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INTERNATIONAL FILM STUDIES JOURNAL

Post-what? Post-when?
Thinking Moving Images Beyond the Post-medium/Post-cinema Condition

Edited by Miriam De Rosa and Vinzenz Hediger

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Contents / Table des matières

Post-what? Post-when?
Thinking Moving Images Beyond the Post-medium/Post-cinema Condition

p. 9 Miriam De Rosa and Vinzenz Hediger, *Post-what? Post-when? A Conversation on the 'Posts' of Post-media and Post-cinema*

21 Shane Denson, *Speculation, Transition, and the Passing of Post-cinema*

33 Ted Nannicelli, Malcom Turvey, *Against Post-cinema*

45 Sabrina Negri, *Simulating the Past*: *Digital Preservation of Moving Images and the 'End of Cinema'*

55 Rachel Schaff, *The Photochemical Conditions of the Frame*

65 Saige Walton, *Becoming Space in Every Direction:* Birdman *as Post-cinematic Baroque*

77 Monica Dall'Asta, *GIF Art in the Metamodern Era*

New Studies

91 Diego Cavallotti, Elisa Virgili, *Queering the Amateur Analog Video Archive: the Case of Bologna's Countercultural Life in the 80s and the 90s*

107 Simone Dotto, *Notes for a History of Radio-Film: Cinematic Imagination and Intermedia Forms in Early Italian Radio*

121 Francesco Federici, *The Experience of Duration and the Manipulation of Time in Exposed Cinema*

135 Kamil Lipiński, *Archival Hauntings in the Revenant Narratives from Home in Péter Forgács'* Private Hungary

149 **Projects & Abstracts**

165 **Reviews / Comptes-rendus**

177 Contributors / Collaborateurs

Post-what? Post-when?
Thinking Moving Images Beyond the Post-medium/Post-cinema Condition

Post-what? Post-when?
A Conversation on the 'Posts' of Post-media and Post-cinema

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Vinzenz Hediger, Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt am Main

Abstract

The text retraces the current debate around the notions of post-cinema and post-media. Employing a dialogic approach, the editors propose a theoretical framework to provide context for the main contributions on these topics published in recent years, highlighting the conceptual connections to the previous scholarship. The resulting reflection serves as a platform to introduce and situate the contributions to this special issue. In particular, the editors propose to use the term configuration to account for the various aspects and facets of contemporary cinematic experience.

The idea for this special issue of *Cinema&Cié* came out of a dialogue. Having both worked on questions of post-media and post-cinema for some time, and for a time in the same institution, we found that one point where our interests intersected was the question of temporality, i.e. the contours of the historical break suggested by the prefix 'post-'. Usually, productive intersections involve twists, negotiations, or even jolts. As befits the object of study, our exchange saw our perspectives converge, but also deviate, sometimes clash and ultimately interweave.

This is why we decided to preserve a dialogic approach to introduce the questions provocatively posed by the title of this special issue, and the answers given by our authors. The six essays, which we had the privilege of selecting from among an impressive number of exciting proposals, offer a good survey of the current state of the debate. We want to present this special issue as an opportunity to expand the dialogue and include a variety of different perspectives on the temporality of the 'post-' in post-media and post-cinema. We hope the reader will find our exchange as productive, engaging and poignant as we felt it was when we prepared it.

Milan and Frankfurt, October 2016

*

mdr: I should probably start by asking you what you think post-cinema is. Instead, I will begin with a confession. I have been working on 'post-cinema' for a while now: much has been written on the topic, many, diverse voices have contributed to set in motion what I genuinely feel is an extremely stimulating debate.[1] Yet, after all that has been said and written, I am still not quite sure what post-cinema is.

Is the shift from cinema to post-cinema solely a question of what we might call the 'nature' of the medium? Is it determined by its material support and, therefore, by the technological element? Is post-cinema a broader term that describes the fact that — borrowing from Rodowick[2] — the film has entered its 'virtual life'? Or again, is it about the aesthetic changes that we can observe in much of the contemporary cinematography? Or maybe a combination of both? Not to mention other vital aspects of cinema and their most recent transformations, such as distribution, spectatorship, etc.

To be honest, I am not sure post-cinema is about film at all. In fact, I would argue that cinema is not only about film either. Conversely, I suspect that the ontological interpretation of post-cinema (to which I also adhered, at first) is based upon a sense of permanence and immobility which I now think is inherently extraneous to cinema. To some extent, Shane Denson's essay which opens our edited special issue implicitly addresses this point, in that the reflection on the speculative nature of post-cinema he proposes focuses solely on computational images and elaborates on the material engagement of media in a 'discorrelated' present. As a phenomenological object, cinema of course needs 'a body' delimited by a tangible skin (be it the film strip, as in the beautiful pages written by Laura U. Marks and somewhat echoed by the texts by Sabrina Negri and Rachel Schaff included in this volume, or the threshold of the red velvet curtains we have so often crossed to enter the movie-theater). [3] Yet the idea of cinema is not

[1] Among the most recent and influential works, please refer at least to *Post-Cinema: Theorizing 21st Century Film*, ed. by Shane Denson and Julia Leyda (Falmer: Reframe Books, 2016); Félix Guattari, 'Vers une ère post-média', *Terminal*, 51 (1990), trans. into English as 'Towards a Post-Media Era', in *Provocative Alloys: A Post-media Anthology*, ed. by Clemens Apprich and others (Lüneburg: Post-Media Lab; London: Mute Books, 2013), pp. 26–27; Rosalind Krauss, *'A Voyage on the North Sea'. Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1999); Lev Manovich, 'Post-Media Aesthetics', <www.manovich.net/DOCS/Post_media_aesthetics1.doc> [accessed 20 October 2016]; Chris McCrea, 'Explosive, Expulsive, Extraordinary: The Excess of Animated Bodies', *Animation*, 3.1 (2008), 9–24; Steve Shaviro, *Post Cinematic Affect* (New York: Zero Books, 2010); Peter Weibel, 'Die Postmediale Kondition', in *Die Postmediale Kondition*, ed. by Elisabeth Fiedler, Elisabeth Fiedler, Christa Steinle and Peter Weibel (Neue Galerie Graz am Landesmuseum Joanneum: Graz, 2005), pp. 6-13, trans. into English as 'The Post-Media Condition', *Postmedia Condition* (Madrid: Centro Cultural Conde Duque, 2006). <http://www.medialabmadrid.org/medialab/medialab.php?l=0&a=a&i=329> [accessed 20 October 2016].

[2] D. N. Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

[3] Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000); on the red velvet curtains delimiting the movie-

about permanence and immobility. It is a powerful repository of memory and an archive of the past, but it is in that which enlivens memory and the past, in that which keeps memory and past alive, moving, and vivid, which I think cinema resides.

I am extremely simplifying but, to summarize, I believe many contemporary cinematic forms do not provide us with anything but the constant evidence that cinema is something variable, (positively) precarious, and changeable. Precisely such mutability is what I feel inclined to identify as cinema — moving images and, therefore, essentially, motion.

I think that the notion of the apparatus can serve to illustrate this point: looking more carefully at the theory of the apparatus, it seems to me that this concept covers a number of recurring elements, which contributed to its institutionalization over the years, but a great deal of elements is not fixed at all.

vh: To take up your point about the mutability and even the malleability of cinema, we could approach the post-cinema debate from a history of science point of view and take a page from Bruno Latour, arguing that cinema has, in a way, never been modern. By this, I mean that cinema has never been a medium with a consolidated specificity, but rather a medium in permanent transformation. In that sense, the cinema which now appears to be over, in the wake of which the suffix 'post-' positions us, should only be considered a snapshot of a particular moment in that permanent transformation.

In his book, *Nous n'avons jamais été modernes*,[4] first published in 1991, Latour argues that most of the concepts and conceptual distinctions of modern scientific practice, most notably the distinction between 'nature' and 'society', are a lot less stable than we assume. Making these concepts operable requires a constant effort of articulation through material practices and institutional frameworks. We can argue that this analysis also pertains to aesthetics. In the realm of aesthetics, one of the quintessentially modern concepts is, indeed, the concept of medium specificity. It can be traced back to Lessing's 1766 essay *Laokoon*,[5] in which the author proposes that the arts may be distinguished from each other by the material and structural properties of their medium of expression. This is a stance that Lessing takes against Horace's dictum '*ut picture poesis*', i.e. the notion, inherited from antiquity, that the arts can mutually express each other, independently of their medium. Lessing's essay belongs to a broader moment in modern thought, the emergence of aesthetics as a sub-field of philosophy. It appears a few years after Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* and Burke's essay on the sublime

theater and the sense of magic unfolding once crossed, the fascinating account by Antonello Gerbi as reported by the equally vivid prose by Francesco Casetti in *The Lumière Galaxy: Seven Keywords for the Cinema to Come* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015) comes to mind.

[4] Bruno Latour, *Nous n'avons jamais été modernes* (Paris: La Découverte, 1991).

[5] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laokoon. Oder: Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1994 [1766]).

and the beautiful.[6] Very broadly speaking, all three are concerned with aesthetic value judgments, but while Baumgarten and Burke focus on questions of logic and the logical form of value judgments, Lessing focuses on material properties and the medium. If we fast-forward to the Twentieth century, we find that art historians and art critics such as Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried, but also film theorists like Siegfried Kracauer, still operate within a Lessing-style framework. Whether a specific work has aesthetic value continues to depend on how well it accords with the properties of the medium.

mdr: The lineage connecting Lessing to Greenberg, Kracauer and Fried is quite obvious. The correlation between aesthetic value and properties of the medium selected to express it reminds me of Arthur Danto's critique of aesthetics. Rather than as a branch of philosophy, Danto contends that aesthetics is in fact a philosophy of art.[7] The 'aesthetic' value is for him to be understood as the result of a number of relational properties of the work of art. It is in this frame — and this is why we could well call them 'relational' properties — that he includes the essential connection among meaning, process of interpretation and underlying intention of the author. I find an echo of Danto's argument in the text by Malcom Turvey and Ted Nannicelli included in this special issue. This might sound like a detour, but is in fact of crucial importance because it takes us back to the *ut pictura poiesis*-debate that you mentioned above. If we return to the sources, I believe we could consider Horatio as an epitome of a relational conception of art — better yet, of the arts. This conception turns on the dichotomy specific/general, and I think that it implicitly permeates the reflections by some of the authors you named. Rosalind Krauss and her famous reference to Marcel Broodthaers' 'fin(e) arts' claim in her opening of '*A Voyage on the North Sea*' is a case in point.[8] Krauss' argument plays with the idea of *fine* arts as several different media, each with its own specificity, and their end (*fin*), which in a way only defers the problem. Jean-Luc Nancy found a wonderful way to synthesize this, which in my opinion is closer to solve the problem, when he proposed the idea of '*être singulier pluriel*'.[9] According to Nancy, arts are as a matter of fact separated but would stem from a unique essence which found diverse modes of expression over time, thus determining the emergence of

[6] Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Aesthetica*, repr. as *Ästhetik* (Meiner: Hamburg, 2007 [1750]); Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015 [1757]).

[7] Arthur Danto, *The Trasfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981). In the same vein, the perspective adopted by analytical philosophy may provide an interesting frame to look differently at issue of medium specificity. It refuses to conceive modernity and the postmodern as separated eras, each of which characterized by specific arts and interpretive modes, in favor of a more consistent — albeit fluid — historical continuity along which various particularisms would characterize various historical moments. Consequently, this view seems to offer some suggestions to tackle the question of temporality at the heart of our inquiry.

[8] Krauss, *'A Voyage on the North Sea'*.

[9] Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

specific yet complementary arts. Therefore, the end of a certain art would stand, in fact, for the beginning of its own plurality.[10] In this view, cinema would be one among multiple languages (arts), having its own 'specificity' but at the same time sharing a common root with others and, consequently, it would not be a monolithic, autotelic and, so to say, 'closed' medium, but would rather be in constant connection with other media.

vh: Well, things are not quite as harmonious for Kracauer, for instance. For him, the specificity of film needs to be thought independently and in contrast to the other arts. Thus, any piece of a newsreel is filmic, because it redeems physical reality, while a filmed adaptation of a Shakespeare play is not filmic, because it stresses the *formgebende tendenz*, the intervention of the artist, over the properties of the photochemical reproduction of film. It is treading in those same footsteps, that Rosalind Krauss introduces the concept of post-medium, when she is confronted with works that are indisputably art works like those by Broodthaers, but no longer conform to the criterion of medium specificity. Now my claim would be that, even after Kracauer, whose *Theory of Film* is the last, great explicitly Lessingian attempt to get to the heart of cinema in the history of film theory, film studies and film theory, whether explicitly or not, took a page from art criticism and art theory when they defined their object. The challenge in the 1960s and 1970s was to delineate cinema as an epistemic object that was solid and consistent enough that it could legitimize an entire academic field devoted to its study. Now it's important to add a caution, in order not to overly homogenize film studies as a discipline. Film Studies first emerged as an interdisciplinary field in post-war Europe in the shape of the filmology movement, but it only became a discipline in the 1970s, in the US, Germany and Britain largely by branching out from literature departments. To the extent that Film Studies has a certain coherence as a field, one could argue that the outlines of academic film theory were formulated in Paris in the 1960s and 1970s. Their teachings were exported to other countries through a generation of film scholars who made a passage through Paris, to study with such scholars as Metz and Bellour, from Constance Penley and Janet Bergstrom to David N. Rodowick, Francesco Casetti and many others.

Now this is where the apparatus comes into play, and where it becomes important that, as you say, the apparatus is far from a fixed entity…

mdr: And that 'cinema' does not only just equal 'apparatus'…

vh: Exactly. I would argue that to the extent that film studies as a field gave a coherent answer to the challenge of delineating their object of study, it could be summarized by a formula comprised of the triad of 'canon + index + apparatus/ dispositif'. 'Cinema' was, first, a catalogue of canonical works, roughly the canon

[10] Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Muses* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

of auteur cinema; 'cinema' was, second, a photographic medium whose core material property was photomechanical reproduction, or, to phrase it in the terms of Peircean semiotics, a medium based on 'indexicality'; and 'cinema' was, third, a dispositif (or, to put it in more properly Althusserian terms, an apparatus), an aggregation of a public space, a technology of projection, and the social habit of movie-going and the mental framework of spectatorship. As it turned out, the triad of canon, index and dispositif that defined 'cinema' as an object of study proved to be prone to accidents and episodes of instability. The transition to digital photography in the 1990s threw the index in crisis, the development of digital networks and platforms ended the privilege of the dispositif of cinema over other modes of circulation, and new modes of digital access and the discovery of new fields of research such as ephemeral and orphan films subverted the canon.

One way of dealing with this triple crisis is to declare, once again, the death of cinema and adopt an attitude of protracted mourning. Krauss actually makes a similar point with regards to the visual arts: the obsolescence of the medium coincides with the highest point of its maturity; the 'post-medium condition' is to be addressed in the mode of an elegy. In our issue, in addition to the essay by Ted Nanincelli and Malcom Turvey a review of a new book by André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion discusses these attitudes in a critical perspective. But another way of dealing with the triple crisis of canon, index and dispositif is to argue, quite to the contrary, that cinema has never been modern: that the search for a media specificity of cinema is futile and misses the point, because cinema is an unspecific medium, a medium of constantly changing and often transitory configurations, of which 'cinema' was only one.

mdr: If there is, indeed, no specificity to lose, but only a succession of transitory configurations, the question in our title — post what? post when? — acquires a new, and somewhat polemical, meaning.

vh: Yes, there is a stance in there somewhere that could be paraphrased as 'enough already with the post-talk; can we move on, please?' I think it's a good question to ask, particularly in a situation where we are at risk of making our lives in the long shadow of a traumatic experience of loss permanent. To argue that cinema has ever been modern seems like a good cure for the melancholia of a modernism, which has just ended forever.

mdr: One might add that not only cinema has never been modern, but Film Studies have always been a permeable field of inquiry, one — as you maintain — with an internal coherence but with an openness to other fields of inquiry, shifting between discipline and field, as Roger Odin recently reminded us.[11]

[11] Roger Odin, 'A propos de la mise en place de l'enseignement du cinema en France. Retour sur une experience', in *Il cinema si impara? Sapere, formazione, professioni / Can we Learn Cinema? Knowledge, Training, the Profession*, ed. by Anna Bertolli, Andrea Mariani and Martina Panelli

Furthermore, I think the suggestion you used is very much in line with what I was trying to touch upon earlier: cinema is fluid, and there are moments throughout history which correspond to major or minor fluctuations, that is, major or minor variations in terms of established objects and basic notions such as the film, the apparatus, etiquette and patterns of spectatorship, etc. When the 'fluctuation' is minor, then a solidifying impulse crystallizes a number of forms into canons, behaviors into habits and, eventually, rituals. When variation prevails, then certain aspects of the medium are reconfigured and the objects, as well as the critical and scientific approaches studying them, also undergo a process of transformation. To push the metaphor further — we could perhaps describe these dynamics in terms of solidification, liquefaction and sublimation: through recurrence, certain aspects of the cinematic experience turn into stable elements; they gain consistence and, therefore are (temporarily) solidified. Conversely, whilst certain traits raise and come to the surface others lose their consistency and are somehow diluted, watered down, as if liquefied throughout the folds of time and replaced by new practices. Such a perspective ultimately describes a modulation, for I assume the changes affecting the moving image over time we are alluding to are the results of complex processes produced by a number of interwoven factors.

There is one further dynamics that may complement the two I just named and which complete my 'alchemic' reading, namely sublimation. When the changes are conspicuous, we could well visualize 'major fluctuations' introducing a prominent alteration of the 'liquid cinematic atmosphere' I tried to describe here — sublimation would then indicate a more radical metamorphosis, that is, a passage that is a faster or more evident transition from one configuration to another, resembling a profound modification of an established filmic form, its parameters and surrounding critical discourses. Experimental projects such as Tony Oursler's environmental projections are a good example and a quite thought-provoking metaphor of this (fig. 1).

These mechanisms do not exclude each other. Rather, they co-exist and emerge with a varying strength throughout time, readjusting the new balance at every turn. As in a sort of cycle, certain aspects emerge and establish themselves as a standard, whereas others are surpassed and therefore progressively abandoned, either proposing what may be an original nuance, just a slim novelty or rather determining a real shift and a consistent change. Such a logic rests upon a conception of continuity, which, as Bolter and Grusin pointed out,[12] would feature the moving image as part of a broader media environment. Besides remediation, which I am not sure is a concept we really need to employ here, this reminds me some beautiful pages by Italo Calvino, as he compared Ovid's linguistic structure to that of cinema. I would argue his remarks offer an eloquent and valuable reflection to observe contemporary (audio-visual) media on the whole:

(Udine: Forum, 2012), pp. 93–101.

[12] Jay D. Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1999).

> everything has to follow apace, […] every image must overlap another, emerge […]. It is the principle of cinema: each frame, as each verse, must be full of moving visual stimuli. [...] A law of maximum economy dominates this poem [according to which] new forms draw as much as possible from the old ones.[13]

Not by chance, Calvino is commenting on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. I cannot but see a similarity between his acute observations on the rough material composing the poem, and the moving image as a rough material of sorts which is to be found in a number of diverse contemporary cinematic forms: as the former represents an *ensemble* of possible stories synthesizing the 'living multiplicity'[14] typical of myth, so the latter is the basic malleable material that can well be shaped into a number of different fashions giving birth to diverse cinematic forms. The scenario where this complex and constant process takes place is a moving territory crossed by clashing and convergent tensions at once,[15] occurring in a transition phase. The post-media age is one of these transformation moments in which a "metamorphosis", an important reconfiguration of both cinema as an object and the critical discourse about it takes place. The reconceptualization of a number of moving image practices including those connected to archive, exhibition and preservation to which the volume edited by Giovanna Fossati and Annie van den Oever reviewed in this issue is devoted, is emblematic to this extent (fig. 2).

vh: I prefer the notion of 'living multiplicity' to that of 'remediation'. 'Living multiplicity' revives the long tradition of biological metaphors that address cinema as a living organism rather than technical tool or just another art form. This tradition stretches from early film theory and its borrowings from *Lebensphilosophie* and Bergson — a connection thoroughly studied by Inga Pollmann in a forthcoming book and, similarly, by Chris Tedjasukmana in a book published last year — to Bazin and the life cycle metaphors of genre theory and on to Vivian Sobchack's concept of film viewing as an encounter and interaction with the film's lived body.[16] Life metaphors deserve a critique

[13] Italo Calvino, 'Gli indistinti confini', in *Metamorfosi,* Publio Ovidio Nasone (Torino: Einaudi, 1987), pp. XII–XIII (my translation).
[14] Ivi, p. X.
[15] Implicitly sitting upon the idea of the 'art after the art', thus recalling a similar rhetoric we are analyzing as regards to cinema, Nicholas Bourriaud also questioned the future of art looking at a number of dynamics which led him to identify an object that he terms 'exform'. Albeit articulating a different theoretical framework based on a different set of labels, he seems nonetheless to identify the necessity to address the mechanisms defining the artistic discourse and its objects proposing a conceptual category which encapsulates the same aesthetical sensitivity we are trying to elaborate on. See Nicholas Bourriaud, *The Exform* (London, New York: Verso, 2016).
[16] Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution* (New York: Sheba Blake, 2015 [1907]); Inga Pollmann, *Cinematic Vitalism: Film, Theory, and the Question of Life* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, forthcoming); Chris Tedjasukmana, *Mechanische Verlebendigung. Eine Theorie der Kinoerfahrung* (München: Fink, 2014); André Bazin, *What Is Cinema?* ed. by Hugh Gray, 2 vols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967); Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: a Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

in their own right, but I think that 'living multiplicity' opens up a rich set of possibilities. My problem with 'remediation' is the same as my problem with the concept of 'intermediality': both reify the medium as an ontological unit and turn it into an underlying substance, to which the processes of remediation and intermediality relate as accidents. This creates what is in my view a completely unnecessary problem of discovery: first we must find, delineate and describe the medium, and then we can move on to an analysis of whatever it is that we describe as 'remediation' and 'intermediality'. I believe we should try to avoid this 'substantiality trap', and I think that the concept of reconfiguration can help us here. In your study about postmedia, you worked on the relationship between the relocated moving image and space — you termed it 'space-image' — and proposed to define it as a 'configuration of experience:'[17] if we agree that cinema is indeed a shape-shifting object of study, we can expand on your insight and use the term 'configuration' to apprehend cinema in its varying shapes, both as they develop over time and as they co-exist and interact with each other.

mdr: I think we agree on 'living multiplicity'. Also, I do agree with the idea of reading post-cinema in relation to a wider context and — as I argued elsewhere[18] — of putting other configurations of the moving image on equal footing with 'cinema'. Your historical take is very convincing, too; perhaps I wouldn't sketch the phases — the three successive crises of the index, the dispositif and the canon — that you brought up earlier in such a linear way, though: on the one hand there is indeed a chronological development, especially in terms of the agenda of Film Studies as a discipline, but on the other hand I believe the three focuses you identified do not simply make room one to the other — they somehow continue being co-present, albeit with a different centrality in the frame of the theoretical discourses which progressively took shape around cinema.

vh: One of the advantages of the concept of configuration to me seems indeed to be that it allows us to move on from modernist melancholia, and embark upon a variety of avenues to more or less completely rewrite the history of cinema.

mdr: Which would then mean that configurations may well emerge out of a disruption of the institutional and established way of conceiving history. In other words, I'd rather go for a non-linear configuration of such discourses, one which

[17] Miriam De Rosa, *Cinema e postmedia. I territori del filmico nel contemporaneo* (Milano: postmedia books, 2013), p. 66.
[18] I had the chance to approach this issue as regards to artistic moving images during my research stay at Goethe University in Frankfurt, where this dialogue started taking shape more consistently. The first result of that strand of my research is published as Miriam De Rosa, 'From a *Voyage to the North Sea* to a *Passage to the North-West*. Journeys Across the Contaminated Histories of Art and Film', in *A History of Cinema without Names*, ed. by Diego Cavallotti, Federico Giordano and Leonardo Quaresima (Milano and Udine: Mimesis International, 2016), pp. 149–55.

would enable to acknowledge the inherent complexity of our object of study. I would suggest to adopt complex theory as a lens through which looking at cinema and post-cinema. This would quite fit with the concept of configuration as a key-term to understand moving images and their pattern of entanglements (rather than evolution) in the post-media age. The essays by Saige Walton and Monica Dall'Asta included in this collection might be seen as important contributions to a similar framework, notwithstanding the fact that they do not aim at proposing a new reading of post-cinema per se. Moreover, your account of Agnès Varda's photographic work, particularly her work on Cuba, which you review in this issue of the journal, confirms that moving images are part of a wider visual culture and that its components are dynamic forms[19] — configurations, as we are claiming — continuously influencing each other.

vh: However, I do think that the concept of configuration offers an opportunity to re-frame the post-cinema debate. Let's get specific. In terms of unraveling the complexity of configurations of the moving image, we could distinguish between several levels of analysis: we could ask what it is that a given configuration of moving images does, i.e. we can discuss a configuration in terms of its operative aspect — which can be to provide an aesthetic experience, as in the classical dispositif of the cinema, or to produce knowledge, as in laboratory and scientific uses of film; we can study the ways in which the moving image relates to other elements of its configuration — for instance, to paratexts in the case of commercial cinema, or to writing and other modes of notation in film-based research such as visual anthropology, for instance; and we can study the spatial dimension of a given configuration, precisely what you called 'space-image'. We can distinguish between these levels for the purposes of analysis, while still keeping in mind that the operational, relational and situational aspects are intertwined. But what such an analysis could help us to achieve is to subvert the primacy of the object of 'cinema' by aligning it, on equal footing, with a multitude of other configurations of the moving image. This would also help us understand that what remains of cinema (to quote the title of a recent book by Jacques Aumont)[20] requires no mourning, but merely our sustained curiosity and attentiveness.

[19] The concept of 'dynamic forms' as key-notion to understand cinema as a language encapsulating an essential sense motion is at the heart of an on-going research project devoted to artistic moving images I am developing in association with Catherine Fowler. Its first output has been presented as a joint conference paper 'Contaminated Histories of Art and Film: Thinking Topologically', at FilmForum XXIII International Film Studies Conference, Gorizia, Italy, 9 - 15 March 2016.
[20] Jacques Aumont, *Que reste-t-il du cinema?* (Paris: Vrin, 2012).

Tony Oursler
The Influence Machine, 2000
Video and sound
10/19/2000 – 10/31/1000
Photo by: Aaron Diskin
Courtesy of Public Art Fund, NY

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Speculation, Transition, and the Passing of Post-cinema

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Abstract

What comes after post-cinema? Such a question calls for *speculation* as a central mode of inquiry. However, this speculative turn is engaged not only by the question of what comes *after* the 'post'; for post-cinema, at its best, is itself already a speculative term — despite the fact that it grows, historically, out of theories of loss (the loss of the index, the end of celluloid, the demise of cinema as an institution). Against this backdrop of mourning and melancholia, post-cinema is speculative in at least two senses. First, the concept of post-cinema is future-oriented at root, as it purports to gain purchase on movements along an unfinished trajectory, hence speculating of necessity about its own future course as a determinant of present actuality. Second, post-cinema refers to media engaged materially in a speculative probing of the present. The 'presence' of experience is now more radically than ever — because materially, medially — dispersed, not just as a play of signifiers but across and within an ecology that is materially redefining the parameters for life and agency itself in post-cinematic times. Accordingly, the question of post-cinema's passing is the question of time's passing in the space of post-perceptual mediation.

What comes after post-cinema? This question — a pressing one today both for theorists of 'new' media and for those who have identified with the putatively 'old' concerns of cinema studies and film theory — demands *speculation* as a central mode of inquiry.[1] Meanwhile, however, the notion of speculation is overdetermined; it might evoke associations with speculative realism (recent philosophical tendencies such as 'object-oriented ontology'), speculative philosophy (an older philosophical impulse exemplified in the work of Alfred North Whitehead), speculative finance (along with the algorithmic processes that have accele-

[1] On the speculative nature of post-cinematic theory, see Shane Denson, Steven Shaviro, Patricia Pisters, Adrian Ivakhiv and Mark B. N. Hansen, 'Post-Cinema and/as Speculative Media Theory', panel at the 2015 conference of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies, Montréal, Canada, 27 March 2015; video of the complete panel is available online: <https://medieninitiative.wordpress.com/2015/05/24/post-cinema-panel-complete-videos/> [accessed 18 October 2016].

rated such speculation and made capital not only 'inhuman' in its consequences but a somewhat *nonhuman* affair as well), or speculative media (an as-yet underdefined notion that might draw on any or all of the above in order to think about the predictive, future-oriented trajectory that differentiates contemporary media from the 'memorial' functions of phonography, photography, and cinema). However, the speculative turn suggested by this non-exhaustive list is engaged not only by the question of what comes *after* the 'post'; for post-cinema, at its best, is itself already a speculative term — despite the fact that it grows, historically, out of theories of loss: the loss of the index, the end of celluloid, the demise of cinema as an institution.[2] Against a backdrop of mourning and/or melancholia, both the notion and the (suspected or only speculated) referent of 'post-cinema' are speculative in at least two senses, which I aim to articulate in this essay and to put into conversation with a range of film- and media-philosophical reflections on the fate and future of moving-image media.

First, I hope to show that the concept of post-cinema is future-oriented at root, as it purports to gain purchase on movements along an unfinished trajectory, hence speculating of necessity about its own future course as a determinant of present actuality. But though such might be said of any historical development, since life is never lived in a punctual 'now' but always in a thick present that is rich with protentional and retentional traces, there is nevertheless something special about the becoming of post-cinema. This is due to what I have elsewhere termed the 'discorrelation' of subjective experience and material substrate that, in a culmination or radicalization of media-historical impulses going back at least to the telegraph, comes to impinge directly upon moving images in post-cinema.[3] In contrast to cinema's photographic images, post-cinema's computational images are generated in a microtemporal interval that is inaccessible to the macrotemporally constituted self of subjective perception. Thus, the temporal window of experience itself becomes the object of the minutest calculation, 'premediation',[4] or algorithmic pre-processing at a microtemporal level. Time in the post-cinematic era passes faster, it would appear, though precisely appearance or the realm of the phenomenal (and specifically, that of the image) is called radically into question in the post-perceptual space of discorrelated images.[5]

[2] For a nuanced theoretical account, see D. N. Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007). For a somewhat skeptical historicizing approach, see André Gaudreault and Phillipe Marion, *The End of Cinema? A Medium in Crisis in the Digital Age*, trans. by Timothy Barnard (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).
[3] Shane Denson, 'Crazy Cameras, Discorrelated Images, and the Post-Perceptual Mediation of Post-Cinematic Affect', in *Post-Cinema: Theorizing 21st-Century Film*, ed. by Shane Denson and Julia Leyda (Falmer: REFRAME Books, 2016) <http://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/post-cinema/2-5-denson/> [accessed 18 October 2016].
[4] Richard Grusin, *Premediation: Affect and Mediality after 9/11* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
[5] Mark B. N. Hansen, 'Algorithmic Sensibility: Reflections on the Post-Perceptual Image', in *Post-Cinema*, ed. by Denson and Leyda <http://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/post-cinema/6-3-hansen/> [accessed 18 October 2016].

This brings us to the second meaning of speculation, then: post-cinema is not just a future-oriented *concept*, but it refers to media engaged *materially* in a speculative probing of the present. The 'presence' of experience is now more radically than ever — because materially, medially — dispersed, not just through a deconstructive play of signifiers but by way of multi-leveled, networked processing operations taking place across and within an ecology that is materially redefining the parameters for life and agency itself in post-cinematic times.[6] If post-cinema means discorrelation, however, and this discorrelation brings with it a transformation of time that necessitates a speculative relation to appearance (because the objects of perception, e.g. images, are generated in a time called 'real time' but which is categorically outside our real-time subjective perception), then the concept of post-cinema must finally be seen as a *transitional* concept in a strong sense. For the 'post' does not mark so much an end (as in earlier discourses of the end of cinema) but rather has its heuristic value by virtue of marking a difference that *may very well stop making a difference*: as the perceptual technology of cinema is absorbed, resituated, or 'relocated'[7] within the post-perceptual ecology of twenty-first-century media, this metabolizing movement implies that the difference 'cinema/post-cinema' itself might become not only imperceptible but also ultimately ineffectual. Post-cinema, as a construct, is necessarily transitional: it will pass. When we recognize this basic transitionality, however, then we see that the question of post-cinema is already the question of what comes after post-cinema — and, more fundamentally, that *the question of post-cinema's passing is the question of time's passing in the space of post-perceptual mediation*.

Transitional Media

What I have just said of post-cinema might, with some justification, be said of cinema as well: the question of cinema is the question of what comes after cinema. Bazin's great question 'what is cinema?' gives way to speculation on tendencies and trajectories that point beyond — towards speculation, in Bazin's case, on what he called 'the myth of total cinema'.[8] This notion of totalization carries within itself the idea of a situation in which the cinema/not-cinema distinction begins to break down, or in which the phenomenal differences that distinguish the cinema from its environment become imperceptible. Thus, for Bazin, the question of cinema's nature gives way to reflection on a kind of nature that per-

[6] On this redefinition of the experiential environment, see Mark B. N. Hansen, *Feed-Forward: On the Future of 21st-Century Media* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

[7] 'Relocation' is one of the 'key words' put forward as a defining characteristic of twenty-first-century cinema in Francesco Casetti, *The Lumière Galaxy: Seven Key Words for the Cinema to Come* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

[8] André Bazin, 'The Myth of Total Cinema', in *What is Cinema?* trans. by Hugh Gray, 2 vols (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), I, pp. 17–22.

sists *after* cinema has perfected its 'total and complete representation of reality'[9] and hence become indistinguishable from it. Can we say, then, that the idea of cinema itself already leads inevitably to the idea of post-cinema?

It would perhaps be hasty to affirm this suggestion, and it is anyway complicated for Bazin by his insistence that 'cinema has not yet been invented!'[10] But the anachronism and the paradox of the Bazinian idea — according to which the mythical ideal of cinema precedes its technical implementation, but where the full realization of the cinema (its 'invention' in a strong sense) would also imply its end (in the sense that it would no longer make sense to distinguish cinema from nature or reality more generally) — might in fact shed light on what I am calling the *transitionality* of post-cinema.

Consider, in this connection, the strangely incompatible set of definitions that Wiktionary, the collaborative dictionary companion to Wikipedia, offers for the term 'postcinematic'.[11] On the one hand, the adjective is said to mean 'after the decline of cinema'; on the other hand, however, and far more surprisingly, it is also defined as 'after the invention of cinema'. But if this latter definition is surprising, it is not for all that illogical: while terms like postmortem and posthumous imply that something happens after the *conclusion* of something else (when life is *over*, for example), other uses of 'post-' imply only that something happens after the *advent* or *occurrence* of something (for example, post-Kantian philosophy refers to philosophy conducted in the wake of Kant's influence; it commences not with Kant's death but with the publication and reception of the *Critiques*). Seen thus, these are two completely distinct meanings of the term 'postcinematic' — implying, by extension, two distinct notions of post-cinema: either the post-cinematic era commenced in 1895 or thereabouts, with the invention and public exhibition of the *Cinématographe*, or it commenced much more recently, for example with the demise of celluloid and photographic indexicality, or by virtue of some other hypothesized decline (e.g. a waning of the collective audience, the eclipse of the big screen by a plethora of little ones, or the decline or downfall of some set of properly cinematic values). One of these meanings is therefore predicated on the birth of cinema, while the other is predicated on its death.

Accordingly, the two meanings on offer here are clearly contradictory with respect to one another, but perhaps there is some truth to be found in the contradiction. Again, I am interested in thinking about post-cinema as an essentially speculative notion, not so much as a state attained definitively in connection with some determinate event, and certainly not one that would be defined in terms of an absolute historical break, but more perhaps as one of the inherent questions of cinema. Taken together, the two definitions might nudge us towards this spe-

[9] Ivi, p. 20.
[10] Ivi, p. 21.
[11] 'Postcinematic', in *Wiktionary: The Free Dictionary* <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/postcinematic> [accessed 18 October 2016].

culative and transitional understanding: by focusing alternately on cinema's birth and its death, i.e. on the beginning or end of its 'life', they suggest significantly that post-cinema is central to the cinema's very existence, to its being or becoming. Nevertheless, the two definitions are hardly saying the same thing; with respect to periodization, as we have seen, it makes a huge difference whether we define post-cinema in relation to cinema's birth (let us call this definition 1) or in relation to cinema's death (definition 2). However, we might pair definition 1 with Gaudreault and Marion's observation that cinema has died at least eight 'deaths' in the course of its life, the first being pronounced right at the moment of its birth — by none other than the father of the Brothers Lumière, who said that 'Cinema is an invention with no future'.[12] In this sense, all of cinema has been post-cinema not just in the sense of coming after the advent of moving images but in the more common meaning of *after cinema* (i.e. 'after' in the sense of following its demise). Definition 1 and definition 2 therefore merge or converge in this unorthodox historiography of cinema.

But things get even more complex when we take into account Gaudreault and Marion's notion of the 'double birth' of cinema.[13] On this account, cinema was born first as an apparatus (ca. 1895) and then as an institution (in the 1910s). It is this second birth that, for Gaudreault and Marion, is the authentic birth of cinema. Thus, cinema's first death comes *before* its actual birth, and the advent of post-cinema is therefore rendered, paradoxically, a pre-cinematic reality. This view might be seen as a sort of distant cousin of Bazin's notion that the cinema is itself a speculative ideal that has not yet been invented; in Gaudreault and Marion's alternative, cinema's death is likewise a speculative ideal that precedes the cinema's invention. Taken literally, this would imply a *reductio ad absurdum* of definition 2 (according to which post-cinema is 'after the decline of cinema'); for what is after the decline can hardly come before the advent, except in some metaphorical or conceptual sense (for example, as an inherent trajectory or conceptual inevitability, the way that death might be said to be inseparable from life *in general* and therefore precedes any *actual* or *individual* birth). But though it would be wrong to take Gaudreault and Marion's suggestion in an overly literal sense (indeed, their point is to cast doubt on the notion of cinema's 'death' in the first place), their history of cinema's multiple births and deaths might help us to see post-cinema neither in terms of everything that follows the invention of cinema (definition 1, a 'nominal' and relatively uninteresting definition) nor as something that follows the demise of cinema (definition 2, the more common but 'vulgar' definition) but as a potential or speculative possibility inherent in cinema itself.

What can we say, then, to flesh out an alternate definition of post-cinema — a 'definition 3', so to speak? First of all, the lesson to be learned from these paradoxes of births and deaths, beginnings and ends, would seem to be that life

[12] Gaudreault and Marion, p. 26.
[13] Ivi, pp. 31–35.

happens in the middle; we should accordingly shift our focus away from the limit cases and think about cinema and post-cinema in the course of their becoming, as they exist *in transit*. We need to look at things *in medias res*. There is a temptation among critics to mark the limits, to define a period or constellation as a closed unit, but this fails to capture the reality of being-in-the-middle, of finding oneself somewhere along an unfinished trajectory (which is the only place one can really find oneself), trying to intuit what that trajectory might be, where it started and where it might lead. We should be guided by this in our attempts to describe post-cinema, which is nothing if not a moment of radically unresolved change. Let us start, then, from the following question: how does it feel to be in the middle of change?

In the Middle

We might take a cue from Steven Shaviro, who in his reflections on 'post-cinematic affect'[14] refers to Raymond Williams's notion of a 'structure of feeling'.[15] It is worth returning to Williams's explication of this concept, which is designed to militate against dichotomies such as that between the 'social' and the 'subjective' — dichotomies which according to Williams attempt to account for the present at the expense of reifying the past, i.e. through the 'conversion of experience into finished products'.[16] There is something similar at work, I suggest, in reifying the cinema as past in order to either celebrate or condemn our post-cinematic condition. This involves an exaggeration of the fixity of the object called 'cinema', a denial of the inherent flux and openness of its borders. And this media-historical impulse both draws upon and feeds back into a media-ontological fetishization of film, especially pronounced with respect to the question of indexicality.

Without a doubt, the very real material connection between pro-filmic reality and its imprint on celluloid was capable of giving rise to those powerful and uncanny experiences described so eloquently by Stanley Cavell[17] and, more recently, David Rodowick:[18] the continuity of recorded and projected image placed viewers in the strange temporal situation of being 'present' at past events. And this situation is, I think, directly relevant to an assessment of cinema's particular 'structure of feeling', to the temporal quality of being-in-the-middle of a cinematic experience and, by extension, in the midst of a cinematic era. But it should be emphasized that this description privileges one level of the overall reality, that of subjective perceptual experience, at the expense of another, that of the microsco-

[14] Steven Shaviro, *Post-Cinematic Affect* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2010).
[15] Raymond Williams, 'Structures of Feeling', in *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 128–35.
[16] Ivi, p. 128.
[17] Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film* (New York: Viking Press, 1971).
[18] Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film*.

pic physical interactions between light, silver halide, and retinal rods and cones. The latter level is of course outside the realm of normal phenomenal experience, but it is not altogether different in this respect from the digital substrate of zeroes and ones that is commonly held responsible for destroying the indexical relation and, by some accounts at least, for destroying the cinema itself as an experience and an era.

My point is not that nothing has changed, that there is no difference between cinema and post-cinema; on the contrary, I think that the intercession of digital processes changes things quite radically. But the difference is not to be located solely in the *interruption* of analogical processes or experiences, for as I have suggested already, those experiences were themselves undergirded by material processes that are discontinuous with respect to integral or 'molar' experience. On the other hand, though, it is true that the *encoding* of images is quite different from the apparently far more contingent capture of light in photochemical processes, where the array of crystals forming the images is different not only from frame to frame but also from print to print. Rodowick has highlighted this contrast between code and crystalline contingency and argued that digital images lack the materiality, and the attendant entropy, of photographic images — for digital information is capable of being copied exactly, and without loss, in a way that photographic images are not.[19] Accordingly, Rodowick suggests that digital images, as informatic inscriptions, are no longer indexical but belong to the symbolic register (in the categories of Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics).[20]

It seems wrong, however, to reduce (or inflate) digital information or data to an exclusively symbolic register, because like the crystals of silver halide that give photochemically based images their characteristic 'grain', digital information too retains its materiality, even physicality. To begin with, digital images are not 'really' reduced to zeroes and ones in the first place (as Rodowick says); *that* is indeed a symbolic rendering of them, such that we can grasp them cognitively, but a string of binary digits (such as '1111 0011 0010 1010') is merely a representation — as should be clear from the fact that it can be converted to a hexadecimal value ('F32A') or decimal number ('62250'). With respect to the algorithmic processes of encoding and decoding, zeroes and ones stand in as proxies for material processes, for a much less binaristic flux of voltage differentials, the actualization of which is never as neat and clean as any of these representations would suggest. And in terms of storage, the code base is likewise subject to material processes of entropy and decay, as Matthew Kirschenbaum has emphasized in his forensically based 'reading' of hard drives.[21] It is thus simply untrue that digital images are *immaterial* entities, so rather than follow Rodowick in tracing a shift from the indexical (associated with Peirce's ontological category of Secondness) to the

[19] Ivi, pp. 110–24.
[20] Ivi, p. 120.
[21] Matthew G. Kirschenbaum, *Mechanisms: New Media and the Forensic Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012).

symbolic (associated with Thirdness), we might instead follow Mark Hansen in his suggestion that digital images in fact produce new Firstnesses.[22] That is, far from being immutably inscribed in an unchanging codebase, digital images are imbricated in highly volatile and *generative* algorithmic processes that fail to reproduce 'the same' image over and over but in fact produce entirely new images with each playback. Glitches and compression artifacts give us a glimpse of this generative processuality and point us towards a new temporal quality of moving-image media and our experience of them.

I will turn in a moment to this new temporality, which I argue ushers in and exemplifies the new speculative quality of post-cinema. Before doing so, however, I want to emphasize what I take to be the significance of this discussion of indexicality. In highlighting the microscopic processes at work in both cinematic and post-cinematic media, I am trying to counter a certain fetishization of the index, which perpetuates unrealistic stories about the mechanisms both of cinema and of digital computation alike. One conclusion to be drawn from this is that we should not exaggerate the clarity and precision of the dividing line between cinema and post-cinema. But this should not lead us to conclude that there is simply no difference, or that the term post-cinema is gratuitous and serves only to exaggerate the distinction in precisely this way. There are very real differences: material differences, as well as social, contextual, and perceptual ones. And even if, as I suggested at the outset of this essay, these differences are destined to fade (especially if 'convergence' is thought not in terms of a homogenization but rather a multiplication of media forms, among which the cinema/post-cinema distinction becomes less central or pronounced), the term post-cinema nevertheless serves an important heuristic function at present in not only highlighting these differences but pointing to their role in this multiplication of media-technical capacities (or affects: the power to affect and to be affected). In short, the term post-cinema serves to focus our attention on the transitional flux in which we currently find ourselves.

And the debate over indexicality and encoding, far from being beside the point, is symptomatic of this transitional experience — part of what it feels like to be in the midst of this change. Much of the debate has been conducted — whether for celebratory or elegiac purposes — towards the goal of delineating our medial past from our present. This goal, as I have suggested, is misguided in its reifying impulse. But the positive upshot of the debate, as I see it, is that it causes us to recognize that there are always microscopic or extra-perceptual processes happening right 'in the middle' of mediated perception: between subjective experience and the objective event or situation that is being presented to us. This insight, I suggest, is essentially *anti-reificational* with respect to subjective experience, which it shows to be founded upon volatile pre-subjective processes that are capable of unsettling the supposed fixity or transhistorical stability of

[22] Hansen, 'Algorithmic Sensibility'.

the subject. In other words, we discover here the transformative agency of a mediating layer between subject and object, and this discovery should be seen as an integral part of the post-cinematic 'structure of feeling'. Finally, though, we need to look closer at the way in which the transformation of this mediating layer is reconfiguring our experience, especially with respect to temporality.

Speculative Temporality

Let us recall the uncanny cinematic experience of being 'present' to past events, an experience attributed to the indexical ontology of photographic images. As we have seen, this paradoxical temporal experience rides atop a layer of complex material interactions that, in some respects at least, are not all too different from the computational materiality of digital images' encoding. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to suggest on this basis that post-cinema's temporality has not been subjected to a radical transformation. And this temporal shift, as we shall see, explains in large part the renewed urgency of speculative thought in the post-cinematic era.

The question of what I am calling post-cinematic temporality is something that Maurizio Lazzarato has dealt with under the heading of his 'video philosophy' — a philosophy of what he calls 'machines to crystallize time'.[23] These machines, which are exemplified in the video camera and further perfected in digital cameras and computer processors, have a direct line on our becoming-in-time, as they operate at speeds that far outstrip our cognitive processing and, on this basis, are in fact capable of modulating our perception itself. For rather than tracing pro-filmic objects and fixing them photographically as the perceptual objects of vision, such time-crystallizing machines operate directly on the sub-perceptual flux of matter, producing images and other sensory contents through material operations that in no way resemble the perceptual acts to which pre-electronic analogue media (phonography, photography, etc.) are held to be analogous. At stake, above all, is the increased speed and precision of the microtemporal operationalization of the mediating layer or interval that, as we have seen, exists between the integral subjects and objects of any mediated perception. Post-cinematic machines dilate this interval and hence bypass the molar perspective of the subject. And not only do they do so at the stage of image capture, but also in computationally based playback, which is not categorically different in terms of generating images on the fly, in a carefully timed balancing act between the computational resources and demands of processors, graphics cards, and competing processes, among other things. Effectively, then, though these images may be based on a binary code that serves as a sort of script, they must be generated in 'real time' by means of an error-prone and always imperfectly instantiated act of algorithmic 'interpretation'.

[23] Maurizio Lazzarato, *Videophilosophie: Zeitwahrnehmung im Postfordismus*, trans. by Stephan Geene and Erik Stein (Berlin: b_books, 2002).

Such images are 'executed' more than they are 'screened'. These acts of processing and execution are a part of the materiality of post-cinematic images, part of their volatility and excess with respect to the symbolic register.

There is, of course, a cinematic moment that persists in post-cinematic mediation. Digitized films still present themselves to us as quasi-filmic events, and the sub-perceptual materiality of computational image processing, logically enough, goes largely unnoticed in subjective perception. But there is nevertheless a kind of displacement, a non-actuality, a lack of positivistic self-presence, or what Derrida might call a 'spectral' logic implicit in this view of post-cinematic mediation, and it is important to account for it if we are to understand our current transitional moment. In its absorption into a post-cinematic media ecology, cinema does not end, but its persistence is less as an actuality than as a quasi-*virtual* moment, a kind of memory-image that supplements and explodes the confines of a punctual present or a concluded past. Moreover, post-cinema's relation to cinema is not just one of retention (or memory) but also of protention (or anticipation). It implies what Mark Hansen has called the 'feed-forward' logic of twenty-first-century media[24] — the logic of predictive analytics and algorithmically generated timelines, playlists, and newsfeeds. It is in this respect, above all, that the temporality of post-cinema diverges from that of cinema.

Post-cinema, with its microtemporal processing, produces essentially post-perceptual images; here, what Deleuze called the 'dividuality'[25] of formerly discrete subjects is enacted at the level of the perceptual object, which is no longer stamped as a discrete photographic entity but *modulated* as a variable and infinitesimally divisible quantity. Such modulation is dependent upon codec settings, available processing power, bandwidth limitations, and buffering, so that the pixillated images we see on our digital devices are in a very real sense 'data visualizations'. And all the while they generate a further stream of data or metadata that delivers information about our attention and perception to corporate interests like Google, Facebook, Microsoft, or Netflix. This metadata, it should be pointed out, is not 'meta-' in any metaphysical sense of a detached second-order register; in many ways, it is the *primary* data, while our sense data has become secondary or supplemental for the purposes not only of the money-making machine but also for the production of sense data to come. Futurity is implied in this equation in a way that explodes the simple feedback loop as we have known it. This is not only about surveillance, but about control in a newer, non-deterministic and non-disciplinary sense — in the sense described by Gilles Deleuze in his 'Postscript on the Societies of Control'. Wendy Chun reminds us that 'the English term *control* is based on the French *contreroule* — a copy of a roll of an account and so on, of the same quality and content as the original'.[26] As

[24] Hansen, *Feed-Forward*.
[25] Gilles Deleuze, 'Postscript on the Societies of Control', *October*, 59 (1992), 3–7 (p. 5).
[26] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), p. 4 [emphasis in the original].

a verb, to control enters into English in the sense of 'to check or verify accounts', in particular by referring to a duplicate register. But in post-cinematic media the idea of the register, the record, or the memorial function more generally of control shifts to a future-oriented, protentional one, whereby the subject of perception is actively anticipated or called into existence by means of microtemporal calibrations of data and sensory streams.

Portending the future, or better: *protending* it, these media synthesize time or becoming through the real-time generation of data that point backwards and forwards at once. Perception itself is dispersed, along with the data of its generation, between here and there, now and then, between the two rolls or scripts, where the acts of reference and correlation between them explodes the static 'now' of either one and enables the generation of new experiences and affects in real time (or, what amounts to the same, in a microtemporal duration that is outside the window of subjective perception).

This describes the temporal/experiential dynamics of Autotune, a popular algorithmic voice-modulation program, which Lisa Åkervall has recently analyzed as an exemplary medium of post-cinematic modulation.[27] In this software-based process, a real-time input (an audio signal) is analyzed and compared to a set of possibilities (the discrete notes or values inscribed on the *contreroule* or control script), subjected to modulation accordingly, and made to correspond to the acceptable values before the signal is even made available for perception. Past, present, and future are synthesized here, their discrete natures dissolved in the interplay of script and counter-script. Of course, it is possible to analyze the situation logically or algorithmically, and to study the exact path of the signal with the help of technical instruments, so that we might claim that it only *appears* that time is subject to transformation. But since it falls beneath the temporal threshold of perception and thus undercuts or bypasses appearance itself, this microtemporal processing does indeed revolutionize time for all intents and purposes — which is to say, for all human intentionalities and telic goals, which are structured in the molar temporal space of gross phenomenality. But what does this have to do with the moving-image media we are considering under the rubric of post-cinema? In short, the microtemporal ping-pong that characterizes the Autotune process also conditions digital images in computational video playback, which is especially evident in processes like motion smoothing, where new images are generated on the fly and interpolated between a just-past image and one that is just-to-come, which means that both of them must be assessed before any image is made available for perception.[28] In both cases, what we find is a situation very different from that of cinema: for it is not just that post-cinematic media operate according to a temporality that is faster than that of photographic

[27] Lisa Åkervall, 'The Truth of Autotune', paper presented at the 2016 conference of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies, Atlanta, Georgia, 3 April 2016.
[28] See also Denson, 'Crazy Cameras', which deals with these processes in greater depth and explores the ways they inform particular movies.

processes, but that they actively generate the objects of our perception in a microtemporal interval — effectively anticipating the subject and modulating the intentional relation of perceptual experience itself.

Conclusion

What this means, finally, is that we are forced to assume a speculative relation not only to the future but also to the present. In a post-cinematic media regime, we can henceforth only speculate on the objects of our perception, on the *present* image itself, whose momentary presence eludes us in the feed-forward process of image generation. In his theorization of the dilation of affect and concentration of temporality in image-processors or time-crystallizing machines, Lazzarato notes the essentially speculative project that these machines make thinkable: namely, the possibility of discovering in them a Benjaminian 'messianic time' beyond the chronological time of the clock, an opening of the present onto a utopian, speculative future, which amounts to the harnessing (or unleashing) of the power of temporality itself.[29] And while this remains a somewhat cryptic possibility, hence a speculative project in a strong sense, it is precisely in this sense, I suggest, that *the question of post-cinema's passing is the question of time's passing in the space of post-perceptual mediation*.

[29] Lazzarato, pp. 157–82.

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 'kinetoscopes, 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 animated or 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 not 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.

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.

Simulating the Past. Digital Preservation of Moving Images and the 'End of Cinema'

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Abstract

In the past decade, the discourse around digital cinema has flourished and given birth to a long series of ontological and phenomenological reflections around the status of the medium in the digital age. Can digital cinema still be called 'cinema?'. Does cinema conserve its indexical nature, or is digital cinema just a simulation? What are the effects of the proliferation of screens, and the consequent loss of the centrality of movie theaters as *the* place for consumption of moving images? With my essay, I would like to investigate the status of digital preservation within the world of digital cinema. How is digital preservation different from analog preservation, if at all? And how are digitally restored moving images different from a film shot digitally? If a digital image is a simulation of reality, rather than a trace left by it (as the analog image supposedly was), what is the status of the digitization of an analog photographic image? I will argue that digital preservation forces us to reconsider the analog-digital opposition, and provides a framework through which to rethink not only the present state of cinema, but also its past and the future of its history.

The introduction of digital cinema has fuelled a lively debate in media studies for the past couple of decades, fostering a renewed interest in the ontology of the medium. While some scholars speak of a continuity between analog and digital cinema, mostly focusing on similarities at the level of camera optics, projection and spectatorial experience in a movie theatre, others see a clear rupture on the basis of an ontological difference between the photochemical and the digital moving image, to the point that digital technology is seen as the end of cinema as we know it.[1] This essay is an attempt to rethink the issue through the lens of one

[1] In the first group of scholars we find, among others: John Belton, 'Digital Cinema: A False Revolution', *October*, 100 (Spring 2002), 98–114; Tom Gunning, 'What's the Point of an Index? or, Faking Photographs', in *Still/Moving: Between Cinema and Photography,* ed. by Karen Beckman and Jean Ma (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), pp. 23–40. Representatives of the second group are, among others: André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion, *The End of Cinema? A Medium in Crisis in the Digital Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015); Lev Manovich, *The*

element that has rarely been put on the table: the digital preservation of analog moving images — that is, the digitization of analog film and the manipulation of the resultant file in order to achieve a result that looks as close as possible to what the original film was supposed to look like in its assumed pristine condition.[2] I will argue that the hybrid status of digitized film forces us to reconsider the analog-digital opposition, and provides a framework through which to rethink not only the present state of cinema, but also its past and the future of its history. In particular, I will examine the way in which digital preservation challenges our perspective on some of the issues that are at the core of the debate surrounding digital cinema, namely the ontological difference between a film and a file and its consequences on the issue of indexicality. I will also argue that part of the discourse on digital cinema is founded on an implicit understanding of analog cinema as a stable concept — a view that is questioned by archival and restoration practices.

It is often taken for granted that, when we talk about digital cinema, we are referring to moving images captured with a digital camera and projected digitally in a movie theatre, or else presented on a smaller, personal screen. This approach is limited by the fact that it is almost exclusively concerned with the production of new moving images. In addition, it conveniently creates a 'before' and 'after digital' that can have misleading consequences on our understanding of cinema history. In other words, it implicitly generates the fantasy of a comfortable and safe past where all images had a photochemical basis and an unproblematic indexical relationship with the world. Besides creating this mythical space, this kind of discourse crystallizes cinema's analogical past and closes it off beyond a hypothetical digital threshold that, as blurred as it may be, divides it from the uncertainties of the present and keeps it untouched from the current tumult.

Supposing that such an idyllic situation ever existed, it is far from being unaffected by the contemporary technological turmoil. Most theoretical studies on the effects of digital technology on cinema have overlooked its employment as a film restoration and preservation tool.[3] In their book *The End of Cinema? A Me-*

Language of New Media (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001); D. N. Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2007).

[2] However still limited, the awareness of the importance of digital preservation within the ontological discourse surrounding cinema is fortunately growing. Notable works include Rossella Catanese, 'The Digital Restoration of Film', in *BiD: textos universitaris de biblioteconomia i documentació*, 33 (December 2014) <http://bid.ub.edu/en/33/catanese3.htm>; Leo Enticknap, *Film Restoration: The Culture and Science of Audiovisual Heritage* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2013). For a broader discussion on preservation of time-based media, including but not limited to film, see *Preserving and Exhibiting Media Art: Challenges and Perspectives*, ed. by Julia Noordegraaf and others (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013).

[3] I use the terms 'restoration' and 'preservation' as indicated by Paolo Cherchi Usai in his book *Silent Cinema: An Introduction* (London: British Film Institute, 2000), pp. 66–67. Cherchi Usai defines 'preservation' as 'the overall complex of procedures, principles, techniques and practices necessary for maintaining the integrity, restoring the content, and organizing the intellectual expe-

dium in Crisis in the Digital Age, André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion briefly mention preservation as one of the fields in which digital technology is employed, but do not differentiate it from digital cinema production at a theoretical level.[4] This treatment of digital preservation is a mistake insofar as it overlooks the hybrid nature of digitized images and throws them into an undifferentiated group labeled simply 'digital'.

Alternatively, John Belton limits his discussion of digital preservation to the issue of conservation of digital files, giving voice to concerns that archivists have been expressing for years: digital storage is not a viable means of conservation as it subjects the materials to a much higher risk of obsolescence and decay.[5] This problem has been discussed at length in technical literature but hardly ever has it been approached theoretically. After all, there is not much to theorize upon: that digital files have a much shorter lifespan than film is a fact proved by numerous studies.[6] All archivists and scholars can do in this respect is to advocate for the continuation of film stock manufacture and for more reliable digital storage systems.

There are other aspects of digital preservation that deserve a more thorough theorization, but so far few scholars tackled the issue. The main reason for this is probably to be found in the longstanding separation between archival practices and academic thought. Unsurprisingly, the works that more directly attempt to draw a theory from archival practices come from scholars who are also archivists and restorers.[7] But I believe that there is a more profound reason behind

rience of a moving image on a permanent basis.' 'Restoration' is a more specific term, and is part of the preservation process: it 'is the set of technical, editorial and intellectual procedures aimed at compensating for the loss or degradation of the moving image artifact, thus bringing it back to a state as close as possible to its original condition'. Unfortunately, there is no official consensus on the use of these terms. 'Preservation' and 'restoration' are often used interchangeably, sometimes to indicate simply a duplication with no curatorial intervention. On terminological confusions and their marketing value, see Vinzenz Hediger, 'The Original is Always Lost: Film History, Copyright Industries and the Problem of Reconstruction', in *Cinephilia. Movies, Love, and Memory,* ed. by Malte Hagener and Marijke de Valck (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), pp. 133–47.

[4] Gaudreault and Marion, p. 6.

[5] Belton, p. 114.

[6] See, among others: *The Digital Dilemma. Strategic Issues in Archiving and Accessing Digital Motion Picture Materials*, ed. by Milton Shefter and Andy Maltz (Hollywood: Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, 2007) and *The Digital Dilemma 2. Perspectives from Independent Filmmakers, Documentarians and Nonprofit Audiovisual Archives*, ed. by Milton Shefter and Andy Maltz (Hollywood: Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, 2012); Howard Besser, 'Digital Preservation of Moving Image Material', *The Moving Image*, 1.2 (Fall 2001), 39–55; David S. H. Rosenthal et al., 'The Economics of Long-Term Digital Storage', in *The Memory of the World in the Digital Age: Digitization and Preservation Conference Proceedings* (UNESCO, 2012), pp. 513–28.

[7] See, among others, Paolo Cherchi Usai, *The Death of Cinema: History, Cultural Memory and the Digital Dark Age* (London: British Film Institute, 2001); Giovanna Fossati, *From Grain to Pixel: The Archival Life of Film in Transition* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009); Jan-Christopher Horak, 'The Gap Between 1 and 0. Digital Video and the Omission of Film History', *Spectator*, 27 (2007), 29–41.

this absence, and it has to do with that fantasy of a safe space of analog cinema that I mentioned earlier. Digital preservation disrupts the stability of our photochemical past, and forces us to reconsider it with potentially uncomfortable consequences.

As John Belton points out with respect to the digital turn, it would be a historiographical mistake to create a parallel between two different moments of technological change, as the conditions in which these changes take place are continually changing.[8] Nonetheless, I believe that we need to identify and clarify the ways in which the digital shift is different from previous, seemingly similar moments. If we look at this shift from a preservation perspective, the newness of this latest transition appears in all its clarity: unlike the transition to sound, colour, or widescreen, digital technology affects the nature of past moving images as much as future ones. Here we find the aspect that embodies the real revolutionary force of digital technology applied to moving images. The question 'What is cinema going to be in the future?' should be asked side-by-side with another question that specifies and redefines it: 'What is the future of cinema's past?' Digital technology applied to preservation wipes away the threshold dividing an analog past from a digital present. If those scholars who see the digital as the death of cinema are right, then we should be ready to not even have a corpse to lament. The preservation of analog films on digital carriers, concurrently with the switch from analog to digital technology in most exhibition venues, *de facto* takes out of circulation photochemical copies of the same title — if digital cinema is not cinema, then digital preservation erases our cinematic past as much as it renders impossible a future. The key characteristic of digital technology is therefore its power to act retroactively, operating a re-writing of film history that shakes the foundations of the very idea of 'cinema'.

At the present stage, of course, only a small percentage of analog films have been digitized. Even though their number will certainly grow in the future, it is unclear whether we will reach a point where all films made in the analog era will only be available in digital formats.[9] A number of factors are at play, including the future availability of film stock for photochemical preservation. As much as this scenario might sound apocalyptic, it is possible that it may become reality in the distant future. Either way, the influence of digital preservation on film history is an understudied issue that deserves a theoretical formulation to guide us beyond the conundrum of the disappearance of film history with the disappearance of film. An analysis of preservation techniques under the light of the theoretical problems posed by the emergence of digital cinema is therefore beneficial both for archival practices and for the advancement of theoretical questions. Although I am aware that the entity 'cinema' is composed of several different

[8] Belton, p. 100.
[9] The shift to digital technology also poses issues of availability and access. In a way, digital preservation is also re-writing the canon of film history. On this very fascinating subject, see Horak, 'The Gap Between 1 and 0'.

elements, I will focus on aspects that are more directly affected by the practice of preservation: the passage from film stock to file formats, and the contextual shift from photochemical to digital images.

As Dan Streible points out in an article with a seemingly tautological thesis, digital film is not film. It is a file.[10] Streible elaborates on the consequences of this distinction and on the reasons why it is important to maintain it so as 'not to lose important historical knowledge and awareness'.[11] That there is a historical difference between a film reel and a digital file is apparent to everyone, but the theoretical consequences of this distinction take us into more prickly territory. The most discussed issue with regards to digital images is the potential disappearance of the indexical relationship between a photograph and the object it represents. Tom Gunning summarizes the terms of the problem very clearly:

> The indexicality of the photograph depends on a physical relationship between the object photographed and the image finally created. The image on the photographic negative derives from the transformation of light sensitive emulsion caused by light reflecting off the object photographed filtered through the lens and the diaphragm. In a digital image, however, instead of light sensitive emulsion affected by the luminous object, the image is formed through data about light that is encoded in a matrix of numbers.[12]

Gunning rejects the conclusion that a digital image loses its indexical relationship to the object represented, and therefore claims that the so-called 'truth claim' of photography remains virtually untouched in the digital age. However, he acknowledges that digital technology offers extraordinary means of manipulation of the image, to the extent that its indexical and iconic relationship to its referent may be stretched to the point of rupture. Although manipulation was certainly possible in the photochemical age, the ease and range of modifications offered by digital technology are unprecedented. Nonetheless, Gunning maintains that this potential for fakery does not jeopardize the truth claim of digital images, but rather opens up new possibilities for creative manipulation. However, I believe that the digitization of analog images complicates this discourse and forces us to reconsider the notion of 'indexicality' itself. With this in mind, I will approach the relationship between digital preservation and film history in two areas: the range of manipulation that digital technology allows and the distinction between film and file that Streible insists upon.

The relationship between an analog film and its digitization gives new meaning to what I previously dismissed as a tautological claim. A digitized image may retain an indexical relationship with the object represented, but it complicates

[10] Dan Streible, 'Moving Image History and the F -Word; or, "Digital Film" Is an Oxymoron', *Film History*, 25.1-2 (2013), 227–35.
[11] Ivi, p. 229.
[12] Gunning, p. 40.

the concept of index in its relationship to the film it digitizes, or at least with parts of it. Before being an index of the world, a film is a film: namely, it carries information that go beyond its so-called ‘content’, or the object it represents. In other words, digitization does not reproduce film-specific elements such as edge codes, type of emulsion, colour system, chemical composition of the film base, etc. Digitization reproduces the image recorded on film, but does not reproduce the film itself with all the information it carries with it. Film is both image and artifact.[13] Although some argue that digital cinema lacks this duality, digital files also have a twofold nature: they are stored on a material carrier that undergoes a process of decay just as film does, although much faster. However, the dual nature of films and files overlaps only at the level of content; as artifacts, their nature is radically different.

The issue of manipulation complicates things even further. Here D. N. Rodowick’s concept of ‘digital event’ as simulation, discussed in his book *The Virtual Life of Film*, is helpful.[14] ‘A digital event’, he writes, ‘is any discrete alteration of image or sound data at whatever scale internal to the image’.[15] The peculiarity of the digital event stands in the undifferentiated nature of the pixels that compose the captured image from those that compose the synthesized additions to it. The consequence, as Rodowick writes, is that ‘The basis of all representation is virtuality: mathematical abstractions that render all signs as equivalent regardless of their output medium. Digital media are neither visual, nor textual, nor musical — they are simulations’.[16]

Image compositing, as Rodowick acknowledges, is not a digital exclusive; matte shots and superimpositions are common examples of analog compositing. But the digital event is something different insofar as it combines captured images with computer-generated ones in ways that collapse ontological differentiation between the two. When dealing with fiction cinema, this peculiarity has purely ontological implications, opening up an enormous array of creative options for filmmakers. However, if the same technique is applied to digital restoration, I believe it is necessary to shift the emphasis from ontology to ethics.

At this point, the truth claim of photography needs to be re-examined with respect to the manipulation of digital images in the restoration process. Digital technology offers to the restorer a creative freedom that was unforeseeable in the photochemical age. Once the print source is digitized, the resulting file can be manipulated indefinitely before it is transferred back either to film stock or to a digital carrier. Certain kinds of manipulation were just not possible with photochemical restoration; severe colour film fading, for instance, could not be corrected with analog means. Digital technology also allows the reconstruction of parts of the frame that were lost in the print source due to decomposition or

[13] See Fossati, pp. 104–05.
[14] Rodowick, pp. 163–74.
[15] Ivi, p. 167.
[16] Ivi, p. 11.

mechanical damage to the emulsion — an operation that was also impossible in photochemical printing.

Given the extent of potential intervention that digital restoration offers, can we say that a digitally manipulated file is truthful to its print source? This question can have several different answers depending on our definition of 'truthful' and on the object of investigation. If we refer to the physical print source, then a digital restoration is definitely not truthful, and it is not supposed to be. What is being restored is not the print source but rather the idea of what that print source looked like when it was in pristine condition.[17] In other words, digital restoration is a *simulation* based on an educated guess. This is where ontology and ethics become intertwined: digital simulations offer the possibility to over-correct, adding elements that were never there or removing unwanted details. Archival ethics prevent restorers from intervening on a file with a different goal than restoring the ideal look of the film, but not all restorations are carried out by archives. Private companies' ethics might be guided by different principles. The risk is that of a proliferation of simulations that have little in common with how the film looked like before the restoration. But the concept of simulation has farther reaching implications than its malleability to the will of the restorer. Manipulating the image digitally means mixing captured elements with synthesized ones in an undifferentiated way: digital restoration creates a series of digital events. In other words, it creates a simulation without differentiation between past and present.

As this power is unprecedented in the history of film and film preservation, it is important not to overlook elements of continuity between photochemical and digital restoration. According to Giovanna Fossati, all restorations are simulations regardless of their output carrier.[18] Modern film stock simulates the look of obsolete film technologies — the restoration of a Technicolor print will necessarily lose the technological peculiarities of Technicolor insofar as the technology to reproduce it is no longer available. In this respect, what I said about the loss of a complete indexical relationship between a film print and its digital copy also holds true in the case of a 'film-to-film' preservation. Elements that are unique to a print, such as edge codes, chemical composition of the emulsion or film stock, splices, scratches, and so on, cannot be reproduced. This is a necessary consequence of the twofold nature of film, which gives the illusion of infinite reproducibility but renders impossible the reproduction of the material nature of individual objects. Reproduction is intrinsically an art of simulation. Film preservation unveils the complexities and the incoherences of that historical period that too often is labeled as simply 'analog cinema'. The

[17] Here, I am referring to the restoration of the image quality of a print. Other, more complex types of restoration involving editorial decisions with regards to the completeness of a mutilated text would deserve a separate discussion, although the principle of 'restoring an idea' would hold true (probably truer) in these cases too.
[18] Fossati, pp. 140–45.

peculiarity of digital technology, therefore, stands not in its act of simulation of analog technology, but in its placement of the output of the restoration in an eternal present, where images from the past and contemporary interventions are indistinguishably blurred in a flow of pixels and can be reproduced indefinitely in this new form.

Digital preservation changes our relationship with the history of moving images; in a way, it re-historicizes them by placing them in an undifferentiated present. But digital preservation also offers a lens through which to look at the history of film in a way that destabilizes our preconceptions about the analog past of cinema, and its potential for simulation reveals the many forms that 'simulation' assumes as an act intrinsic to the creation of faithful reproductions. The nature of digital images also reconfigures our perception of analog film technology: their 'presentness' contrasts with the historicity that *each film print* carries with it. And here is where I would place the last, fundamental distinction between analog and digital images: whereas the former have the potential to carry the sign of their history, the latter are forced to live in a permanent present. Digital files must migrate to new carriers at least every five years to prevent digital decay. The migration is completely lossless as concerns the information embedded in the file, yet implies the loss of the carrier that used to store it. Conversely, unlike what happens when a photochemical print shows sign of decomposition, a file that is even only partially corrupted cannot be played back. The passing of time cannot leave traces on digital objects. It can leave them untouched or destroy them completely.

The consequences of digital preservation might not be immediately visible in the experience of cinema; in a movie theatre, very few spectators will be aware of the changed condition of the object they are experiencing. Actually, digital restoration offers a much more precise simulation of the look of old film stock than photochemical reproduction does, somehow enhancing the spectatorial experience. In this respect, I believe that digital technology offers a perfect example of the resilience and flexibility of the concept of 'cinema' rather than decreeing its end. At the same time, though, an approach that considers only the look of digital images and the similarities between analog and digital projection risks overshadowing the complexity of the interplay between film, digital technology, and history that I have sketched out so far.

A historiography of digital technology has yet to be written, but it faces difficulties that are radically different than those posed by photochemical artifacts. What will happen to analog cinema when all its copies will be digitized is uncertain, but the diffusion of digital images across a plethora of screens might in return foster a new awareness of the physicality of film in a way that brings cinema closer to other visual arts. The future of film might be in its relevance as

an embodiment of a set of technological peculiarities that are not reproducible.[19] Digital images would therefore be copies that do not mirror the technological complexity of the original (or originals) just as the reproduction of the Mona Lisa on a computer screen cannot be considered a substitute for Leonardo's painting. This approach would help us avoid the danger of considering analog cinema as a safe, stable and undifferentiated space that is defined exclusively in opposition to digital technology. Similarly, we should be aware of the risk of considering digital technology in similar terms, overlooking the technological complexities that the term 'digital' overshadows. The hybrid status of digitally preserved film invites us to go beyond a simple analog-digital opposition, and forces us to go back and explore the complexity, the conflicts, and the contradictions within the seemingly stable and coherent space of analog cinema that the digital revolution so conveniently created.

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I am deeply grateful to Adam Hart and D. N. Rodowick for their generosity and their invaluable feedback. Any errors are my own.

[19] See Michele Canosa, 'Per una teoria del restauro cinematografico', in *Storia del cinema mondiale. Teorie, strumenti, memorie*, ed by. Giampiero Brunetta, 5 vols (Torino: Einaudi, 2001), v, pp. 1069–118 (p. 1086): 'Ciascun esemplare di film diventa un *unicum*, cioè autentico. […] L'autenticità non è connaturata ai prodotti tecnicamente riproducibili, e dunque ai film, ma a questo punto possiamo sottilizzare: non lo è immediatamente. L'autenticità vi si aggiunge (è un valore aggiunto). Perché accada deve prodursi una distanza, uno scarto e un gesto di riconoscimento – che sono esattamente le condizioni del restauro'.

The Photochemical Conditions of the Frame

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Abstract

This paper seeks to contextualize the frame by focusing on the formal properties of its specific medium (film). It looks outside of the frame's function to think about it as a condition of its material. What defines the frame is that it is a product of its photographic condition: it is a direct result of the photochemical material and process (and is therefore contingent on processes of time and timing). Significantly, even in this 'post-cinema' climate, we are still conscious of the frame's link to the medium of film. With this in mind, this paper proceeds to examine how digital formats (e.g. Red Digital Cinema Cameras, Apple Pro Res 422 HQ (Final Cut), and DNxHD (Avid)) appropriate the language that was once unique to the cinematic apparatus (e.g., frame, film gauge, frame rate, exposure) and argues that these terms do not adequately describe the processes by which digital cinema is produced and experienced. Fundamentally, this paper asks: what is so important about the frame? Is the very concept of the frame a defining feature of cinema?

We are now in a moment during which any attempt to clarify cinema that engages film's specificity is seen as a dismissal of other forms of media. The arguments that surround these post-cinema or fate-of-cinema questions tend to reject any discussion of medium specificity as nostalgic or fetishistic. In this respect, my argument is triggered by the crisis presented by our current post-media climate of convergence, which threatens to swallow cinema into the larger stream of audiovisual media, giving content and communication priority over the material of the medium. But this is not a nostalgic gesture — or even a lament over cinema's death — since cinema is not dead yet (though recent scholarship has suggested otherwise); rather I seek to clarify the photochemical conditions of the film frame.[1]

[1] This is necessarily complicated because, as Rosalind Krauss argues, the 'post-media condition' has forged a different type of specificity that is more focused on 'the essence' of cinema. Here I

While the frame has often been described as an ever-present condition of cinema, its function has been understood in a variety of ways: from the indexical proof of cinematic realism, to an aspect made visible by the technology of the cinematic apparatus. It has typically been understood as an opaque 'window of vision' that positions perspective (field of vision), and is taken for granted as merely a 'display window' that makes the world visible.[2] The frame touches the very edge of the image; indeed, it both borders and separates an image from its environment, displacing depicted space from actual space (and vice-versa). In film and media studies, there is an emphasis on the aesthetic experience of cinema's moving-frame as an interior vision, projected as an exterior visuality that is enworlded and embodied to exist as film time. What is contained within the frame then is this distinctive spatio-temporal grammar, as well as the physical composition and framing of the image, light, camera movement and editing (*mise-en-scène*).

Certainly phenomenological, grammatical and structural analogies have been useful for explaining these systems established within cinema, but these approaches avoid defining the frame as a material object in lieu of examining its aesthetic potential. Nevertheless, what defines the film frame is that it is a product of its photographic condition: it is a direct result of the photochemical material and process (and is therefore contingent on material and technical processes of time and timing). Theories of cinema may divorce film from its photochemistry, but the medium is firmly rooted in the applied science that produces a specific chemical reaction between light and photosensitive material. Why haven't we looked outside of the frame's function to focus on the formal properties of its specific material — the filmstrip? What is the place of the frame in the context of digital cinema? Thinking about the frame as a condition of its material will ultimately allow us to consider the ways in which we still rely on the traditional characteristics of film to describe an idea of cinema. And, more importantly, it will lead us towards a more comprehensive understanding of the frame as an intrinsic condition of the medium.

Framing

With the exception of scholarship about avant-garde, structuralist or materialist works, the frame is and has been surprisingly under-theorised by film and media scholars.[3] One scholar to take on the subject is art historian Rosalind

follow Krauss's lead and focus on medium specific practices that attempt to produce the effect of cinema. Rosalind Krauss, *'A Voyage on the North Sea'. Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1999).

[2] Anne Friedberg, *The Virtual Window: From Alberti to Microsoft* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), p. 89.

[3] While several scholars write about the frame, their studies tend to overlook its relationship to film material. The exceptions are works on the still frame or the freeze frame. For example, Laura Mul-

Krauss, who describes the frame as the 'very boundary of the image' that crops or cuts what is being represented out of 'reality-at-large'. Krauss writes: 'the frame announces that between the part of reality that was cut away and this part there is a difference; and that this segment which the frame frames is an example of nature-as-representation, nature-as-sign'.[4] She goes on to explain that the camera produces — the camera frames and makes visible through point-of-view or focal length — 'the automatic writing of the world: the constant, uninterrupted production of signs'. Further, Krauss cites Surrealist photography and photomontage as her examples *par excellence* to show how the frame works 'silently' similar to Derridian spacing to indicate a 'break in the simultaneous experience of the real, a rupture that issues into sequence' — but it can also function as 'ceaseless automatism' that represents and highlights the frame itself.[5] In this way, she suggests to us that the photographic frame is a formal precondition that can defer and distend reality, even as it mediates and shapes it through focusing and selecting vision (what László Moholy-Nagy called the 'new vision' of camera seeing) to supplement our aesthetic experience (hence rendering these images *surreal*).

Clearly Krauss's understanding of the frame is rooted in the same semiotic tradition that distinguishes the essence of the photographic image by pointing to the camera's frame as both a sign that ruptures and a signifier that shapes reality as we see it. But more importantly, it speaks to the material quality of the photographic frame. For many scholars, including Krauss, photography's material chemical base gives it a privileged relationship to reality.[6] When the photographic machine registers an image as an inscription of light, a chemical reaction remains on photosensitive film as a trace of whatever was in front of the lens. Because of the nature of its light sensitive photochemical material, a photograph is an imprint, a trace, a reference, or a transfer of the real world onto the image. It simultaneously mediates reality and corroborates its existence. From this perspective, the primary function of the photochemical material and process is to reproduce an indexical sign: a guarantee of representability.[7]

vey explains that unlike the still photograph, the freeze frame is in perpetual motion. The freeze frame is a reference back to the photographic frame — it an optical effect constituted by printing one identical frame across the consecutive time of the filmstrip. This process of holding arrests film action, creating an illusion of stillness that replaces cinema's illusion of movement. However, in the end, the freeze frame remains 'a continuous flow of the filmstrip and its individual frames, closing the gap between the film in the projector and the image on the screen'. Here, we should put our emphasis on duration as both a narrative and material condition of film, because, as Mulvey notes, 'unlike the photograph, cinema cannot but come to an end'. Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), p. 83.

[4] Rosalind Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), p. 115.

[5] Ibidem.

[6] Ibidem.

[7] Mary Anne Doane writes about relationship between the frame and the index: 'What is being indicated, indexed, brought to our attention is the frame itself, as the border between everything

For scholars engaged in death of cinema debates, the index is the principle quality that digital cinema lacks. These scholars return to André Bazin's ontological framework to highlight the index as a sign that always exists before the photographic camera's lens (even in its casual relation) to create a reality effect.[8] Nonetheless, they are missing the point. While Bazin did write about the photographic image as a distinct trace of reality, he did not actually take on reality outside of film's frame. What truly interested Bazin was how the still frame bounds the image and arrests it as 'embalmed time' that can be reanimated as lived duration. Furthermore, his ontological framework was motivated by questions about the existential potential of the film frame that held the moving image — questions about how the frame organized space and time through 'perfect neutrality and transparency of style', to connect the film to the 'viewer's experience of the world'.[9]

What we take away from these ontological discussions is that our modes of experience will shift with the loss of the index. This is, of course, a more complex argument than the one I am outlining here — and implies that the digital lacks an index (it does not) — but the point is that these scholars appear ambivalent about the material part of the media process. In this context, material (or materiality) is used interchangeably with indexicality in order to mourn the digital's perceived absence of a reference to — or an object believably rooted in — the real world. Not only does this reduce analogue and digital technologies to a simplistic binary opposition, it also overlooks the very question of medium specificity it attempts to protect. We need only look to what is being indexed to understand what is truly lost: the underlying material aspects of a medium that is fully bound with its materiality.

The frame is precisely a material object: it has a physical form and matter, but at the same time its content is more broadly perceived as immaterial. To be sure, the term 'material' is a loaded one, and often conflated with materiality. What materiality denotes, however, is the material process of a physical matter as it is blurred into an abstraction. Put another way, a single frame on a filmstrip is not immediately legible as cinema, so it must be attached to material support that can manipulate it 'from touch to sign, to materiality, to abstraction'.[10] It is true that

and nothing, as the cinematic equivalent of this […]. The persistence of the photographic and cinematographic frame, in contrast to the frame of a painting, is that it coordinates and necessitates the dialectic of Peirce's two, seemingly incompatible, definition of the index, as trace and *deixis*. The frame directs the spectator to look here, now, while the trace reconfirms that something exists to be looked at'. Mary Anne Doane, 'Indexicality and the Concept of Medium Specificity', *differences*, 18 (2007) 128–52 (p. 140).

[8] For examples of this see: Philip Rosen, *Changed Mummified: Cinema, Historicity, Theory* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2001); Tom Gunning, 'Moving away from the Index: Cinema and the Impression of Reality', *differences*, 18 (Spring 2007), 29–52.

[9] André Bazin, 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image', in *What Is Cinema?,* ed. and transl. by Hugh Gray, 2 vols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), i, pp. 9–16 (p. 10).

[10] Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

to some degree the cinematic apparatus ensures the specificity of the medium. Take for example the technical conditions of operations of the opto-mechanical film projector and the screen. Both work as enabling mechanisms that intercept light and transform separate, distinct frames into a continuous stream of moving images. Just think: a latent frame on a film strip must undergo various chemical, mechanical and physical operations to expose, develop and project its material — and only then can it become realized as cinema.

In fact, the frame is not intrinsic to raw film material (which appears solidly black with perforations). Cameras produce frames: when the analogue camera's pull-down claw engages the film perforation, it moves the material down one frame, and as it disengages to pull down the next, a pressure plate holds it at the camera's gate to be exposed to light (photons). This exposure period triggers the oxidation of the silver salts in the film material and releases electrons. What the camera captures then registers into a latent image on the photochemical negative until chemical amplification brings forth a visible image (and with it, a frame).[11] The frame only emerges as a consequence of the capturing mechanism irreversibly altering the chemical make-up of film material. The act of developing thus distinguishes film from its digital counterpart, because it simultaneously transforms and destroys its previous material state.[12]

As I am suggesting, it is crucial to recognize the material processes that constitute film time. Whatever its form, there is a temporality attached to all labour that goes into the filmmaking process: from loading, shooting, and developing raw stock, to projecting a completed print. The photochemical process of processing raw material is itself contingent on time and timing. We often forget that in order to yield any image, film must first be exposed to light, chemical baths, physical agitation, and water rinses — and each step runs on a clock. Thus, we need to think about what it means that the digital does not go through any of these processes. The differences between film time and digital time may appear negligible to viewers, but the fact is that these absences must profoundly change how we experience cinema time.[13] Writing about what they call the 'double birth of media', André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion tell us that 'the digital system of films and algorithms is too different from the celluloid system for us to remain

[11] As Sean Cubitt, Daniel Palmer and Nathaniel Tkacz note, 'the frame carries the evidence of its making, and indeed the "archival life" […] that it has led since the shutter closed'. Sean Cubitt, Daniel Palmer and Nathaniel Tkacz, 'Introduction: Materiality and Invisibility', in *Digital Light*, ed. by Sean Cubitt, Daniel Palmer and Nathaniel Tkacz (London: Open Humanities Press, 2015), pp. 7–20 (p. 21).

[12] Terry Flaxton, 'HD Aesthetics and Digital Cinematography', in *Digital Light*, ed. By Cubitt, Palmer and Tkacz (London: Open Humanities Press, 2015), pp. 61–82 (p. 65).

[13] Paolo Cherchi Usai explains why this is technically the case: 'In film projection, because a blade shutter of another device equivalent to is, the screen is dark, for at least half of the time, meaning that that almost half of the time, meaning that almost half of the movie we are watching is actually made of darkness […]. The difference is just too big to be meaningless for our sense, let alone our aesthetic judgment'. Paolo Cherchi Usai, 'Seeing/ Not Seeing', *The Velvet Light Trap*, 70 (Fall 2012), p. 60.

in the same universe'.[14] This emphasis on the 'digital effect' from a technological perspective is useful because it considers the ways in which the digital actually captures and reproduces images. One thing is certain: we need only look to the shifting role of the frame to see these changes up close.

Let's not forget about the time-based character of film material. As we know, there is a sense of sheer materiality that pervades film time and duration.[15] Not only do mechanical devices measure film time, but time itself is also measured in feet of material. On a film reel a frame is an integer, or a basic unit of time. This leads us towards thinking about the significance of the basic mechanics of frame rate, which is calculated in frames-per-second (FPS). On one level, frame rate refers to the speed that the projector flashes still frames in rapid succession in front of a lighted aperture, which gives the illusion of motion. But frame rate also refers to the rate of a camera's capture — how many frames of film register an image-per-second. We only experience the illusion of cinema when these two machines operate at the same variable speed. The industry standard for both 35mm and 16mm synchronous sound film is 24 FPS. Similarly, digital cinema uses the progressive scanning format 24p (specifically 23,976) to look like film.[16] But more specific to the digital process is refresh rate, which is measured in hertz (Hz), and refers to the number of times digital images flicker-per-second during playback. The faster the digital flicker, the more lifelike and realistic the motion will appear. For example, a digital film shot at 24p can have a refresh rate of 72 Hz if each still image is flashed three times, or 48 Hz if flashed twice. This resembles a film projection practice used to minimize the inter-frame judder found in 24 FPS, which involved flashing the same frame two-or-three times before the next frame. While digital technology attempts to imitate film time, the pressure of time is fundamentally different. What we take away from this is, that without the frame, duration is no longer a distinctly material effect. If the frame is intrinsic to analogue film, then what is its place in the digital context?

Digital Cinema (Un)framed

In this contemporary moment that archivists call the 'digital transition' and others call the 'digital revolution', cinema is going through an identity crisis. This crisis is a reaction to the hybridisation of media and platforms that threaten to wipe out traditional notions of cinema-as-a-medium. This has prompted several scholars to claim that we live in a 'post-medium era', in which we should adopt

[14] André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion, trans. by Timothy Barnard, *The End of Cinema? A Medium in Crisis in the Digital Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), p. 38.
[15] D. N. Rodowick argues that it is impossible for the 'digital effect' to achieve duration. D. N. Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 100.
[16] The industry chose 24 FPS at the standard because it used as little film as possible while not manipulating sound (in other words, it was the cheapest option that worked).

new concepts, metaphors and operations to talk about cinematic experiences. Perhaps the most vocal advocate for these so-called 'post-media aesthetics' is Lev Manovich, who argues that new media is essentially cinematic because 'the visual culture of a computer age is cinematographic in its appearance, digital on the level of its material, and computational (i.e. software driven) in its logic'.[17] Here I think Manovich is right to distinguish digital media as a distinct cultural object that demands a language of its own. But Manovich's alignment of information technologies with a generalized effect of cinema also dismisses the specific materialities of these new media.[18] And in the end, we still find ourselves asking the same question: what is cinema? That is, what falls within the bounds of the cinematic experience?

Ever since the arrival of the digital, we have used film as a model in order to shape it so that it fits within the idea of cinema. Of course this is nothing new: we have always used 'old' forms of media as models for 'new' forms to establish historical continuity. To do this, certain traits of film were manipulated, others abandoned, and new ones were retroactively added. The two are more similar than different — but the fact remains that they are still different. Here we go back to how digital technologies appropriate the language used to describe film. This may create a sense of continuity, but many of film's characteristics do not exactly translate. Many of these new devices appear to use similar tools, but these terms do not adequately describe the processes by which digital moving images are captured, reproduced, or experienced. We may want to use concepts like the frame, frame rate, film gauge, and exposure, but it is a mistake to assume that these functions are stable-yet-occupied by different technologies. In short, these concepts serve as stand-ins for what could theoretically exist.

It is clear, first of all, that digital cinema does not have a material frame, at least not in a traditional sense. Instead, an image is captured by computer automation and filmmaking software. This information is then registered formally (mathematically) as numerical digital code. The frame is simply not inherent to the digital's material base (data that can be stored in a file). This does not mean, however that digital cinema ceases to *use* the frame — it continues to be used as a metaphor for the field of perception, and also as a unit of duration. And, when we shoot digital, we can still single out a still frame. In fact, it is common practice, for example, for a cinematographer to take a still photograph of their image before shooting to form a better understanding of framing and check for light. Thus, the frame is rendered simply a framing technique.

Just as the meaning of the frame shifts when we distinguish between digital and analogue media, so do its related concepts. For instance, we may think about the concept of film gauge, which is the width of the frame. It is frequently mistaken for film format, which is a set of standard characteristics for image

[17] Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 2001), p. 180.
[18] Lev Manovich, 'Post-Media Aesthetics' <www.manovich.net/DOCS/Post_media_aesthetics1.doc> [accessed 3 March 2016].

capture; this incidentally includes the digital. Significantly, when we talk about 70mm, 35mm, 16mm, Super 16mm, 8mm and super 8mm, we are referring to a potential frame of exposure. We use a 35mm frame for commercial feature films, because it is much larger than a Super 8mm frame. This offers a larger area of exposure, and registers more detail to produce a sharper image that yields less grain. In contrast, digital formats tend to strip down the image, remove grain and scratches, and trade indexicality for reliability of image quality.

In some ways, film grain is like digital noise, which occurs when the camera fails to accurately capture an image in low lighting; so points of low (or no) light are registered fuzzy. In fact, with film, exposure is an automatic, organic process that occurs as a direct effect of the encounter of light and light sensitive material. What we call aperture in digital cine-cameras is actually a light sensor, which approximates the light that is hitting the camera at any time. This digital sensor reacts differently to light and colour values than an analogue camera would. But digital is still light based technology. The options for calibrating exposure can be manipulated and adjusted to achieve the most specific of image qualities giving the digital a larger sense of control and the ability to capture a more pristine image. This also rules out many accidental light effects — light leaks, flares, and fogging of the image — that occur naturally with film. However, depending on the frame rate and what values are being shot, unintentional lines may appear to flicker over the top of the image. In this way, a digital camera can too revolt, distort and break the image.

Despite all of these differences, digital media still aims to mimic and improve on the aesthetic qualities of film. Most importantly, it never questions if it should abandon the qualities that are established by the film frame. So, the question is: what is so important about the frame? Is the very concept of the frame a defining feature of cinema?

A good example of this is how, in 2008, the RED 1 was positioned as the first digital cine-camera that could compete with analogue cameras. Whereas previously hi-definition digital cine-cameras topped out at the resolution 1920 by 1080 or a slightly higher-resolution format called 2K, the RED 1's sensor promised to capture motion in 4K resolution (4096 lines of horizontal and 2304 of vertical). This is predicated on the fact that the industry standard 35mm stock has a roughly equivalent visual resolution to 4K. This requires that the camera use an image sensor identical in size and shape to a single frame of 35mm motion picture film. Without this sensor, the camera would not have any control over depth of field, colour saturation, tonality, or many other qualities of 35mm film. Further placing emphasis on the frame is the fact that the RED records in the same bulky raw file format as digital single-lens reflex cameras (DSLR), which preserves image data in what is essentially an unprocessed form (called REDCODE). This gives us more latitude and allows us to manipulate images with editing software. But the RED 1 was just the start. Now every digital cine-camera — RED, Canon, Sony, Panasonic, ARRI — is at least 4K. In addition, these large-sensor cameras offer an ever-increasing number of new and distinctly digital features that expan-

ds the camera's firmware (e.g. gammas, codec, resolution, EI (ISO)).[19] Given that the digital is employing the form of the frame as standardized by analogue film, we must acknowledge that in some ways it is only because we want a replacement for a certain cinematic aesthetic that we bother with these digital solutions at all.

From the notion of digital capture, I want to turn to another key element of digital cinema, specifically post-production. In today's all-digital age, almost all films are edited digitally, even ones that were originally shot on film. It is not surprising then that post-production and editing software in particular still adhere to basic notions of film editing. This is true even of the rhetoric surrounding it; we denote cuts and splice-in, shots, sequences, slates, assembly, rough and fine cuts, and discuss cinematic looks. But we also discuss the technology in terms of folders, multi-grouping, drop and non-drop frames, rendering, transcoding, and consolidation. One major difference from film to digital is the codec. In the digital realm, we have a number of compression-decompression formats: Quicktime .mov (H.264), Apple Pro Res 422 (HQ), Avid DNxHD for video; .mp4; .wav, .aiff, AAC for audio. This is proprietary, and enables certain formats to conform to a particular editing software. Sometimes we need an additional plug-in to even interpret the footage. In a single cut, we may mix several codecs and frame rates, kind of like stitching 8mm, 16mm, and 35mm film together.

Even with all of these differences in the ways we process digital images, we still want them to look like film material. For example, it is commonplace to use programmes like Adobe After Effects, DigiEffects, and built-in visual effect filters (as well as plug-ins) to achieve so-called *film looks*, for example, hairs, scratches, dust, and film grain. These visual effects are customizable, and can be easily tweaked. One of the most desired of these visual effects is the *rollout effect*, a brief sequence of overexposed frames that exist on the beginnings and ends (and often throughout) of all raw film footage. To be clear: rollout is not a dissolve, a break, a splice or a cut. It is usually a by-product of loading a roll of film into a camera. To thread the film spool into the camera's gate, several frames must be exposed to light. On the developed filmstrip, rollout may appear to be transparent or opaque — it may also appear to have the orange, red, yellow and brown hues of bunt film. It may be what's-skipped-over or what's-overlooked, but rollout is not exactly a series of blank frames or the absence of image. It is especially prevalent within small gauge film formats like Super 8mm, which is manufactured in a pre-looped film cartridge that allows amateur filmmakers to take the roll out of the camera (overexposing several frames) and then put it back in to resume shooting. The rollout effect is a defining characteristic of standard (double) 8mm film. Because 8mm film uses a 16mm frame, only half of a roll is exposed at a time. It must be manually flipped to expose the other half, which overexposes the middle 6 feet of film. After it is developed, the roll is split down

[19] David Leitner, 'Digital Motion Picture Cameras in 2015: the Dust Settles', *Filmmaker Magazine* <http://filmmakermagazine.com/93957-digital-motion-picture-cameras-in-2015-the-dust-settles/#.Vu9juUWkqnM> [accessed 11 March 2016].

the middle to form two 8mm filmstrips, which are bookended by this rollout effect. Above all, the rollout effect is reflexive of its own material. It illustrates a direct link to — and an affirmation of — human interaction with the film material. Furthermore, it speaks to the materiality of the image as if to confirm that it is indeed a sequence of frames running through a projector.

Hence, the rollout effect speaks to an extra-dimension of film's — and more precisely, the frame's temporality. Notably, rollout is found between significant happenings — an unintended transition between different shots or scenes. These frames imply an ellipsis, indicating that time that has passed since the last event deemed worthy enough to record. It is thus a voluntary omission — a gap that signifies a supplementary meaning — that signifies the possibilities of the many connotations that may lie in-between. The way in which I am describing the rollout effect recalls Stephen Heath's 'suture scenario', which describes the process by which the frame structures film experience by confronting representation and perspective: or in sum, because a viewer's imagination demands additional representation it requires a 'suture' that stitches the two together.[20] In the context of narrative film, the notion of the ellipsis refers to writing outside of the frame of the film's diegesis, which shortens plot duration by omitting some of the story. More tellingly: elliptical editing refers to an editing strategy used to indicate shot transitions that don't show — that omit — parts of an event, causing an ellipsis in plot duration.

These are just some examples of how the traditional concept of the frame shifts with the digital. This allows us to take a closer look at the formal properties of film and digital processes, so that we can start to think about how form is shaped by material. Despite being made up of seemingly immaterial code, digital cinema is still tied to a material object. It records on cards (like the P2 card), although they can be cleared, wiped completely for re-use, and backed up on hard drives, which contain the footage as well as the editing project and its attendant graphics. These hard drives take up physical space on a shelf. In this respect, like film, digital cinema is not divorced from the real world of objects.

As I am arguing, questions about medium specific practices can be more productive than the nostalgic laments that prematurely mourn cinema's death, and celebrations that herald its ongoing expansion. Ultimately, of course, the film frame is a product of its photochemical condition. But it is clear that the frame remains perhaps the only ever-present quality of cinema.

[20] Stephen Heath, 'On Screen, in Frame: Film and Ideology', in *Questions of Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), pp. 1–18.

Becoming Space in Every Direction: *Birdman* as Post-cinematic Baroque

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Abstract

While the post-cinematic is typically understood as the passing of film-as-celluloid, the digital expressivity of film need not involve the loss of materiality. Inspired by Giuliana Bruno's call for cinematic materiality to be re-thought through the substance of material relations rather than through technological definitions, this article examines how the baroque endures in the post-cinematic. Concentrating my analysis on *Birdman: Or, The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance* (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2014) as one instance of the post-cinematic baroque, it argues for the baroque as being organised by particular vectors of movement that move between the horizontal and the vertical and the inner and the outer, often giving rise to composite and/or highly spatialized displays. Taking inspiration from Gilles Deleuze's philosophy of the fold, art history, media archaeology and film studies, I argue for Iñárritu's film as enacting baroque configurations of body, space, movement and environment. As with the formal and affective uplift of the musical and superhero film genres as well as the importance of movement in historic baroque forms, *Birdman* defies the horizontal plane. As I argue it, *Birdman* reprises the longstanding baroque desire to become space in every direction.

And did you get what
you wanted from this life, even so?
I did.
And what did you want?
To call myself beloved, to feel myself
beloved on the earth
(Raymond Carver, Late Fragment)

If the question 'what is cinema?' continues to haunt us in the digital age, it brings with it renewed opportunities to consider how the post-cinematic connects with media experiences of the past. The post-cinematic is defined here as the passing of film-as-celluloid though this passing is not equated with the loss of materiality. In her book *Surface: Matters of Aesthetics, Materiality and Media*, Guiliana Bruno argues that materiality needs to be re-thought 'not

[as] a question of materials but rather […] the substance of material relations'.[1] By detaching cinematic materiality from tired definitions of a film's technological make-up, Bruno enables an embodied appreciation of how our 'sense of space and contact with the environment' persists in the digital by tracing shifting sets of material and aesthetic relations across film and media history.[2]

Following Bruno's lead, this article explores how the baroque's substance of material relations might be mapped across the pre-cinematic, the cinematic and the digital. Concentrating my analysis on *Birdman: Or, The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance* (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2014), I consider some of the ways in which historic baroque configurations of space, body and environment find new life and liveliness in Iñárritu's film. To develop the possibility of a post-cinematic baroque, I draw particular inspiration from philosopher Gilles Deleuze's work in *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (1993). For Deleuze, the baroque is more than just a historic era or even an aesthetic style. What he calls the baroque fold is a trans-historic trait that inflects 'architects, painters, musicians, poets, and philosophers', as well as filmmakers into the twenty-first century.[3] If 'the Baroque can be stretched beyond its precise historical limits' as Deleuze insists it can, it is because contemporary media works also have the capacity to move 'according to the fold'.[4] While *Birdman* is not the only instance of what we might call a digital or a post-cinematic baroque, it allows us to re-visit the history of baroque forms and their movements and how they might connect with cinema for this is a film that moves 'according to the fold'.[5]

To help me establish the relevance of the baroque to the digital expressivity of *Birdman*, what follows will draw important connections between Deleuze's fold with vitalist accounts of the baroque in early art history; with different film genres that are devoted to the lures of movement or moments of uplift and with Norman M. Klein's media archaeology of baroque special effects. To clarify: I am not suggesting that the post-cinematic age is inherently baroque or that the baroque was not present in earlier generations of filmmakers. As I have argued elsewhere, the baroque needs to expanded beyond notions of a visually spectacular and/or technologically-driven aesthetic if it is to have saliency for contemporary film and media theory. This article continues that endeavour by considering how the post-cinematic baroque is organised by particular vectors of movement that alternate between the horizontal and the vertical.[6] The attitude of becoming space in every

[1] Giuliana Bruno, *Surface: Matters of Aesthetics, Materiality and Media* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), p. 2.
[2] Ivi, p. 8.
[3] Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. by Tom Conley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 34.
[4] Ivi, pp. 33–34.
[5] Ivi, p. 34.
[6] See Saige Walton, *Cinema's Baroque Flesh: Film, Phenomenology and the Art of Entanglement* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), pp.19–22.

direction is a longstanding tendency on the part of the baroque that connects its art history to Deleuze's fold and both to the architectonics of movement that is performed by Iñárritu's film.

Deleuze's Architectonic Folds

In his seminal *Life of Forms in Art* (1934), the early French art historian Henri Focillon was amongst the first to identify the baroque as a recurring or cyclical phenomenon. For Focillon, forms are mobile because they are 'specific to time but also spanning across it'.[7] According to Focillon, the baroque is a trans-historic form that can reveal 'identical traits existing as constants within the most diverse environments and periods of time'.[8] In his vitalist and morphological account of form, Focillon is well attuned to the baroque appetite for movement, energy and spatialized dispersal. He suggests that baroque forms yield dispersive displays of movement that transform time into space. To quote Focillon, baroque forms will 'proliferate like some vegetative monstrosity. […] *they tend to become space in every direction* […] *to become one with all its possibilities*'.[9]

For Focillon, the baroque aesthetic is bound up with a strong sense of liveliness, with movement and with multi-directional dispersal. In his later work on *The Fold*, Gilles Deleuze also understands the baroque as a vital operative function or trait: it 'endlessly produces folds'.[10] Like Focillon's evocative description of becoming of 'space in every direction', Deleuze's baroque insists on arresting movement and spatial dynamism as essential to baroque form and thought. However, Deleuze goes one step further than Focillon by positing that an optical account of the baroque — even the baroque conceived as its own spectacular optic — might be too restrictive. As it is prone to a powerful sense of movement in and through space, Deleuze identifies 'the operative concept of the Baroque [as] the Fold, everything that it includes, and in all its extensiveness'.[11] For Deleuze, the fold is the formal and conceptual means by which we can account for both the historic specificity of the baroque and the trans-historic activation of the baroque-as-fold in contemporary media.

While Deleuze's titular guide and interlocutor in *The Fold* is Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, it is the philosopher's use of historic baroque media (especially architecture) and his engagements with early art history that concern me here. Re-reading Deleuze's text alongside early art historic studies of the baro-

[7] Angela Ndalianis, *Neo-Baroque Aesthetics and Contemporary Entertainment* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), p. 8.
[8] Henri Focillon, *The Life of Forms in Art*, trans. by George Kubler (Cambridge, MA: Zone Books, 1992 [1934]), p. 58.
[9] Focillon, p. 58 [emphasis added].
[10] Deleuze, p. 3. As Tom Conley notes in his translator's introduction, Deleuze's trans-historic take on the fold parallels Focillon's morphology of forms.
[11] Ivi, p. 33.

que, the architectonic implications of the fold become particularly striking.[12] The architectural sensibility of the fold comes to the fore through Deleuze's repeated engagements with the work of the early Swiss art historian Heinrich Wölfflin, whom he cites as the first to establish the baroque as a distinct set of 'material traits'.[13] Drawing directly on Wölfflin's writings on historic baroque architecture, Deleuze glosses baroque material traits as the following: a 'horizontal widening of the lower floor'; a 'flattening of the pediment'; the 'rounding of angles and avoidance of perpendiculars'; sets of 'curved stairs that push out into space'; 'spongy, cavernous shapes'; matter that is handled in 'masses or aggregates'; and the expression of 'vortical form always put in motion by renewed turbulence'.[14]

Lest the architectural nature of the fold be missed, consider the references to architectural foundations, façades and frameworks that appear in Deleuze's conceptual scaffolding of the baroque-as-fold. In addition to Wölfflin's material traits, outlined above, the philosopher defines the baroque as inventing 'the infinite work or process. The problem is not how to finish a fold, but *how to continue it, to have it go through the ceiling, how to bring it to infinity*'.[15] This is Deleuze's radical re-definition of the baroque, as what he calls 'the fold to infinity'.[16] At the same time, his sensuous descriptions of the baroque as air-borne or as a potentially infinite or processual movement rely heavily upon the grounding and solidity of architectural metaphors and motifs. A gravitational pull to earth as opposed to the urge to take flight is particularly evident in Deleuze's allegory of the Baroque House. Here, baroque architecture is put to the purpose of philosophy as a folding between two levels or floors. By way of the Baroque House, Deleuze identifies the baroque as moving between two specific levels that fold between immanent 'pleats of mater' (the lower level; the life of the senses) and the immaterial 'folds in the soul' (the upper level; the life of the mind).[17]

Throughout, Deleuze consistently makes use of historic baroque architecture and early art history to argue for the baroque fold as being organized by particular vectors of movement. Invoking Wölfflin once more, he comments that: 'as Wölfflin has shown, the *Baroque world is organized along two vectors, a deepening toward the bottom, and a thrust toward the upper regions*'.[18] He also quotes directly from Wölfflin's first book *Renaissance and Baroque* (1888) to outline how the 'Baroque underlines matter', even though '*it does not suffice to contain the mass that spills over and passes up above*'.[19] For Deleuze, as for this article, the baroque moves between the horizontal and the vertical, the earth and the air, also

[12] Ivi, p. 33.
[13] Ivi, p. 4.
[14] Ibidem.
[15] Ivi, p. 34.
[16] Ivi, p. 122.
[17] The Baroque House is Deleuze's means of reconciling any ontological split between the life of the body and that of the soul/mind. See Deleuze, p. 39.
[18] Ivi, p. 29 [emphasis added].
[19] Ivi, p. 123.

folding between the inner and the outer (the mind and the senses). How might these ideas be pushed cinematically?

At this juncture, we can identify a number of aesthetic and material traits to Deleuze's baroque fold that can be brought to bear on Iñárritu's film. These features include: the expression of prolonged, processual or infinite movement; a clear foregrounding of architecture; and repeated emphases on vertical movement, flight and propulsion, as this exists in counterpoint to the horizontal. As it enacts a tension between the horizontal and the vertical, seeking liberation from the lower level or else presenting bodies and worldly objects in literal states of suspense or in flight — *Birdman* can be approached as one instance of a post-cinematic baroque that moves 'according to the fold'.[20]

Birdman begins with the clicking of drumsticks, followed by clashing cymbals and drumbeats that evoke the sounds of rolling thunder. Against the film's percussive score, red letters begin to form a quotation from the last published poem of American short-story writer and poet, Raymond Carver (*Late Fragment*: a poem that was written while Carver himself was dying of cancer). After the film's title appears, we catch a brief glimpse of jellyfish that can be seen beached upon a seaside foreshore. The film then cuts to the unexpected image of a meteor seen hurtling through space. The meteor's downward trajectory and its fiery movement through space is interrupted by a hard cut that gives way to a still shot of the film's lead, Riggan Thompson (Michael Keaton), seen from behind. Like the movement of the meteor, Riggan is suspended in-between the grounding of the earth and the sky. Our introduction to Riggan sees him meditating in a backstage dressing room, while microscopic dust particles float about and the sounds of a ticking clock quietly count down his mortality.

Within the first few minutes of Iñárritu's film, we have moved from the grandeur of macro-scale movements in outer-space to a scene of mundane, earthly reflection. However, the film's enigmatic opening ushers in unresolved questions. Does it belong to an internal or external event? Are these images 'real' or 'imagined'? Are they a metaphoric stand-in for Riggan's mental meditation or perhaps an excerpt from one of his blockbuster movies? Similarly, the first lines of dialogue that are spoken by Riggan's alter-ego, the Bird-Man, could pertain to either the cosmological journey of the earth or reflect the terrestrial angst of a washed-up Hollywood actor on Broadway: 'How did we end up here?'. The opening becomes even more complex if we consider the few brief words of Spanish that can be heard before the film's 'overture' for they feature the composer of *Birdman*, Antonio Sánchez, who can be heard asking director Iñárritu a question.[21]

[20] Ivi, p. 34. *Birdman* can therefore be distinguished from other digital films such as *Russian Ark* (*Russkiy Kovcheg*, Alexander Nikolayevich Sokurov, 2002). Though both films are structured by virtuoso long-takes, the latter does not enact baroque movement between the horizontal and the vertical. On the digital baroque as avant-garde see Timothy Murray, *Digital Baroque: New Media Art and Cinematic Folds* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2008). On baroque haptics and digital filmmaking see also Walton, pp. 208–26.

[21] Dolores Tierney, 'Dolores Tierney on *Birdman or The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance*',

From the beginning, *Birdman* introduces a movement between the horizontal and the vertical. Grandiose shots of the sky and outer-space function in clear counter-point with the more mundane concerns of Riggan. In addition, the film moves freely between the internal and the external and between a 'realist' and a 'fantastic' film aesthetic so as to muddy the distinctions between them. Throughout, we watch Riggan/Bird-Man enact super-heroic powers in a film that is not overtly coded as belonging to this genre. Set inside the space of the St. James theatre in New York City, much of Iñárritu's film follows Riggan at ground-level as he rehearses his own stage play adaptation of a Carver short story, *What We Talk about When We Talk about Love*. As the camera trails Riggan in the midst of rehearsals or behind the scenes, we get to see Riggan's interactions with the rest of the cast; his troubled relationship with his young rehab daughter, Sam (Emma Stone); his desperate need for artistic affirmation and approval in the wake of his Hollywood career fallout and to witness his psychological conflict with his inner Bird-Man (and all that his alter-ego represents).

For the character of Riggan Thompson, unlike the Bird-Man, the 'art' that is the theatre trumps literature as well as the pleasures of Hollywood 'entertainment'. For *Birdman* itself, however, divisions between media or between Hollywood filmmaking versus 'art' are a much more complicated matter. In his descriptions of the pre-modern baroque 'unity of the arts', Deleuze outlines how separate art forms such as painting, sculpture and architecture were deliberately merged so as to be folded into one overarching and implicitly populist performance.[22] In the post-cinematic performance that is *Birdman*, Iñárritu brings together literature, theatre, poetry, comic books, music and cinema and destabilizes the borders between them. Interestingly, the director also makes a number of references to the history of baroque and neo-baroque literature in this film: from the structure of the play within a play format to the inclusion of people on the street shouting lines from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* ('a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury') or the scene in which actor Mike Shiner (Edward Norton) can be seen reading a copy of Jorge Luis Borges's *Labyrinths*. And yet, despite this film's many literary references to Carver and to other authors or its allusions to the craft, aspirations or pretentions of the American stage, it is cinema that remains Iñárritu's foremost and virtuoso 'player'.

Writing of the historic baroque unity of the arts, Deleuze comments upon how the baroque seeks to 'attain a unity of the arts as "performance", and *to draw the spectator into this very performance*'.[23] Similarly, Iñárritu's folding together of multiple media formats is done in order to draw the spectator deeper into the kinaesthetic performance and imaginative potential that is cinema. As William

Mediático: *Media and Film Studies Blog*, 23 February 2015 <http://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/mediatico/2015/02/23/birdman-or-the-unexpected-virtue-of-ignorance-alejandro-gonzalez-inarritu-2014/> [accessed 24 March 2016].

[22] Deleuze, p. 123.

[23] Ivi, p. 123 [emphasis added]

Brown comments, 'what really comes through' in *Birdman* is just how powerfully 'cinema can trump theatre through its central device: movement'.[24] Expanding Brown's comments further, I would add that it is not just the appeals of cinematic movement that catalyse this film but the baroque desire to become space in every direction. In these terms, baroque forms will detach from the ground by endeavouring to 'go through the ceiling' through aesthetic expressions of infinite circulation and ambient movement.[25] Those familiar with *Birdman* will be well aware of how the film is structured by a particular stylistic conceit, achieved in and through uses of digital cinematography and editing. Following the first of its few visible edits, *Birdman* proceeds as the film were one long, fluid and continuous take across multiple spaces and across different time frames.[26] Emmanuel Lubezki's camera follows not only Riggan and his movements in and through the St. James theatre but also the film's ensemble cast: bodies move upstairs and downstairs, out onto the rooftop, in and out of dressing rooms and on and off the Carver stage set. The space of the St. James theatre and the movement of its inhabitants therein unfurl in an ever-winding and continuous spatial display wherein 'architecture and film co-exist in the same moment'.[27] Just when we thought that every possible nook and cranny of the theatre space had been revealed, the camera then follows Riggan downstairs into the bowels of the theatre before unexpectedly bursting through the stage doors with him and moving outside onto the bustling city streets to meet Mike. Yet another layer of spatial complexity and potential avenue for human as well as camera movement is added.

According to Robert Sinnerbrink, the Mexican-born Iñárritu often favours the structure of the 'network narrative' to portray 'dispersed engagement, coalescing events and clashing story lines'.[28] This is because the network narrative allows Iñárritu to plait together multiple plot lines and different diegetic spaces and times, inter-weaving the fates of his different characters or that of entire cities into one labyrinthine structure. By way of *Birdman*, I think we can add post-cinematic and baroque complexity to Iñárritu's use of the network narrative. Rather than weaving together separate plot lines, the film re-configures the network narrative as a multi-directional, architectonic and highly spatialised display that gets physically moved along by the entrances and exits of the characters and the seemingly weightless choreography of Lubezki's camera.

[24] William Brown, 'Birdman and the Intoxicating Alchemy of Cinema', *The Conversation*, 6 January 2015 <https://theconversation.com/birdman-and-the-intoxicating-alchemy-of-cinema-35275> [accessed 24 March 2016].

[25] Deleuze, p. 34.

[26] In *Birdman*, editing is disguised by darkness or the calculated use of edges and corners. See Tierney who compares its digitally masked edits to *Rope* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1948).

[27] Norman M. Klein, *The Vatican to Vegas: A History of Special Effects* (New York: The New Press, 2004), p. 11.

[28] Robert Sinnerbrink, 'Postsecular Ethics: The Case of Iñárritu's *Biutiful*', in *Religion in Contemporary European Cinema: The Postsecular Constellation,* ed. by Costica Bradatan and Camil Ungureanu (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 166–85 (p. 169).

Birdman *as Baroque Scripted Space*

Birdman is not just a paean to cinematic movement. Iñárritu stages very particular kinds of cinematic movement — movements that have the potential for transforming the dynamics of the ordinary and the everyday. For my purposes, it is important to note how this film enacts a constant dialectical tension between the 'fantasy' of the vertical (motifs of flight; cinema and superheroes) versus the 'reality' of the horizontal (motifs of gravity; the theatrical stage and fatherhood). Even as the film's human characters tread the theatre boards, the camera repeatedly drifts, floats or orbits around their bodies. Independent of Riggan or of others, the camera's vision will halt to contemplate the verticality of buildings; to linger on the motion of birds in flight or scenes of the sky transitioning from day to night. Through his inclusion of air-borne motifs together with Lubezki's ambient camera, Iñárritu make it seem as if the film itself were trying to take flight.

In his *Matters of Gravity: Special Effects and Superman in the 20th Century*, Scott Bukatman draws important formal and conceptual parallels between the superhero and musical genres. As he details, both genres enact a 'freedom of movement' that allows them to superimpose 'the fantastic on the face of the utilitarian, bringing the city back to the fact of its own fantasy'.[29] Likewise, Iñárritu's film partakes of the freedom of movement; scenes of urban fantasy and moments of literal as well as affective uplift that pervade these two genres.[30] As Bukatman observes, to be a superhero or an inhabitant of the musical 'you've got to be able to move' or, at very least, access enhanced powers of human motion'.[31] Through the seeming effortlessness of song and dance, the urge to flight or displays of super-human strength and speed, both superheroes and musical characters embody the agility of the other-worldly. Given his tongue-in-cheek references to the Hollywood super-hero, it is not surprising to find that Iñárritu's own Riggan/Bird-Man (played by a former Batman) is endowed with his own special motorial powers that involve levitation, flight and the telekinetic manipulation of objects. Similarly, Lubezki's camerawork enacts its own carefully rehearsed and digitally achieved super-human movement. In this regard, *Birdman* encourages us to *feel* as if its vision were live and natural and akin to the spontaneous eruption of energy, grace and movement that occurs in a Hollywood musical (numbers that themselves were just as labour intensive as well as skilfully timed and carefully choreographed as the camerawork displayed here).

What might all this have to do with a baroque organisation of body, space and environment? To answer that question, we must turn to Norman M. Klein's

[29] Scott Bukatman, *Matters of Gravity: Special Effects and Supermen in the 20th Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 189.
[30] Note the musical significance of this film's location on Broadway; advertisements for musicals that appear throughout or the use of percussive beats and sounds while the characters walk and talk.
[31] Ibidem.

notion of the baroque scripted space. In his book *The Vatican to Vegas: A History of Special Effects*, Klein conducts an illuminating media archaeology of baroque film and media by tracing their roots back to the ceiling and dome decoration of seventeenth-century Europe. As these were purpose-built architectural sites that the beholder had to personally navigate, movement was essential to feeling the scripted space. To quote Klein: 'when the sky was askew on a ceiling, it operated like *an animatic*, a five-minute stroll towards revelation, from pride to humility, from hubris to prayer'.[32] If grand-scale ceilings and domes opened up a sensory portal to the divine, that portal could only be accessed through the movement of the beholder below. The 'space underneath [the] dome generated [...] *walk-through stories*' that encouraged the beholder to enact their own 'tangible path to God' through walking, drifting and free floating 'inside the skin of these domes'.[33] Scripted spaces speak to how the baroque is entrenched in palpable connections between body, space and environment that will open up in multiple directions.

Obviously, these architectural effects existed centuries before film and they were also catalyzed by very different historic and socio-political contexts. Like Bruno, however, Klein refuses technological specifics in order to cut a media archaeological path from the history of scripted spaces into cinema.[34] His work suggests a walk-through mode of story-telling that can be extended to films whose architectonics moves from the horizontal to the vertical. Whether analogue or digital, such films build towards moments of formal and affective uplift through their privileging of movement, uplift and weightlessness. Wandering about inside the scripted spaces of the historic baroque, the beholder had encountered all manner of gravity-defying effects. From flat walls that bent and curved to an array of ornamental figures, often floating in mid-air (angels, clouds, cherubs and, of course, birds). These in-built special effects were intended to move not only the body but the mind of the beholder into moments of elation and/or private contemplation. Like *Birdman*, scripted spaces were carefully designed to unfurl in multiple directions and to alternate between impressions of weighted form/bodies as opposed to weightlessness. The progressive movement of the beholder concluded with epiphanic movement in the mind, triggering sensory surprise or a 'moment of wonder'.[35]

Following his altercation with a prominent Broadway theatre critic, his daughter and others, an increasingly despondent Riggan commits suicide on the stage during preview week. Following the blast of the shotgun, the camera lingers on a view of the theater audience and their standing ovation before rising upwards to the roof of the theatre, taking in its glittering lights. At this point, the film folds in upon itself by returning to previous paths of character and came-

[32] Klein, p. 53.
[33] Ivi, p. 50 [emphasis added]
[34] Ivi, p. 11.
[35] Ivi, p. 12.

ra movement in order to initiate new trains of thought. According to Anthony Vidler, what is so unique about Deleuze's baroque-as-fold is its spanning of the physical and the mental, as well as 'its ability to join […] all levels and categories at the same moment'.[36] In the penultimate scene of *Birdman*, we find an equivalent to Deleuze's folding between matter and mind and the conjunction of all levels or ideas in a moment.

Against the fanfare of a drumroll, we return to the descending meteor from the film's opening. A band troupe, formerly glimpsed outside the space of theatre, now beat their drums on center stage for the camera. We glimpse flashes of the Carver stage set illuminated by lighting, while Spider-Man and other people in costumes from Times Square slowly move across the stage. We return to the dressing room that had featured in the opening, replete with its tiny dust specks. In this revealing sequence, Iñárritu weaves between the macro and the micro, collapsing all the different spaces and times of the film into one composite display that lends cinematic form to the opening lines of poetry from Carver: 'And did you get what you wanted from this life, even so?' Shots of the meteor speeding through the sky give way to a return to the beached jellyfish, now surrounded by flocking birds. Imagery pertaining to the earth and the sky meet, intertwining the film's horizontal and vertical impulses. Despite the quasi-spiritual nature of this sequence, *Birdman* does not invoke a transcendental beyond for Riggan. Iñárritu's film comes full circle, suggesting that there might be an intricate yet entirely immanent connection or folding between things.[37] The scene ends with a raised shot that takes on a non-descript hospital ceiling, where Riggan is revealed to have survived and finally feels himself to be 'beloved on this earth'.

Conclusion: Taking Flight

Taking my cues from the work of Deleuze, Bruno, Klein and other thinkers, I have approached the baroque's substance of material relations in film through its kinaesthetic appeals to the body, space, movement, architecture and environment rather than through strict technological definitions. In doing so, I have considered how *Birdman* bears substantial continuities with the movement that organises historic baroque forms (the scripted space) and with film genres (musicals and superhero films) that also privilege vertical movement and moments of uplift.

In my analyses of *Birdman*, it has certainly not been my intention to graft Deleuze's 'infinite' fold onto the stylistic technique of the long-take nor to reductively imply that all digital filmmaking is baroque. Given Deleuze's own archi-

[36] Anthony Vidler, *Warped Space: Art, Architecture and Anxiety in Modern Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), p. 218.
[37] According to Sinnerbrink, Iñárritu often couples quasi-spiritualism with realism in his filmmaking.

tectonic conception of the fold, I have instead suggested that particular vectors of movement shape baroque forms and a baroque cinema (analogue or digital). Here, bodies as well as camera movement will seek to take flight, to levitate and to fulfil the baroque urge to become space in every direction.

As D. N. Rodowick reminds us, the 'difficulty of placing film as an object grounding an area of study does not begin with the digital "virtualization" of the image'.[38] Given that the history of film studies has involved 'constantly shifting terrain for thinking about time-based spatial media', Rodowick suggests that the ongoing critical flux as to just what constitutes film in the age of the post-cinematic might be approached 'a positive thing'.[39] For this article, that critical flux allows alternate media archaeologies and different aesthetic modalities such as the baroque to emerge into view. By way of conclusion, I find it significant that Iñárritu's film gestures towards potentially infinite yet invisible conjunctions of film, body, space and movement. In the closing scene of *Birdman*, Riggan embraces his inner super-hero and defies gravity once more. This moment of uplift occurs entirely off-screen. It is intimated only by the sense of joy or hopefulness that flickers across Sam's face as she sees her father in flight. Embracing the vertical pleasures of Hollywood, Iñárritu's *Birdman* hints that it is really cinema itself that allows all of us (not just the Bird-Man) to take formal, imaginative and affective flight. New as well as old possibilities of still await us in the wings.

[38] D. N. Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 12.
[39] Ibidem.

GIF Art in the Metamodern Era

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Abstract

This essay offers an exploration of the recent phenomenon of GIF art, in light of the cultural attitude that has come to be known under the term of 'metamodernism'. Unlike other recent theories (New Realism, Hypermodernity, Altermodernism, and so on) that have tried to conceptualize the 'cultural logic' of the present age as a kind of neo-modernist dismissal of postmodernism, metamodernism is not intended to dispose of the notion of postmodernism all together. Instead, it is defined as 'an oscillation between aspects of *both* modernism and postmodernism' (Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker). The article argues that GIF art can be held as a major contemporary expression of a truly metamodernist 'structure of feeling', following a refunctionalizing, in artistic terms, the Graphics Interchange Format. GIF art is today an extraordinarily vital, well-diffused and fragmented field of experimentation, where new uses of the moving image are continuously developed and tested. Its interest for film studies lies in the fact that it almost literally reinvents the cinematographic device *(disposif)* in a digital context, to the point that it has been termed 'a form of mini-cinema entirely native to the Internet' (Tom Moody).

The Metamodern Dialectic

Statements about the end of postmodernism have acquired wide currency in cultural discourses for at least two decades now. Linda Hutcheon, one of the leading scholars in postmodernism, declared it had reached the condition of 'a thing of the past' as early as 2003.[1] Many since then have attempted to offer a convincing description of the 'cultural logic' of our post-postmodernist times. The resurgence of certain modernist traits (like a new interest in history and a distinct experimental attitude) in current cultural production has spurred various theoretical formulations and definitions, from Remodernism to Automodernism, from Digimodernism to Hypermodernity, and more.[2]

[1] Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 165.
[2] For a critically informed presentation of all of these trends, and more, see David Rudrum and Nicholas Stavris, *Supplanting the Postmodern: An Anthology of Writings on the Arts and Culture of the Early 21st Century* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

The problem with all of these different theoretical paradigms is that they conceive of the contemporary cultural landscape as the result of a rupture with, or a departure from, postmodernism, while at the same time structuring their definitions of the 'new' around aspects that can be said to belong legitimately to the postmodern condition. If, as Alan Kirby states, 'postmodernist culture was rooted in all kinds of historical, social, economic and political developments', then one can certainly agree with his conclusion that 'it would take something wrenchingly huge to sweep this away'.[3] However, his identification of this 'huge' transformation with the advent of the digital era seems quite inadequate to play the role of what, in Fredric Jameson's terms, should be characterized as the end of 'the cultural logic of late capitalism', that is, as a systemic reversal that we are far yet to experience.[4]

A more persuasive attempt to describe the present configuration of contemporary cultural production in relation to postmodernism has been advanced by Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker. Their notion of 'metamodernism' is particularly intriguing since it allows one to explain why so many aspects of the previous paradigm still survive today within a cultural frame that does not comply with the nihilistic stance of postmodernism. Defined as 'a kind of informed naivety' or 'a pragmatic idealism', metamodernism is offered as a tentative synthesis, or, more precisely', an oscillation between aspects of *both* modernism and postmodernism'.[5]

The strength of this concept is that it does not attempt, as other recent theories, to dispose of postmodernism by proposing a simple, linear progression from one paradigm to another, but (just as postmodernity did not dispose of modernity) it incorporates major aspects of the postmodernist attitude (like irony and deconstruction) into a new 'structure of feeling' that revamps the typically modernist tension toward experimentation and discovery, sincerity of expression, pursuit of truths, critique and *détournement*, and many more cultural practices that all speak of a new urge for utopia even in a context dominated by pessimism.[6]

The main novelty in the oscillating attitude of metamodernism is the return of the dialectic after a long period in which it was displaced in favour of a playful

[3] Alan Kirby, *Digimodernism: How New Technologies Dismantle the Postmodern and Reconfigure our Culture* (New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 27.

[4] Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991).

[5] Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker, 'Notes on Metamodernism', *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture*, 2 (2010), 1–14 <http://www.aestheticsandculture.net/index.php/jac/article/view/5677/6306> [accessed 20 March 2016].

[6] The notion of 'structure of feeling' is derived from Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 132–34: 'The term is difficult, but "feeling" is chosen to emphasize a distinction from more formal concepts of "world-view" or "ideology". […] we are concerned with meaning and values as they are actively lived and felt.... Structures of feeling can be defined as social experiences in solution, as distinct from other social semantic formations which have been precipitated and are more evidently and more immediately available'.

indifference for conflict and history.[7] Where poststructuralist thinkers such as Deleuze, Lyotard and Derrida worked to pulverize the dichotomies of modernist dialectical thought (as well as the negative energy on which they were based) into an infinite multiplication of affirmative differences that no longer aimed at a synthesis, metamodernism rediscovers contradiction to simply inhabit it, and even rest in it, in a way that does not show any confidence in the modernist faith in linear progress, or what Jameson calls 'the ideologic conviction of gradualism'.[8] In other words, whereas modernists conceived of conflict as a moment in a dialectical process moving toward the *telos* of history, the metamodernists see it as a permanent reality that will never be overcome by the advent of a final synthesis. At the same time, Vermeulen and van den Akker acutely retrace the origin of so many postmodernist discourses about the end of history in the very matrix of all modernist dialectical thinking, that is, Hegel's 'positive' idealism. For some, they write,

> this notion of history dialectically progressing toward some predetermined Telos had ended because humankind had realized that this Telos had been achieved (with the "universalization of Western liberal democracy"). Others suggested that it had come to a conclusion because people realized its purpose could never be fulfilled — indeed, because it does not exist.

Yet in fact 'history never ended'. The reaction to this new awareness generates the suspended dialectics that they call 'metamodernism':

> The current, metamodern discourse also acknowledges [as in the most critical versions of postmodernism] that history's purpose will never be fulfilled because it does not exist. Critically, however, it nevertheless takes toward it *as if* it does exist. Inspired by a modern naïveté yet informed by postmodern skepticism, the metamodern discourse consciously commits itself to an impossible possibility.[9]

The metamodern dialectic then bears some extraordinary similarities to Walter Benjamin's 'dialectics at a standstill', a notion he developed as an alternative to the triumphant teleology and unabashed faith in linear progress of orthodox deterministic materialism.[10] Introduced as a strategic conceptual tool to preserve

[7] Of course things here are more complicated than that. As Jameson has shown in *Valences of the Dialectic* (London and New York: Verso, 2009), the explicitly counter-dialectical thought of 'Hegel's contemporaries critics' (a chapter devoted to discussing authors like Derrida, Deleuze and Foucault) is just another articulation of the dialectic that contributes to the general movement 'towards a spatial dialectic' that the author sees announced in contemporary culture. While I cannot discuss Jameson's view in more detail here, I want to remark that what I call 'metamodernism' bears many similarities with his concept of a 'spatial dialectic'.

[8] Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic*, p. 29.

[9] Vermeulen and Van den Akker, p. 4.

[10] 'Ambiguity is the appearance of dialectic in images, the law of dialectics at a standstill. This standstill is utopia and the dialectical image therefore dream image'. Walter Benjamin, 'Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century: Expose of 1935', in *The Arcades Project*, ed. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, trans. by Rold Tiedeman (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press,

hope as a 'weak messianic force' in front of the impending catastrophe of World War II (the material demonstration of the fallacies of progressive teleology), Benjamin's crystallized dialectic seems to offer the only adequate 'impossible possibility' for the metamodern subjectivity to deal with the anxieties and the threats of global war, impoverishment and environmental collapse generated by contemporary capitalism.[11] Neither the gradualist dialectic of modernism, nor the postmodern disavowal of dialectics are better equipped to cultivate resilience in front of what is felt as a looming disaster. The metamodernist structure of feeling responds with an invitation to look for an improbable way out in any way. If postmodernism can be characterized as a navigation between islands that appear deprived of any intrinsic value of their own, whereby meaning is created by the interconnection provided by the navigation itself, metamodernism can rather be described as the experience of a sea captain whose ship is sinking and

> has to set sail for one island whilst understanding that each island has its value. For us metamodernism is this moment of radical doubt, of constantly, at times desperately, repositioning between the islands, finally choosing one. The terms we chose early on were [...] oscillation and metaxy. Perhaps elasticism could be another way to describe it, in the sense that the captain is tied by an elastic to different islands and the further he stretches the band to one island, the more violently the pull, the swing, back to another will be — until it snaps, of course.[12]

The Dialectic as Image

Metamodernism is then the name for the condition of a subject who inhabits the contradiction, who finds him/herself in-between a hoard of tensions and has to choose how to position for the sake of his/her own existence. The sense of urgency attached to this choice is another element that points to a similarity with Benjamin's dialectic at a standstill, and that which makes contradiction appear in a spatial form, that is, in the form of an image. Benjamin formulates this concept by writing that 'image is dialectic at a standstill'. In other words, the dialectic of now-time (a wording used to express the form that present takes on for a subject in danger)

1999 [1935]), p. 10. Elsewhere, Benjamin describes the dialectical image as the product of a sudden clash between the past and the present. A good illustration of how this peculiar dialectic works in Benjamin is the ambiguous treatment he reserves to the notion of 'aura', whose demise is seen in completely positive terms in his essay on *The Work of Art in the Age of Technical Reproductibility*, and in extremely pessimistic terms in *On Some Motifs in Baudelaire*.

[11] Here again, the notion of an 'impossible possibility' meets Jameson's discussion of Benjamin's dialectical messianism: 'You would not evoke the messianic in a genuinely revolutionary period, a period in which changes can be sensed at work around you; the messianic does not mean immediate hope in that sense, perhaps not even home against hope; it is a unique variety of the species hope that scarcely bears any of the latter's normal characteristics and that flourishes only in a time of absolute hopelessness'. Benjamin, *Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 177.

[12] Vermeulen and Van den Akker, *Notes on Metamodernism.*

> does not take place by means of concepts, but in form of images. This explains why it cannot perform a conciliatory role, since it is only the work of conceptualization that which can overcome/abolish effectual contradictions, transforming them into *di-s*course — while the image *con*tains all antagonist polarities, without offering future solutions […]. The dialectic at a standstill is the image that blocks the real into a constellation charged with tensions.[13]

If my linkage of metamodernism to the notion of a spatialized dialectic is correct, we should now be able to find examples of metamodernist dialectical images. Some work has be done in the field of film studies to track down the presence of a metamodernist sensibility in contemporary cinema. James MacDowell has brought up the case of what he calls 'quirky cinema', a trend he sees represented by the films of, among others, Michel Gondry, Wes Anderson, Miranda July, Charlie Kaufman, Spike Jonze, Jared Hess, Alexander Payne, David O. Russell. Quirky, he writes,

> is a sensibility made up of tensions: between indie and mainstream, comedy and drama, naturalism and artificiality, innocence and experience, and — perhaps above all — 'irony' and 'sincerity'. More precisely, it can be broadly described as 'walking a tightrope between a cynically 'detached' irony and an emotionally 'engaged' sincerity.[14]

Coherently with his search for what he calls 'the tone' of metamodernist cinema, MacDowell tends to concentrate more on the film's content, than on its visual structure. However, when looking for images, and specifically for dialectical images, it seems to me that an even more poignant embodiment of the metamodernist spirit can be found today outside the field of traditional narrative cinema. GIF art is an excellent case in point. Having emerged as an effort to refunctionalize in artistic terms the Graphics Interchange Format, which has been ubiquitously in use in the Internet since 1987, GIF art is today an extraordinary vital, disseminated, as well as fragmented field that explores new possible uses of the moving image. The interest of the GIF medium for film studies lays in the fact that it almost literally reinvents the cinematic device *(disposif)* in a digital context, to the point that it has been termed 'a form of mini-cinema entirely native to the Internet'.[15]

[13] Guido Boffo, *Nero con bambino. L'antropologia impolitica di Walter Benjamin* (Milano: Mimesis, 1999), p. 98 (my translation).
[14] James MacDowell, *Quirky,* 'Notes on Metamodernism' (13 August 2013), <http://www.metamodernism.com/2010/08/13/quirky/> [accessed 20 March 2016].
[15] The definition is by digital artist Tom Moody, *IMG MGMT: Psychotronic GIFs* (2008) <http://www.artfagcity.com/2008/08/05/img-mgmt-psychotronic-gifs> [accessed 20 March 2016]. See also Moody's interview in the booklet issued by Distributed Gallery to accompany a 2009 exhibition in Los Angeles <http://e-rat.org/Distributed%20Gallery/dg.telic.info/>. On Tom Moody and two other gif artists see Sally McKay, 'The Affect of Animated GIFs (Tom Moody, Petra Cortright, Lorna Mills)', *Art and Education* [n.d.] <http://www.artandeducation.net/paper/the-affect-of-animated-gifs-tom-moody-petra-cortright-lorna-mills/> [accessed 20 March 2016]. More literature that explores the

Suspended between stillness and movement, GIF images embody the metamodern dialectical principle in their own technological structure. Of course they move, right, but their movement is frozen in an endless repetition of the same few frames. A new temporal form emerges where fixity coexists with mobility, variation with monotony, change with stability. The paradoxical constitution of GIFs thus appears to mimic on the formal level the blocked dialectic of capitalism, its incessant pursuit of change that never changes anything — or what Benjamin first characterized as the ever-new appearance of the ever-same in the experience of modernity. In a way, the flood of looping images that saturates the metamodern mediascape has disenchanted the techniques of image reproduction, by generating a new perceptual habit that provides an automatic ability to recognize the ever-same in the ever-new. In shrinking the duration of a moving picture to a few seconds, the GIF image reveals the structural sameness that is inherent to every product created by means of a recording technique (and what is a film, ultimately, if not a recording that loops each time it is reproduced?).

GIFs as Dialectical Images

Characteristic to the GIF image is the short circuit it produces between some of the most advanced digital technologies (such as motion photography, motion graphics, or software like Processing and Cinema 4D) and cinema's history, and even cinema's pre-history, reactivating a wide constellation of ancient forms and techniques of perception such as the stereoscopes, the zoetropes, the phenakistiscopes, chronophotography, lenticular print, and so on.[16] The emerging field of GIF art offers numerous interesting examples. Dain Fagerholm, an illustrator who specializes in stereograms, presents the viewer with glimpses into a melancholic world of adolescent alienation drawn in blue tones, where monstrous puppet kids with big heads and huge eyes sit in front of luminous cubes or prisms, either alone, or without seemingly attempting any kind of interpersonal communication.[17] The principle of Marey's chronophotography is revived and put in motion by Erdal Inci, a Turkish artist based in Berlin who produces his GIFs by cloning himself into dozens of identical doubles. In his series titled after

gif-cinema-precinema connection includes the following: Hampus Hagman, 'The Digital Gesture: Rediscovering Cinematic Movement Through GIFs', *Refractory* (29 December 2012) <http://refractory.unimelb.edu.au/2012/12/29/hagman/> [accessed 20 March 2016]; Jane Hu, 'GIF Typologies and the Heritage of the Moving Image', *Hyperallergic* (28 September 2012) <http://hyperallergic.com/57585/gif-typologies-and-the-heritage-of-the-moving-image/> [accessed 20 March 2016]; A. D. Jameson, 'Are Animated Gifs a Type of Cinema?', *Indiewire* (17 April 2013) <http://www.indiewire.com/2013/04/are-animated-gifs-a-type-of-cinema-133784/> [accessed 20 March 2016].

[16] GIFs can be said to revive, in a very precise way, the aesthetic of the 'cinema of attractions', as they many characteristics with early cinema: silentness, brevity, multiplicity, the sensationalism or exhibitionism of visual effects. See Wanda Strauven, *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006).

[17] See http://dainfagerholm.blogspot.com [accessed 20 March 2016].

a famous essay by Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament* (1927), his own body dressed in black is replicated multiple times, so as to create disturbing arrays of marching figures that suggest different, and even opposite readings: a fascist troop or an anarchist rally, an official parade or a ritual choreography performed by a group of hooded street artists.[18] In a more playful mood, artists like Neil Sanders, Nicolas Fong and Matthias Brown have been experimenting with digital phenakistoscopes. Sanders, one of the animators (in the double sense of the word) of the Australian Loop De Loop team, crams his virtual discs with crowds of little elastic creatures dancing and bouncing in a classical cartoon style.[19] Fong's mesmerizing mandalas, featuring the perpetual mutation of strange zoomorphic figures, have been included in a music video he made for the BNRS band, *Many Chances* (2015).[20] Matthias Brown (who also experiments with GIFs in videomaking) employs the traditional technique of rotoscope animation to produce digital phenakistoscopes and other looping compositions (which include sequential plates that is reminiscent of Muybridge), all exclusively rendered in black and white.[21]

These examples persuasively suggest the metamodern, dialectical nature of the GIF image. These tiny visual loops plunge the viewer into a perceptual experience that goes back to the prehistory of cinema, producing a clash between our digital present and the distant past of the analogic moving image — a perfect illustration of a spatialized dialectics. What appears as most modern today allows the resurrection of a host of ancient optical toys, the actualization of the movement that is virtually inscribed in them: just type 'Dick Balzer' on Google and you witness a true explosion of nineteenth-century moving taumatropes, phenakistoscopes, zoetropes, and animated magic lantern slides from one of the largest and most amazing collections in the world. At the same time the forms of so-called pre-cinema are constantly recreated in the work of present-day digital pratictioners. The marvel of the chromatrope, a spectacular display of moving colors, once a major attraction for magic lantern (and later early cinema) audiences, is today revived online in hundreds of GIFs.[22] James Kerr, who is exceptionally popular in social networks as Scorpion Dagger, makes compelling *détournements* of Renaissance paintings by means of an elemental type of montage that brings to mind the mechanical animations of the magic lantern.[23]

[18] Search for Erdal Inci on Tumblr, Vimeo and Instagram.
[19] See http://neilsanders.com.au. See also the website of the collective http://loopdeloop.org [accessed 20 March 2016].
[20] Search for Nicolas Fong on Tumblr and Vimeo.
[21] See http://traceloops.com [accessed 20 March 2016].
[22] Some intriguing examples are provided by the anonymous artists who conceal their identity under the pseudonyms of Hexeosis and Admiral Potato.
[23] Search for Scorpion Dagger on Tumblr. James Kerr has been experimenting with the use of GIFs in his recent augmented reality art book, *Do You Like Relaxing?* (Montréal: Anteism, 2015). Animations can be played live on an iPhone from the pages of a handcrafted art book: <http://anteism.com/shop/scorpion-dagger-augmented-reality-soft> [accessed 20 March 2016].

The subterranean connection that links the GIF phenomenon to the prehistory of cinema is made explicit in the construction of new analogical optical toys. The most intriguing example is the Giphoscope, a machine assembled by Alessandro Scali and Marco Calabrese at the Okkult Motion Pictures studio in Turin, Italy.[24] Based on the principle of the flip-book, this elementary, and yet extremely elegant device allows the user to play GIFs by hand simply by turning a crank. The machine is sold together with an optional number of printed GIFs from a catalogue featuring both works by contemporary artists and brief sequences from public domain early cinema collections. But the Giphoscope is just one among several more examples that document the contemporary trend toward the 'descent' of GIFs 'in real life', through analogical as well as digital devices. GIFpop is an initiative created to commercialize the work of digital artists in the form of large cards produced by means of a lenticular printing process. Again, GIFpop lenticular animations sold in this form include the work of digital artists like Davidope, Patakk, Zack Dougherty (Hateplow), Zolloc and others, alongside a serpentine dance from the early days of film history and a phenakistoscope from the Richard Balzer collection. IRL GIFs are also the business of Meural, a digital canvas connected to the Internet that allows you to view high quality GIF animations on your home wall.

All of these developments suggest that GIFs can become an extraordinary field of inquiry for media archaeology. GIF archaeology has become a specific subject of research in the work of Olia Lialina, a scholar and a net artist who finds her material in elements from the Web 1.0.[25] More generally, we can see how widely GIFs contribute, through the practice of frame capture, to the continual remediation of film history, now delivered in the form of tiny fragments to the voracious cinephilia of a large number of web users. Frame grab GIFs are giving a strong impulse to the ongoing cinematization of the web,[26] but they do so only collapsing the whole history of the moving image into an eternal present where hand-colored films exist side by side with 16mm documentary productions, panoramic formats in Technicolor, television programs, videoclips, home movies, and so on. These scattered fragments, most often generated by anonymous users, provoke an

[24] Loops visible on the giphoscope.com website include sequences excerpted from Edison and Méliès films, as well as from Muybridge's plates on animal locomotion. For more information about Calabrese and Scali's other artistic projects, look for their personal websites <http://okkultmotionpictures.tumblr.com> [accessed 20 March 2016].

[25] See Olia Lialina's continuing reconstruction of the history and prehistory of GIF culture in her *Vernacular Web* multimedia essay series (2005–2010): <http://art.teleportacia.org/observation/vernacular/>; <http://contemporary-home-computing.org/vernacular-web-2/>; <http://contemporary-home-computing.org/prof-dr-style/>. See also Paddy Johnson, 'A Brief History of Animated GIF Art', parts 1–4, *Artnet News* (2 and 15 August, 2 and 17 September 2014) <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/a-brief-history-of-animated-gif-art-part-one-69060> [accessed 20 March 2016].

[26] The process that I call 'cinematization of the web' is certainly involved in the ongoing 'relocation of cinema' discussed by Francesco Casetti in *The Lumière Galaxy: Seven Key Words for the Cinema to Come* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

archaeologic, metamodern reading of the media experience, in which the perception of history is given on a synchronic, i.e. spatialized, rather than diachronic, ground.

An intriguing example is the reinvention of certain visual *topoi* of both abstract cinema and optical/kinetic art, a common practice among 'generative' artists in the field of so-called 'creative coding'. The most fortunate of these *topoi* is perhaps the circular movement of Marcel Duchamp's 'rotoreliefs', famously used in *Anémic Cinéma* (1926) to create a hypnotic impression of depth in a two-dimensional image. Duchamp's concept of his spinning discs, where sets of concentric circles move in eccentric fashion, has been exploited dozens of times in GIFs. The 'anemic', i.e. Duchampian, genealogy of much optical and kinetic art is made explicit in those works that use designs by Victor Vasarely, Marina Apollonio or Bridget Riley to create mesmerizing bidimensional sculptures in motion. In this way, artists like Davidope (dvdp), Dave Whyte (beesandbombs), Dylan Fisher (xverdxse), Joe Winograd, among many others, have opened up a new enthralling season of digital experimentation for abstract kinetic art.[27]

Research in this field has gone in parallel with a process we might describe as the 'toyfication of the web'. Several abstract artists have been engaged in developing online tools that exploit interactivity to produce perfectly gratuitous perceptual experiences, which again revive the nineteenth-century tradition of optical toys in the digital context. Hardcore experimentation meets a kind of childish taste for playing with images that for once is not subjected to the competitive logic of gamification, and can be seen in many examples such as Chris Shier's *Gifmelter*, Vince McKelvie's *Klear.me* and *Clickdragclick*, or Andrew Benson's *Pusher.* Bill Domonkos, a digital artist and talented videomaker who works with found footage, distributes *Stereopsis*, a free iOS app that allow to watch his surreal GIFs in stereoscopy.[28]

GIFs and the Metamodern Critique

If GIFs embody the metamodern sensibility already at the level of their formal structure, nothing is more telling of their departure from postmodernism than the peculiar kind of social and/or political critique some artists try to communicate through their loops. While their satirical wit can be quite aggressive — as in the case of Peekasso's political spoofs, which turn Donald Trump, and Hillary Clinton no less, into grotesque artificial puppets — their most characteristic attitude is a melancholic irony that leaves little place for the euphoria that both modernism and postmodernism had expressed toward, respectively, engagement and disengagement.[29] The metamodern sensibility arises from the exponential

[27] Search for their names and nicknames on Tumblr, Vimeo, YouTube and Instagram.

[28] See http://www.bdom.com [accessed 20 March 2016].

[29] An eloquent example of Peekasso's net-artistic strategies is the glittering découpage of a cat,

disenchantment experienced by a young generation as it witnesses the collapse of postmodernism's re-enchantment strategies, and finds itself facing giant global problems that seem beyond any possible solution. Maybe metamodernism is the only true postmodernism, since it is only too painfully aware that those problems are just the heritage of modernity, and it is left with a longing desire for a utopian way out, which it despairs will ever be found. The *naïvete* that is often associated to metamodernism can be compared to that of a grown up child who reacts to a trauma by embracing her toys and singing a lullaby — she knows this is not going to change her condition, but helps.

A grim representation of the artist's destiny in the age of digital reproduction is offered by Milos Rajkovic — an artist from Serbia who signs his GIFs as Sholim — in the loop that opens his *The World Was Wonderful* series.[30] All the images in this series are characterized by slow movements of only a few figures, which create a *tableau-vivant*-like effect, while the only recurring element is a swarm of flies that keeps turning over piles of waste: the rest of what was once a 'wonderful world'. The scenes range from Father Christmas and his reindeers hung up by their feet, with Christmas lights used as rope (*New Year*), to a headless couple who tries to orientate themselves within a field encumbered with rubbish, using their white canes as dowsing rods (though actually the woman is using her stick to position her cell phone and take a selfie of her non-existent head: *Relationship*).

In this context the artist is no more than a surviver too. He is portrayed as a beggar, sitting on a plastic box, slightly waving as if under the effect of too much alcohol, his head hanging on his chest, surrounded by fastidious flies. The carton board at his neck reads: 'Gif art veteran needs help. God bless' (*Veteran).* Rajkovic other works are extremely biting too. He specializes in mechanical heads with all kinds of improbable elements moving in and out of empty orbits, mouths, craniums etc. Five of these GIFs are freakish portraits of as many characters chosen to embody the American militarist spirit, represented by an American flag in the background. In *Join the Army 2,* the Coca Cola logo in the flag connotes the optimism of a smiling military. The man has no eyes, as his upper head hosts instead a couple of puppet clowns, perpetually going up and down with a piston-like motion: the smaller clown emerges rhythmically, dressed in uniform and blowing in a trumpet that spurts blood, from the bust of a larger McDonald's clown, who in turn keeps his hands closed in prayer. All of Sholim's heads oscillate slightly and usually smile while the movement in their head reveals the agony that is going on inside: a brain with legs keeps walking endlessly in a Hamster wheel, inside

posted on 15 February 2016, he uses to forward the viewer to a YouTube link featuring General Wesley Clark's public declaration that the American military plans after 9/11 was 'to take out seven countries in five years, starting with Iraq, and then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and, finishing off, Iran'. <http://peekasso.tumblr.com/post/139376478483/httpswwwyoutubecom-watchv-9rc1mepksw> [accessed 20 March 2016].

[30] See this and Rajkovic's other series at http://sholim.com.

a cage filled with dollars (*Manager*); baroque mechanisms allow a shining black car to spin in the head of an orthodox priest, as on a display platform (*Faith*); a machine pumped by two athletic blond women exercising with their sport equipments bears a faceless head of a woman with a fashionable haircut, which becomes a frame for a headless female figure seen in the act of taking a selfie (and the earrings of this *Selfie* are two spinning skulls used as hooks to hang a couple of vinyl bags). Each of Sholim's GIFs is an allegory that is simultaneously satirical and terribly serious, ironic and grave, suspended between a cheerful cynicism and the solemnity of a *memento mori*.[31]

One more glimpse in the condition of the contemporary GIF artist is offered by the intriguing work of Michael Green, a net artist whose creative trace is dispersed across multiple media (from social networks to commercial sites, from music to video, from GIFs to Second Life)[32]. His *Balloon Dog Deflated* uses a GIF to perform a complex conceptual deconstruction of the ultimate icon of postmodernist art, Jeff Koons' famous stainless-steel series of sculptures reproducing the shape and the surface of an inflated balloon dog, in different variants of color. Koons' balloon series (reproducing a dog, a swan, a rabbit, a flower and so on) are the epitome of postmodern seriality; based on the concept of an indefinite replication of identical 'originals', they were met with a commercial success never attained before by a living artist. In 2013 Koon's *Balloon Dog (Orange)* 'was sold to an anonymous telephone bidder for $58.4 million, surpassing initial $55 million estimates, to become "the most expensive work by a living artist sold at auction"', according to *Time*.[33] The meaning of Green's 'deflation' of such an obviously 'inflated' artwork (in both senses of the phrase) is made clearer by the commercial operation put in place by the artist himself to sell his GIF. In 2014 *Balloon Dog Deflated* was put on auction on eBay for $ 5800, accompanied by a long explanation by the author that resembles a mix of a commercial announcement and an artistic manifesto.[34] This text merits to be quoted at length, not only because it is an organic part of the work itself, but also because it shows the penetration of a metamodern sensibility in an artist's metadiscursive reflexion about art in the digital century.

Balloon Dog Deflated, Green writes, 'was conceptually crafted with the same principles of the original […]. Like Koons, Michael Green was the CEO of the project, overlooking every detail without ever actually having to create the 3D

[31] It is worth noting that Sholim has been experimenting with transforming his GIFs into sound minimovies of just one minute. GIFs thus become extraordinarily suggestive moving tableaux accompanied by a sound environment that makes them even more expressive. See <http://coub.com/milosrajkovic> [accessed 20 March 2016].

[32] See Michael Green's official website <http://officialmichaelgreen.com> [accessed 20 March 2016].

[33] Olivia B. Waxman, *An Orange Balloon Dog Sold for $58.4M So Here Are 10 Other Cool Jeff Koons Balloon Pieces*, *Time* (14 November 2013) <http://newsfeed.time.com/2013/11/14/an-orange-balloon-dog-sold-for-58-4-million-so-here-are-10-cool-jeff-koons-balloon-pieces/> [accessed 20 March 2016].

[34] The page is still available at <http://www.ebay.com/itm/Balloon-Dog-Deflated-GIF-file-by-Michael-Green-/321516528404> [accessed 20 March 2016].

sculpture, or write code to produce the animation'. Green's purely conceptual work focuses on deflation, situating itself in the historical place 'where it is once again time to destroy the values of the tradition of modern art', since 'modern art has exhausted its own frame with postmodern maximalist expression of all that was left'. Today '*physical museums, like compact discs and books are dead*' and '*the museum of 2014 is the internet*'. In a typically modernist stance, Green affirms the need 'for our culture to evolve to the logical next step, the digital medium'. This turn is anticipated by 'a young generation of artists [who] have found inspiration from new tools that represent their time on earth'. But the disenchantment with both the modern and the postmodern versions of euphoria keeps assailing these avant-garde practitioners with the awareness that they 'will never have a name like Jeff Koons did 20 years ago, because culture has divorced itself from relating to the concept and value of a painting. *It's over*. The deflation of "Balloon Dog Deflation" represents this death, letting go of all the optimism Koons blew into it 20 years ago'. In a truly metamodern, oscillating attitude, though, the end of art is described as an eternal, recursive ending, one that allows for the serial reappearance of the new: 'Innovation is taking place in this medium', because '*It's over and it begins again…*'. Consequently, purchasing Green's GIF means 'to be making history', to give 'artists around the world an opportunity to MAKE A LIVING from their own work. Today's best artists are on the internet and they do it for free. Jeff Koons is dead. If he was alive today, and made a 'balloon dog deflated', he would be as poor as Michael Green'. Green's denunciation of the living conditions of contemporary digital artists acknowledges that 'it is difficult for artists who make digital work to gain any capital from it, because the work is all in the hyperreal. Where is the object physically? No such object exists'. Finally, the aim of his piece of conceptual net art is 'to open up a discussion on how digital art jpegs/GIFs/etc. could be sold and collected, just like how paintings are currently auctioned', so as to allow 'Michael Green and his contemporaries [to] support their lifestyle by selling their work to the public'. That Green's GIF was finally sold for just $200 is a gloomy commentary to his artist's intervention.

Selling a GIF on eBay is no doubt a perfect allegory for the destiny of art in the post-postmodern age of digital reproduction. The story of *Balloon Dog Deflated* reflects a more general 'structure of feelings' that can be said metamodern insofar as it effectively positions itself beyond the end of the end of history (and art), but only to discover that history is just the experience of a present that does not end. Yet this permanent feeling of historical loss is viewed as the condition for the birth of something new, an 'impossible possibility' that it still worth to pursue beyond any rational calculation. In their permanent state of suspension between stillness and motion, GIFs are graphic expressions of the metamodern urge to reveal the looping horizon that history has become for us contemporaries.

New Studies

Queering the Amateur Analog Video Archive: The Case of Bologna's Countercultural Life in the 80s and the 90s[1]

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Abstract

Drawing on an interdisciplinary approach, this article aims to outline some theoretical issues concerning the archival structure of videos developed during the Eighties and the Nineties in Bologna's alternative scene. More specifically, we will focus on two archives, Cassero CDOC Centre's video archive and Home Movies — the Italian National Amateur Film Archive, which host two different video repositories that stemmed from a common background: Bologna's countercultural environment, in which we can find the "1990 Student Movement" (the so-called *Pantera*) and the gay and lesbian scene that belonged to Arcigay and Il Cassero. These materials shared not only some production/fruition modalities, but, very often, the same people took part in them: we can see members of the gay community who were, in the meantime, students who participated in the university occupations. Therefore, the main questions we have to answer are: which kind of archival framework is the most appropriate for such materials? Are the current archival practices correct in order to abide by the original context and motivations that fostered their production? Our reply refers to the notion of *transarchive.*

Introduction

When we talk about the interrelationships between LGBT[2] themes, archival

[1] The essay was conceived and developed by the authors in close collaboration. However, as regards the draft of single sections, Diego Cavallotti wrote the paragraphs *PVEH Collection, Transarchive: A Queered Model for the Amateur Video LGBT Archive*, and *Step 2: Queer Transarchiviality*; Elisa Virgili wrote the paragraphs *Il Cassero's Amateur Video Collection, Queering archival records*, and *Step 1: Private/Public Dialectic*.

[2] This term causes certain difficulties — first of all, issues of definition. For instance, in this article we use the term LGBT because we refer to the current name of the archive we accessed (*Il Cassero LGBT Center's CDOC*); however, from 1982 to 1994 nobody employed this acronym. The movement started to use the formula *National Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transsexual Coordination Pride Rainbow* for the National Pride in Venice, 1997, and the acronym LGBT since the *Rome World Pride* in 2000. This is not a mere linguistic clarification: the different terms indicate not only different historical transformations, but also different types of mobilization structures the

frameworks, and amateur analog video collections, we are confronted with an epistemological conundrum. LGBT amateur videos, both in home[3] and community[4] modes of communication, were concrete emanations of a countercultural environment that tended to blend their modal boundaries: first, this was not only because they were produced within the LGBT community, but in fact specifically addressed to its members, therefore creating a semi-public fruition context in which the presence of a non-LGBT audience was limited; second, because we can compare the community itself (as a social place where both political and affective bonds are established) to the 'family-we-choose', originally described by Weston.[5]

Suppose these materials become part of an archive: how can we account for the inner fluidity of the social and cultural bonds that stood behind the production of these audiovisual products? To what extent should this fluidity be an inner feature of this archive?

Starting from these questions, throughout this paper we will focus on two different collections. The first one is preserved in Bologna at *Il Cassero LGBT Center's CDOC 'Flavia Madaschi'*[6] and refers to VHS format videos related to a ten-years time span (1982-1991). It is composed by amateur videos produced within the LGBT community of Bologna (mainly by K.G.B.&B. [Kassero Gay Band & Ballet]). The second one is stored in Bologna at *Home Movies – Italian Amateur Film Archive*: it is composed by U-Matic, VHS, S-VHS, VHS-C, S-VHS-C, Video8, Hi8 videos and regards the activities of Bologna's countercultural network — more specifically the activities of the so-called *Pantera* movement, created by protesting students who participated in the house-squatting scene as well. The group included gay and lesbian students who were members of *Il Cassero*: during the 1990 student movement they developed their own group, called *Pantera Rosa*, which was one of the first efforts to create a university gay-lesbian group since the 1977 movement.

These students appeared in and helped to shoot videos belonging to both collections. So, what should we do with them? Should we keep them apart or should we try to develop an archival framework in which their interrelationships are made visible?

movement dealt with. *Politiche dell'orgoglio. Sessualità, soggettività e movimenti sociali*, ed. by Massimo Prearo (Pisa: ETS, 2015).

[3] Richard Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987), pp. 4–16, 49-69.

[4] Ryan Shand, 'Theorizing Amateur Cinema: Limitations and Possibilities', *The Moving Image*, 8.2 (2008), 36–60 (p. 53).

[5] Kath Weston, *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

[6] This documentation centre (CDOC) was founded in 1983 and its development paralleled the growth of Bologna's movement (*Circolo di Cultura Omosessuale 28 Giugno* and, since 1985, *Circolo Arcigay Il Cassero*). 'Il Cassero. Chi siamo', <http://www.cassero.it/chi-siamo/il-cassero/> [accessed 18 May 2016].

Theoretical and Methodological Framework

First of all, we don't aim to develop here a fully-fledged paradigm accounting for the multi-layered interconnections that complex archival items[7] refer to, compelling the archivists to deconstruct institutional boundaries such as the archival ones. Moreover, we don't aim to reconstruct the whole social networks in which these materials were produced, although we think that these videos hint at them and they should be part of our research targets. Finally, we don't aim to 'queer' the collections mentioned above as a display of theoretical mastery that is an end unto itself: our goal is to elicit specific issues concerning the archival life of these videos, which relate to them as emanations of counter-cultural communities that often cross their paths, such as *Il Cassero*'s and *Pantera*'s ones.

When it comes to describe their archival features, first of all we should ask ourselves how they relate to the complexity of their original production/fruition contexts. One of the hypotheses we are focusing on is that *Il Cassero*'s and *Pantera*'s archival repositories should engage in dialogue with each other, overtaking their institutional boundaries. This means, on the one hand, that the creation of a counter-cultural video archive should take into account the heterogeneous composition of the community in which these videos were originally produced and screened; on the other hand, to pinpoint how audiovisual communication was one of the tools that helped the lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders to interact with other communities, becoming part of a broader social and cultural scene as well. Through this perspective, *queering* LGBT archival items (or collections) means to disclose its inter-linkages with items (or collections) preserved in other archives whose major goal is to save the collective memory of other social groups, adding new possible identity layers to the LGBT galaxy.[8]

In other words — and here comes the answer to the second point, which regards our theoretical frame — to queer an archive means for us to develop Morris's and Rawson's assumptions: in 'Queer Archives/Archival Queers' they affirm that this act critiques and challenges 'the normativizing collecting and circulating practices of other institutions'[9] — in our case those audiovisual archives (LGBT, amateur film archives, etc.), whose primary goal is to preserve the memory of a community without taking into account the ramifications of itineraries in which more than just one countercultural community is involved. These trajectories enrich and, at the same time, question established identities, showing how com-

[7] In other words, we are talking about items that lack a solid documentary apparatus because they were produced in an informal context. In order to reconstruct their history, we have to rely on oral documents, *memoirs*, or even anecdotes. Sean Cubitt, 'Anecdotal Evidence', *Necsus*, 2.1 (Spring 2013), 5–18 (pp. 5–8).
[8] Scott Bravmann, *Queer Fictions of the Past: History, Culture, and Difference* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. X.
[9] Charles Morris and K.J. Rawson, 'Queer Archives/Archival Queers', in *Theorizing Histories of Rhetoric*, ed. by Michelle Ballif, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2013), 74–89 (p. 76).

munity membership is not a matter of exclusivity: some of *Il Cassero*'s members were also *Pantera*'s students, for instance.

Starting from these stances, we feel the need to account for a multi-layered framework[10] in which the archives develop ambiguous relations with the items they store because they thematize the fact that they refer to different communities, in our case the LGBT and the student movement ones. Thus, what is at stake here is a sort of amphibolous and paradoxical teleology, in which we cannot recognize the emergence of a univocal identity, but an iterative act of creating multiple identities. More specifically, in our cases, conceiving these audiovisual archives as open and fluid infrastructures means to open new breaches both in the LGBT and in the '1990 Student Movement' identities, renewing their inner features in a more inclusive fashion. Thus, the act of queering archival LGBT collections hints at complex and polymorphous historical constructions, in which we can find 'queer traces' (oppositionality, fluidity, polymorphy, etc.).

In order to investigate the hybridity and the inherently openness of these constructions, we will refer to an interdisciplinary approach, which will cross the research pathways of queer theory (Morris and Rawson's framework), amateur film and video theory (Zimmermann's approach[11]) and archive theory (Ketelaar's and Cook and Schwartz's epistemic sets[12]). Drawing on these references, we will not linger on in-depth descriptions of *Il Cassero*'s and *Pantera*'s collections: instead, we will reflect on how the institutional boundaries between these collections can be re-programmed in order to account for the inherent oppositionality, fluidity and polymorphy of their items and the complexity of the social networks they stem from. For this purpose, we will develop the notion of *transarchive*.

Il Cassero*'s Amateur Video Collection*

The birth of Italian gay movement is conventionally connected to the foundation of *Fuori!* in 1972. *Fuori!* was the first organisation that catalysed the stances of the Italian gay world and sought to develop a common political agenda. Very soon, however, a diaspora started to undermine *Fuori!*'s project:[13] in 1974, after *Fuori!* moved closer to the Italian Radical Party (a left-liberalist party), many of its members splintered and joined new groups — often local, underground

[10] Jake Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), p. 170.
[11] Patricia R. Zimmermann, 'The Home Movie Movement: Excavations, Artifacts, Minings', in *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories*, ed. by Karen L. Ishizuka and Patricia R. Zimmermann (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2008), 1–28 (p. 18).
[12] Eric Ketelaar, 'Tacit Narratives: The Meanings of Archives', *Archival Science*, 1.2 (2001), 131–141 (pp. 137–41).
[13] Which was the establishment of a stable political platform for the Italian gay rights movement.

groups. One of them was the *Collettivo Frocialista*, founded in Bologna in 1977, which, one year later, became *Circolo di Cultura Omosessuale 28 Giugno*.[14]

This was the first gay culture club to engage in dialogue with a state institution: Bologna's municipality (led by the Italian Communist Party[15]), whose mayor, Renzo Imbeni, signed an agreement in 1982 with the founding members of *Circolo 28 Giugno*, offering them a venue for cultural activities. In 1985, the *Circolo 28 Giugno* became the national headquarter of *Arcigay*, the most important Italian gay association, under the name of *Circolo Arcigay Il Cassero*. Throughout the late Eighties and the beginnings of the Nineties, *Il Cassero* developed several campaigns that targeted the outbreak of the AIDS epidemic and discrimination against gay people.

First and foremost, however, *Il Cassero* became one of the cores of Bologna's countercultural scene, presenting itself as a hub for its theatrical and cine-videographic collectives. K.G.B.&B. was one of the most influential groups: it was directed by Stefano Casagrande, who, in the late Nineties, became *Il Cassero*'s chief coordinator.[16] Their productions were often staged at *Il Cassero* during club parties (for example, at the beginnings of the Nineties, every New Year's Eve party would host a K.G.B.&B performance) or specific events, such as the first party/gay ball held for celebrating the 1982 agreement with Bologna's municipality.

The ball was recorded on a videotape called *MEGALOMENIA – Festa del circolo 28 giugno – ITALIAN SLIP 1982 'NIKOTINA & GAY CASSERO BAND' – Sala Sirenella (Quartiere San Donato)* (VHS, 1982), which is one the earliest documents preserved at *Il Cassero's CDOC*.

First of all, it is worth noting the stereotypical mode of amateur communication: a text with low coherence and cohesion (a fragmentary sum of performative highlights of the party rather than a cohesive textual structure that tells us about the ball), audiovisual grammatical mistakes (no transitions from one shot to another, the use of an annoying spotlight that blinds whoever is portrayed, a large number of camera-looks, etc.), and a manifest technical poorness. As a consequence of these practical and semiotic features, we are confronted with several problems in decoding the video's meaning-making processes: if we cannot count on anyone that assists in interpreting them (someone that recognizes the party's participants and helps to contextualize the video), we cannot read them properly. So, as often happens, the images 'are taken up as intermediary, mnemonic, and channelling device *through* which the viewer evokes and identifies

[14] Massimo Prearo, *La fabbrica dell'orgoglio. Una genealogia dei movimenti LGBT* (Pisa: ETS, 2015), pp. 76–84.

[15] Since 1979, the Italian Communist Party has shown some interest in the gay and lesbian community: the members of *Arci* (a leftist Italian Cultural Association close to the Communist and the Socialist Parties) created a civil rights commission coordinated by Marco Bisceglia, an openly gay priest. One year later, Bisceglia founded *Arcigay*, which became, from 1983, when *Fuori!* ceased to exist, the biggest Italian gay association.

[16] Stefano Casi, *Teatro in delirio. La vera storia del K.G.B.&B. – Kassero Gay Ballet and Band* (Bologna: CDOC, 1989), pp. 53–54.

not with the mimetic image, but with an absent person or past event',[17] their relevance exceeds their content, inviting the viewer to re-join the past events it represents. These materials are closely tied to their original production/fruition contexts: to investigate them is to understand how their social fabric is reflected in their textual features.

The contents of the video get clearer as the camera-operator focuses on K.G.B.&B.'s show. It consists in a parody concert and in a comic performance. In fact culminates in a serious epilogue in which a ball participant in drag reads *Circolo 28 Giugno*'s declaration of intent, in which it is stated that every member should fight against homophobia, sexual discriminations and every kind of identity constraint. Thus, *MEGALOMENIA* can be interpreted in two different ways: on the one hand, as a document witnessing Bologna's gay lifestyle before the outbreak of the AIDS epidemic in Italy, as an audiovisual emanation of Bologna's gay movement, in which we can observe the joy of the community united to spend leisure time together and, of course, to celebrate an institutional achievement; and on the other, as a polyvocal milestone of a broader and inclusive movement, which cannot be defined only as 'gay'.

Since the mid-eighties, K.G.B.&B. started to explore the possibilities of videomaking. One of the most important efforts was *Cassero News* (VHS, 1990). It was an 'amateur video-newsreel' shot in *Il Cassero*'s cellar and narrowcasted on the bar TVs of the club, providing information (the activities of *L.I.L.A.* [*Italian League Against AIDS*], the most important news about *Il Cassero*'s community, gay-themed movies, etc.) and entertainment (*Maga Tamara*'s column — a man in drag, 'Sorceress Tamara', giving some advice to lonely hearts calling on the phone) for the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender communities of Bologna. In the second (and last) edition of *Cassero News* we can find an interview of the members of *Pantera Rosa* – among them is Vincenzo Tallarico,[18] who was, at the same time, one of *Il Cassero*'s most active members. One of the main topics conveyed during the interview was the emergence of a new generation of gay men whose lives were very different from their 'older siblings': they had their first sexual experiences only after the ravages of AIDS had changed the way in which sexuality was conceived, and, more generally, they did not conform to the identities of thirty-fourty year-old gay men or lesbian women; they were first of all students, who lived their lives at the borders of the community and were involved in the exciting underground scene of Bologna, which, in those days, witnessed the appearance of a new protesting student movement, the *Pantera* movement.

[17] Vivian Sobchack, 'Toward a Phenomenology of Nonfictional Film Experience', in *Collecting Visible Evidence*, ed. by Jane M. Gaines and Michael Renov (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), pp. 241–54 (p. 247).

[18] Vincenzo Tallarico was, in those days, a University of Bologna's student and one of the most important *Il Cassero*'s activists: despite his young age, he became part of *Il Cassero*'s board in 1990. Later on he moved away from Bologna and put aside activism.

PVEH Collection

In 1990, a law proposal by the socialist Minister of University and Scientific Research Antonio Ruberti gave rise to a protesting student movement, which took issue in particular with the corporatization of the university and the admission of private citizens or institutions onto university boards. Within a month, the movement (called *Pantera*), captured the public conscience of the students and became a national issue. The protesting students proved their communicative skills very quickly:[19] they used fax technology to send messages to each other all over Italy, they developed behaviour protocols for TV or press journalists, and they shot counter-information videos.[20]

In Bologna, a group of film students gave rise to an experimental audiovisual project called *Videogiornale*, a video-newsreel that documented the everyday life of *Pantera*'s protests. They provided a full-coverage of the university occupations, creating a small distribution network among the university departments. Every evening an edition of *Videogiornale* was screened: this is how, in a sort of pre-digital way, the students connected to each other, informing the squatters what was happening in their community and how they were perceived by the outside world — 'video-journalists' often interviewed pedestrians about the university protests.

Videogiornale's master cameras and edited newsreels are now part of the *PVEH Collection*. They belong to a wider collection that documents Bologna's countercultural life in the late Eighties/early Nineties, from *Pantera* to the house-squatting scene, from the rise of cyberpunk culture to a peculiar experiment of a local TV station (called *Pratello TV*). *Videogiornale* and the *Pantera* protest movement should be recognized as the formative experience of a group of young students that, throughout the years, grew up, changed its members and took part in Bologna's lively countercultural scene.

Since *Videogiornale* created a sort of audiovisual network within *Pantera*'s community, it became the best way to make announcements. This was the case for *Pantera Rosa*. In a VHS named *GAY PANTERA ROSA di Luciano Seminario Autogestito GAY/Lesbo* (VHS, 1990) in the *PVEH Collection*, the representatives of *Pantera Rosa* informed other students about the gay and lesbian meetings during the university occupation. Their brief video-announcement was then included in the fifteenth edition of *Videogiornale*, which was narrowcasted on the TVs of the university's (occupied) classrooms. Among *Pantera Rosa*'s members, we can once again identify Vincenzo Tallarico, who, with other male gay students, discusses the relevance of gays and lesbians in past student movements, and the importance of a new political subject that includes new sexual identities.

[19] Loredana Colace and Susanna Ripamonti, *Il circo e la Pantera. I mass-media sulle orme del movimento degli studenti* (Roma: Led, 1990).
[20] Nando Simeone, *Gli studenti della Pantera. Storia di un movimento rimosso*, (Roma: Alegre, 2010), pp. 65–80.

This new subject should link the needs of the gay/lesbian community to a broader political landscape, in which a new generation of activists could find its place.

Thus, to sum up, it is necessary to focus on two different amateur videos that were shot almost during the same period, had the same communicative aims, referred to the same people and now belong to two different archives. More specifically, the presence of Tallarico in both videos reveals the tight bonds that link Bologna's young activists to a broader countercultural movement: as activists they took part in a student movement simply because they were both gay (or lesbians) and students. This compels us to reflect upon a simple but often neglected notion: when we talk about LGBT audiovisual products we should not merely identify who shot or appeared in them only in terms of sexual orientation, but we should account for the complex framework in which they establish social, cultural, and affective bonds.

In order to solve these research problems, we will develop the notion of *transarchive* as a queered archival model.

Transarchive: A Queered Model

If we want to engage in dialogue with these collections and disclose their *queer* and *transarchival* potential, we have to start from two specific issues.

Firstly, we have the definition of *queer archive*, as both an enunciational principle and an actual counter-institution that challenges the normativization of archival practices. As we stated in our introduction, Morris and Rawson's notion of 'queer' as the act of queering LGBT contents in order to disclose their counterhegemonic profile is highly relevant in our case, as it helps us to develop a theoretical model through which the polyvocal nature of our materials — and of the multiple identities they collect — is fully taken into account. Secondly, we have to stress the relationship between the very nature of the amateur analog videos we are investigating and their archival life. The facts that their videos were developed outside the professional realm, produced using consumer technology, and referred to alternative production/fruition institutional contexts should entail a different set of archival practices.

First and foremost, for instance, if the main goal of a non-professional video archive is to reconstruct not only the 'correct version' of an audiovisual text, but also the social network that fostered its development (as we argued in reference to the *PVEH* case study), then, in our cases, a strict separation between archival institutions is nothing but a limitation: on the one hand, confronting the paratextual sources would provide the users with a better understanding of the video contents; on the other, 'mixing up' the collections would allow a more exhaustive reconstruction of the social fabric in which countercultural video-making took shape in Bologna — more specifically, we could account for its inherent complexity, underscoring also how the nuances of sexual (and gender) identities stemmed from this fast-changing social turmoil. That is why the act of crossing

over these audiovisual archives is also an act of challenging fixed identities and social common places: in other words, this archival crossover, called *transarchive*, can refer to an act of queering the archive.

Queering Archival Records

LGBT amateur analog videos can claim for themselves a double layer of alternativeness: on the one hand, we have, of course, the counterhegemonic stance of audiovisual productions developed within a countercultural movement, whose institutional boundaries reflect the basic assumptions of the struggle against homophobia and heterosexism; on the other, we have audio-visual products that represent the unstandardized and heterogeneous side of the 'official' cinema/video realm. Indeed, as we can argue following Zimmermann, amateur videos allow us to investigate 'the more variegated and multiple practices of popular memory' from polyvocal points of view, since they refer to a 'visual practice emerging out of dispersed, localized, and often minoritized cultures, not a practice imposed on them'.[21] In the intersecting perspectives of film history and social history, researching amateur videos means to move away from 'a single, metanarrative, and omniscent viewpoint, based on referentiality, reality and facts that repress heterogeneity, toward a more particularized, multicultural construct of plural pasts.' In other words, the inherent polyvocality of these materials can open up 'historical analysis to different explanatory models'.[22]

Through this perspective, we could affirm that amateur videos account for the primary source of heterogeneity and singularity, which is everyday life. In our particular case, we can observe a merging point in the daily life of a community, where ordinariness meets social and political activism. In this way, the amateur analog videos preserved at *Il Cassero* (as well as the *PVEH* Collection) make us understand, for instance, not only how its members dealt with the AIDS crisis, but also how, in those days, the community itself tried to improve the quality of its members' daily lives — see *Cassero News*, Bologna's community 'amateur video-newsreel', or *GAY PANTERA ROSA* and the topsy-turvy context of an university occupation.

So, when it comes to reflect upon the role of LGBT amateur analog videos in an archive and the actual protocols that can be applied to them, we have to acknowledge the main difference between their configurations in a LGBT archive and in a queer archive. Both of them relate to audiovisual materials that dwell at the crossroads of everyday life and political activism. Anyway, in the LGBT archive it is crucial for these videos to reinforce specific identities, highlighting how they took part in the creation of an overarching and all-encompassing community in an historical moment when it is necessary to legitimize the existence

[21] Zimmermann, p. 1.
[22] Ivi, p. 5.

of non-heteronormative sexual orientations. In other words, the LGBT amateur analog video archive displays a *centripetal structure*, in which its items should be hypothetically ordered relating to the different parts of the community, creating at the same time audiovisual repositories for the LGBT macro-identity.

Instead, the queer archive tends to interpret these materials retrospectively as documents of polymorphous, open, inclusive and multi-layered identities against any form of normalization of LGBT memories.[23] In this way, the queer archive displays a *centrifugal structure* in which not only the internal boundaries (between the gay and bisexual identities, for instance), but also the external boundaries are questioned. More specifically, through the notion of queer archive, we can reflect on how an amateur video can become a hub for the inter-linkages among different countercultural communities.

The problem at stake here is thus how these hypothetical characteristics of the amateur analog video queer archive can be transformed in actual features. How can they be the distinctive marks of a framework that critiques and challenges 'the normativizing collecting and circulating practices of other institutions'? How can they bend the exertion of the power of consignation[24] — which affects not only the acquisition policies, but also how the archivists interpret these amateur videos and how they order them — toward the open and dialogic practices of the queer archive?

Drawing on our case studies, we will focus on these questions, outlining a 'double step' process.

Step 1: Private/Public Dialectic

When we think about amateur videos, we typically consider them as reservoirs of private and intimate memories. Outside the enclosed context of family fruition, these materials seem to be out of place. This is the reason why, when they enter the archive, we think that a sort of archival violence is perpetrated against them: they change their nature, becoming part of a publicly accessible institution. That's only partially true, at least for two reasons. Firstly, the archive itself does not always grant public access to the materials it stocks. Sometimes this is in the name of preservation (when access is a threat to the item's integrity) or for power issues (the stakeholders decide that the item must not be accessed). From this perspective, the archive is not a fully public institution: the 'publicness' of its items is always negotiated with the community. Secondly, as our case studies prove, many amateur analog videos were shown in semi-public fruition contexts.

For instance, as we already noted, *Cassero News* (1990) was narrowcasted on the bar TVs of the club, providing information and entertainment. Very often the

[23] Morris and Rawson, p. 84.

[24] Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 11–12.

information delivered was strictly focused on the life of the cultural center. For example, in its first edition the announcer reads the news regarding the nomination of *Il Cassero*'s board and introduces a video-report of the last national *Arcigay* conference. Although it was not mandatory to be gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender to get the club membership, it was highly improbable that someone outside the selected audience of the community would be interested in *Cassero News*: their fruition context was neither completely public nor completely private.

The same observations can be applied to *GAY PANTERA ROSA*. This video was not supposed to be narrowcasted, since it was only a rough 'video-draft'. Ultimately it was edited, and a polished version of it was then included into the fifteenth edition of *Videogiornale* — which, in turn, was narrowcasted on the TVs of the occupied classrooms, where the students gathered together before a TV-VCR system and watched their counter-informative newscast. This causes some very complex issues. First, it is implausible that people outside *Pantera*'s community watched it: non-leftist students were often considered as agitators and asked to leave. Secondly, unfinished materials were not supposed to be narrowcasted. They belonged to *Videogiornale*'s small archive, and could only have been watched by the 'video-journalists'. A further layer of 'privateness' emerges: the privateness of a transitional material, the master-tape, which was expected to remain sealed in *Videogiornale*'s metaphorical vault. So, if the screening modalities of these videos were semi-public (*Cassero News*) or semi-private (*GAY PANTERA ROSA*), how can they be related to the access policies of the amateur analog video queer archive, whose 'radical openness' challenges archival power?

In our opinion, the point at stake here is how the queer archive faces two issues. Paraphrasing Derrida, we can argue that, if there is no 'archive without consignation in an external place which assures the possibility of memorization, of repetition, of reproduction, or of remission',[25] there is no archive without consignation power. How does the queer archive deal with procedures that risk to keep stored materials secret and unaccessible? In the community's semi-public production and fruition contexts, we have tight personal relationships between who shot the videos (or acted in them) and their audience: in other words, these videos catalyse social and affective interactions, allowing for individual needs to become visible. For instance, we might refer to a video from *Il Cassero*'s collection which was not produced under the supervision of K.G.B.&B., but rather was a collaboration between *Il Cassero*'s lesbian groups: *Lesbo qui, Lesbo là, Lesbo tutta la città* (VHS, 1994),[26] shot during the first Italian National Pride in Rome by *Il Cassero*'s lesbian activists. In its 'amateurish' flow of fragmented

[25] Ibidem.

[26] The video refers to an important political moment for the whole Italian movement and for the lesbian part of it: as we stated before, the Rome Pride was the first National Pride; two years later, in 1996, the lesbian members of the movement voted to create a separated organization, *Arcilesbica*, that was nevertheless federated with *Arcigay*.

sequences, we can observe several participants re-performing (even parodying) their own coming out, like the middle-aged woman who addresses the camera and says 'Hi, Mom! I'm a Lesbian!'. Although someone recorded these identity performances onto a magnetic strip that could be narrowcasted everywhere (or even broadcasted), they never crossed *Il Cassero*'s community boundaries and remained within the limits of its safe space. Thus, when we theorize about the relations between LGBT amateur videos and the inner features of the queer archive, about the latter's inherent dialogicity and openness, we have to reflect on what negotiating public access to these materials really means.

Within this perspective, we have to account for another nuance of Zimmermann's polyvocality: the archive works as an 'infinite activation of the record'[27] that allows us to reconstruct its contents and the social context in which they took shape. This process operates through several recontextualisations that take place 'at every stage of a record's life [in our case, during the inventory, the technical restoration, the digitization, and the cataloguing phases] and in every dimension of the records continuum, adding values (or subtracting values) to the record'.[28] The notion of 'wide access' is crucial for this infinite reactivation process: it is a phase in which an archive that challenges 'centripetal' policies transforms what is usually considered as an archival asset into a public, broadly disseminated and disposable good, which is open to new interpretations and historiographical hypotheses. Although they could crack the boundaries of a restricted community, they allow a better understanding of its inner dynamics as well.

In the case of the analog video queer archive, this issue becomes very relevant. The queered record/document cannot be simply stored. When it becomes accessible, it becomes open to a wide range of hermeneutical manipulations: researchers that link the archival record to unexpected historical and cultural phenomena, mobilizing new forms of *counter-history*; activists (or former activists) that connect the item to their lives (and their social networks), creating new forms of *counter-memory*; archivists that relate collections to each other, although they belong to different archives, giving rise to new forms of *counter-archiviality*. In other words, the negotiation of consignation power and public access signals the relevance of 'wide access' as a *countercultural approach* to the queer amateur video archive: through its inner complexity and fluidity we aim at (re)constructing social and cultural *counter-networks*. In the last part of our paper, we will focus on a specific counter-archival typology: *queer transarchiviality*.

Step 2: Queer Transarchiviality

The queer archive constructs a memorial space whose items show how audiovisual materials that are often discarded as cheap and valueless can in fact work

[27] Ketelaar, p. 137.
[28] Ibidem.

as aggregators of a complex and fluid memory. Its features tend to challenge the semi-public (or semi-private) nature of our case studies. Thus, the analog video queer archive should be deemed as a framework in which the dialectic of privacy/publicness represents a constitutive dynamic and not a problem to be solved: this polar tension can mobilize new interpretations on LGBT countermemories by casting light on what was deemed appropriate for these semi-public videos in those days, and what a public function can do for the LGBTQIA+ community now. The public/private dialectic works as specific feature of the 'technology of memory'[29] the archive helps to shape, creating a disseminated memory that has built, and continues to build, the identity of the movement.

This 'technology of memory' and its 'reactivation processes' involve not only the different facets of the LGBT community, but also those 'neighbour' communities in which LGBT activists took part — in our cases, especially when we think about *Cassero News* and *GAY PANTERA ROSA*, Bologna's student movement. Crossing over the collections they belong to, we can reflect upon a crucial fact: both the gay and lesbian (and, more broadly, LGBT) and the leftist countercultural identities seemed to be (in those days in Italy) synchronically mobilized. That's why *transarchiviality*, the act of crossing over collections preserved in different archives, can be a useful tool when, for example, we have to investigate the life of an activist such as Vincenzo Tallarico (who was part both of *Il Cassero*'s and *Pantera*'s communities) and we have to account for the complex nature of his social networks.

Making public material that was (originally) semi-public/semi-private, and opening up the strict boundaries between different archives and linking their collections together means, first of all, to deny the 'centripetal' nature of the LGBT archive and to point out at the intersections between sexual orientation matters and broader political identity issues.

Another example of the *transarchival* usefulness is *PVEH*'s *Sfilata Daniele 19/7/94* (VHS, 1994). *Miss Italia Alternative*'s first edition, a man-in-drag beauty contest organized by Stefano Casagrande for fund-raising purposes (AIDS awareness), is included in this video. Daniele Del Pozzo, a former member of *Videogiornale*'s crew and *Il Cassero*'s activist, was among the participants: here we can find another superimposing layer that links our case studies to the social fabric that outline their backgrounds. Del Pozzo worked on several *Videogiornale* productions, even when its members decided to follow different research pathways. He and Lino Greco (another member of *Videogiornale*), for example, worked on a *found-footage* video called *Blue Movie* (VHS, 1993), whose main concept was a visual study on the relationship between the image-as-matter and the body.

As we can see, the individual pathways of each activist, student or videomaker draw a centrifugal map, in which none of them belong to just one social group. If these amateur videos hint at a such complex framework, their archival lives should

[29] Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of Californa Press, 1997), pp. 9–12.

not downgrade their entropy: preservation practices and access policies should work against every 'centripetal' consignation power[30] and facilitate the crossover of video collections — in other words, they should facilitate a *queer transarchiviality*.

Queer transarchiviality points to the establishment of an intersecting access frameworks in which the materials preserved in the LGBT archive could engage in dialogue with those stored in other archives, creating a *queer transarchive*. Here, the notion of 'wide access' becomes a relevant enhancer for the (re)construction of social-affective frames: it entails a multiplication of historiographical interpretations because every archival user (academic researchers, activists, etc.) can elaborate inter-linkages between different collections (and different archives) drawing on her/his historical knowledge or her/his memory. Every linkage is based on 'affinity recognition': videos belonging to different collections (and different archives) must have something in common, even on a very basic level — their content, for instance.

That is how the *queer transarchive* becomes more than a neutral mediator between the item's original context and contemporary researchers: the record is always manipulated and (re)constructed, and so is its functional context. In other words, the structure of the *queer transarchive* does not simply entail a batch of fixed, unquestionable and non-invasive protocols. Since it underscores the relevance of cross-boundary and fluid intersections between collections, archives, and social frameworks, it helps us to understand that every LGBT person has always been part of a wider social context and that she/he has always been compelled to negotiate her/his identity with it. In our cases, *Il Cassero*'s and Bologna's broader countercultural communities are inherently co-implicated, and so should be their audiovisual amateur archives, which witness the daily lives of their members. This is why (re)constructing and reactivating a record shapes new possible (counter)memories.

Not by chance, when Cook and Schwartz, two postmodern archival theorists, deconstruct the 'archival neutrality paradigm', they account for Butler's theory of performativity. Cook and Schwartz affirm that archival practices are based on repetition and ritual, through which a naturalization of archival 'codes of behaviour and belief'[31] is established. Those naturalized codes rule thanks to the 'tacit narratives' of the archive, transforming notions such as the sacredness of the vault and the predominance of preservation over access into scientific dogma. 'Yet routinized performance/practice, and the beliefs/theories that sustain it [...] can be shaken when social contexts become more fluid':[32] then, they can be challenged by 'transgressive performances'[33] that open new theoretical spaces and

[30] Derrida, pp. 11–12.
[31] Terry Cook and Joan M. Schwartz, 'Archives, Records, and Power: From (Postmodern) Theory to (Archival) Performance', *Archival Science*, 2.3 (2002), 171–85 (p. 173).
[32] Ivi, p. 176.
[33] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 173–180.

make old practices more inclusive. This change also involves, of course, archival power, which 'loses much of its authority'.[34]

Queer transarchiviality, in our opinion, belongs to the realm of 'transgressive performances'. As we can see, crossing over collections that belong to different archives raises our awareness about the multi-layered social and affective linkages between the LGBT movement and other movements, making them visible — and this is vital for non-researchers. *Queer transarchiviality* discloses how complex social interactions in the LGBT community have always been. They involve first of all the daily lives of people — their bodies, their stories — who cross paths with many other social and cultural groups: queering an analog video archive means, thus, to open it and to connect it to other archival frameworks, to deal with different spaces, with the 'inside' and the 'outside' of a community, and also with different temporalities. In other words, queering the archive means to queer temporalities: to retrospectively queer the past and to re-write history for the contemporary LGBT(QIA+) community.

[34] Cook and Schwartz, p. 177.

Notes for a History of Radio-Film: Cinematic Imagination and Intermedia Forms in Early Italian Radio

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Abstract

The article discusses the concept of 'radio-film', a term which repetitively entered the vocabulary of practitioners and theoreticians during the transition to sound, and raises several well acknowledged historical notions by adopting a slightly different question: has an idea of cinema as an entirely aural art — i.e. sound cinema as 'cinema made of sound' — ever come up in media history? Starting by considering the European scenario and by focusing more specifically on the case of the early Italian radio-play between 1925 and 1935, this article explores this path as a concrete historical possibility: in this context, the surfacing of two hybrid terms such as *fonoquadro* [phonoscene/phonoframe] and *suonomontaggio* [sound-montage] will represent the case studies for a discussion on 'intermediality' both as an epistemological framework to apply and 'a state of historical transition' to investigate. By questioning the role of cinema as an always present term of comparison in the debate on the medium specificity of radio and the ways in which a cinematic imagination has affected the development of entertainment genres in radio production, the essay aims at demonstrating how a hypothesis of aural cinema as a radio art can be grounded in several concrete aesthetic and technological intermedial exchanges.

Sound Cinema as an Aural Art: a Hypothesis in Media History

During the transition to sound cinema, the concept of a cinematic art conceived for radio seemed to surface sporadically all over Europe. Between the late 1920s and the early 1930s, shortly after Dziga Vertov had announced that 'a method for recording auditory phenomena on film tape had been discovered',[1] filmmakers and critics in the Soviet Union started talking about 'radio-film'. According to Stephen Lovell, at that time radio productions were conceived in analogy with cinema, since 'the aesthetic lexicon of the 1920s had no other term for a form of

[1] Dziga Vertov, 'KinoPravda & RadioPravda', *The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, ed. by Annette Belson, (London, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 95.

aural performance that was not theatre […], not a literary or journalistic text […], and not news report or commentary […]'.[2] In the meanwhile, the Breslau radio station in Germany premiered Werner Milch and Friedrich Wilhelm Bischoff's *Hallo! Hier Welle Erdball!* (1928), an audio piece that combined four previously recorded albums 'as a testing ground onto stereophonic disc'.[3] A different version of the same work would be broadcast again in 1930, together with Walter Ruttman's notorious sound-collage *Weekend* — one of the first attempts at an artistic composition that relied on an optical recording procedure, following the version perfected by the Tri-Ergon Company just some years before. These two radio-artworks have repeatedly been interpreted as the starting points of the tradition of *Film-Hoerspiele* or, as a critic of that time put it, 'films without moving images'.[4]

On March 1926, just two years after the first official radio transmissions in Italy, the National Broadcasting Company's agency *Radiorario* hosted an article named 'Acoustic Film and Radiophonic Literature' by the poet Mario Vugliano. In it he makes a direct comparison between the early age of cinema and the first years of radio, suggesting that the two media would grow together on parallel paths.

> Just like cinema, to begin with radio took advantage — as it still does now — of the 'materials' that were conceived for the other arts: literature and music. But every art has its own style, which simply does not suit the others: just as the cinematographer — who has a visual way of thinking — gradually rejected chapters of novels and dialogue from stage plays and instead created visual literature, so radio, especially in foreign countries, is now looking for what we can call a microphonic style. […] The acoustic film consists in uttering sounds that can make the ear feel the same sensations as those felt by the eye in front of cinematographic images.[5]

Vugliano later dismissed these experimentations as 'phonotechnical witticisms' or 'suburban fairground attractions', being convinced that 'radio will unfold its unpredictable possibilities and outline its own technique'[6] only when it faces the challenge of telling a story or staging a drama. Differently from the previous

[2] Stephen Lovell, *Russia in the Microphone Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 83–84.

[3] Daniel Gilfillan, *Pieces of Sound: German Experimental Radio* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), pp. 76–77. For a recent contribution on Ruttman's intermedial approach in *Weekend* see Andy Birtwistle, 'Photographic Sound Art and the Silent Modernity of Walter Ruttmann's *Weekend* (1930)', *The New Soundtrack*, 6.2 (2016), 109–127.

[4] Ivi, p. 77.

[5] Mario Vugliano, 'Pellicola acustica e letteratura radiofonica', *Radiorario*, 2.18 (May 1926), p. 1. (My translation. From now all translations from the Italian are the author's own.)

[6] A few months later, an updated version of the article — featuring references to the Irish essayist Clive Staple Lewis' *Broadcasting from Within* and to the *pièce radiophonique* 'Mare Moto' by the French playwrights Pierre Cusy and Gabriel Germinet — was published in the same magazine, significantly renamed *Radiotheatre*. See Mario Vugliano, 'Radioteatro', *Radiorario*, 2.36 (September 1926), p. 4.

examples, such a conception of 'acoustic film' did not involve the use of any actual 'film':[7] Vugliano used the word as a synonym for cinema, essentializing the art of moving images as 'a visual way of thinking' and its aural counterpart as 'a test to see through sound'.[8] A similar synesthetic task was suggested in 1930 by the theatre and film director Anton Giulio Bragaglia:

> someone provided the examples of the way in which the audience learns to understand cinema, and how a bi-dimensional sense of sight has grown, relying on a subconscious convention; in similar ways, new sensory abilities would be acquired by radio listeners, in order to overcome those absences which are instead the real treasure of this new mean of expression.[9]

Bragaglia then imagined radio listeners as 'an immense crowd of régisseurs/spectators',[10] capable of creating the show by themselves using the means of an inner vision to aid their sense of hearing. Radio listening becomes, in these terms, an even stronger 'visual way of thinking'.

This brief and patchy overview necessarily does not mete the ambitious aim of retracing all of the exchanges that occurred between radio and cinema as emerging media.[11] Nevertheless, the aforementioned examples aim to raise several well acknowledged historical notions by adopting a slightly different question: has an idea of cinema as an entirely aural art (i.e. sound cinema as 'cinema made of sound') ever come up in media history? The mere facts that film *was* at some point a support used in radio stations, and that a term such as the 'radio-film' repetitively entered the vocabulary of practitioners and theoreticians, make this path a concrete historical possibility. Since the analysis of this article will mainly focus on the Italian case, my starting point will be the ideas expressed by Vugliano and Bragaglia concerning radio as a 'medium for the inner vision'. It will retrace their concrete applications in the history of the Italian radio-play, from the earliest examples to the moment when sound-on-film technologies entered radio production as technical support. By exploring the ways in which a cinematic imagination has affected the development of entertainment genres in radio production, this essay will demonstrate how a hypothesis of aural cinema as a radio art can be grounded in several concrete aesthetic and technological intermedial exchanges.

[7] German experimentations in 'acoustic films' included the first work of Hoerspiele pioneer Alfred Braun.
[8] Vugliano, 'Pellicola acustica e letteratura radiofonica', p. 1.
[9] Anton Giulio Bragaglia, *Sottopalco. Saggi sul teatro* (Florence: Barulli e Figlio, 1937), p. 135.
[10] Ivi, p. 128.
[11] In this respect, my reflection builds on Paola Valentini's insights on how radio paved the way for the reception of sound cinema in Italy. See Paola Valentini, *Presenze sonore. Il passaggio al sonoro in Italia tra cinema e radio* (Florence: Le Lettere, 2007).

In order to do so, I will rely on two different understanding of intermediality. The first refers to an epistemological horizon and a historiographical approach, as formulated by Fickers, Aalbers, Jacobs and Bijsterveld: intermediality in this sense, is not only a theoretical category for the study of the complex interrelations among different media forms and their intramedia reference, but also a lived reality where new cultural practices emerge'.[12] The second is the notion of 'intermediality as a state of historical transition', theorized by Rick Altman: the search of a single medium for its specificity and the establishment of its specific identity is historicized in the passage from an intermedial instability to an all-encompassing state of multimediality.

> L'intermédialité devrait désigner, à mon avis, une étape historique, un état transitoire au cours du quel une forme en voie de devenir un média à part entière se trouve encore partagée entre plusieurs médias existants, à un point tel que sa propre identité reste en suspens. […] Car le système proposé ici ne se limite pas au seul cinéma: au contraire, il s'applique au double mouvement d'inscription et d'eirfacement de l'intermédialité propre à l'introduction de toute nouvelle technologie.[13]

Similar concepts were further elaborated by André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion in their theory of the double birth of a medium. Relying on the prototype of early cinema, they offer a general model that prescribes multiple stages of the life-span of each medium, where the appearance of a new technological process is followed by the emergence of particular procedures and, as a final step, by the constitution and institutionalization of an established medium. Along this process, new media, which are at first received as 'a new way of presenting already well-established entertainment genres' and an 'extension of earlier practices',[14] are born again when they finally find their 'medium-specific expression capable of disassociating the medium from other media or generic 'expressibles' that have already been distinguished and are being practiced'.[15] In Gaudreault and Marion's vision, the search for a distinctive expressive feature goes hand in hand with technological and institutional development: the spheres of institutionalized discourse, semiotic means of expression and materials, technological apparatuses and technological means of dissemination variously contribute in defining the medium's identity with respect to other media.[16]

[12] Andreas Fickers, Jasper Albers, Andres Jacobs, Katrin Bijsterveld, 'Sounds Familiar: Intermediality and re-mediation in the written, sonic and audiovisual narratives of Berlin Alexanderplatz', in *Soundscapes of the Urban Past: Staged Sound as Mediated Cultural Heritage*, ed. by Karin Bijsterveld (Buelefed: Transcript Verlag, 2007), p. 81.
[13] Rick Altman, 'De l'intermédialité au multimédia: cinéma, médias, avènement du son', *Cinemàs*, 10.1 (1999), 37–53 (pp. 38, 51).
[14] André Gaudreault, Philippe Marion, 'A Medium is Always Born Twice…', *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 3.1 (2005), 3–15 (p. 4).
[15] Ivi, p. 3.
[16] Ivi, p. 6.

Within these theoretical frameworks, my analysis will start from the discursive formation of the radio-play genre during the 'constitutive' period of Italian radio (the first decade of its history as a mass medium, from 1925 to 1935), providing the two key-terms *fonoquadro* (which, as will be explained, had the double meaning of 'phonoscene' and 'phonoframe') and *suonomontaggio* ('sound-montage') with some contextualization. More specifically, this study will retrace the search for medium-specific artistic expression by analysing several articles — published on the EIAR (Italian Institution for Radiophonic Auditions) periodicals *Radiorario* and *RadioCorriere* as well as in other newspapers or cultural magazines — which directly questioned the existence of a radio art. At first, the majority of practitioners, writers or intellectuals who took part in the debate considered dramas aired on the radio as a (more or less legitimate) extension of theatre with new technological means.[17] In this same challenge against other 'expressibles', as will be argued below, cinema played a quite different role: its presence as a term of comparison was more rarely addressed than the theatre, however it can nonetheless be inferred in the lexicon and the techniques of some radio productions. An insight into both the discursive dimension and the material practices in use at that time could therefore provide an overview of how radio observed cinema while searching for its own expressive form.

From the Aural Scene to the Sonic Frame. Building the Fonoquadro

The term '*fonoquadro*' emerged alongside the very first attempts to stage a drama that was prepared specifically for the radio: the original radio-play, Luigi Chiarelli's *L'anello di Teodosio* [Theodosius's Ring] was broadcast in November 1929, and officially introduced as 'a radio-comedy in thirty *fonoquadri*'.[18] Three years later, Alessandro De Stefani used an almost identical term — '*quadro acustico*' — to present his work *La dinamo dell'eroismo* ['The Bravery Engine'], the second original play to be premiered on the national frequencies, on 3 October 1932. The Italian word *quadro* has itself an 'intermedially' ambiguous meaning, as it may refer both to a theatrical and a cinematographic realm. In the former it indicates a smaller division of the act, a narrative unity (a 'scene'), in the latter it corresponds to a spatial and temporal unity of representation (a 'frame'). Strictly speaking, there is evidently no actual equivalent of the cinematographic frame that could possibly occur during the staging of a dramatic representation, whether it takes place in a radio studio or not. However, according to Bragaglia, the increasing number of stage plays organized in *quadri* at that time indicated specifically the willingness of theatre to compete against the modes of representation introduced by film art. As he would later recall:

[17] Enzo Ferrieri promoted an 'inquiry on radiotheatre' in the pages of the theatrical magazine *Convegno*, 8 August 1931.
[18] N.a., 'Una novità di Luigi Chiarelli a 1Mi e 1TO: "L'anello di Teodosio"', *Radiorario*, 8.46 (November 1929), p. 4.

> *Quadri*, then, means lightness, fantasy, multiplicity, a revolving stage: theatre wants to speed up its pace. To say 'to act' will soon equate to saying 'oppressive, slow, boring, stifling, tedious, tiresome'. It is something we started to say fifteen years ago […]. The revolution in the stage techniques mostly deals with the representational rhythm: a question of time, rather than space […] In the era of cinema, the theatre too must keep pace with accelerating representations of our time.[19]

The theorist of photodynamism stated that theatre could have equated cinema only by fastening its mode of representation. From this perspective, the notion of 'scene' was valuable as a mere unit of duration, for its rhythmical functions rather than/as well as the strictly narrative ones. As a 'one dimensional medium', radio could not help but to inherit such an enhanced temporal dimension: the unfolding of a radio-piece structure 'in "almost scenic" sequences, differently placed through time and space' eases the perception of the passing of time in a more 'concrete', 'tangible form', since it is organized in 'discrete spatiotemporal blocks' instead of passing in a constant flow.[20] To put it in simpler words: given that it cannot provide visual evidence of a given space in a given time, the entire aural representation depends on how sonic elements are ordered throughout time. As a consequence, early writings for radio tried to take advantage of these specificities by referring to the notion of *fonoquadro* as a spatiotemporal unit rather than as an autonomous narrative section (i.e., more as a 'phono-frame' than as a 'phono-scene'). In both aforementioned radio-plays, the *fonoquadri* followed one another, often marked by changes of settings. *L'anello di Teodosio*'s plot — three detectives chasing two imaginary thieves in an international scenario — was, according to the Italian radio historian Malatini, nothing more than 'an excuse to exploit the specific capabilities of the radio to easily and quickly displace the action from one location to another, using noises to provide clues'.[21] All the (admittedly disparate) locations where the drama took place ('hotels, an ocean liner travelling from Geneva to New York, a movie theatre, a theatre, a bar, the inside of an elevator…')[22] allowed for clearly acoustic, sometimes musical, characterizations. The characters run from an opera theatre to a jazz club, often passing through a stereotypical array of urban sounds ('street noises, the cries of the paperboys selling *L'Eco di Genova*, streetcar bells, train whistles, car horns').[23] As is proven by the several redundant lines in the dialogues ('We have just arrived in Geneva'; 'Now we have stopped in front of a theatre…'),[24] the writer was more concerned with the construction of a diegetic space than with narrative coherence itself.

[19] Bragaglia, p. 39.
[20] Angela Ida De Benedictis, *Radiodramma e arte radiofonica. Storia e funzioni della musica per radio in Italia* (Turin: EDT, 2007), p. 83.
[21] Franco Malatini, *Cinquant'anni di teatro radiofonico in Italia 1929-1979* (Turin: ERI-RAI, 1981), p. 21.
[22] N.a.,'Una novità di Luigi Chiarelli a 1Mi e 1TO: "L'anello di Teodosio"', p. 4.
[23] Quoted in Malatini, p. 22.
[24] Ibidem.

Two years later, Alessandro De Stefani — who had been working both as a playwright and a screenwriter — further enriched the definition of the *fonoquadro* by using almost cinematographic terms. While commenting on his work, *La dinamo dell'eroismo*, he specified that 'street noises and night noises, sounds coming from a tavern, an aerodrome, an anarchist club and a fire will interchange in a fast sequence of acoustic scenes [*quadri*] in order to recall those places'.[25] Moreover, he clearly underlined the intermingling of narrative development and the listener's experience of fictional space: 'The audience is required to follow the characters as they move from one place to another, and this movement, this different perspective, must be rendered with a different shading of noise'.[26] Further notes on the script detailed the composition of the *fonoquadri* and provided a prescription of how a given sound should move from the background to the foreground, or the other way round ('Electric bells, urban street noises, speakers, advertising, fast and fleeting sensations; then the noise of the city diminishes and fades away, as though swallowed by a dense fog; eventually, a voice emerges from total silence').[27] Whereas the listeners could sometimes infer their point of audition from the specifics of what they heard (as another note on the script reads: 'we can hear [car] noises very well because the windows are presumed to be open'),[28] more often they had to discover their coordinates in the diegetic space hearing one sound at the time. Most of the doors and the windows that are repeatedly slammed, being alternatively closed or opened in both Chiarelli's and De Stefani's plays, serve no other function than that of gradually revealing to the listeners where the action is taking place. As De Stefani wrote: 'One must be able to see and to recognize the places, the people and even their gestures by counting on the only clues coming from the "environment" and the dialogues'.[29]

Shortly after the broadcast of the radio-plays, the editorial staff of the National Radio magazine *RadioCorriere* (as it was named at the time) asked the listeners to provide feedback by submitting reviews. In order to respond to those critics who lamented that the plot had no inner logic and the characters lacked any sense of reality, the editors clearly specified that the main purpose of these experimentations was not to provide a 'realistic representation', but to 'assemble a set of impressions that could suggest, through simple acoustic means, the sight of a place or an action'.[30] The impressionistic and synesthetic task of a 'truly radiophonic comedy' could then be considered fulfilled, as long as almost all

[25] The author's reflections, which originally appeared on *RadioCorriere*, March 1932, p. 3, were republished as 'La dinamo dell'eroismo. Commedia radiofonica di Alessandro De Stefani' in the journal *Cinema Studio*, 3.11–12 (July-December 1993), p. 37. Together with the text of script (pp. 38–77). The following quotations will make reference to this version.
[26] Ibidem.
[27] Ivi, p. 57.
[28] Ivi, p. 41.
[29] Ivi p. 37.
[30] N.a.,'I giudizi critici degli ascoltatori su La dinamo dell'eroismo', *RadioCorriere*, 8.10 (March 1932), p. 3.

the listeners appreciated how 'you do not need your sight to enter the many settings where the radio-comedy takes place. Your hearing is enough',[31] 'to one of our critics the impression was so strong that he could even feel the smell of the tavern through the transmission'.[32] To prove further their point, the editors of *RadioCorriere* reported the opinion of an unusual listener. Professor Musella, 'blind since his infancy', gave a definitive confirmation about the efficiency of the sonic representation by stating: 'I felt like I was attending a theatrical play and a sound film at the same time'.[33]

Conversely, the engineers of the 'sonic staging' at the radio stations in Milan and Turin played a significantly different role from that of sound-makers on theatrical productions or silent movie projections. To face the 'specific problems owed to the reproduction of the infinite number of sounds and noises that compose the *fonoquadri*'[34] meant not only to look after the strictly material qualities of sounds, in order to provide an adequate acoustic backdrop (known among the German *Hoerspiele* practitioners with the specific name of *Geräuschkulisse*). Instead of synchronizing their movements to the lines spoken by the actors, so as to add aural information or enhance the believability of what the audience was already seeing on a stage or on a screen, they were required to 'build' the surroundings in the scene or in the frame anew, to make them 'visible' to the listening audience. Since they act both as stage technicians and set designers at one time, their task was not to 'stage', in its literal sense of 'putting something on the stage'; rather, they had to 'put something between the scenes, put it into action'.[35] As Valentini notes, in reference to the same examples: 'what is at stake here, is not just the construction of a mere décor de bruits, but also complex work on the sonic perspective, simultaneities and sequences which would ultimately have contributed to the presentation of a proper soundscape'.[36]

Though still far from being a proper 'unit', the *fonoquadro* rapidly lost the meaning that it originally held, as a narrative section, and gradually came to constitute an abstract notion that mirrored all the semantic overlaps that occur during the construction of a new media. Nevertheless, we can assume that the term had at least a two practical functions: on the one hand, by implying that writing a radio-play equated to writing a script for a theatre without a scene, or for a film which had no images, it allowed playwrights to re-imagine their work. On the other, it helped to organize — or rather, 'to frame' — the experience of the listeners throughout a rhythmical structure.

[31] Ivi, p. 4.
[32] Ibidem.
[33] Ibidem.
[34] N.a., 'Una novità di Luigi Chiarelli a 1Mi e 1TO: "L'anello di Teodosio"', p. 4.
[35] Bragaglia, p. 20.
[36] Valentini, p. 95.

Sound Montage and the Need for Technical Dramaturgy

> We used to recreate the sound of the wind by spinning a wooden wheel, while a few small lead spheres were supposed to imitate the sound of the sea, taking cue from the most conventional tradition. We usually looked for the right corner in the room so to obtain an echo effect. Within a space of twenty square meters we collected an armoury of touching noises [...]. Oh, the lost innocence of radio, the passion of youth! As a sign of progress, all of that world has now been replaced with many black records, well aligned in packages, each with a different label on it: 'train', 'army', 'thunderstorm', 'disaster', like the burnt down fables in a mourning dress.[37]

As the director of the first staging of *L'anello di Teodosio* and the tireless promoter of the debate on radio-theatre, Enzo Ferrieri nostalgically mourned the early times of the radio-play. What used to be the prerogative of the 'director/noise intoner', as he called it — to broadcast radio scripts by 'sticking to the chosen rhythm' and discarding 'anything that does not belong to 'the uniform sonic material, which is exclusively composed by words, noises, sounds and music'[38] — were then partially superseded by new technologies. Though recorded music had constituted a significant part of transmission schedules since their beginning, only in the mid-thirties did sound recording complete the technological apparatus of Italian radio. In 1933, the publicly owned record label C.E.T.R.A. was founded as an extension of the EIAR society in order to serve two main functions. First, it acted as a publishing company, recording and producing orchestras, theatrical companies or the artists that were already employed by the National Institution for Radio broadcasting. Second, some of its record-pressing machines were placed at the radio stations in Turin and Rome for internal production purposes.[39] Unlike those that were produced for the mass market, these records could be broadcast immediately after having been pressed. Before 1935, technological equipment was enriched by the introduction of both optical and magnetic recording systems. Due to the advantages and disadvantages of their technical specificities (no recording time limits versus the long lasting chemical processes required), the two Selenophone U7 apparatuses placed in the stations of Rome and Turin were only used to record those transmissions which were considered to be worth preserving. Conversely, almost every station employed a Blattnerphone steel tape recorder: since it could be employed repeatedly and facilitated 'erasures, corrections and superimpositions', it allowed for a trial-and-error process.[40] Sound recording technologies came to represent a new means of radio dissemination, preservation and production together, that deeply affected

[37] Enzo Ferrieri, 'Il regista radiofonico', *RadioCorriere*, 26.41 (October 1949), p. 30.
[38] Ivi, p. 30.
[39] See Luca Cerchiari, *Jazz e fascismo. Dalla nascita della radio a Gorni Kramer* (Palermo: L'Epos, 2003), pp. 23–24.
[40] EIAR, *Annuario dell'anno XIII. Dieci anni di radio in Italia* (Turin: Società Editrice Torinese, 1935), pp. 161–68.

the productive practices and routines behind different pre-established genres (such as sport chronicles, journalistic reportage, the transmission of institutional speeches, etc.)

During the same years, a brand new word made its appearance on the pages of *Radiocorriere*: two radio-works aired on 13 February 1934, called '*suonomontaggi*' ['sound montages'], were broadcast during the 'G.U.F Radio Hour', a programme that disseminated the creative efforts of Groups organized by the Fascist regime in Italian Universities.[41] While taking part in the newly established cultural-artistic competition *Littoriali della Cultura e dell'Arte*, every group of students was allowed to fill a one-hour time transmission per week, presenting their works from the nearest radio station.[42] In *La fontana malata* ['The Sick Fountain'] and *In linea* ['On the Line'], both by Renato Castellani and Livio Castiglioni, sound montage indicated simultaneously a new expressive form and an innovative technical practice borrowed from film production.

> Consider the loudspeaker not as a means for reproducing or disseminating plays, which can be technologically perfected day after day, but as an instrument capable of producing sound. Such a perspective opens up an entirely new field for the radio transmissions, not so different from the one encountered by the camera and the movie camera when they were no longer used as simple means of diffusion but as new artistic tools. The obvious comparison between sound and image led the young students from the G.U.F. in Milan while composing their work: they called it sound montage by analogy with the editing process, which converts the 'documentary pieces' shot in studio in the harmonic entirety of 'film'.[43]

La fontana malata was an acoustic interpretation of a poem of the same name written in 1904 by Aldo Palazzeschi. As the author is often considered to be a forerunner of the futurist aesthetics, his anti-subjectivist poetics of 'impersonality' and the intensive use of onomatopoeia in the literary text allowed the two young students to have an inanimate object acting as the main character in their aural drama. Gradually, the sound of water drops is surrounded by the noise of the courtyard (a young boy taking piano lessons, an old man playing arias from a Verdi's opera with an harmonica, some school kids spelling aloud, etc.), until 'the evening comes and the fountain is alone again, dreaming and regretting the past times'.[44] Excluding the 'weeping and coughing' of the fountain, all the sonic events in the piece were specifically written for the radio adaptation and juxtaposed in order to give the impression of a soundscape evolving throughout different moments of the day. The Fascist-inspired *In linea* was an even more abstract, almost musical composition, arranged over three moments: the untied

[41] See Luca La Rovere, 'Fascist Groups in Italian Universities: An Organization at the Service of the Totalitarian State', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 34.3 (July 1999), 457–75.
[42] N.a.,'I Littoriali della Cultura e dell'Arte', *RadioCorriere*, 12.9 (February 1936), p. 11.
[43] N.a., 'I suonomontaggi del Guf Milano', *RadioCorriere*, 10.74 (February 1934), p. 10.
[44] Ibidem. See also Malatini, p. 39.

and low sounds of the first part become gradually concise in a 'straight sonorous movement', and are then resolved in the final part through the appearance of a voice that resembles Mussolini's.[45] According to *RadioCorriere*, the plot was a metaphor of a 'righteous' education: 'after having struggled to nail a simplicity and reality that he could not grasp, a man encounters the fascist doctrine'.[46] Months later, Renato Castellani employed again the sound montage technique for another celebratory piece *La battaglia del Piave* ['The Battle on the Piave River'], which is officially presented as a 'radio-synthesis' and aired nationwide on 18 June 1934.[47] This patriotic, commemorative occasion gave to the author a chance to invoke the First World War battle between the Italian and the Austrian armies, by means of a series of acoustic impressions: the quiet flow of the river and the soldiers' whispers overnight suddenly gave way to the explosion of a sonic warfare, where the human voices alternatively 'get lost like leaves in a hurricane', 'engage a duel against each other while the artilleries fight' and finally 'find themselves again in a choral resonance'. Then 'the realism of telegraphic transmissions weaves in the tremendous orchestra of the battle',[48] finally announcing that the enemy's attack has failed.

Castellani himself highlighted the discontinuities from former attempts in radio drama (which he compares to 'theatrical representation on a revolving stage' with short acts, short dialogues and fast changing scenes), and provided a little theorization of his working methods. Radiophonic representation, he wrote, 'must be an open window on the wider field of sound, choral in its essence, not for some abstract speculations on the specificities of radio, but as a result of the systematization of the technical necessities underlying the realization of any work'.[49] According to his conception, the foregrounding of the sonic landscape 'as the leading actor', as well as the implicit underplay of the strictly narrative components, came as a direct consequence of the possibilities disclosed by the manipulation of recorded sound. During an interview years later — when he was already a well known film director — he emphasized how these ideas were related to the search for a medium-specific expression: 'It came to my mind that radio, which until then had been used as a means of dissemination, could turn out to be also a means of expression, if one was allowed to take the raw material of sound, record, elaborate, manipulate and edit it'.[50]

Castellani's considerations resemble strikingly the experimentations with sound-on-film technologies that had taken place in Germany and in the Soviet Union just some years before. Although he never explicitly mentions them, he appears almost

[45] See Valentini, p. 94.
[46] N.a., 'I suonomontaggi del Guf Milano', p. 10.
[47] N.a.,'La battaglia del Piave', *RadioCorriere*, 10.26 (June 1936), p. 3.
[48] Ibidem.
[49] Quoted in Gi.Mi., 'Spettacolo Corale', *RadioCorriere*, 10.50 (December 1934), p. 4.
[50] Quoted in Aldo Zappalà, 'Alla radio il cinema eternamente grato' in *La radio. Storia di sessant'anni. 1924/1984*, ed. by Peppino Ortoleva and Franco Monteleone (Turin: ERI Edizioni Rai, Piemonte Vivo, Crt, 1984), pp. 180–87 (p. 185).

to quote Walter Ruttmann's 1929 '*Ars Acustica*' manifesto ('All the audible in the world becomes material')[51] and to share Bishoff's conviction that 'acoustic dramaturgy is unthinkable without technical dramaturgy'.[52] Moreover, despite being inspired by a different ideology, his understanding of radio-art was related to the 'radio ear' theorized by Vertov in the *Kino-Pravda and Radio-Pravda* manifesto, which stated that the primary aim of the radio was to broadcast 'audible phenomena'[53] captured from the workers' real life rather than operas or symphonies.

What is even more relevant to this analysis is the way in which this conception of radio-drama re-configured the relationship with cinema. In an article significantly entitled 'Radio Takes Lessons from Cinema', Castellani explicitly compares cinema and radio both as technological media and art forms. The two apparatuses are outlined in an essential transmitter-receiver model (camera — projector *versus* microphone — speaker), and the specificity of 'simultaneity' on the radio is dismissed as an inessential feature for true artistic expression. Castellani argues that as long as the tasks of the medium are limited to reporting/transmitting the aural portion of an event taking place somewhere else, radio listening will be considered as a secondary activity — or, in the particular case of radio-play, a 'surrogate of live theatre'.[54] In order to develop its own expressive form, radio must follow the example of cinema as a purely visual art:

> it is *the silent film of radio* (a purely aural spectacle) that we must look for [...] In fact, the 'sound-spectacle' has been potentially achievable since the advent of the gramophone, but only the film soundtrack enables its concrete existence, thanks to an efficient montage technique.[55]

The article goes on to provide practical advice on how to obtain an alternate montage à la Griffith by 'shortening the film soundtrack from a three meters to, let's say, a one meter length' and 'gradually raising the volume into a crescendo and a purely sonic emotion'. The author concludes that the few conventional elements that allow the comprehension of a similar art form will be acquired by the spectators 'at least as quickly as they did with the passages from a long shot to a close up during the early years of silent cinema'.[56]

[51] Walter Ruttmann [1929], 'A New Approach to Sound Film and Radio, Programme for a photographic Sound Art' / 'Neue Gestaltung von Tonfilm und Funk. Programm einer photographischen Hörkunst', in *Walter Ruttmanns Tonmontagen als Ars Acustica*, ed. by Jeanpaul Goergen, (Siegen: Universität Gesthochschule Siegen, 1994), pp. 25–26 (p. 25). For an extended dissertation about the use of montage in German radio-plays see Antje Vowinckel, *Collagen im Hörspiel. Die Entwicklung einer radiophonen Kunst* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1995).
[52] Quoted in Peter Jelavich, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: Radio, Film and the Death of the Weimar Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), p. 89.
[53] Vertov, pp. 96–97.
[54] Renato Castellani, 'La radio a lezione dal cinematografo', *Cinema*, 1.12 (1936), pp. 465–66.
[55] Ibidem [emphasis in the original]
[56] Ibidem.

Conclusions

Some general observations can be made in the light of this overview. The first concerns the way in which the development of the radio-play traced out here mirrors an evolving conception of the medium and its specificities through a constant comparison to cinema. Since it was seen at first as an essentially 'real time' medium, radio found itself associated to live theatrical staging: it is then not surprising to see how radio dramatic production were often defined in essentially pejorative terms ('one dimensional theatre' or 'theatre for blind people'), i.e. defining the contours of the medium's opacity as evidences of its technical limitations. Broadcasting stage plays acoustically would deprive them of 1) the physical presence of the audience as a collective entity in front of the stage, and 2) all of the sensorial channels of perception except for hearing. In this first phase, cinema helped as a useful term for comparison, it being an art of 'illusionary perception'. In the same way that the juxtaposition of still images (frames/*quadri*) could provide the illusion of movement in a spatiotemporal continuum, so assembled sounds of different durations (*fonoquadri*) could create an illusionary, synesthetic impression of visual space. At a later stage, as soon as sound film and other audio-recording technologies emerged, the analogy with cinema was renewed in view of material consistency: 'sound montages' revealed how the mediation of radio could consist of multiple stages, rigidly distinguishing the technical issues related to the creation of a piece from those strictly bounded to its broadcasting. The aesthetization of the sound-spectacle as an 'art of post-production' relied on a new temporal and epistemological dimension, which would shortly after prove to be pivotal in other radio genres too, for aesthetic manipulation as well as for censorship interventions.[57]

Focusing on an aesthetical dimension, it is furthermore worth noting that the aims of older radio-plays (to make the listener 'see through sound', not to mention the rhythmical organization of listening) became exaggerated through the application of sound montage techniques. In a sense, the more similar the working methods grew on a material level, the more abstract the comparison with cinema became. Whereas at first radio could not resist reference to sound cinema (i.e. 'the talking film') as its ideal counterpart, the employment of sound film (i.e., sound-on-film-technologies) allowed Castellani to talk use 'the silent film of radio' as a metaphor for a purely mono-sensorial form of art. Within this process, the definition of 'radio-film' changed as the terms of the analogy with cinema shifted from one idea of the radio-film (a radio work that sounds like a talking film *without* moving images) to another (a radio-work that features recorded sound-on-film *instead* of moving images). Paradoxically, by employing the same technological means as the film medium and by constantly referring to cinema

[57] See EIAR, *Annuario dell'anno XIII. Dieci anni di radio in Italia* (Turin: Società Editrice Torinese, 1935), pp. 161–68.

as an art, radio sought to emancipate itself and to develop a symmetrical — and therefore equally respectable — expressive form.

One could provide further reflection on the intermedial concept of cinema as a radio art by expanding this focus to an international scale. For instance, Rudolf Arnheim's radio writings in the same years took stock of most of the topics that have been analysed here. He addressed radio as 'the countermedium of silent film'[58] and advocated the use of editable sound recordings for spatial and temporal manipulation. Moreover, his conception of 'sound drama' as a particular form of radio-play, which represented the 'possibility of a compelling aural art form drawn from the materials of radio but with broader applicability for film, as well',[59] was not so different from the examples of radio-film mentioned here. However, the various references he made to the 'radio film' as a 'hybrid creature' are in fact allusions to the television medium[60] (radio-film as 'the broadcasting of sounds and moving images', once again without necessarily involving a film stock) therefore further complicating the picture, and making the study of such intermedial notions an even more challenging task.

[58] Rudolf Arnheim, 'Confessions of a Maverick,' *Salmagundi*, 78-79 (Spring/Summer 1988), p. 50.
[59] Rudolf Arnheim, *Film*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1933), pp. 215–16. For an overview on Arnheim's intermedial thought, see Shawn Vancour, 'Arnheim on Radio: *Materialtheorie* and Beyond', in *Arnheim for Film and Media Studies*, ed. by Scott Higgins (New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 177–94.
[60] Rudolf Arnheim, 'Radio-Film', in *The Promise of Cinema: German Film Theory, 1907–1933*, ed. by Anton Kaes, Nicholas Baer and Michael Cowan (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), pp. 602–03.

The Experience of Duration and the Manipulation of Time in Exposed Cinema

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Abstract

This paper seeks to weave a path through some of the temporal forms of moving images. These are models that were created with the development of video, videoinstallations and later exposed film, in a crescendo of possibilities dictated by the exploration of technology and the desire to place the viewer in a temporal flow which is controlled to a greater or lesser degree. At least three different lines of temporal forms which determine the image have been developed in the comparison of the "real" duration and the "manipulated" duration of artwork. The first group of forms includes manipulations based on the linearity of the image such as *delay* and slow motion. A second line is related to the particular practice of the *loop*, while the third concerns the temporal intermissions caused by the overlaying of several lines, of space and time, within a single piece of work or the itinerary created by the artist. This set of forms shows how the practices of relocation and installation in cinema are the result of the combination of the temporal and spatial values of the works themselves, the places in which they are exhibited and of the spectators.

This paper is part of the long-running debate on the contemporary forms of moving images,[1] whereby time, its duration and manipulation are key elements

[1] See among others: *Oui, c'est du cinema. Formes et espaces de l'image en movement,* ed. by Philippe Dubois, Lucia Ramos Monteiro, Alessandro Bordina (Udine: Campanotto Editore, 2009); Philippe Dubois, *La Question vidéo. Entre cinéma et art contemporain* (Crisnée: Yellow Now, 2011); Philippe Dubois, 'Un "effet cinema" dans l'art contemporain', *Cinéma & Cie. International Film Studies Journal*, 8 (2006), 15–26; Cosetta G. Saba, 'Extended Cinema. The Performative Power of Cinema in Installation Practices', *Cinéma & Cie*, 20 (2013), 123–40; *Unstable Cinema. Film and Contemporary Visual Arts* ed. by Cosetta G. Saba and Cristiano Poian (Udine: Campanotto Editore, 2010); Raymond Bellour, *La Querelle des dispositifs. Cinéma – installations, expositions* (Paris: P.O.L, 2012); Francesco Casetti, *The Lumière Galaxy. Seven Key Words for the Cinema to Come* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015); Francesco Casetti, 'The Relocation of Cinema', *Necsus*, 2 (2012), <http://www.necsus-ejms.org/the-relocation-of-cinema/> [accessed 1 November 2016]; Erika Balsom, *Exibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013); Maeve Connolly, *The Place of Artist Cinema. Site, Space and Screen* (Bristol: Intellect, 2009); *Exhibiting the Moving Image: History Revisited*, ed. by François Bovier and Adeena Mey (Dijon–Zurich–Lausanne: Les Presses du réel/JRP/Ringier/University of Art and Design, 2015); *Extended*

in the construction of the artwork and of its fruition. The objective of this essay is to outline a classification of some of the recurring temporal forms of installed moving images. Given the complexity of the present-day scene, and considering also the magnitude of the exposed cinema phenomenon, it would now appear that the time has come to summarize the artistic practices of contemporary forms of the moving image. We use the general term 'exposed cinema' to describe its various forms, which could also be referred to as cinema, video, video installations, interactive installations and so on. This need to group them all under one umbrella has arisen, both from the various and diverse technological devices used (such as videotape, digital video, film, etc.), as well as from the institutional locations where these art forms are on display. Their exhibition within such a context renders them part of a unique and complex panorama.[2] The images and installations of Bruce Nauman and Dan Graham in the late sixties and seventies, and later those of Douglas Gordon, Bill Viola, Katia Maciel and Anri Sala, were all exhibited in similar settings, namely, institutional art spaces.

The theoretical framework available to us is vast. The many aspects of time, through the medium of videos and video installations, have often been touched upon, and some brilliant insights have emerged. In 'The Temporalities of Video: Extendedness Revisited',[3] Christine Ross identifies several forms of the exploration of time through the medium of video, paying particular attention, among other things, to the *loop*. As we shall see, this is a form which is widely used today. Rosalind Krauss, Catherine Fowler and Kate Mondloch[4] have also made further fundamental contributions to this theme, thus allowing us to map out a comprehensive framework.

Much less has been said, however, regarding our contemporary historical era, which started with the twenty-first century, and whose immediate roots are to be found in the expansion practices of 1990s cinema. For this we need to rely on interventions coming more from the curatorial field, such as that of Daniel Birnbaum, whose work *Chronology*[5] plunges us into a fascinating journey through temporality. Finally, the writings of Erika Balsom and Giuliana Bruno[6] are the best for understanding the complexity of the contemporary scene, with-

Temporalities: *Cinema and Contemporary Art* ed. by Alessandro Bordina, Vincenzo Estremo, Francesco Federici (Milan: Mimesis International, 2016).

[2] Francesco Federici, 'Framing Convergence. Theoretical Tools for a Landscape of Contemporary Cinematic Forms', in *Framings*, ed. by Slavko Kacunko, Ellen Harlizius-Klück and Hans Körner (Berlin: Logos Verlag Berlin, 2015), 367–82.

[3] Christine Ross, 'The Temporalities of Video: Extendedness Revisited', *Art Journal*, 65.3 (Fall, 2006), 82–99.

[4] See Catherine Fowler, 'Room for Experiment: Gallery Films and Vertical Time from Maya Deren to Eija Liisa Ahtila', *Screen*, 45.4 (2004), 324–43; Rosalind Krauss, 'Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism', *October*, 1 (1976), 50–64; Kate Mondloch, *Screens. Viewing Media Installation Art* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

[5] Daniel Birnbaum, *Chronology* (New York: Lucas & Sternberg, 2005).

[6] Balsom, *Exibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art*; Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film* (New York: Verso, 2002).

out getting caught up in classifications that relate solely to technological devices. Therefore, following the theoretical framework outlined above, this paper seeks to weave a path through some of the temporal forms of moving images. These models were created with the development of video, video installations and later exposed cinema, in a crescendo of possibilities defined by the exploration of technology and the desire to place the viewer in a temporal flow, which is subjected to greater or lesser degrees of control.

At least three different lines of temporal forms that determine the image have been developed in the comparison of the 'real' and the 'manipulated' duration of artwork. The first group of forms includes manipulations based on the linearity of the image such as *delay* and slow motion. A second line is related to the particular practice of the *loop*, while the third concerns the temporal intermissions caused by the overlaying of several lines of space and time within a single piece of work or the itinerary created by the artist. This set of forms shows how the practices of relocation and installation in cinema are the result of the combination of the temporal and spatial values of the works themselves, the places in which they are exhibited and of the spectators.

The aim of this essay is to provide an initial outline of certain developments, both historically and in contemporary practices, in order to facilitate reflection on certain forms of image manipulation, thus demonstrating the temporal complexity with which the image is constructed. This complexity, it ought to be reiterated, has often been overshadowed by the study of spatiality and the *site* in contemporary art. This work aims to show how, through the temporal forms analysed, we are now immersed in a context where the spatiality of an art work is constantly compared with its temporality. The result is various combinations of space and time, with the spectator at the centre.

The Exploration of Duration

To experience duration in exposed cinema means to be immersed in a constantly evolving flow. It is a paradox that, as spectators, we live within this movement, yet cannot grasp its essence. In order to do this one must take a step back in time to the dawn of video technology when, thanks to one of those fortunate meetings between the histories of art and cinema, temporality and spatiality became the two fundamental coordinates of artwork. In the exact moment when video came onto the art scene, its association with the word '*time*' became natural: 'Video technology was the first to mimic different functions and different time syntheses. It is a temporal technology not only because it modulates time-matter, but also because it always works on a duration,'[7] it manages in the utopia of put-

[7] Maurizio Lazzarato, *Videofilosofia. La percezione del tempo nel postfordismo* (Rome: Manifestolibri, 1996), pp. 106–07. See also Sandra Lischi, *Visioni elettroniche. L'oltre del cinema e l'arte del video* (Rome: Fondazione Scuola Nazionale di Cinema, 2001), p. 11.

ting together filming and editing and then vision.[8] Duration and its experience are one of the underpinning features of the electronic image and installations: to immerse vision in the present, as it is happening, is the prerogative of these art forms, without necessarily falling into the trap of the over-used notion of *time-based media*, which implies a rejection of the technical materiality of the device. In order to achieve this, the film has to exaggerate duration up to the point of eliminating it metaphorically. Andy Warhol, for example, worked in this way, seeking specifically to de-temporalize the film image by frustrating the spectator's vision. The final result of this continuous replication[9] is that time is somehow killed. In this sense, prolonging or slowing down are ways of destroying 'normalized' time, in direct contrast with the film industry model, but also with the artistic norm of the 1960s that was developing in tandem.

Continuing to the era in which exposed cinema was no longer a novelty, but rather the artistic norm, the title of the 2005 Biennale de Lyon was, significantly, *Expérience de la durée*.[10] In his introduction to the catalogue,[11] Nicolas Bourriaud uses notions from Bruno Latour and George Kubler as points of reference for a concept of duration that reaches beyond that of the present-day. From Latour he embraces the comment about modernist temporal flow, whereby 'au lieux d'un beau flux laminaire, on obtiendra le plus souvent un flux turbulent de tourbillons et de rapides. D'irréversible, le temps devient réversible';[12] from Kubler he accepts the denial of the temporal sequence as it is commonly understood.[13] These are starting points for inserting the values of duration into a context that is not linear, but confused and made up of overlapping elements. Bourriaud said he wanted to distance himself from 'global art' to become part of the legacy of conceptual art whereby 'art-making time is inseparable from the current moment'.[14] He instead became interested in the idea of *longue durée*,[15] as intended in the projectual dimension of artwork.

[8] See Maurizio Lazzarato, 'Paik et Bergson: la vidéo, les flus et le temps réel', in *Vidéo topiques: tours et retours de l'art vidéo*, ed. by Patrick Javault and Georges Heck (Paris–Strasbourg: Paris-Musées/Les musées de Strasbourg, 2002), 24–34.
[9] See Wayne Koestenbaum, *Andy Warhol* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2001); Sven Lütticken, 'Transforming Time', *Grey Room*, 41 (Fall 2010), 24–47.
[10] *Expérience de la durée* (Lyon, Biennale de Lyon, 2005), curated by Nicolas Bourriaud and Jérôme Sans.
[11] Nicolas Bourriaud, 'Time specific. Art contemporain, exploration et développement durable', *Expérience de la durée, Biennale de Lyon 2005*, ed. by Nicolas Bourriaud and Jérôme Sans, (Paris: Paris-Musées, 2005), pp. 17–24.
[12] Bruno Latour, *Nous n'avons jamais été modernes. Essai d'anthropologie symétrique* (Paris: La Découverte, 1997), p. 100.
[13] George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962).
[14] Nicolas Bourriaud, 'Experiencing Duration 'the Story of an Exhibition', in *Expérience de la durée,* ed. by Bourriaud and Sans, p. 44. In French: 'le temps de production artistique était indissociable du temps vécu'.
[15] For a historiographical point of view see Fernand Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1949), p. XIII; Fernand Braudel, 'La longue

Thanks then to the re-evaluation of duration in overlapping forms, we can link the artistic practices of video to those of installations. Whereas previously the focus was on the present and as such, duration was developed horizontally in a *continuum* that ended only when the spectator exited from the flow of the artwork, now perception is modified by multiple values, which combine to create a joint participation of horizontal and vertical temporal vehicles. This occurs in a present with a precise duration, yet at the same time continues.

Duration, inevitably linked to the multiple and possible concepts of time, can only be analysed when supported by a model of temporality. However, some of its features are common in various schools of thought and link to the simultaneity of several moments and, in particular, to the definition of a perception. If perception involves an action in time, in the same way perceiving duration involves a prior understanding of perception itself, with the risk of a short circuit, which is after all the form of inattentive contemplation of installed moving images.

Thus the analysis of the concept of duration, from the point of view of this research, oscillates between awareness (artistic) of the non-determinability of the temporal flow as normally experienced – therefore horizontal – and the need to find technical ploys to break this flow, which although not recognized, returns from the spectator's viewpoint as soon as he exits the temporality of the artwork.

Acceleration, slow motion, and editing are all ways of challenging the *real* duration, in an attempt to free the spectator from the obsessive contemporary fluidity and to oppose the general tendency of the moving image to draw his attention into a magma of times and spaces, without providing a way out. One could say that the attempt to free the spectator from time[16] becomes an attempt to imprison him in a flow that is simply different, but from which it is impossible find a perpetual liberation. The spatialization of time with various duration effects leads to an overlapping of perceptual lines.

Linear Forms of Duration

The idea of duration, when it passes into the field of moving images, brings into play several lines of argument regarding the image, its temporality and the extension of the temporality of the image. From a conceptual point of view, duration in itself can be detached from the development of the image, in the sense that it is the duration, in a certain way, that contains the image, since it delimits the extension. One comes to understand how the *experience of duration* can de-

durée', *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 4 (1958), 725–53, and the debate with Michel Foucault and Claude Lévi-Strauss.

16 See Francesco Federici, 'Undefined Temporalities. Contemporary Cinematic Forms: From Chronophobia to Chronophilia' in *Extended Temporalities*. *Cinema and Contemporary Art,* ed. by Francesco Federici, Alessandro Bordina, Vincenzo Estremo (Milan: Mimesis, 2016), pp. 107 –25.

velop at the level of the present or move in directions that exploit the different possible temporal aspects.

From a technological point of view, the primary form of video is the present, the experience at the moment of its production, obtained through live recording. Today it is common, though at the time of its introduction it was of huge significance both in the fields of visual communication and of art, which has made widespread use of it. Video technology exists *only* in live recording, within the event, whilst with cinema time is deferred. Live television is different again, as it is part of a power *dispositif*[17] and as such cannot be associated with video, which embodies the artistic and creative choice of the *moment*. Just as time is the 'matter' of video, likewise video can intervene in the present, at the very moment of its making and can modify it through manipulation.

It is clear how the present experienced through video conceptually represents a resource, a possibility in artistic practice which does not appear to have been fully expressed. The exploration of the present is an exciting movement, when compared with cinema's inability to do the same. Very soon it becomes clear that the great interest in video art and video installations is of simulating all that happens in the present, be it memory, the experience of temporal contractions, acceleration, slow motion and, to an even greater extent, circularity. The present is a mere starting point, no matter how successful in its technological achievements. Strategies of experience develop from here and are carefully explored by all those artists who have the idea of consciously mixing space and time.

Forcing the viewer into an unnatural temporal experience in order to 'free them' from the common experience of time: this is not what we might call spectator freedom, yet it remains within an artistic paradigm that has never ceased to work since the end of the 1960s. Since then, thanks in particular to closed circuit (itself bearer of clear political and metaphorical significance), vision becomes imprisoned in temporal perception. Although today the passive/active dichotomy has been recognized as the product of a prevarication, the use of time, during those years in which the practices that are at the core of this paper began to appear, thrived on a search for freedom.

> Artists such as Graham, Bruce Nauman, and Joan Jonas all produced works containing feedback loops of live cameras and monitors, installations into which viewers are invited to enter. Drawn into the visual machinery they are not only viewers but instantly also part of that which could be seen, i.e., not only perceiving subjects but also bodies forced into the passive role of the perceived object.[18]

The body, which is the other main object of possible study regarding the practice of installed moving images, allows physical, sometimes haptic perception and itself becomes the object of perception in one of the multiple short circuits

[17] Lazzarato, 'Paik et Bergson', p. 30.
[18] Birnbaum, p. 154.

that characterize contemporary art. Too far away spatially to be *in* the screen, the body takes us *into* the time produced by the images. It is in any case a movement of entry, with the only difference, albeit major, being that when we deal with temporal matter easy entry means easy exit due to multiple factors such as concentration, surroundings and unfolding narrative unrelated to the work into which we 'enter'. As to the above-mentioned practices, in a historical moment in which the evolution of visual forms of control became pressing, it seemed logical to concentrate artistic attention on reflections on the physical and mental imprisonment of vision.

Bearing in mind that 'it is important to recognize that recent experimentation with spatializing time and duration, as well as its critical reception, has an important precedent in media installation art of the 1960s and 1970s',[19] we will now examine some works from that period.

Bruce Nauman, when working on the 'space-in-between' referred to by Margaret Morse,[20] was also working on a recurring temporality. Dan Graham, who according to Birnbaum exemplifies how to divide 'the Present Tense of Space',[21] operates in a similar way. The 'presentness' of which Robert Morris speaks is experienced by the spectator in a modified manner and above all is broken up into different levels of firstly spatial and then temporal editing. The act of being present collides with a series of ways of unfolding one's temporal self.

In Bruce Nauman's various *Corridor* exhibits, which span the 1969–1974 period, the return of the time of the experience divests the visitor's present essence. It's about starting with the idea that 'real space is not experienced except in real time',[22] considering that practices which can be united with post-minimalism[23] become greatly complicated by the breaking up of the *present tense*. To paraphrase Janet Kraynak, the experience of experience itself, provoked in *Corridor,* compresses the path traced by Nauman's original *performance*, its re-proposition in video and the present and future experienced by the spectator in action.[24]

Similarly, in the 1970's Dan Graham lined up a series of works explicitly connected to time and its fragmentation: *Past Future Split Attention* (1972) as well as *Present Continuous Past(s)*, *Two Rooms/Reverse Video Delay*, *Time Delay Room* and *Opposing Mirrors and Video Monitors on Time Delay,* all in 1974. As Nick Kaye writes, a game between 'Video Time' and 'Performance Time'[25] is on stage

[19] Mondloch, p. 42.
[20] see Margaret Morse, 'Video Installation Art: the Body, the Image and the Space-in-Between', in *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art*, ed. by Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer, (New York/San Francisco: Aperture/BAVC, 1990), pp. 153–67.
[21] Robert Morris, 'The Present Tense of Space' in *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris*, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1995), pp. 175–209.
[22] Ivi, p. 177.
[23] Nick Kaye, *Multi-Media: Video - Installation - Performance* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 66.
[24] Janet Kraynak, *Please Pay Attention Please: Bruce Nauman's Words: Writings and Interviews* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), p. 30.
[25] Kaye, p. 37.

and both are revisited by the spectator and by the vision in a game that is purposefully made to be labyrinthine. The artist criticizes Morris's *presentness:* he wants to make the spectator's perceptive process explicit and at the same time show the impossibility of 'locating a pure present tense'.

When spatialized, the forms of video show the technological fragility of live filming by inserting simple manipulations. *Delay* is one of the most common and efficient. It describes the trajectory of the route, re-proposing in sequence the trajectory itself in a process that can ideally only be stopped by the spectator's static nature. They are practices that will soon be abandoned since, in a certain sense, exploited to the highest level by the artistic scene and also because, after a certain period of time they no longer represent social and cultural demands. When connected to closed circuit, manipulation through *delay* remains one of the most interesting forms of time analysis, showing immediately that video too, although made up of time, cannot be used in the analysis of the same, unless through manipulations made with the intention of simulating the overlapping of human perception.

Exactly ten years prior to the aforementioned *Biennale de Lyon*, the third edition of the same event[26] had as one of its centrepieces a work by Douglas Gordon, the slowing down of *The Searchers* (John Ford, 1956) which was decelerated to a duration of five years. *5 years drive-by* (1995) allows the spectator to see only one second a day of Ford's film. It is one of the many experiments by the Scottish artist on cinematographic-artistic duration. It is curious to think how the same artistic event, the Biennale de Lyon, could have chosen works, ten years later, which reflected on slowness, speed and duration.

It is equally true that the first wave of experimentation in the field of video and video installations came to an end in the first half of the 1990s, giving way to the more 'complex' forms of the 21st century. Françoise Parfait, who quotes Gordon's work, relies on Paul Virilio's philosophy and his idea of 'espace-vitesse' and 'esthétique de la disparition' where the moving images are only perceived in the moment in which they disappear.[27] Therefore, if the acceleration of human time changes our relationship with reality, within the museum time, the excessive slow motion of the projection changes our relationship with the artistic reality. In this Douglas Gordon is repeatedly a master: the formula of *24 Hour Psycho* remains contemporary and can be expanded in various ways, as in *5 years drive-by.*

[26] *Interactivité, image mobile, vidéo* (Lyon: Biennale de Lyon, 1995), curated by Thierry Prat, Thierry Raspail and Georges Rey.

[27] Paul Virilio, *Esthétique de la disparition: essai sur le cinématisme* (Paris: Éd. Balland, 1980); Paul Virilio, *La Machine de vision: essai sur les nouvelles techniques de représentation* (Paris: Éd Galilée, 1988); Paul Virilio, *La Vitesse de la libération* (Paris: Éd. Galilée, 1995). 'Pour moi la vitesse est l'analyseur numéro un. Dans une société où la vitesse n'était pas mise en œuvre techniquement, industriellement, on pouvait encore se poser la question. A partir du moment où on invente la machine à vapeur et le télégraphe, c'est fini.' Paul Virilio, 'Les Rèvolutions de la vitesse. Conversation avec Paul Virilio', in *La pensée exposée, Textes et entretiens pour la Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain* (Arles/Paris Actes Sud/Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, 2012), p. 258.

It means denying habitual perception and moving into a temporal model which is rather uninviting for the spectatorial habit of speedy fruition.

It is also about connecting with a concept that contrasts speed. Not that Gordon's work is forcibly affected by the development of socio-political movements intent on the slowing down of life, a life which today is considered archaic in its forms. However, art affronts its contemporaneity and feeds on it. Indeed, Bill Viola – another contemporary star – has made slowness and visual intensification his distinctive hallmark, to the point of forcing the spectator's vision into the perception of the slowing down of the image.

The exhibition dedicated to him at the Grand Palais in Paris[28] cannot be enjoyed unless the time of the works is respected, intensifying a visual route very different from the contemporary tendency of viewing artwork in a museum. Both Bill Viola's temporalities as well as the spaces enlivened by the interferences produced by each of them, strike us with their inevitable wholeness, and rarely in their singularity. It is a paradoxical outcome, since the use of such decelerated motion together with the use of high-precision cameras should attract our attention towards detail and not the whole. Instead a strident contrast is created: Viola's unbearable temporality is made visible by the spatial leaps into which vision is forced, where several works are displayed together or where the idea of polyptych (highly developed in Medieval and Renaissance culture, source of inspiration for the Californian artist) bows to narrated time. If we think of the room in which there are three works of art, *Catherine's Room* (2001), *Four Hands* (2001) and *Surrender* (2001), this becomes evident. Eleven pictures are created from three works, each one practically devoid of action and all slowed down to the point of visual exasperation. But the characteristic precision of the images produced by the artist comes to light more in the whole than in the detail. The spectators' vision leaps, seldom allowing contemplation and, in spite of this, the perception of the slowness is clear in their eyes. In a less recent interview dedicated to the question of time in his works Bill Viola explains:

> You have to look at two different kinds of time in a very general way that exist in the world. The time of each individual, their life cycles and their lifelines. And the kind of time that is associated with nature and the world which is eternal and infinite and exists beyond the span of any individual person. And we can only know the former but we aspire to understand the latter.
>
> That's why all great religious traditions have some kind of theory or idea or concept of eternity and that's when you look at human life in individual terms you end up with a life with a beginning and an end like films do. And if you look at human life from a social standpoint […] then you're looking at a circle that is always turning and is eternal really.[29]

[28] *Bill Viola* (Paris: Grand Palais, 2004), curated by Jérôme Neutres and Kira Perov.

[29] Stuart Koop and Charlotte Day, 'Video, Being and Time. Interview with Bill Viola', *LIKE*, 8 (Autumn 1999), 20-26, p. 20.

Hence his attraction to oriental, cyclical and non-linear temporal forms, capable of expanding the range of contemplated vision beyond the linear misinterpretation of time. Likewise, his need to move in a manipulated temporality is derived from this philosophy. Just like Gordon, who is explicit in this, Viola realizes that his work is imperceptible, in the sense that it is not perceptible according to contemporary possibilities. He offers it as a sort of temporal alternative to common time, like a model of resistance to collective fruition.

Therefore, the manipulation of the temporality of the image becomes the most appropriate form, in art, for *measuring* memory and experience: non-existent temporalities are made to collide (in our perception) with recognized models in an attempt to create awareness in the experience of vision.

Cyclical Forms of the Image

The form of the *loop* is one of the essences of the moving image in contemporary art, one of the real forms that are opposed to the finiteness of film as presented at the cinema. The contemporary temporal essence returns towards itself, as if the impossibility of a comprehension based on criteria that have since been abandoned could be remedied by an obsessive return into a confused temporal labyrinth.

The *loop* has a practical and a conceptual function. The first relates to the fruition of the work: when we are faced with artworks that are the result of an 'open-ended temporality'[30] the only way to enter the visual discourse is that of repetition. This allows us to take back what was lost upon entering into a random moment of the development. Similarly, it enables the spatialization of the work. Leaving the flow of the image in continuous development, the relationship with the *site* becomes critical, because they are in relation *ad infinitum*.

The second, on the other hand, is related to the chronological need of contemporary art. Manipulations such as *delay,* slow motion and acceleration are important visual styles for many artists and have led to a series of undoubtedly valuable widespread practices. The *loop,* however, highlights the contemporaneity around the idea of repetition, which has become the only acceptable chronological development in the chaos of proposed timelines. The return is a sort of systematic proposition of our contemporaneity. 'Loops, circularity and rotation are modes of visualization, modes of (in)stalling time. What they have in common is their ability to make moving images and entire sequences return',[31] says Birnbaum, referring particularly to the work of Tacita Dean, *Fernsehturm* (2000).

From among the artists working with this form of temporality, we could take the Brazilian Katia Maciel as an example. *'Répétition(s)'*,[32] the Paris exhibition dedicated precisely to repetition in the moving image, is interesting in this re-

[30] Mondloch, p. 43.
[31] Birnbaum, p. 68.
[32] Katia Maciel, *'Répétition(s)'*, (Paris: Maison Européenne de la Photographie, 2014).

spect. For the artist it is about relating the time of the vision to the time of the artwork in a very particular way, using short video sequences to be shown in continuous repetition, hence *loop,* inserting these returns at a precise moment of the action, in order to create an endless repetition. All this is obtained using micro-actions. According to Katia Maciel:

> On pourrait affirmer que le temps est, à certains égards, une invention issue de notre rapport existentiel à la répétition. 'Nous sommes ce que nous répétons sans cesse', affirmait Aristote dans l'*Éthique à Nicomaque*. L'idée de répétition se manifeste à travers la plupart de mes travaux dans lesquels le temps semble résister au temps. L'utilisation récurrente de la mise en boucle de séquences vidéo n'est pas seulement une figure de style, elle est, avant tout, l'essence même de la poétique qui opère dans les images que je façonne.[33]

Time withstands time through its repetition with no solution of continuity. They are videos that determine an immediate misunderstanding of the action once in front of the image: in *Meio cheio, meio vazio* (2009), the simple act of pouring water from a jug into a glass struggles with the fact that the glass is always half full, never filling to the top. The *loop* allows us to break the chronological advancement of the action and doing so visually creates an impact with the spectator's perception. A similar procedure occurs in *Timeless* (2009) where the spectator is in front of an hourglass in which the sand both falls and rises, moving in both directions. A doubled moment, which again is endless: a sort of mechanism that 'create the illusion of an infinite present'. *Uma Árvore* (2009) was one of the most powerful installations of the Paris exhibition since it was installed in a room similar to a large corridor accessible to spectators, at the end of which there was the image of a tree, as in the title, which would extend and withdraw provoking the spectator's temptation to move his body forward and then immediately back again, whereby the extension of the branches becomes an effective presence in the environment.

Ondas (2006) was the only interactive work presented in the exhibition. It was a projection of sea waves and a 'reactive sensorial mat', whereby the weight of the spectator creates other waves under foot. Therefore it was a wave in the marine sense, but also a wave of energy, mixing the incessant flow of the water, a sort of natural *loop*, with a flow created by the visitor's body.

The examples of the Brazilian artist are interesting as they make the viewing experience of a very clear object (a jug and a glass, the beach, an hour glass, the artist herself) collide with the almost immediate surprise of an action that is impossible from a temporal viewpoint. A conceptual game, therefore, but of the type useful in the perception of the image of the daily flow of time. It was an exhibition that as a whole would not require more than a few minutes total

[33] Katia Maciel, *'Répétition(s)'*, <http://www.mep-fr.org/evenement/katia-maciel/> [accessed 1 November 2016].

viewing if one were to follow the chronological order of the videos in their entirety. The *loop* makes this discourse meaningless, because a series of interferences come into play that are modified each time the action returns.

Forms of Temporal Intermittence

The artistic presumption that any work, of any length, should be experienced in its entirety is frustrated by the actual spectatorial practice of cancelling the duration of the vision, substituting it with his own, personally 'invented' one.

There is undoubtedly an 'exploratory duration' that Anne-Marie Duguet speaks of in relation to Jeffrey Shaw's work.[34] A 'window shopping approach'[35] on the part of the viewer also exists. The work of art is, in contemporary times, the fruit of an attempted path of liberation of the spectator and, even when this has not been achieved, as a result it becomes possible to move with greater ease in the exhibition hall of the museum.

At the Venice Biennale 2013, the French Pavilion (in actual fact German, because the two countries had decided to swap buildings for the 2013 edition), displayed a work by Anri Sala, *Ravel, Ravel, Unravel*. Based on the *Piano Concerto for the Left Hand in D major* (1930) by Maurice Ravel, this work offers the viewer a unique experience that is therefore complicated to analyse. The first level, architectural, is also important for temporal analysis. Christopher Mooney writes:

> The French building is an innocuous enough space. Built in 1912, designed by an Italian and owned by the citizens of Venice, it presents exhibiting artists with only one problem: how to fill its standard-issue neoclassical shell. The German-designed and owned pavilion, however, with its temple-like apse and towering Teutonic pillars, presents a surfeit of ticklish issues: architectural, aesthetic, political, you name it. Built in 1909, Nazified in 1938, de-Nazified in 1947 and almost razed a couple of times since, it is overdetermined by history and overloaded with ghosts. Included among the latter is the spirit of the last artist to show there, Christoph Schlingensief, who died in August 2010, a year before his Venice installation opened. Schlingensief's curator and widow turned the building into a Schlingensief mausoleum of sorts, and it worked – the Biennale jury awarded the pavilion its top prize.[36]

It was the same pavilion that had witnessed the famous work of Hans Haacke, who in 1993 destroyed the marble floor where Mussolini and Hitler shook hands. With an emotional load of this magnitude, Anri Sala decided to rethink

[34] See *Jeffrey Shaw: a User's Manual, from Expanded Cinema to Virtual Reality* ed. by Anne-Marie Duguet, Peter Weibel and Heinrich Klotz (Ostfildern: Cantz, 1997), p. 21.
[35] Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping. Cinema and the Postmodern* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1994).
[36] Christopher Mooney, 'Anri Sala', *Art Review* (Summer 2013), <http://artreview.com/features/feature_anri_sala> [accessed 9 February 2016].

the space and time: he compelled the spectator to go in through a side entrance, leading firstly to a room where he could watch a video depicting DJ Chloè Thévenin, *Unravel* (2013). Through the next door, the central room served as the core of the artwork: lined with soundproofing material, it contained two screens, one higher up and the other lower and slightly to the left, with two video performances of Ravel's *Piano Concerto for the Left Hand in D major*, performed by the virtuosos Louis Lortie and Jean-Efflam Bavouze: hence *Ravel Ravel* (2013). From here there was access to the third room, with the second projection of *Unravel*, showing Chloè Thévenin trying to concatenate the two interpretations of the *Concerto*. This is followed by the exit.

> Le projet d'Anri Sala ne réalise pas un véritable réarrangement de l'œuvre originale, mais des modifications de tempos, afin de créer une sensation d'espace variable, c'est-à-dire d'extension voire d'étirement de l'espace. Il recherche 'la perception d'une chasse', selon ses propres termes, comme si deux voix se répondaient mimétiquement.[37]

To this spatial extension another equivalent temporal one was added, because the modified repetition created the effect of an elongation of perception. When the concerts began, the two tracks were simultaneous. At a certain point they divided using the technique of *phasing*, based on the de-synchronization of two musical phases. This is a trick of space and time, therefore, within a structure that is already complex, from a historical viewpoint.

> When you work with a time-based medium you are aware of the use of time and how it is experienced. Making a film is like simultaneously crafting an object and the duration of the public's encounter with it. The duration becomes the object. The efficiency of the object will depend on the efficiency of its duration. But the objective time and the subjective experiencing of it do not always have the same duration. Sometimes the experience of time feels longer or shorter than the real duration, the time-code time.[38]

The relationship between the duration and the object of vision became crucial, to the point that it depended on the duration of the latter, in a circuit between objective and subjective time. The French pavilion was organized in this way and as such was a model: it included the art of time in the extension of time and modified the values of both, according to the relationship with the spectator, who was thus obliged to follow a precise path, but despite this still able to choose his viewing time. An artwork of this kind clearly highlights the question of 'forms

[37] Christine Macel, 'Faux Jumeaux', in *Anri Sala, Ravel Ravel Unravel*, ed. by Christine Macel and Anri Sala (Paris: Manuella Éditions, Institut Français, Centre National des Arts Plastiques, 2013), 9-20, p. 15.
[38] *Anri Sala*, ed. by Mark Godfrey, Hans Ulrich Obrist and Liam Gillick (London: Phaidon, 2006), p. 27.

of temporal intermittence' that complete our journey: artworks that are initially complex, with the aim of reflecting adequately on the relationship between space and time within the work. Artworks that incorporate a reflection on the different levels of artistic device in direct comparison with the installation *site* and the medium or media selected. *Ravel, Ravel, Unravel* is a key example that showed the interpenetration of spaces and times of viewing. The spectator's subjectivity was added as a last line of perception, overlapping temporal and spatial perception. In this sense the forms of temporal intermittency were the result of previous experiences of linearity and circularity and the best example for reflecting on the management of the spectator and his times in contemporary art.

Thus we can observe how the different forms that have been analysed offer a path that aims to summarize the main forms of the temporalization of moving images when they are spatialized. From the linear forms that have been offered to us by the history of contemporary visual arts, to circular forms, peculiarities of moving images and in particular exposed film. Both ways of using time are at the basis of the composite system, the last one we considered, of which Anri Sala's pavilion was a key example, considering the explicit reasoning on the relationship between images and sound. Taken together they show us how the forms of relocation, exhibition and installation, are part of the same set, one that compares the spatial with the temporal values of images and the places in which they are located.

Archival Hauntings in the Revenant Narratives from Home in Péter Forgács's *Private Hungary*

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Abstract

The paper discusses the haunting narratives of amateur home movies in Péter Forgács's multipart project *Private Hungary* (1988-2002), reading found-footage documentaries as a spectral repetition of a past era. It suggests that the tool-character of 'revenant' narratives may provide a new interpretative dimension for the archival collection of Central European micro-narratives, presenting photographs, freeze-frames and colour filters as an innovative form of reiteration. The project's found footage films employ re-personalize film form, re-writing forgotten archival stories over a backdrop of the *grand récits* (and national upheavals) of the Holocaust and 'goulash' communism. In particular, I read two Jewish stories, *Dusi & Jenő* (1989) and *Free Fall* (1996), in terms of their intermingling historical narratives, which 'doubly occupied' time, and formed the plurality of revenant visions. This 'aesthetics of ruins', which is presented as an effect of the coalescence of time, attempts to pose new questions and redefine our understanding of the visual heritage of past generations.

Introduction

In the last decades, there have been growing debates on images that change across space and time, within an interdisciplinary context. In the history of visual culture, discussions of contemporary Europe, according to Thomas Elsaesser, have been 'doubly occupied, indeed haunted: first by its recent history and historical catastrophes still not worked through or laid to rest (Nazism, the Holocaust and the failure of Socialism), and secondly, Europe is pre-occupied with the consequences of colonialism — reluctantly reminded of economic exploitation, colonialism and slavery, precisely by […] hyphenated Europeans'.[1] In other words, today's socio-political situation reflects the unique tendency of two

[1] Thomas Elssaesser, 'Real Location, Fantasy Space, Performative Place: Double Occupancy and Mutual Interference in European Cinema', in *European Film Theory*, ed. by Temenuga Trifonova (New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 47–61 (p. 51).

driving forces, both of which aim to re-evaluate a new form of indigenous media content, and return to forgotten sources and commemorative practices. Without little doubt, some amateur home movies and archival footage may require extensive aesthetic analysis in this regard, making visible the 'ghosts' invoked of past eras. In modern societies, such content is predominantly embedded in a broad 'crisis of representation', that is, a loss of faith in the possibility of historical and visual truth. In other words, this epistemological claim marks the transition away from 'formal experimentation, attention to dialogical context of fieldwork, incorporation of multiple authorial voices'.[2]

The essay focuses on these questions, specifically by reflecting on the comparison of theoretical statements and newly invented, modern paradigms and formal experimentation techniques that are 'in disarray', with 'problems intractable, and phenomena only partly understood'.[3] It investigates the content of what I call 'revenant hauntings' as a possible framework to analyse Péter Forgács's found-footage project *Private Hungary* (*Privát Magyarország*, 1988–2002). To establish this claim, I recall the 'revenant' aspects of space and time that trace the ordinary lives of people faced with national upheavals. In this process, previous generations invert the bridge between the past and the present in certain films, instead building a dialectical tension between the two periods, in order to reanimate the memory of a previous era.[4] The principal aim here therefore is first to develop the importance of archival findings as research tools, following Jacques Derrida's theory. Second, I will focus on the broader context of those found footage documentaries that employ 'haunting' as a means of revealing forgotten media stories. As such, I hope to refine the 'theoretical landscape' by posing the questions posed by what I define 'flux archives'.

Theoretical Landscapes of Haunting

In the following section I analyse the co-presence of old and new materials in one artistic project, using a theory of ghosts as a research tool. Generally such phenomena could not be investigated without referring to two time-ontologies based on Karl Marx's concept of spectrality and Martin Heidegger's concept of the ghost, which lend the metaphor characteristic shape and properties. An emergent method of haunting is hence inseparable from the effects of iteration.

[2] Michel Renov, 'Domestic Ethnography and Construction of the "Other" Self', in *Collecting Visible Evidence*, ed. by Jane M. Gaines and Michael Renov (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), pp. 140–55 (p. 141). See George E. Marcus, 'Ethnography in the Modern World System', in *Writing Culture*: *The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography,* ed. by James Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 165–193 (pp. 190–193).
[3] Marcus, p. 191.
[4] See Ernst van Alphen, 'Towards a New Historiography: The Aesthetics of Temporality', in *Cinema's Alchemist: The Film of Péter Forgács*, ed. by Bill Nichols and Michael Renov (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), pp. 59 –74.

In general, attention given to iterant forms may help us to identify the ways in which the capacity to repeat deploys various contexts, in a way that is comparable to a form of citationality. More specifically, 'a certain haunting' aims to find descriptive language that 'in our terms comes upon us like the sudden emergence of an apparition'.[5] Haunting procedures can thus be defined as a set of languages that are 'neither dated, nor given a date in the chain of presents, day after day, according to the instituted order of calendar'.[6]

We can gain further insight on found footage in archival documentaries by considering the 'revenant effects' of memory reanimation, which seek to build a conceptual framework for 'the new speed of apparition of the simulacrum, the synthetic or prosthetic image, virtual event'.[7] In other words, this revenant mark could function as visual data: as Derrida would say, in fact, 'the ghostly would displace itself like the movement of this history. Haunting would mark the very existence of Europe'.[8] Building on the broader context of its use, as is outlined in precedent archiving practices and drawing on the presence of haunting revenants, I would like to focus on 'all things that are neither fully present nor fully absent, neither living nor dead, that occupy the borderland between the perceptible, and imperceptible'.[9] In contrast to common archives, one of the most notable traits of this practice is that the ghost 'forms part of the series of non-things of what in general one claims to oppose to the thing'.[10] It must also be noted that shifting from invisibility to visibility features a 'revenant thing' that 'engineers a habitation without proper inhabiting', therefore evoking a case of prosthetic memory that features spectres.[11] These metaphors allow us to interpret presences as a phantom that 'inhabits without residing, without ever confining itself to the numerous versions of this passage'.[12] The most intriguing passages in this theory deal with open questions. Inevitably, adopting this perspective entails an epistemological point in time that describes feelings, refers to external ideological mechanisms, and analyses 'perceptions, representations/apparitions of things non-substantial'.[13]

Before entering into further detail, it is worth recapitulating several remarks made by Martin Heidegger on the category of ghost. In seeking to develop an instrumental perspective on the ghost and its position in time and space, we must be far more explicit about what these terms mean in each particular context. One

[5] David Wills, *Matchbook: Essays in Deconstruction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 5.
[6] Ibidem.
[7] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf (New York, London: Routledge, 1994), p. 4.
[8] Ibidem.
[9] Ivi, p. 51.
[10] Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. by Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 16.
[11] Ibidem.
[12] Ivi, p. 18.
[13] Ivi, p. 194.

of the most characteristic traits is the tendency of becoming-spatial that describes being-in-space as a situation both of being-in-a-world (*das In-Sein in einer Welt*) and having a spiritual property (*eine geistige Eigenshaft*).[14] A critical evaluation of this argument inspires Heidegger's conception of *Vorhandensein*, that Derrida in turn features as being inextricable from the body-as-thing (*Korperding*) and spiritual-thing (*Geistding*). As emphasized above, the latter emerges after time (*nachträglich*), and in many cases 'transposed, transferred, deported (*versetzt*) into space'.[15] The point — once posed in Derrida's critique of apparitions and phantasmagory — is that it takes place in a certain moment of History 'in its inside, haunted by a foreign guest that occupies the domesticity of Europe'.[16] When it comes to a geopolitical diagnosis, Derrida argues that 'all the resources and all the references return to spirit';[17] and that thinking the earth and the spirit geopolitically consequently raises a question of the '*Weltpolitik* of spirit'.[18]

One may notice that, when returning to Edmund Husserl's question 'How is the spiritual configuration of Europe (*die geistige Gestalt Europas*) characterized?'[19], Derrida argues that the answer was the destitution of Europe and the collapse of German Idealism.[20] As a result of these statements, Derrida defines the revenant as a wide array of possibilities, calling into question Karl Marx's definition of 'the spectral effect [as] a position (*Setzung*) of the ghost, a dialectical position of the ghostly body as body proper'.[21] What is intriguing about this is the fact that the *revenant* (the ghost) and the *Geist*, intended as 'the most fatal figure of this *revenance* [returning, haunting] [emphasis in the original]'[22], cannot be separated from each other. One might say that the combination of these two contexts creates a bridge between the past phantoms and the present, evoking a memorial haunting in accordance with a specific hegemony; this hegemony defines 'spectre' as a form of transmutation, or return of the revenants, and operates in '*madly* spectral compositions and conversion' [emphasis in original].[23]

For Derrida, the spectre illustrates phantoms that represent 'commodities transforming human producers into ghosts. And this whole theatrical process (visual, theoretical, but also optical […]) sets off the effect of a mysterious mirror'.[24] From a different perspective, the transformations of the ghost can be interpreted as plural spectres that defining contemporary media and prevent us from unifying with the human project. Another consequence of this view is that

[14] Ivi, p. 24.
[15] Ibidem.
[16] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 4.
[17] Derrida, *Of Spirit*, p. 44.
[18] Ivi, p. 46.
[19] Ivi, p. 60.
[20] Ivi, p. 61.
[21] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 161.
[22] Derrida, *Of Spirit*, p. 40.
[23] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 57.
[24] Ivi, p. 195.

these premises involve an ethical dimension, in that, according to Derrida, 'we have a responsibility [justice] to those not present: the dead and the not yet living';[25] using metaphors such as 'living in the past' or 'living in the future', or both, spectrality 'reminds us of our obligations to past and future generations'.[26]

The main point of this theoretical model is that such spectral duplicity takes the form of a haunting ghost's monologue and ventriloquizes it, comparable to Boris Eichenbaum's concept of inner speech in the cinema.[27] All these models of interpretation that imply a double condition of the material (there and now) are interwoven with each other. These archival proclivities enable a more precise definition of the way in which we can observe past generations, and moreover offer a conceptual framework to a retrospective gaze on documentary practices that are brought back to life.

Home Movies as Revenant Archives

Looking back at Péter Forgács's early works, one may note that they effectively inaugurated the use of home movies as found-footage in late-1970s Hungary. More specifically, his first video *I see that I look* (1978) can be considered the starting point of this innovative technique, focused on the tensions between collective and personal historical narratives. Forgács's 'archive fever'[28] began when he established the Private Photo & Film Archives Foundation (PPFA) in 1983 in Budapest; since then, Forgács has been studying twentieth-century Hungarian visual collections as an outset of institutionalization of collective memory. Forgács first experimented his technique with private archives from the 1930s. The author gathered more than 300 hours of home movie footage, then collecting an additional forty hours of interviews provided by amateur filmmakers and shot in the 'anachronistic' format of 9.5 mm. Forgács himself then filmed the relatives and friends of the individuals who shot the original footage.[29] The new dynamics established by his work with found footage imply a new dimension of speed and produce a 'new structure of the event and of its spectrality'.[30] Among the results of disclosing time as a pure form of documentary filmmaking are 'revenant effects', triggered by the use of specific techniques of cutting, slow motion, freeze-framing and narrative ellipses.

A key inspiration for this film is *Private History* (1978), conducted by experimental filmmakers Gábor Bódy and Péter Timár. The film was composed of amateur

[25] Simon Tormey, Jules Townshend, *Key Thinkers from Critical Theory to Post-Marxism* (London: Sage, 2006), p. 194.
[26] Ibidem.
[27] See Ronald Levaco, 'Eichenbaum, Inner Speech and Film Stylistics', *Screen Magazine*, 14-15.4 (1974–75), 47–58.
[28] See Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. by Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
[29] See Bill Nichols, 'Introduction', in *Cinema's Alchemist: The Films of Péter Forgács*, ed. by Nichols and Renov, pp. VII–XXII (p. XI).
[30] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 79.

footage that playfully narrates the story of a 'private' nation through fragments of the national past. Bódy's work at the Béla Bélazs Stúdió (BBS) and his experimentation with the borderline between fiction and found-footage documentaries had enormous influence on Forgács's work. Deriving inspiration from the aesthetics of 1980s video-clips, Gábor Bódy marked the advent of video experimentation in Hungary, paving the way for the use of superimposing layers on images. Bódy's short video *De Occulta Philosophia* (also known as *Philo-clip*), for instance, 'must in all likelihood have had an effect on Péter Forgács's *The Back-Drive of Spinoza* [1985]'.[31]

The director's most impressive project of archival research is *Private Hungary*, a found footage compilation that has been transformed into a colossal epic saga. This project, as well as most of Forgács's recent works, is based on the restoration of home movies produced in Europe from 1918 to the 1960s. This collection comprises thirteen parts (*The Bartos Family, Dusi & Jenő, Either-Or, The Diary of Mr N., D-Film, Bourgeoisie Dictionary, The Notes of a Lady, The Land of Nothing, Free Fall, Class Lot, Kádár's Kiss, A Bibó Reader, The Bishop's Garden*), all of them focused on the broad spectrum of the experiences of two subsequent Hungarian generations, observed from different angles. Among their characteristic traits, the most endemic to home movie storytelling is the fact that these short movies offer at once a valuable contribution to the growing archive of oral history — also emphasised by voice-over commentaries — and a cinematic narrative built from the original documentaries and 'reassembled' *ex post*. In other words, shifting the emphasis on newly 'reframed' narratives, Forgács attempts to refine a certain revenant vision of 'haunting history' in documentary found-footage of a country shattered by the rise of Nazism and the Anschluss (annexation), the Second World War, the Holocaust, and the arrival of Stalinist Russia. By 'recycling' forgotten private stories, Forgács allows memorable excursions into places and moments that are unavailable to 'official' histories of the period spanning the interwar to the post-war communist era. The process of re-assembling archival home movies and making them resemble newsreels allows the author to present haunting narratives of everyday life in twentieth-century Hungary as the result of a specific use of post-production practices that transform private documents into collective history.

Jewish Revenant Narratives

One of the main questions posed by Forgács's compilation is how to reiterate the backstage of Jewish life in a time of such terrible national transformations. In order to fulfil this aim, *Private Hungary* employs standard devices of non-fiction film such as 'visual text, narration, music, where each of them uses unusual inventiveness to contextualize Jewish lives within international political events'.[32] Howe-

[31] János Palotai, 'Visual Revolution – Change of the Political Regime', *Filmkultura* [n.d.] <http://www.filmkultura.hu/regi/articles/essays/visual.en.html> [accessed 15 September 2016].
[32] Scott Macdonald, 'Péter Forgács: An Interview', in *Cinema's Alchemist: The Films of Péter*

ver, the very intimate story outlined in the second part, entitled *Dusi & Jen* (1988), focuses on a micro-narrative that illustrates the death of a dog in the background of the deportation of the Jews and the devastation of Budapest. The whole life of the couple is measured in terms of the vicissitudes of their dog's life, which becomes a central aspect of the story in the face of the upheavals of war. Thanks to the constant intermingling of these two spheres, this movie represents a

> moving portrayal of a Jewish couple whose carefully documented, ordinary lives punctuated by domestic rituals — meals taken on a terrace, regular promenades with a beloved dog — evoke the lives of thousands who perished and whose lives vanished without benefit of recorded images.[33]

Further insight into the Jewish question is provided in the tenth part of *Private Hungary*, entitled *Free Fall* (*Az örvény*, 1996), which offers a historical 'glimpse into a culture about to vanish'.[34] More specifically, the question raised in the above 'video opera' seems to be

> why, after so many Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe had already vanished, the Hungarian Jewish community was still mostly intact in the early spring of 1944, suggesting the radical disjuncture between Hungary's position as an ally of the Third Reich from the beginning of World War II and the fate of its Jews at the War's end?[35]

Based on 8-millimetre amateur footage registered by the musician, photographer and businessman György Pető, who filmed his family members in their everyday life 'enjoying high times in neo-Proustian style',[36] the film

> traces this process of "free fall" from an unexpected, intimate viewpoint, rather than documenting the bureaucratic mass homicide system from the outside, thereby focusing on the process as experienced from within the future victims

quotidian subjectivity'.[37] According to Catherine Portuges, Forgács's experimental drive is mostly evident in the postmodern sound-design that characterizes

Forgács, ed. by Nichols and Renov, pp. 3–38 (pp. 5–6).

[33] Catherine Portuges, 'Hidden Subjects, Secret Identities: Figuring Jews, Gipsies, and Gender in 1990s Cinema of Eastern Europe', in *Writing New Identities: Gender, Nation, and Immigration in Contemporary Europe*, ed. by Gisela Brinker-Gabler and Sidonie Smith (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. 196–215 (p. 208).

[34] Portuges, 'Memory and Reinvention in Post-Socialist Hungarian Cinema', in *Cinemas in Transition in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989*, ed. by Catherine Portuges and Peter Hames (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013), pp. 104–134 (p. 123). It should be noted that Forgács found the footage employed in *Free Fall* accidently, in an attic in Budapest owned by a Jewish family. I would like to thank the participants in the panel 'Experiencing the Space' at the NECS 2015 Conference 'Archives or/for the Future' (Łód , June 18–20) for this information, where I presented a preliminary version of this article.

[35] Ivi, p. 124.

[36] Ivi, pp. 124–25.

[37] Ivi, p. 124.

this work, and especially the discrepancy between form and content: focusing on the abstract language of Jewish law, the director — together with the composer Tibor Szemz — presents Jewish legal terminology

> being sung in hauntingly repetitive clauses that echo and mirror the experience of the narrowing sphere of life and the unpredictability that characterized the victims' lives. […] This elegiac, silent visual mode accompanied by voice-over instills in the viewer as sense, however fleeting, of the tragic fate of these subjects, revisited and rehistoricized, from the perspective of a director born after World War II.[38]

I argue that these works could exemplify the differential role that visual archives could play in an educational context, as well as in the development of a new theoretical perspective. Shedding new light on the history of Jews during World War II, archives created by amateur filmmakers illustrate daily, ordinary life, primarily of bourgeois families involved in historical *grands récits.*

Visual Archives as Catalogues

Having defined the genre of amateur visual archives, it is worth noting that similar associations define the starting points of such amateur documentary practices. As a form of complex, para-documentary structure made of pre-existing footage, *Private Hungary* exerts the tension between the 'pioneers of the family' involved in the upheavals of public, historical events related to the Holocaust and the objectification of narrative visual archives. More specifically, as the average citizens' family activities and public events were shot against varied backdrops of social-political turmoil in 1930s Europe, it seems to suggest that family-made home movies can effectively be considered as archival material. As a titanic labour that innovatively juxtaposes different 'temporal' dimensions, Forgács's work transforms our perception of time and movement according to the life 'embodied' in these images. Notably, Catherine Portuges stresses that

> Forgács has been reworking issues of European memory in an archival experimental format that, drawing on an era of predigital photography, allows him to reappriopriate materials from the private past of family memory.[39]

These specific home movie archives differ from other forms of archiving. Home movies are a specific genre, which has specific 'souvenir' properties, for events such as anniversaries, weddings, family outings, the birth and growing up of children, although these personal elements are selective.[40] Retrieving visual

[38] Ivi, pp. 124–25.
[39] Ivi, p. 125.
[40] See Portuges, 'Intergenerational Memory: Transmitting the Past in Hungarian Cinema', *Spectator*, 23.2 (special issue *Quo Vadis European Cinema?*, ed. by Luisa Rivi, Fall 2003), 44–52 (p. 51).

materials from home movies as multifarious sources of historical reconstruction therefore sits between the private and the public. As Derrida puts it, it is

> thus in this *domiciliation*, in this house arrest, that archives take place. The dwelling, this place where they dwell permanently, marks this institutional passage from the private to the public, which does not always mean from the secret to the non-secret'.[41]

Here, the focus is on the use of home movie sources that are inscribed in the process of archive institutionalization: 'documents, which are not always discursive writings, are only kept and classified under the title of the archive by virtue of a privileged *topology*'.[42] A detailed classification concerns 'the intersection of the topological and the nomological', and shows that 'a scene of domiciliation becomes at once visible and invisible'.[43]

Although home movies were not associated with any specific competences, 'amateur cinema was considered an elitist practice reserved for the bourgeoisie,'[44] who could afford expensive film stock: the home movie soon became a hallmark of weddings, birthday celebrations, and holidays. However, during the war years, the 'archive fever' related to the creation of 'compilation films'[45] has to some extent demonstrated that collection is

> the imaginative process of association turned material'[46], meaning that 'production is no longer performed automatically and unconsciously but is intentionally externalized and materialized. The ordering of objects collected and archived is ultimately a form of association, that is, a form of connecting and joining together.[47]

This system of associations might seem to some extent reassuring, in that it introduces 'meaning, order, boundaries' in otherwise 'confused and contingent' material; however, 'this production of coherence and meaning has a price', because it entails the 'paradoxical effects of archiving'.[48] This is, 'because at a cer-

[41] Derrida, *Archive Fever*, pp. 2–3.
[42] Ivi, p. 3.
[43] Ibidem.
[44] Kristian Feigelson, 'Cinematic Archives and the Rereading of European History in Forgács's Cinema: A Filmmaker of the Anonymous', in *Just Images: Ethics and the Cinematic*, ed. by Boaz Hagin and others (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), pp. 142–57 (p. 145).
[45] According to Àngel Quintana, the practice of making 'compilations films' was introduced during the 1940s. In those films, the creator did not have to make images, constructing the story on the basis of pre-existing images. One of the most famous examples of such films is *Paris 1900* (1947), directed by Nicole Védrès, which is composed of archival images made between 1900 and 1914. See: Àngel Quintana, *Virtuel? À l'ère du numérique, le cinéma est toujours le plus réaliste des arts*, trans. by Esther Fouchard (Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma, 2008), p. 118.
[46] Matthias Winzen, 'Collecting, so Normal, so Paradoxical', in *Deep Storage: Collecting, Storing, and Archiving in Art*, ed. by Ingrid Schaffner and Matthias Winzen (Munich: Prestel, 1998), p. 22.
[47] van Alphen, 'Archival Obsessions and Obsessive Archives', in *What is Research in the Visual Arts?: Obsession, Archive, Encounter*, ed. by Michael Ann Holly and Marquard Smith (Williamstown, MA: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute; distributed by New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), pp. 65–84 (p. 66).
[48] Ibidem.

tain point the individual components are deemed to be only another expression of those objects that surround it', thereby destroying '[u]niqueness, specificity, and individuality […] within the process of archiving'.[49] This is what Matthias Winzen calls 'protective destruction': in other words, '[i]n many cases, the transplantation of a concrete individual piece into a collection means that this piece partly or completely perishes in favor of its documentality'.[50] This idea presents many traits in common with Walter Benjamin's renowned formulation: we could argue that the archival impulse expressed by 'compilation films' in the age of mechanical reproducibility deprives home movies and amateur films of the past of their 'aura', that is, of their natural context and of their original function.[51]

Home vs. Heimat

As has already been pointed out, these 'home movies archives' are to be considered a specific form of narrative playing a special role in the area of collective memory. The most particular aspect of home movies is the fact that they encompass two different dimensions, inherently related to the structural ambiguity of the term 'home': '[f]or home in the literal sense […] is essentially private. Home in the wider sense, *Heimat*, is essentially public [and] by definition collective. It cannot belong to us as individuals'.[52] However, David Morley (quoting Ann Oakley) argues that 'home' and 'family' have become 'virtually interchangeable terms' since the 1960s.[53]

The main focus of home movies is effectively the observation and recording of family gatherings such as those mentioned above. The registration of personal familial moments appears limited – especially in the interwar period, due to the low quality of celluloid – and relies on selectiveness, that is, on a composition of happy memories. However, as I sought to demonstrate earlier, home movies are also central within the construction of collective memory, creating an overlap between the home as family and the home as *Heimat*, especially in the production of 'compilation films'.

According to Ernst van Alphen, Forgács's use of the home movie archive resists this dichotomy between public and private:

> [h]is archival films do not provide information, they do not tell history, but they show us that the experience of time in personal history is something that cannot be integrated in or translated into collective or official history. As Kaja Silverman argues […], his films are based on strategies of re-personalization instead of objectification or catego-

[49] Ibidem.
[50] Winzen, p. 24.
[51] Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, trans. by J. A. Underwood (London, New York: Penguin Books, 2008).
[52] Eric Hobsbawm, 'Introduction', in *Home: A Place in the World*, ed. by Arien Mack (New York, London: New York University Press, 1993), pp. 61–64 (pp. 63–64).
[53] David Morley, *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity* (London, New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 25; see Ann Oakley, *Housewife* (Harmonsworth: Penguin, 1976), p. 65.

> rization [...]. Whereas the archival mechanisms of objectification and categorization strip images of their singularities, Forgács's archival footage keeps insisting on the private and affective. Silverman writes that this is first of all done through the many direct looks with which people face the camera. This seems to be a defining feature of home movies as such.[54]

Evidently, home archives of past generations acquire new life and provide a retrospective glimpse into narratives that interlock memories and stories performed by people. This tool leads to the constitution of a dynamic process that explores both personal and collective memories of the past era.

Having outlined an impulse of reiteration in found footage compilation films, I wish to stress that Forgács's main aim is to gather and assemble old film materials. On the one hand, then, the project consists of personal narratives created by amateur filmmakers and their nature of leisure practices; on the other, he manipulates and reprocesses these fragmented archival discoveries, to some extent creating a reconstructed historical temporality. These practices, however, might cast doubts on the ethical aspects of media transformation, especially since these life stories were taken out of their original context (the home) and 'partially intercut with minimal explanatory material'.[55] Intercutting and eradicating archival discoveries can be considered a result of re-personalization, as opposed to that of 'objectification or categorization'.[56]

In this sense, Forgács's personal touch appears in his significant manipulations of the temporality of such documents. Slowing them down, producing a movement back and forth, stopping the movement for a few seconds, thus generating a rhythm, Forgács almost creates a haptic experience; his films somewhat give the impression of a 'revenant effect' that characterizes the 'genre' of home movies found footage as well as Forgács's own 'intensification of qualities of the medium of the moving image as such'.[57]

One of the results of the interplay between the personal and collective dimensions concerns the aforementioned dynamic of reiteration, which 'exposes' the method of re-personalization of archival footage, at the same time offering fresh insight into many direct representations of 'real' people. By the same token, this psycho-ontological aspect of 'amateur effects' is highly visible when the individuals recorded in those home movies look directly into the camera. Breaking with the cinematic illusion brings into the present forgotten Hungarian stories of war upheavals. This meticulous documentation of social life is enriched with

[54] van Alphen, 'Visual Archives and the Holocaust: Christian Boltanski, Ydessa Hendeles, Peter Forgács', in *Intercultural Aesthetics: A Worldview Perspective*, ed. by Antoon van den Braembussche, Heinz Kimmerle and Nicole Note (Dordrecht, London: Springer, 2009), pp. 137–55 (p. 152). See also Kaja Silverman, 'Waiting, Hoping, among the Ruins of All the Rest', in *Cinema's Alchemist: The Films of Péter Forgács*, ed. by Nichols and Renov, pp. 96–118.

[55] Portuges, 'Home Movies, Found Images and "Amateur Film" as a Witness to History: Péter Forgács's *Private Hungary*', *The Moving Image*, 1-2 (Fall 2001), 107–24 (p. 109).

[56] van Alphen, 'Visual Archives and the Holocaust', p. 152.

[57] Ivi, p. 153.

the soundscapes composed by Tibor Szemző. More specifically, the Hungarian composer turned these home movies into a new aural sphere, pulling them out of the home and transforming them into something that feels 'defamiliarized'.[58]

This effect of 'strangeness' might be considered as a sort of resistance to the simple idea of 'assemblage' of amateur films and home movies. However, the adoption of strategies of appropriation of found footage can be considered as ethically dubious, since it 'shatters' the original contexts and uses of such materials. This resonates with Derrida's idea that '[i]nheritance from the "spirits of the past" consists […] in borrowing. Figures of borrowing, borrowed figures, figurality as the figure of borrowing'.[59] However, the strategy of re-appropriation adopted in *Private Hungary* opens up a trans-generational look on the Jewish stories being carried from the past to the present: in other words, the appropriation of home movies and their 'extraction' from the family domain generates a sort of counter-document defined by its new function. That is, those home movies somewhat express the logic of 'repeatable' documentation: once meant to document family stories, they are now reprocessed for a different documentary use.[60]

Aesthetics of Ruins

In light of what has been discussed thus far, I would like to stress that such multilayer archival documentaries based on intermingling temporal moments seem to comply perfectly with Jacques Derrida's definition of 'haunting', as a ghost coming from the ashes.[61] Not without reason, Thomas Elsaesser talks about

> new post-realist ontologies [that perform] presence as post-mortem, and thematiz[e] the consequences – positive and negative – of mutually interfering with, mutually sustaining and mutually authenticating each other, as both 'ghosts' and 'real', both actual and virtual at the same time.[62]

[58] Michel Chion discusses the idea of phantom in the area of the audio sphere, drawing on Marleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*. In his book *Audio-Vision* Chion uses the phrase *en creux*, which roughly translates as 'phantom'; as the translator notes, Chion 'is negotiating the territory of transference from one sensory channel to another, which sometimes produces psychological "presences" in the face of perceptual absences'. Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, ed. and trans. by Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 218. See also: Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Colin Smith (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965).

[59] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 136.

[60] See also: Marsha Kinder, 'Reorchestrating History: Transforming the Danube Exodus into a Data base Documentary', in *Cinema's Alchemist: The Films of Péter Forgács*, ed. by Nichols and Renov, pp. 235–56.

[61] See Derrida, *Of Spirit*, p. 1.

[62] Elsaesser, 'Real Location, Fantasy Space, Performative Place', in *European Film Theory*, ed. by Trifonova, p. 60.

However problematic, however aporetical, these ideas remain: perhaps the most notable consequence of these 'alternative' versions of historical narratives that move from past to present, in the form of archival discoveries of multifarious amateur documentaries, is the actualization of what Catherine Russell has termed an 'aesthetics of ruins'.[63] In his films, Forgács experiments with filmic language to such an extent that he conceptually undermines the 'permanence, stability, and linearity'[64] of previous narratives created by two different generations during interwar period in Hungary. The particular 'tricksterism' of his work is reflected in his practice of partially 'subverting' official history, by uprooting home movies found footage from its original destination.

According to Catherine Portuges, in fact, the Jewish stories included in *Private Hungary* express a 'personal past that has became a record of investigation into the mysterious memories of others'.[65] At a first look, this use of home movies archival materials recalls the notion of found footage as a 'repeatable' form that reflects the dynamics of contemporary media practices. However, this representation of the people of a forgotten era also expresses Jacques Derrida's claim that 'all the forms of a certain haunting obsession [seem] to organize the dominant influence on discourse today'.[66] Drawing on Derrida's work, but also seeking critical revisions of his ideas, this article has first of all sought to demonstrate that the process of (haunting) reiteration comes into play when a transition creates a shift from one moment in history to another one. The genre of 'compilation films' perfectly illustrates the dialectics of overlapping inherent in a narrative mode that is spread between past and present. Thus, home movie documentaries embody the reiteration of a recurrent *Zeitgeist*. The archival 'landscape' stems from the use of temporal ellipses in the articulation of found footage material that shows the private life of two generations. Without giving a straight answer to the question posed by the idea of a 'crisis of representation', *Private Hungary* creates an 'archival' storyline of the vicissitudes of quotidian life for everyday people, observed in the light of an intergenerational timeline of national transformation.[67]

Contrary to what could be inferred from the standard reconstruction of archival documentaries, this collection problematizes the idea of found footage documentaries as a genre. Forgács's saga helps us to understand the differential role played by the re-use of found footage materials, moreover raising new questions regarding ethic issues. More specifically, it encourages us to re-think the very idea of manipulating historical truth, in a way that mirrors the modern shift from

[63] Catherine Russell, *Experimental Ethnography: The Work of Film in the Age of Video* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), pp. 239–40.
[64] Rob Yeo, 'Cutting Through History: Found Footage in Avant-garde Filmmaking', in *Cut: Film as Found Object in Contemporary Video*, ed. by Stefan Basilico (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Art Museum, 2004), pp. 13–27 (p. 25).
[65] Portuges, 'Memory and Reinvention in Post-Socialist Hungarian Cinema', in *Cinemas in Transition in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989*, ed. by Portuges and Hames, p. 126.
[66] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, p. 45.
[67] See Portuges, 'Jewish Identities and Generational Perspectives', in *A Companion to*

micro-narratives of everyday life to the public history of the national regimes, a shift that is frequently considered to be an effect of the coalescence of time. A return to the memorial residue allows us to re-read those memories as ghosts that bring the past into the present, presenting the ordinary life of two interlocking generations in the light of 'haunting' ramifications of *revenant* home media.

Eastern European Cinemas, ed. by Anikó Imre (Chichester, UK, Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp. 101–24 (p. 121).

Projects & Abstracts

Intensive Post-Production and Creative Infrastructures

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Over the last two decades, the spaces and places of cinematic pre-production, production, and post-production have become increasingly intertwined. VFX previsualization becomes critical for planning out the on-set cinematography of *Gravity* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2013);[2] *Gone Girl* (David Fincher, 2014) was shot in 6K so that Fincher had the flexibility to reframe shots after principle photography was complete;[3] George Miller sat in a Sydney theater and remotely directed colorist Eric Whipp, who graded *Mad Max: Fury Road* (George Miller, 2015) in a Toronto post-production facility.[4] The boundaries that mark where and when the moving image is 'produced' are increasingly blurred, which also blurs the creative responsibilities of roles like that of the director, producer, cinematographer, editor, colorist, and visual effects artist.

One of the primary reasons for this spatial ambiguity is an expansion and intensification of post-production practices. Prior to the 1990s, cinematic post-production primarily included film processing, linear editing, and sound editing. However, as noted by Murch's *In the Blink of an Eye: A Perspective on Film Editing* and Arundale & Trieu's *Modern Post: Workflows and Techniques for Digital Filmmakers*,[5] the widespread adoption of computer platforms for film editing throughout the 1990s and the early 2000s enabled a significant expansion of the techniques that were financially and creatively viable 'in post'. In addition to linear and sound editing, post began to function as a more complex ecology

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[2] David S. Cohen, 'Cutting Production Costs With Cheaper Previs?', *Variety,* (29 August 2014), <http://variety.com/2014/artisans/production/cutting-production-costs-via-previs-1201292223/> [accessed 2 March 2016].
[3] Jonny Elwyn, 'The Making of *Gone Girl*: Inside the *Gone Girl* Post-Production Workflow', <http://jonnyelwyn.co.uk/film-and-video-editing/the-making-of-gone-girl/> [accessed 2 March 2016].
[4] 'Meet The Colourist: Eric Whipp', <http://www.filmlight.ltd.uk/customers/meet-the-colourist/eric_whipp.php> [accessed 2 March 2016].
[5] Walter Murch, *In the Blink of an Eye: A Perspective on Film Editing* (Los Angeles: Silman-James Press, 2001); Scott Arundale and Tashi Trieu, *Modern Post: Workflows and Techniques for Digital Filmmakers* (New York: Focal Press, 2015).

of color grading, visual effects, image compositing, asset management, and mastering & delivery.

What's significant in this shift is not the presence of these practices alone. What is significant is that intensive post has become an increasingly normative work practice. While intense post-production is historically associated with the contemporary blockbuster or special-effects intensive genres like science fiction or action films, intensive post is a refinement process that increasingly sustains multiple genres and production scales. These post-production practices and the ways they support cinematic storytelling are not inherent to the medium of the computer, nor have they occurred as a neutral product of technological 'progress'. Rather, what we understand as contemporary post-production emerges through a messy (and ongoing) period of infrastructural development. Creative weight is displaced from medium specific roles onto a more distributed framework of creative collaboration. At best, these workflows integrate the potential for expression in a collaborative human environment; at worst, workflows subordinate creative expression to managerial interests in efficiency and distribution.

Conceptions of creative space have been central, I argue, to the ways in which creative management have sought to secure the consent and creative energies of editors, directors, and audiovisual artists in the ambiguously successful project of coordinating cinema's digitization. As film became file, producers and studios drew upon spatial conceptions of editing and post-production in an attempt to organize the shifting temporality of the when and where of digital cinema production. Intensive post practices have been accompanied by, and indeed instituted by, spatial logic that attempted to manage and locate creative control in an expanding creative field that challenged extant hierarchies of creative control. The expanding creative practices of post-production have been rationalized through spatial logic aimed at 1) mapping out creative spaces and 2) making these creative spaces 'flow'. While these economic rationales of space do not determine the kinds of work artists will or can produce, they do incentivize certain kinds of creative labor and make other kinds more difficult.[6]

This project will investigate a set of questions concerning digitization, creative space, and the state of infrastructure in commercial creative practice. I am still early in my research process and am hesitant to offer up the specific body of films or particular subset of practices upon which this project will move. My intention, though, is to make a contribution towards understanding how contemporary post-production apparatuses coordinate with what Nadia Bozak has called 'the ecological image economy'.[7] If post is the conceptual infrastructure by which

[6] This project intends to perform the kind of infrastructural inquiry modeled in: Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star, *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999); Alexander Galloway, *Protocol: How Control Exists After Decentralization* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004); Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015).

[7] Nadia Bozak, *The Cinematic Footprint: Lights, Camera, Natural Resources* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012), p. 192.

studios refine an aesthetically seamless cinema, it may also be the space in which we reclaim a space for sustainable and 'imperfect' creative labor.

In examining the spaces of contemporary post-production practices, I seek to understand the political conditions for creativity that have been shaped by economically-minded imaginations of creative space during a period of intensified practice expansion. The goal in this project, then, is to both to trace an area of cinema production that often renders itself into invisibility, consider the long-term effects of these changes in practice, and make a contribution to understanding what kind of creative infrastructure these protocols sustain for the horizon of creative labor in cinema production.

Les Relations entre la télévision et le cinéma en France et en Suisse romande dans les années cinquante: enjeux techniques, historiographiques et esthétiques

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Durant les deux premières décennies de la deuxième moitié du XXe siècle, les télévisions nationales prennent leurs essors : le présent projet de thèse porte sur l'émergence de ces œuvres nouvelles, télévisuelles et audiovisuelles, qui apparaissent progressivement en France et en Suisse Romande depuis la création de la Radiodiffusion Télévision Française (RTF) en 1947 et la Télévision Suisse Romande en 1954 (après les expérimentations locales des télévisions genevoise et lausannoise). Optant pour une approche prosopographique, cette étude porte son intérêt sur ces hommes et ces femmes pionniers dans l'histoire de la télévision qui, formés pour la plupart aux métiers de cinéma, vont progressivement inventer de nouveaux dispositifs de création à la croisée des arts du cinéma et de la radiophonie.

Cette enquête envisage donc faire ainsi l'étude de ces relations entretenues entre les deux milieux de la télévision et du cinéma depuis les premières expériences de la toute fin des quarante jusqu'à l'émergence concomitante, à l'orée des années soixante des « cinémas nouveaux » (Nouvelle Vague française et du Nouveau cinéma suisse des réalisateurs du Groupe 5). Pensée à la croisée des deux *médias* et à la manière d'un « rhizome », ce projet de thèse fonde son propos sur l'étude des principaux nœuds relationnels et intermédiaux affirmant d'importants emprunts d'un média à l'autre à la fois sur le plan humain, technique et esthétique.

L'histoire des télévisions française et suisse romande semble révéler de nombreuses similitudes, et les parcours de ces hommes et femmes témoignent aujourd'hui, au regard de ce qui nous est connu, d'importantes relations entre les milieux du cinéma et ceux de la télévision, à une époque où l'on ne parlait pas encore d'« audiovisuel » pour aborder conjointement les deux *médias*. Parmi ces similitudes, il apparaît que ces télévisions, pour se mettre en place, ont fait appel à des jeunes de la génération née dans les années trente qui trouvent, à partir de la toute fin des années quarante, l'opportunité de faire leurs premiers pas dans le monde des images en mouvement grâce à la télévision, à une époque où,

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notamment en France, l'industrie du cinéma paraît peu encline à renouveler ses effectifs. Pourtant dans ce climat qui semble opposer les deux milieux du cinéma et de la télévision, certains cinéastes vont tenter l'expérience de la télévision. En France, le plus connu d'entre eux est Marcel L'Herbier, alors directeur de l'Idhec (aujourd'hui la Fémis). Il dispense à ses élèves les rudiments de la technique de télévision, lui qui du cinéma en est venu à réaliser pour la RTF de nombreuses adaptations de nouvelles littéraires. Parmi les élèves, citons à titre d'exemple le cas du téléaste suisse Jean-Claude Diserens qui, né en 1927, suit une formation à l'Idhec à Paris avant de rejoindre la TSR.

Ce projet de thèse fait ainsi la part belle à ces jeunes, pour les uns diplômés des écoles de cinéma, pour les autres formés ailleurs (au théâtre, à la photographie, ou encore « sur le tas »), au moment où ceux-ci font leurs premiers pas à la télévision. Cinéphiles pour beaucoup d'entre eux et ayant comme ambition de pouvoir un jour passer à la réalisation de long-métrages de cinéma, il s'agira de considérer la manière dont ils ont trouvé à la télévision un lieu propice à la création, à l'expérimentation, n'ayant pas les contraintes que connaissent alors les cinéastes et profitant des nombreuses innovations qui jalonnent les années cinquante : depuis l'apparition des caméras légères jusqu'au magnétophone portatif (dont le célèbre *Nagra*, inventé en Suisse par l'ingénieur Kudelski). Il s'agira donc d'allier l'étude (1) de ces parcours professionnels qui témoignent de ces relations entre cinéma et télévision, (2) des politiques culturelles mises en place dans les différentes institutions télévisuelles qui ont permis ces relations, et (3) des différents dispositifs techniques, de prises d'image et son, introduits à la télévision.

Towards Non-human Personhood: Relational Animism and the Moving Image

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The task of imagining an alternative to modernity and its inherent anthropocentrism is an especially pressing matter in an epoch that natural scientists label 'the Anthropocene',[2] where human relation to the so-called natural environment on one hand, and technological advancement on the other forms the crux of critical, artistic, and activist inquiry. Marked by human impact on the seemingly separate nonhuman realm, the Anthropocene demands new ways of thinking and acting that critically explore and re-imagine the entanglement of human and nonhuman *actants*. Through highlighting the impossibility of asking ethically relevant questions without considering the nonhuman, the Anthropocene also invites a re-consideration of the purpose and politics of art. The urgency of this matter was the starting point of this project, which operates at the intersection of moving image studies and non-anthropocentric politics from the angle of contemporary anthropological theory.

If, as Bruno Latour[3] and fellow anthropologists such as Philippe Descola[4] or Nurit Bird-David[5] propose, the ontological assumptions that modernity presupposes as axiomatic are only one way of categorizing and experiencing reality among others, then alternate worldviews, becomings, and existences could by their very alterity offer a possible solution. In my dissertation, I explore the usefulness of engaging with the relational potential of new animism[6] in critically evaluating the separatist ontology of modernity, based upon the binary dualism of nature and culture. Furthermore, I argue that speculative, aesthetic, affective, and formal properties of the moving image are indispensible in speculatively

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[2] Jan Zalasiewicz and others, 'Are we now living the Anthropocene?', *GSA Today*, 18.2 (February 2008), pp. 4–8.
[3] Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1999).
[4] Philippe Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).
[5] Nurit Bird-David, 'Animism revisited: Personhood, environment, and relational epistemology', *Current Anthropology*, 40.S1 (February 1999), pp. 67–91.
[6] Graham Harvey, *Animism: Respecting the Living World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

imagining animistic futures. Perhaps it is precisely from this periphery that we can observe the ethos of the Anthropos rising — and falling.

Yet, what is animism, an 'ontological anarchy' or 'the ghost that hunts modernity'?[7] In *Beyond Nature and Culture*, Descola maps out four ontologies — animism, naturalism, totemism, and analogism in order to account for the ways in which humans and nonhumans live the relations between them. Descola systematizes these relations on the basis of enacted similarity and dissimilarity between humans and non-humans. Naturalism, based on a strict division of the natural from the cultural is the ontology of modernity: humans, as the sole possessor of any interiority (culture) are only by virtue of their material bodies connected to the non-human world (nature), which itself is devoid of an interior. In this ontology, representation and meaning separate humans from the nonhuman world. On the contrary, in animism, humans and non-humans share an interiority — the possibility of becoming persons through engaging in relational practice that cuts across the nature/culture division.

In contrast to the loaded terms stereotypically associated with animism, such as 'spirits', 'ghosts', 'shamans', 'supernatural' or 'life forces', personhood is the least burdened with the oppressive politics of the nineteenth century anthropology. To approach animism as practice rather than belief is to vacate the territory of transcendental commitment to a world distant from ours, populated with anthropomorphic spirits and vengeful ghosts. Rather than that, animism as practice rooted in relationality highlights the immanent entanglement of human and nonhuman actors in the here and now. This, in turn, accentuates the vital role of creative practices, such as art, philosophy and activism, in laying groundwork for a politics beyond anthropocentrism — a politics that the Anthropocene pressingly demands.

Can animism help us think a post-naturalist cinema? According to Descola, '[the arts] enjoy a certain degree of freedom, which affords the possibility of stepping into different ontologies',[8] while for Felix Guattari, animism is the condition that brings about 'aesthetic and affective events that [could] recompose the world'.[9] Indeed, cinema theory provides multiple considerations of the medium's ability to world-build and fabulate; to viscerally immerse in new worlds. As film philosopher Patricia Pisters states, referring to the work of Gilles Deleuze, 'cinema is not an illusion of reality but a reality of illusions'.[10] Among various scholarly approaches, the idea that the cinema is an ontological vehicle for thought rather than a representation of reality runs throughout the history of cinema theory; for some it is a matter of formalism and for others a

[7] Anselm Franke, 'Introduction', *e-flux*, 36, (July 2012) <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/introduction%E2%80%94%E2%80%9Canimism%E2%80%9D/> [accessed 6 March 2016].
[8] Eduardo Kohn, 'A Conversation with Philippe Descola', *Tipiti: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America*, 7.2, Article 1 (2009).
[9] Felix Guattari, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 86.
[10] Patricia Pisters, *The Neuro-Image: A Deleuzian Filmphilosophy of Digital Screen Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), p. 65.

necessary space for political speculation.[11] While fleshing out the connections between relationality and film philosophy would demand a separate dissertation, I take as especially relevant the instances when film theory explicitly engages with animism or other non-modern ontologies. From Jean Epstein's assertion that all of cinema is animistic[12] to Rachel Moore's *Savage Theory: Cinema as Modern Magic*,[13] Raul Ruiz's meditation 'on a shamanic cinema'[14] and, more recently, Sarah Cooper's *The Soul of Film Theory*,[15] film theory has stressed the political potential of non-modern ontologies as enabling an enchantment that cuts through modernity's dualistic reductions. Following Moore's statement that 'the cinema is for the moderns as magic is to the primitives',[16] it would seem that *all* engagement with the cinema is a mode of self-anthropology, an anthropology of the moderns. Capturing and generating animist stances, the cinema reveals its position as an ethical and speculative agent, investigating and proposing remedies to anthropocentric modernity and humanism.

Inter-disciplinary in its scope, this dissertation seeks to present a possible conjunction of the ontological turn in contemporary anthropology, from which it borrows the concept of animism, and moving image studies. While the sizeable field of visual ethnography continues to produce insight on stylistic and aesthetic features of ethnographic films — often in relation to realism — little research has been generated on how fiction or experimental films can touch on ontological questions that anthropology currently investigates. Although a number of anthropological studies deal with the question of perception,[17] cinema is rarely used as a thought model. Through a diffractive reading of anthropological and cinema theory as well as case study analysis of selected films, this project proposes that an engagement with the moving image through an animist lens can produce ethical insight into human relations with the nonhuman world.

[11] See, for example: Daniel Frampton, *Filmosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006); Daniel Yacavone, *Film Worlds: A Philosophical Aesthetics of Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015); John Lyden, *Film as Religion: Myths, Morals, and Rituals* (New York: New York University Press, 2003).

[12] Jean Epstein, 'Le Cinématographe vu de l'Etna', in *Jean Epstein. Critical Essays and New Translations*, ed. by Sarah Keller and Jason Paul (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), pp. 287–307.

[13] Rachel Moore, *Savage Theory: Cinema as Modern Magic* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

[14] Raul Ruiz, *Poetics of Cinema* (Paris: Editions Dis Voir, 1995), pp. 73–91.

[15] Sarah Cooper, *The Soul of Film Theory* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013).

[16] Moore, p. 12.

[17] See, for example: Rane Willerslev, *Soul Hunters: Hunting, Animism, and Personhood Among the Siberian Yukagharis* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2007).

Beyond Post-war Cinema. Historical Experience and Cultural Agency in Post-Yugoslav Film

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Bosnia and Herzegovina is still considered a post-war country, both by its inhabitants and external observers. The concept of 'post-war' implies that the country and its people are tied more strongly to the past than they are oriented towards the future. A post-war society appears to be permanently overshadowed by the past, while the future is permanently postponed. Paradoxically, as long as the future is kept at bay and the post-war condition kept alive, Bosnia maintains certain significance on the global scene. However, living in the temporal vacuum of the post-war condition cannot be a long-term perspective. But when and how will the status of a 'post-war' society be lifted?

This project asks to what extent films and filmmakers can contribute towards overcoming the post-war condition.

Inevitably, war is a major topic in contemporary post-Yugoslav films. The experience of war comes to the fore in cinema either through conventional representation or through what one could call, drawing on a concept of Gilles Deleuze, strategies of non-representation.[2] By conventional representation I mean clichés and images with definite and stabilized meanings, which produce no further associations. Non-representation, on the other hand, refers to images that encourage attentive spectatorship, evoke various and often conflicting experiences and are open to multiple layers of meaning.

A range of films, like Jasmila Žbanić's *For Those Who Can Tell No Tales* (2013), Bobo Jelčić's *A Stranger* (2013), Aida Begić's *Children of Sarajevo* (2012), Šejla Kamerić's *1395 Days without Red* (2011), Vladimir Perišić's *Ordinary People* (2009), Goran Dević and Zvonimir Jurić's *Blacks* (2009), and Namik Kabil's *Interrogation* (2007) with its follow-up film *Inside* (2013), provide spectators with non-representational images that offer innovative approaches to the collective past, while simultaneously reframing contemporary experience. What I propose

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[2] See Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011); Gilles Deleuze, 'Nomadic Thought', in *Desert Islands and Other Texts, 1953-1974*, (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2004), pp. 252–261.

to call non-representational images in post-Yugoslav cinema appear to offer a more dynamic relationship to the past and the present, while reflecting complex processes of the formation of collective and individual identity, memory, guilt and responsibility.

But if these dynamics are inherent in non-representational images, is there indeed a way in which such images can contribute to overcoming the post-war condition? In order to answer this question, I propose to examine the emergence of non-representational images of war within post-Yugoslav contemporary cinema of the last fifteen years (i.e. since 2000). In particular, I want to investigate how contemporary images of war shape film aesthetics and development of film language in post-war Yugoslav cinema, and to what extent non-representational strategies and their reception contribute towards the process of reconciliation.

In order to address the social relevance of non-representational images of war in addition to their aesthetic properties, my project will include an inquiry into the role of the Sarajevo Film Festival in selecting, showcasing and supporting production and circulation of post-Yugoslav films. I aspire to explore whether and how the Sarajevo Film Festival as a privileged showcase of post-Yugoslav film contributes to the overall discourse on reconciliation within post-Yugoslav society.

The Sarajevo Film Festival was founded in the days of the siege of Sarajevo as an act of resistance and strife for life. Coming out of its intimate phase as a small-scale event that gathered international filmmakers and intellectuals to celebrate the city's survival, over the course of twenty years it has grown into an international film festival with a focus on the broadly understood region of Southeast Europe. From the industry perspective, over the past decade the festival has aspired to become the hub for regional film professionals, as it plays an important role in the development and financing of European co-productions in the region. A close, inter-dependent relationship between the festival and the local society has remained throughout the years. It is embodied in the inner-city open-air cinema experience for up to 3000 people. The local audience is used to getting exposed to films produced in former Yugoslavia. Recognizing the need of society to engage with contemporary cinema, which, at the same time, reflects on the problematic past, the festival has come up with modes, which support wider circulation of non-representational images.

In particular, I want to find out to what extent the festival encourages the production and promulgation of films that avoid the use of representational images of war and address both the historical experience of war and the contemporary experience of post-war society through non-representational strategies.

The films in the corpus have been selected in terms of the way they deal with individual and collective memory, the relationship of past and present and their choice of representation and non-representational strategies. In addition, the corpus primarily includes films that premiered at the Sarajevo Film Festival.

Overall, my research can be divided in two major segments: the first segment covers a wide range of issues, from positioning the meaning of non-representa-

tional (in relation to representational) images, exploring benefits and limitations of both modes, providing their diachronic analysis (film production of the last fifteen years in relation to the time before), to discussing their impact on reconciliation (cultural aspect) and the development of film language (aesthetical aspect). One of the main objectives is to enquire about whether post-Yugoslav cinema is more defined by the emergence of different national cinemas or by its shared, transnational identity.

The second segment focuses mainly on the role of Sarajevo Film Festival in exhibiting and fostering the distribution of non-representational images and stimulating their further production on one hand, while contributing to reconciliation within the present-day post-Yugoslav society on the other.

Reviews / Comptes-rendus

Giovanna Fossati and Annie van den Oever (eds.)
Exposing the Film Apparatus: The Film Archive as a Research Laboratory

Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2016, pp. 480

Film archives can be understood as repositories of the historical experience of cinema; they are first and foremost places dedicated to the transmission of visual memory, and therefore testify to the importance of film heritage as an expression of cultural identity. Film archives emerged in response to a need for film conservation, caused by a series of historical events, not to mention the physical features of the carriers – i.e. subject to chemical decay. However, film archives are currently entering a radical, new phase: they are no longer merely the depositary for visual cultural heritage, but moreover institutions that can dialogue with the current mediascape and new forms of audience experience, that are addressed to a projection of the future.

Among these kinds of institutions, the EYE Filmmuseum in Amsterdam has a leading role, and the book series *Framing Film*, launched by Amsterdam University Press in collaboration with EYE, is dedicated to studies of restoration, archival, and exhibition practices.

This eclectic collection of 29 essays is based on presentations at the *Film Archive as a Research Laboratory* conference, held in 2013 in Amsterdam and Groningen, and they discuss the role of the archive in current academic teaching and research on film. The editors are Giovanna Fossati[1] and Annie van den Oever.[2] With this volume, their aim is to research the history and development of film studies through a media-archaeological perspective.

This approach begins by reflecting on the etymology of the term 'technology', which comes from the ancient Greek *techné* and thus captured both concepts of craft and art. As such, cinema and media technologies face the complex challenge of their contemporaneity, deeply impacting the society in which they emerge. The authors are well aware of the theoretical background in media studies, established by Walter Benjamin, Marshall McLuhan, Friedrich Kittler, Bernard Stiegler, Paul Virilio etc. Nevertheless, here this study of media history and theory predominantly addresses the 'exposure' of devices and apparatuses

[1] Giovanna Fossati, *From Grain to Pixel: The Archival Life of Film in Transition* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009).

[2] Annie van den Oever*, Techné/Technology: Researching Cinema and Media Technologies, their Development, Use, and Impact* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014).

by reassessing the history of audiovisual media, and it focuses specifically on the practical applications of these epistemic objects.

In fact, media technology questions its own historical determination, while moreover investigating the role of the film archive: the main idea of this volume is to promote new forms of collaboration between academic and cultural heritage institutions, and thus invite media historians to interpret museums and archives as research laboratories. Film archivists today seek to reframe the meaning of their collections in view of this moment of technological transition, while film scholars are currently redefining the conceptual issues related to film history and to the so-called ‘digital turn’. As such, practices of archival institutions become crucial in a rapidly changing ‘mediascape’, which in turn is connected to an ecosystem of apparatus advancements: for example, every tool for darkened rooms (projectors, printers, cameras) has made its mark in the moving image heritage. In this framework, the intertwined genealogies of art and media relate the cultural value of technological artifacts to an epistemological relevance, overcoming the traditional reticence for apparatuses in film studies. In the volume, apparatuses are re-conceptualized by film scholars and curators within a trajectory that goes from the small to the large: a first section, entitled *Small and Portable*, includes analyses of the portable devices, comparing the impact of smartphones, portable cameras – such as the hand-cranked Debrie Parvo, which dates back early 1900s – and devices like the 16mm Movie Maker or Ciné-Kodak system, for amateur use. Histories of material objects and of amateur filmmaking practices are intertwined, with particularly original contribution focuses on tools like the tripod. From the iPhone back to the Edison Ideal Kinematograph, through the history of Bolex cameras, VCD and Sony Video Rover Ensemble, this section reflects on the crucial role of devices in the spectator’s relationship with the moving image. The second section, *Medium and Not Easily Portable*, examines projectors (from Kinemacolor to a 2k DLP Digital Cinema Projector) and other machinery such as the 1909 Pathé Frères stencil-cutter or the Biophon sound-on-disc system. The final section of the volume, *Large and Not Portable*, is dedicated to bigger apparatuses used in post-production. From printers to editing tables, from 19th-century stereoscopy to 3D computer graphics, installations and databases, and from movie theaters to augmented reality, this expanded idea of cinema responds to the widespread presence of the moving image that has continually shaped our daily life.

The universe of visual arts and the spaces of modern life have been permeated by the functions of all these devices, which impact cinema both as an art form and an industry. With the introduction of digital technologies, the heritage of the moving image is becoming a more complex cultural object: it now reflects technological progress and its social impact, due to the status of contemporary media formats and their specific modes of fruition.

The theoretical framing of this research adopts Michel Foucault’s definition of the *dispositif* – later used by Jean-Louis Baudry and Giorgio Agamben; according to this theory, the mechanics of representation in cinema engender a power

dynamic, connecting the audience and spectatorial practices within an 'imaginary relation', i.e. the immaterial effects of the work of the apparatus. But the cinematic medium does not involve only a trascendental condition: technology must be recognized as categorical in the epistemology of the media. Accordingly, this book engages in an analysis of the experiences activated by various devices by promoting scholarly awareness of the materiality of the apparatus. The heuristic methodology of 're-enactment', already well-established in the field of experimental archaeology and in the history of science, directs the research of this edited collection towards an experimental approach, which focuses both on the discursive construction of epistemological structures related to the media, and the materiality of the various devices as well as their modes of use.

[Rossella Catanese, Università degli Studi di Roma "La Sapienza"]

Varda / Cuba exhibition

Centre Pompidou, Paris (November 11, 2015-February 1, 2016)

How do you exhibit a film? This question has been on the minds of curators, film scholars and art historians ever since the moving image first entered the museum space. *Varda / Cuba*, an exhibition in the photo gallery of the Centre Pompidou in Paris, offers a surprisingly simple answer: you break down the film into its component parts, namely individual frames, and hang them on the gallery wall.

Trips to Cuba were par for the course for French artists and intellectuals in the early 1960s. Jean-Paul Sartre travelled to the Caribbean island to take stock of the achievements of the revolution, as did actor Gérard Philippe, writer Marguerite Duras and photographer René Burri, a Swiss native and honorary French cultural establishment figure, who came back from Cuba with one of the great iconic images of the 20th century, the portrait of Che Guevara smoking a cigar and defiantly looking upwards past the camera. Also traveling with her camera in Cuba was Agnès Varda, who visited the island from December 1962 to January 1963. Varda had established herself as a major filmmaker in 1961 with *Cléo de 5 à 7*, the film that prevented the Nouvelle Vague from becoming yet another all male chapter in the history of cinema. During her trip to Cuba, Varda took about 1800 photographs. She photographed politicians, functionaries, and particularly women in positions of political responsibility, from government officials to diplomats. But Varda also photographed the life beyond the scene of politics: musicians, dancers, people in the streets, gestures, looks, attitudes, interactions. After her return to Paris, Varda edited the photographs into a half-hour film, which she called *Salut les Cubains*, with a running commentary by Varda herself and her actor-friend Michel Piccoli. The title referred to a ragingly successful French pop culture magazine of the early 1960s, *Salut les copains*, which made sense particularly because the film also contained a music track with popular songs from Cuba. The stars of the film include singer and dancer Benny Moré, who died before the film was completed and thus appears in *Salut les Cubains* posthumously, dancing in intermittent steps to one of his songs. The commentary elucidates the photographs with a subtle play of shifting meanings, which undermines any intimation of officialdom that this product of a quasi-state visit might have carried. In Varda's commentary, for instance, there is a short way from 'corps diplomatique', the diplomatic corps, to the 'corps des femmes',

the bodies of Cuban women, which Varda describes, both in photographs and words, as 'taking the shape of the letter S in constant movement'.

Today, *Salut les Cubains* and the photographs from which the film was composed, constitute an artistic ethnography of everday life in Cuba in the early years of the revolution. At the same time, Varda's work in Cuba marks a pivot towards a politically engaged form of filmmaking, which she would further expand in later works of the 1960s. In 1967, for instance, she collaborated with Alain Resnais, Jean-Luc Godard, William Klein and Joris Ivens on *Loin du Vietnam*, a collective work which chronicles the American war of attrition against North Vietnam from the point of view of the civilian population. And in 1968, while in California to negotiate a contract with a Hollywood studio, which didn't materialize when the studio refused to grant Varda final cut, Varda shot a film on the *Black Panther* party in Oakland, which stands as one of the great works of political documentary cinema and feels eerily contemporary in the light of recent police abuses against African American citizens in the United States.

From these later works, *Salut les Cubains* and the Cuban photographs differ in the cheerfulness they exude, but also in terms of the unusual technique that lead from the photographs to the film – the montage of a film as a succession of still photographs. Varda's colleague Chris Marker employed a similar technique in his now-canonical science fiction film *La jetée* from 1963, which is also composed of still images. Where *La jetée* is a film in 'immediate short-term memory', as Julian Hochberg once argued, *Salut les Cubains* has a very different effect. By lining up still photographs of bodies in movement in rapid succession, the film turns photography into a form of sculpture in time, transforming stills into the successive steps of a dance. At the same time, the film retains a documentary attitude and seizes with great accuracy an expressive repertoire of body attitudes and gestures, which constitute the fabric of a community.

That *Salut les Cubains* depends for its effect on the artistic quality of the individual photographs provides the organizing principle of the *Varda / Cuba* exhibition at the Centre Pompidou. Varda originally trained as a photographer, and while she shot her first feature film, *La pointe courte* in 1954, she never ceased to work as a photographer. While some of her colleagues, such as her friend and long-time partner in dialogue Jean-Luc Godard forever rack their brains over the question of what an image is, Varda, now 88 years old and shooting her next film, lines up one inventive image and striking composition after another throughout her career as a filmmaker – to the point where one is often tempted to freeze the frames and place them in a frame to be displayed on a wall. Which is exactly what *Varda / Cuba* did for *Salut les Cubains*. The occasion for the exhibition is a donation: Varda has recently bequeathed her Cuban photo archive, which is a core element of her photographic oeuvre, to the Centre Pompidou. The exhibition consisted of a display of the component parts of the film on the walls of the Centre's *Galérie des Photographies*. The effect was to open up a space between the images and between the still image and the film, and to relate the rhythm of the film and the temporality of the individual photographs to each other in

striking and productive new ways. Another, equally important effect was to remind the visitor that Varda is not only an accomplished filmmaker – and, more recently, installation artist – but first and foremost a maker of images, a first rate photographer.

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André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion
The End of Cinema? A Medium in Crisis in the Digital Age
New York, Columbia University Press, 2015, pp. 256 (trans. Timothy Barnard)

The adjective 'digital' seems to attach itself to everything these days, accompanying anguished hand-wringing as often as it does excitement. This kind of descriptive promiscuity, not unlike that often vexing prefix 'post-' invites an obvious question: if *everything* is 'digital' today, what does it mean that *any* thing is? As the subtitle suggests, André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion's *The End of Cinema?* takes a broad approach, acknowledging the range of digital technology's transformative effects while taking seriously the definitional questions at stake. The volume offers a playful and readable survey of various debates from the field's technophobes and technophiles alike. Situating cinema's so-called 'end' within a longer genealogy of multiple 'births' and 'deaths', the titular crisis refers to cinema's decline in pre-eminence in an increasingly crowded field of moving image cultures, as well as evolving modes of viewing and engagement. Translated from the French, the volume leans unsurprisingly towards French-language sources, contributing a refreshing array of Francophone examples — from Air France ad copy to the re-branding of the *Cinémathèque québécoise* — to a discussion often palpably American in focus.

The authors frame 'the digital' as yet another transformation in a medium notably prone to change, insisting: 'cinema's entire history has been punctuated by moments when its media identity has been radically called into question' (2–3). They distinguish between 'digitization', the process of digital encoding, and 'digitalization', 'the process of cinema becoming digital in general terms' (40), including the proliferation of screens, the decline of the movie theatre and changes in the method and means of cinematic production. 'Digitalization', then, is just another 'death' alongside the introduction of sound and the emergence of television: '*le Cinéma est mort. Vive le cinéma!*' as a 1967 pamphlet would have it. Tracing the recent re-emergence of such 'attractional' tendencies as special effects, motion capture and the re-transmission of 'live' opera, the volume proposes a return to medium diversity that cinema's 20th century institutionalization has, they claim, attempted to obscure. This return (with a difference) to cinema's 'attractional mode' is a central feature of the current crisis, and is a reminder of how much the medium has historically oriented itself towards narration. Following in

the work of Lev Manovich,[1] the authors assert that we ought to characterize this 'post-cinematic' cinema as '*animage*'; '[*animage* is] an image that moves to the beat of *animation*. Animation is thus *returning* to cinema, or rather the contrary: cinema is *returning* to animation'(175). These many deaths belong to a medium that was both stillborn and born thrice; historic lags between cinema's 'births' as technological possibility, socio-cultural practice, and now attractional mode were heralded, we are told, by Antoine Lumière's pronouncement that 'Cinema is an invention with no future' (26).

There remain, however, ways in which the recent 'death' of cinema is distinct: for one, according to Gaudreault and Marion, digitalization is processual, less an 'event' than a 'passage' (37) or perhaps a 'transubstantiation'(38). Secondly, this passage is not the *replacement* of one system by another, in the way that 'talkies' replaced silent film, but the *fragmentation* of a media system more broadly. This fragmentation unsettles the relation between media across the entire field, moving towards what the authors' call 'intermediality', or the '*fusion* of all media (accompanied by a *confusion* of genres)' (42). The burden of determining media specificity then shifts to the frontier between medium and intermediality, for it is now determined by *how* a medium negotiated its 'necessarily intermedial relations with other prisms of media identities'(112).

The volume develops an impressive terminological arsenal, full of neologisms and acronyms to identify particular moments in cinema's short history. While many may prove useful for scholars in a field where so much is in flux, the vocabulary can occasionally appear to favour inventiveness over theoretical clarity. For example, the question of whether these transformations qualify as 'revolutionary', to which the authors devote several pages, seems a second-order semantic tussle, and far less significant than tracking the socio-cultural effects of the transformations themselves across diverse contexts. Do we truly see the 'post-cinematic' landscape better when we use expressions such as 'cinematographiation' (98), DiMuMi syndrome (digital, multiple and migrating) or ATAWAD (Anytime, anywhere, any device)? Furthermore, the specifying impulse of ever-more neologisms betrays an ontological focus that may let cinema's sociality fall away: broadly, the authors seems to suggest, if we could say precisely what cinema *is*, then we would understand what cinema *does*, or what it means to us. This is not accidental: as the authors make clear, they intend to make their case by 'driving the digital's innermost ontological entrenchments into the open' (181). However, their second aim, to bring this approach up against the digital's 'social uses and cultural practices', is a little less successful. For example, although the authors do consider the effects of the shift to digital stock on spectators, their 'spectator' has a generic quality, an abstraction particularly remarkable given the diversity of viewing experiences globally, and considering the question of which spectators have access to what, where, when, how, and how this makes them feel. This last

[1] Lev Manovich, "What is Digital Cinema?", in *Post-Cinema: Theorizing 21st Century Film,* ed. by Shane Denson and Julia Leydas (Falmer: REFRAME Books, 2016).

question of feeling would have been a welcome addition to the work: the recent efflorescence of scholarship on the question of affect from, for example, Brian Massumi and Steven Shaviro,[2] demonstrates the richness of this line of inquiry for the digital age. Finally, there is very little in the volume that acknowledges that the digital age is also the era of globalisation, and as such relies on material and political networks of unevenly distributed access, resources and authority.

'What is cinema?', that infamous question of André Bazin's, continues to orient discussions among film scholars in the digital era, and many readers will find the authors' 'births and deaths' model compelling. Although, as the authors recognize, concerns over the model's biologistic inflection exist, there may be more to it than metaphoric convenience. For within the text's account of cinema's genealogy is a vision of media development more generally, asking how a medium comes to know itself through failure and change. As distorting as the metaphor may be, it nonetheless foregrounds how much of what we think we know about cinema comes into focus at a moment of dissolution: invention, destruction and crisis, in such a model, emerge as not only unavoidable, but indeed part of the self-constitution of the medium itself. It is a reminder, therefore, that cinema is, and always has been, a living medium.

[Emily Ming Yao, Columbia University]

[2] Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); Steven Shaviro, *Post-Cinematic Affect* (New York: Zone Books, 2010).

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