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IMAGINATIONS
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# *THE MISE-EN-SCÈNE OF A DECADE: VISUALIZING THE 70S*

*ISSUE 9-1, 2018*

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**Guest Editors – Nathan Holmes and Andrew Pendakis**
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**Front Cover Image: The Post newsroom set for *All the President's Men*.**

# FADE OF THE POLAROID: TOWARDS A POLITICAL ONTOLOGY OF THE 70S

ANDREW PENDAKIS

*…that memories are the only possessions which no-one can take from us, belongs in the storehouse of impotently sentimental consolations that the subject, resignedly withdrawing into inwardness, would like to believe as the very fulfilment that he has given up. In setting up his own archives, the subject seizes his own stock of experience as property, so making it something wholly external to himself. Past inner life is turned into furniture just as, conversely, every Biedermeier piece was memory made wood. The interior where the soul accommodates its collection of memoirs and curios is derelict. Memories cannot be conserved in drawers and pigeon-holes; in them the past is indissolubly woven into the present. No-one has them at his disposal in the free and voluntary way that is praised in Jean Paul's fulsome sentences. Precisely where they become controllable and objectified, where the subject believes himself entirely sure of them, memories fade like delicate wallpapers in bright sunlight. But where, protected by oblivion, they keep their strength, they are endangered like all that is alive.*

*–Theodor Adorno (2005: 166)*

*The clocks are never synchronized, the schedules never coordinated, every epoch is a discordant mix of divergent rhythms, unequal durations, and variable speeds.*

*–Rebecca Comay (2011: 4)*

Though we are tempted to imagine time as intrinsically open, free to combine and re-combine with moments past or still to come, eras instead become compulsively entangled with each other, linked in such a way that neither can be understood apart. We know, after Walter Benjamin, that history looks less like a finished building than it does the latter ruined—shards of basement in the attic, holes slashed through floors at strange angles, staircases that end suddenly, mid-air. When times interpenetrate like this they find themselves suddenly linked by a historically necessary energy of filiation or disavowal. In a structure loosely analogous to that of the unconscious of an individual

subject, a time enters into an orbit with another period or era. Times fall in love, though the parameters here are not defined by transparency or fullness, but dependency, fear, aggression, and misrecognition.

It may be that our own time has entered into precisely such a relationship with the 1970s. Unlike the 1990s, which may still be too close to us, the 1960s, 70s, and 80s are decades amenable to representation as discrete units or periods; they strike us as wholes bound by a certain internal aesthetic logic or flow. It may be, of course, that this is little more than an optical illusion produced by representation itself: we intuit the 1960s as such only because we've been trained by popular culture to recognize its tell-tale cues and signs. The unrepresentability of the 1990s then may in fact turn out to have been nothing more than the interval required by a culture to transform its past into a concept; alternatively, it may be that there is actually something in the object, in the historical specificity of the 1990s itself, that prevents its translation into a coherent image or idea. Today one watches the TV show *Friends* fully aware of the way its tone, style, and forms of speech are proper to the period, but the various bits and pieces that comprise the decade's content seem more like an aggregate of externally related parts—one damn thing after another—than they do the organelles of a functioning temporal whole. Where certain "decades" come to appear wrapped around central organizing events/problems or are saturated from within by dominant styles (anything from fashion to sounds), others seem to wade through a zone of indifferentiation, a tonelessness that leaves its key objects and moments linked by nothing more than sheer contiguity. It may be in fact that the 1970s were among the last eras phraseable in the idiom of the "era" itself—that they were, in some complex way, the last real "decade."

But why might this be? Is it that when compared with the 1990s (and later the 2000s) the 70s altered culturally and technologically at a comparatively slower pace, that this rate of change was still slow enough to congeal into the recognizablity of a style or idea? Is it less a question of pace and more one of quality, of the kind of change that took place in this period, with the internet and mobile phones representing a more substantive redistribution of space and time than the CD? Is it that the 1970s were not yet technologically fragmented in the way that the 1990s and later our own time would be, with the cultural tone of our age now effectively dispersed across a thousand platforms, media, and "content providers"? Is it the belated effect of globalization on our capacity to generalize an era? Or is it that the 1990s when held up against the 1970s were experienced even by those living through them as a kind of terminus or endpoint, a time apparently without events (at least in the West), which, depending on one's perspective, marked the triumph of liberalism and a new era of perpetual peace, or alternatively (and less naïvely), the triumph of unfettered capitalism and a new era of hyper-consumerist banality. It may be too that this failure of the 1990s to achieve its own iconicity is the expression within historiography of the problem that Guy Debord once posed as the moment in which all that was once lived moves into the domain of the image. The capacity of an era to register events as actually happening would in this sense be the minimal ontological condition for the existence of Hegelian *Geist*, of an era's inner spiritual coherence and necessity. It is in this sense that we might be said to be living in something like *a long 1990s*, a decade without discernible texture that persists, despite its contradictions,

despite the obvious differences between then and now, for as long as no viable political alternatives to neoliberalism can be imagined. It could be too, finally, that this very conceit, that of a transformation in the capacity of history to generate "eras" proper, tells us less about the logic of the 1970s, the last "real" decade, than it does the structure of our own time's desire (a time, perhaps, so desperate to mark its own specificity that it is open to imagining itself as unprecedentedly devoid of sense, feeling, historicity, etc.). In the postmodern drive to frame the present as an end—to history or experience, for example—the present itself is flooded with a vibrating ecstasy of the new, a sense that nothing like this has ever happened before and that we, here, at the end of history can now know all of the things those who came before us didn't.

The most obvious symptom of our moment's entanglement with the 1970s is the intensity with which we continue to attach ourselves to its artifacts. This is expressed first in the ease with which film and music from the decade continue to be consumed under the sign of the "classic," a concept that clearly imbues productions from the era with greater authenticity or originality than their counterparts in the present. We should not assume that this is something like the natural aura of history, one that organically begins to fringe all things past or old at intervals that can be predicted in advance. Instead, it would appear that the dimensions that accrue around the concept of classic rock and film in the present are soldered to many of the properties of the 1970s itself. What is it about the decade as a whole that allows for this intensified investment, as if it were the time itself, its own grittiness, its own contradictory realness, that vibrates through the signature cultural objects and gestures we tether to the period? Isn't there a way, after all, in which everything we know about the 1970s happens in the light of a strangely universalized New York, a New York of the movies, one rotten with crime and sex but also gorgeously soaked in neon? The dorm rooms of university students, especially those of men, continue to bizarrely orbit the era: Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, and Bob Marley posters in music, *The Godfather*, *Mean Streets*, *Clockwork Orange* in film. Even a cursory glance into these spaces reveals a strangely paralyzed campus imaginary; the expected transition to a version of the classic grounded in new content, in the "best of the nineties," takes place, but only partially. If the process by which things become translated into the idiom of the classic is linear, a huge machine that slides through time along predictable inter-generational cycles—say, every 25 years—then the mechanism almost certainly jammed in the 1970s and has since stuttered around the decade with a strange insistency. Perhaps it is not surprising then that among the most oft-encountered (contemporary) posters found in these spaces is that of Quentin Tarantino's film *Pulp Fiction*, a 1990s text completely saturated by the motifs and forms of the 1970s (and featuring one of the decade's most recognizable stars): it is as if we could only cobble together our conception of the classic through the detritus of the 1970s, as if the decade had become necessary to any attempt on the part of a text to convincingly canonize itself. Troublesome is the way this ontologization of the decade's key figures and motifs dovetails with the logics of contemporary misogyny, fears about the declining manliness of men, and the confusing vagueness of gender roles fed into a nostalgia for a time when "men were still men." The brute maleness of the mobster—or any one of the decade's myriad agents of charming violence, ranging from serial killers to rogue cops—comes to be intuited as somehow closer to the savage Real of things themselves. The humiliations of the present—say the

banalities of office work—can then be re-calibrated as female, as markers of a mass emasculation of men that has led them into a world of fakeness and passivity. This is precisely the position taken by *Fight Club*; it comes as no surprise then that Tyler Durden is decked out in the garb of the 1970s (wide-collared disco shirt, aviator glasses, vintage leather jacket, etc.)—he's functioning in 1999 as an id dressed up as natural masculinity. To what extent this "natural masculinity"—grounded in a fantasy of the 1970s as a time of unconstrained male gesture and desire—continues to haunt the moustaches of urban hipsters is an open question, one not easily solved by an invocation of irony.

We consume the period's visual culture, then, also through its reiterations in contemporary content set in the period. 1990s cinema looped back to the decade constantly—*Goodfellas* (1990), *Casino* (1995), *Boogie Nights* (1997), *Summer of Sam* (1999), *54* (1998)—orbiting objects and motifs (disco, mobsters, the birth of the serial killer) that continue to haunt contemporary films (*Zodiac*, *American Hustle*, *The Good Guys*). Again, the kind of tone grounding these films reveals an era that is intense, expressive, high, fast, and violent—manically Real in a way that has been lost to a seemingly less volatile, more "mediated" present (with this mediation often fantasized from the both the Right and the Centre as the encroachments of "political correctness"). Recent television—*Narcos*, *Mindhunter*, etc.—mirror many of these interests and continue the trend of imagining the life-world of the decade as mostly violent and male. So total is the penetration of the fictional universe of *Star Wars* into the molecules of contemporary representation that it is easy to forget that it is in many ways, at least for those over the age of 40, a living artifact from the 1970s, one inseparable from an encounter with the period's core logics and contradictions. We could not have imagined in 1977 that *Star Wars* was the Trojan horse for a new way of being in the world. That films could become worlds—self-sustaining spaces in which a whole generation might imaginatively live out much of its time, spaces complete with alternative histories, entire cosmologies—would have been surprising to those alive amidst the pressing historicity of the 1970s (and for whom film often critically reflected on the most relevant historical matters of their day, from the war in Vietnam to Watergate). It is perhaps a mark of how badly things have gone politically in the wake of Reagan—America's first (but not last) Hollywood President—that our culture continues to understand these expansionary fictional universes as no more than good clean fun, a fun, albeit, that has expanded—through bedsheets and toothbrushes, video games, and food packaging—in directly inverse proportion to the capacity of individuals to understand in even the most minimal of ways their own place in history. Wouldn't this be the ultimate expression of postmodern thinking taken to its extreme limit? A world in which every subject, having chosen the content it likes best (*Star Wars*, *Harry Potter*, *X-Men*, etc.), embraces the sovereign right not just to escape politics, but the planet itself, distant fictional galaxies rendered in greater detail (and lusher colour) than the basic political outlines of their own neighbourhoods? The sight of a middle-aged man at home with his collection of *Star Wars* figurines—or pointing proudly at the office to a life-size Boba Fett doll he'd had installed to improve morale—reminds us that, despite all of the delusions of modern adulthood, it at least always held in reserve the ghost of a materialist ontology. For all of its conservatism, for all of the ways every claim to adulthood is a lie, there remains in the latter's contempt for children's fictions, and myth itself, a bare historical-materialist gesture—an insistence on the

serious Oneness of situations and on the existence of a ground we somehow complexly and share. After 1977 it became possible to be in possession of detailed technical knowledge of the blueprints of the Death Star (and to display this knowledge as edgy intelligence), while at the same time openly (and unashamedly) knowing nothing about the existence of Toussaint Louverture.

## "Back to the 1970s"

If popular culture returns to an idea of the 1970s that is at the very least variegated, mainstream political discourse perpetuates a much less flexible image of the decade as a period of undifferentiated ruin. One could argue that neoliberalism in many ways survives, masking its own profound failure, on the basis of a highly codified set of associations—what we might call "stock footage"—that frame the 1970s and social democracy itself as an objectionable form of politics, ludicrous to re-consider as viable. The codes at work here appear most clearly in the near-hysteria that has greeted the rise of Jeremy Corbyn in Britain. In 2015, Centrist Labour MP David Blunkett claimed that those voting for Corbyn were mostly hard-Left militants fueled by an irrational politics of hate (of the rich, the successful, etc.); if left unchecked they would drag Britain back to the 1970s, a time in which the nation was torn apart by "strikes, food shortages, and blackouts." To tilt in the direction of social democracy—higher taxes, for example, or tightened regulatory regimes—would be to unthinkingly follow "a road to nowhere." A nightmarish montage accompanies even the merest hint of a return to these policies: corpses left unburied by unionized gravediggers; the three-day work week (imposed to conserve coal supplies hobbled by striking miners); streets crowded with uncollected garbage (and flush with rats); a series of States of Emergency (five in total) declared by Edward Heath between 1970-74 (placing social democracy on the same dangerous plane as terrorism or war). Instead of being a conjuncture of possibility plied by myriad speculative futures, the 1970s in this view is reduced to the scintillating obviousness of crisis. Thatcherite austerity then comes to appear as necessary medicine, a strict but fundamentally sound treatment designed for a patient that would have died without it. In this sense, neoliberalism is never opposed to a genuine political alternative or different form of political reason, but only ever to networks of dangerous drives, instincts, and emotions—to an irrational expansion of the political into the sovereign necessity of the market. In other words, neoliberalism lacks interlocutors because those who contest it are always no more than force-fields of instincts. Any desire to "return to the 1970s"—that is to systematically reassess its political legacy—can only be understood as: a) a naïve form of economic illiteracy (there is, after all, no such thing as an economically sound social democracy) or b) a bad Marxist death drive—a desire for the pleasures of stupid negation, of a class war that destroys for the sake of destruction itself. Such a desire, either way, is nothing less than *unnatural*— a corpse left out in the sun.

One way to track the tropes at work in neoliberalism's occluded history of the world is to focus on one of its great, spectral bogeys: inflation. Hatred of inflation is perhaps the closest thing our moment has to a (bi-partisan) moral absolute. Left unchecked, allowed to "spiral," inflation is almost universally decried as wrong or risky; economic policy (so we're told by the central bankers and institutional lenders) should be tailored to prioritize and control this danger, even if it is at the cost of a rise in unemployment or involves significant cuts to basic services.

That such a choice in the 1950s—the era of One Nation conservatives such as Harold Macmillan—would have been unthinkable, not just politically, but on emphatically *moral* grounds is entirely forgotten. Stranger, though, is the way our moment finds in inflation an idea of catastrophe that is more readily imaginable and a greater spur to action than the risk posed to life by climate crisis. This is not an empty assertion: governments regularly act politically to curb inflation even as they do nothing in the face of potential extinction. It is as if the hyper-inflationary environment, one in which the simple act of exchange spectacularly collapses, presents a more complicated puzzle—and a more terrible prospect—than the collapse of the global eco-system: one can fantasize, for example, dramatic scientific fixes for climate change or imagine a world in which humans eek out an existence on the edges of a changed natural world, but our creativity fades when tasked with the spectre of a $10,000 load of bread. One cannot survive or endure inflation; one can only immediately move to extinguish it. In a capitalist environment in which everyone is spontaneously relativist, nothing is more structurally surreal or really more fundamentally *evil* than a shift in the stability of prices—it is as if the consistency of money were the last of the classical certitudes, one that persists despite the fact that it was precisely the marketization of life—the sovereignty of money—that killed the old truths in the first place. It is perhaps not surprising then that historians regularly locate the Holocaust, a politics of death taken to a point beyond all limits, as emerging out of the terrible fog of the 1923 Weimar inflation. The message is clear: keep one's monetary house in order or risk a return of the repressed of world-historical proportions.

Hatred of inflation passes for truth, even in an age characterized by the suspicion of absolutes, because it links the experimental skepticism of the natural sciences with a much older customary logic grounded in the association of chaos with excess. In contradistinction to the moralizing Christian or Confucian, the neoliberal economist can point to the political necessity of anti-inflationary measures, not as an injunction to ascesis or moral balance but as an effect of unquestionable natural scientific law (complete with precise numbers and graphs). If we can't imagine measuring mass unhappiness we can at least know precisely what's going on in the stability of our money: we can accord to chaos a precise measure and respond to it with monetary governance. Yet this injunction (to balance) works precisely because it lies so closely to the inherited customary norms that structure the West—dreams of order as harmony, balance finally restored, and of excess or chaos as an unnatural deviation from things as they should be. Our moment illustrates or dramatizes this chaos using stock photos of the 1970s. On the other side of inflation is a future drawn directly from the past: scenes of riot, produce rotting out of the backs of trucks, garbage-strewn streets, etc. The tone here is biblical; this is a time of plague and rot. Nothing better signals social failure in the eyes of the middle class than the public display of uncollected trash: it contains "Third World" [this is not a claim about the "Third World" but about the way the latter is imagined in the minds of the white middle class], devolution, the threat of a complete collapse of liberal civilitydevolution, and the total breakdown of liberal civility. Inflation, for neoliberals, is a moral fable in which the main villains are profligate (self-serving) welfare states and greedy, wage-distorting unions: at the root of inflationary chaos, one that ends the natural simplicity of buying and selling, are states and unions who have made it all so troublingly political.

Thus, we must reject the idea that inflation is axiomatically bad or that it is simply the symptom of self-evident economic failure. This is because inflation reveals the truth that every claim of an economy to transcendental naturalness is false. The fog of inflation makes clear the falsity of growth, its claim to be an axiom, and its seeming automatic quality. In an inflationary spiral there is no longer any sense that an economy is something comprised of individuals nor that it is simply a natural whole that operates behind the back of its agents; instead, the world splits into virulent stakes and interests, classes and forces, a fog or smoke in which everything is suddenly debatable. Coal doesn't simply move along smooth tracks from pit to factory, but is slowed down by the Real of truculent labour, the inconvenient fact that nothing happens without the latter's consent. Money doesn't flow from hand to hand, between a seller and a natural buyer, but takes the form, finally, of a problem. Money in these contexts becomes the local historical invention it has never ceased to be. Certainly, any possible Left politics has to "keep the lights on," "keep the trains running," etc., but whatever Left efficiency stands to be imagined by future praxis will also be distinct from its present counterpart by being oriented from the beginning towards the possibility of a life *never wholly sutured to efficiency in the first place*. A life, in other words, in which efficiency never becomes a governing ideology (nor a justification for suffering or exploitation).

It bears keeping in mind that the last moment one could *realistically* imagine the planet's future as communist—or post-capitalist, socialist, etc.—passed quietly and without anyone really noticing on a day without a date sometime in the 1970s. All over the world—in China, parts of Africa, South America, and even at the system's very centre (in the United States, Germany, etc.)—it was possible in the 1970s, buoyed by a sense for the continuing relevance of social democracy, for the political power of students and unions and for the revolutions that continued to emerge in places like Nicaragua or Afghanistan to conclude that the planet was still tilting slowly to the Left. There were signs of crisis, certainly, and symptoms of accumulating contradictions and limits, but almost nobody envisioned the answer to these problems in the form of a jarring lurch to the Right; apart from a tiny minority, mostly Friedmanite economists or policy wonks such as Keith Joseph, the thought of using unemployment to tame inflation, or of actively disempowering the unions, was unimaginable. Adorno, of course, is correct to point to the ways Auschwitz interrupted the Enlightenment dream of perpetual progress; yet it was precisely the defeat of those who had engineered Auschwitz, combined with the post-war spread of social democracy, that made it easy to see the slow trickling into common sense of once-radical Left ideas—unionism, full employment, etc.—as an extension of Reason into the last remaining bastions of ignorance and privilege. For many in 1975 the idea that post-secondary education should be free (or near-free) was as accepted as the suggestion in 2018 that a cigarette should never be smoked in the hallway of a hospital. Publically funded libraries were then as axiomatically irreversible as the rights of women to drive or vote. Even those on the Right—such as Edward Heath or Richard Nixon—broadly conceded as necessary many of the things that today, under neoliberalism, we view as excesses or impossibilities (workers' rights, for example, or pensions).

To live in the 1970s was to inhabit a horizon on which the future was, if not Red, at least reddish or pink. This strange, now almost structurally unrememberable fact, is at the heart of the

1974 travel diary of Roland Barthes' time in China. When he notes with amazement the "absolute uniformity" of the outfits worn by citizens in the People's Republic, he is to some extent channeling a fairly predictable liberal response to communist alterity: sameness encountered in this most private of domains—that of fashion and the bodily articulation of the personality—can only be registered as repression, as the banal symptom of totalitarianism, rather than as *a difference that capacitates as much as it limits*. Beneath the many snarky liberal asides that pepper his diary, however, there is at the same time something more—a sense for the sheer exteriority of communism. It is along the thread of this anatomist's gaze, one that restlessly but amorally documents differences, that the text comes to register communism as a gigantic, world-historical object. Communism, on this account, is not merely the history of a radical dream, nor a subjective process sustained by the activity of militants, but *something that has already happened to the world* (in the form of MiGs and free health care, but also shorter working days and, yes, even gulags). Barthes texts registers, in other words, the scalar totality of communism—its hugeness but also its improbability, all of the risk and torpor it had to traverse to exist at all. Barthes, who taught us to read our bodies like books and that outfits too were systems of signs, finds in the command economy a kind of absolute alterity or limit: "the reading of the social dimension is turned upside down. Uniform isn't uniformity" (57). To move from within the naturalness of a world in which we dress ourselves comfortably in any manner we like to a world in which the heterogeneity of fashion, its empiricism, has been arrested by centralized production is to move anthropologically between two radically different life-worlds or ways of being alive. Millions of people suddenly wear the same piece of clothing, a piece of clothing that is finally nothing more or less than fabric itself, fabric worn on a secularized body for which there no longer any Gods (save, maybe, for Mao). Certainly, these garments are alienated, still blurred at the edges by Maoist myth, but at the same instant, they are nothing more than cloth, and so become objects on the edge of every personal imaginary, objects of utility and use value, freed on some level from the imaginary itself. To contend with the 1970s then is to contend in part with the remarkable richness and residual ontological signatures of actually existing communism.

A film such as *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*, for example, presents communism not as a spectral ideal, nor as a well-intentioned feeling, nor even as a form of malevolent extremity or failure, but as a *boringly existent force*, something bluntly present in the world. Communism in such a film is an object among objects, something imbued with conatus, struggling to remain in existence but certainly there, real, a fact among facts. In such films the Eastern Bloc is not demonized, but encountered like natural history, "beyond good and evil." This quality—that of boring, amoral facticity—still comes through in the kind of photographic travelogues of Moscow or Leningrad put out by *National Geographic* in the decade. Communism in fact gets directly folded into the magazine's vision of the world as a system of cultural rather than political differences—communism itself becomes a kind of local colour, slightly exoticized, for sure, but nevertheless included as such within the variegated spectacle of the "human family." Regardless of one's position on the relative strengths and weaknesses of the Soviet system, the fact it happened at all—and that for many decades fed, educated, and clothed its citizens and produced cutting-edge scientific research—remains a significant political fact. This is because even

in the rottenness of the Soviet experiment there is the trace of a miracle, a break, an outside for thought and practice. Jean-Paul Sartre remains correct that without this rotten, beautiful experiment, the world would have remained ontologically bourgeois. Alongside attempts to discredit Left imagination by reference to its blighted history—in which its existence was exhausted by failure—there exists another tendency, one very much at the heart of neoliberalism: it is not only that communism failed, that the facts of its existence were eaten up by failure, it is that its failure was so profound that it comes to be perceived as never having existed in the first place. In this context, the bare gesture of pointing to communism as having existed at all (and in a form not simply isomorphic with failure) becomes political.

Recently, we have begun to hear a lot about the supposed end of postmodernism, the turn, after Slavoj Žižek, Alain Badiou, Quentin Meillassoux, Jodi Dean, and others, towards a post-postmodernity. Whether it be in the form of a return to the radical intensity of Truth, a disruptive materialist psychoanalytic Real, a certain kind of Marxist sociological determinacy, or even, as in Object Oriented Philosophy, a thought capable of grasping things themselves (rather than simply their appearances), our moment can be said to be characterized by a desire to exit the era in which philosophy came to see itself as a storyteller rather than as a practitioner of strict German *Wissenschaft*. What then, of the claim, that postmodernism is over? In so far as these are claims for a turn within the restricted cultural sphere of philosophy they are certainly correct; positions that celebrate the irreconcilable multiplicity of perspectives, the sovereignty of pleasure, or the ecstasy of an identity in constant flux have never looked less interesting nor as philosophically weak as they do today. Yet as the name for an actual historical era it is arguable—despite all the talk of a return of the repressed of history, a new cycle of the Real, a return to the divisiveness and intensity of struggles, and so on—*that postmodernity as a politico-aesthetic regime has never been more securely founded*. Anybody who has spoken at length to a Trump supporter, a fan of the Kardashians, a liberal banker, or an urban "creative" knows all too well that the negative remains as moribund as it felt to Herbert Marcuse writing at the end of the post-war boom: the only way to seriously believe that we are living in an era of sharpened negation is to confine one's conversation to a tiny coterie of like-minded academics. Badiou's meta-philosophy is not just true in the weak sense that it compellingly describes the structure of human history, it is true in the stronger sense of offering to humans a picture of themselves as radically capable of change. Yet nothing in the grandeur or even descriptive adequacy of Badiou's position changes the fact that there was perhaps no time in history in which it was more difficult to actually make (let alone sustain) a truth claim. In many ways, the core texts of Jean Baudrillard on simulation or Debord on the spectacle or Frederic Jameson on the flattening of affect—all written before the advent of the internet, social media, and a 24/7 temporality—now look less like the slightly mad, "abstract" rantings that serious social scientists once denounced them as, and more like sober, empirical accounts of the world as it is. We live in a moment, we should recall, in which mainstream scientists and thinkers as well as some of the world's most influential "business leaders" (Elon Musk, for example) have sincerely come to believe that reality is a sophisticated simulation. This simulation hypothesis—famously articulated by Nick Bostrom in 2013—points to the possibility of a time in which we can plausibly imagine a human being who, after spending

its day in various simulated realities (VR, television, etc.) removes the goggles only to encounter a world it also openly believes to be false (or second-order). This is unparalleled cultural territory, the strange revenge of Platonism (though a Platonism miserably emptied of truth and of the possibility of a world beyond the cave).

It may be that the experience we once called "Being"—that old lofty Heideggerian *Dasein*—itself died, along with the communist outside, on that obscure day lost somewhere in the 1970s. That Jameson was diagnosing this situation in the 1990s is remarkable given how preliminary the symptoms were at the time. Given this context, there is a way in which 1970s visual culture may end up carrying a heavier ontological signature than much of the cinema which comes before or after it. Like a photograph taken by someone at the instant before their death—the genre of the death selfie is now commonplace among stegophiles, extreme tourists, etc. —1970s visual culture registers the traces of a *Dasein* intensified in the moment before its own erasure. It should come as no surprise then that the signals left by the collapse of a thematics of Being (and even of an end to the motif of collapse itself) ping louder the closer we get to those visual artifacts that commemorate or register the technologies most implicated in this process. There is something impossibly odd about the sight on film of a 1970s telephone booth, an uncanniness that can't be understood apart from the operations of a certain diffuse historical-materialist metaphysics. An image of a contemporary cell-phone or laptop has no capacity to register the difference between the postmodern and what came before it—they are bluntly contemporaneous with themselves. However, this immediately changes when we are presented with primitive prototypes of these objects or even with wholly other objects on alternative developmental arcs with roughly the same functions or operations (the tape-recorder, type-writers, etc.). It also comes as no surprise that details about this ontological shift are refracted through the visual history (and after-effects) of the technologies implicated in this erasure and in the fundamental redistribution of space-time it involves. 1970s films reveal to us a world that is at once uncannily similar and totally different. It is the uncanny proximity to ourselves—offices that are recognizable but computerless, fully contemporary automobiles outfitted with ash trays and dial-switch radios—that allows us to witness materially proof of the fact that there was life before the smart phone. Revealed here is the objective superfluousness of all of those modes and habits that make up the fabric of contemporary communication, the presence to desire of a world content despite the absence of wifi. This historical structure of desire—the bliss of the past vis a vis all of the pleasures or "necessities" held in store for it by the future—may be less universal than one might think, with the washing machine, for example, "dreamed of" by the historical suffering of women's bodies in a way that has no analogue in the cellphone.

The 1970s is a time that is close enough to resemble ours but at once separated from us by an unfathomable distance. Though one could point to the great ontologists of 1970s cinema—for example, Andrei Tarkovsky or Bela Tarr, in whose films we are confronted by a gritty being-there of History we encounter almost nowhere today—even films in popular, plot-driven genres seem ontologically haunted vis-à-vis their contemporary analogues. This is evident mostly on the level of pace, in a remarkable slowness that characterizes so much of the film production of the period and in which what is happening on the screen is never quite absorbed into the immediacy of its notional content.

There is no going "back to the 70s". There are, however, good reasons for thinking that any possible means out of the present--out of neoliberalism, out of postmodernism--will require a detour through the decade's repressed political and ontological signatures. It is easy to romanticize the 70s, a time which, after all, provided us with some of the last great photos of Revolt, of history captured collectively by a genuinely oppositional Idea. It is not romanticism, though, that leads us back curiously to flit through old shoe-boxes of Polaroids (shots of long-gone suburban streets, of faded birthday parties, of now-rusted playgrounds, of loved ones dead for decades, etc.). Held up against the immateriality of the digital image, the Polaroid today has about it the aura of a cemetery or burial ground. Why is this the case? Though the Polaroid extracts a moment from the flux in which it takes place in a way that is similar to the digital image, it suddenly transforms that moment into an object that is itself instantly claimed by singularity and time, itself immediately unrepeatable and subject to deterioration. Rather than disappearing into the permanence of an orbiting Cloud, the Polaroid object can now be lost, shredded, fade, burn, etc. Unlike the traditional photograph, however, the moment extracted from the flux is not separated from its transformation into an object by the interval of development: instead, slightly displaced, it appears within that very same here-and-now. We are haunted by the Polaroid–an aesthetic now widely circulated on *Instagram* filters, for example—not just because it was superseded as a medium by the arc of technological change (that is, *not just because its dead)*. Rather, the desire of the *Instagram* filter is the fade of the Polaroid: what it craves, on the border of everything it finds intolerable about the present, is ontology. It isn't nostalgia then that leads us back to the Polaroid, nor a belief in some kind of unmediated Being or *Erfahrung*, but a tinkerer's interest in the possibilities inherent in everything still capable of fading.

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# PREFACE

NATHAN HOLMES

The essays and reflections collected in this issue excavate 1970s visual culture across a number of sites, each investigating how modes of visuality developed within and around the decade resonated in their immediate moment and yet remain tethered to our present. In particular, the contributions here gravitate to genres and tropes that either flourished in the 1970s—from landscape art and digital film effects to *giallo*—or, like the western, horror, or the journalism film, were revisited and renewed. Taken together, these contributions offer ranging considerations about how visual concepts germinate, multiply, survive, and transform, and how they might be seen differently when turned in the light of alternative historical coordinates.

Analyzing the proliferation of point-of-view cinematography in 1970s horror, Adam Hart pivots from the theories of identification that have pervaded the discourse of slasher films. Instead he argues for the uncanny, subjectively destabilizing effects of point-of-view as a mode of spectatorial address, contrasting it with the surveillance aesthetic found in recent found-footage horror.

In "Predictive Landscapes," K.R. Cornett considers the relation between American landscape, the western, and the road film. Examining Monte Hellman's *The Shooting* (1966) and Bob Rafelson's *Five Easy Pieces* (1970), she traces a mode of citation and subversion that allowed both films to produce a visual mediation on America's open spatiality.

Colin Williamson considers a different variation on the western in "An Escape into Reality: Special Effects and the Haunting Optics of *Westworld* (1973)," drawing attention to the way the sci-fi western's digital effects can be seen as figures for the anxiety and imagination surrounding both computer technology and emerging contexts of geopolitical volatility. The equally volatile, crisis-ridden world of the 21st century, Williamson points out, makes HBO's resurrection of the world of *Westworld* apposite, even if the expansive technological anxieties of the present seem to demand more elaborate narrative images.

The landscape of the American west and the land artists who took it as their object form the basis of Kaitlin Pomerantz's reflection piece. Wandering around Robert Smithon's *Spiral Jetty* (1968) and Michael Heizer's *Double Negative* (1969-70) provokes Pomerantz to consider how the artist's assumptions about natural history have fared

as questions of anthropogenic environmental change have intensified.

Italian *gialli* films have likewise been associated with contextual, if more localized, social anxieties. Seb Roberts argues, however, that the transgressive sensation and exuberant stylization of the cycle allowed Italian audiences an experiential departure from the moral conservatism that characterized their moment.

Moving from the sensational to the seemingly mundane, Nathan Holmes investigates the production design of office space in "Deep Backgrounds: Landscapes of Labour in *All the President's Men*." Drawing on the film's production history as well discourses in office design and management theory, Holmes argues that the film's staging of knowledge work via investigative journalism expressively delineates aspirations for a white-collar workplace that would never materialize.

Finally, in "Archaeology of the (1970s) Commune," Andrew Pendakis interviews the artist Fraser McCallum about his installation, *Come Live with Us*. McCallum's project reconstructs the experience of Rochdale College, an experimental, student-run school spawned within a modernist dormitory high-rise at the border of the University of Toronto campus. Drawing on archival materials, interviews, and present-day images of the building's architectural surfaces, McCallum's installation grasps toward Rochdale as a radical moment of possibility, even as it acknowledges the difficulty of solidifying its historical presence.

# "AN ESCAPE INTO REALITY": COMPUTERS, SPECIAL EFFECTS, AND THE HAUNTING OPTICS OF *WESTWORLD* (1973)

COLIN WILLIAMSON

***Abstract*** | *As one of the earliest experiments with integrating computer-generated special effects into celluloid filmmaking, Michael Crichton's science fiction film Westworld (1973) imagined the transition into a digital future with a familiar apocalyptic narrative about disobedient machines and virtual realities. In this essay I move away from "escapist" and "futurist" readings of the sci-fi genre and explore how Westworld was "an escape into reality," to borrow Isaac Asimov's phrase, that immersed audiences in the computerization of life, visuality, and the cinema in 1970s America. My focus will be on mapping the film's use of computer simulation as part of a constellation that includes everything from modernity in fin-de-siècle amusement parks and early cinema to discourses on postmodernism (Baudrillard) and dehumanization (Sontag). I will also consider how the recent HBO series Westworld (2016) reimagined Crichton's film as a way of visualizing and historicizing questions about the virtual in our digital moment.*

***Résumé*** | *Le film de science fiction de Michael Crichton, Westworld, (1973), l'une des premières expériences d'intégration d'effets spéciaux créés sur ordinateur dans l'industrie cinématographique, imagine la transition dans un futur digital au sein d'un récit apocalyptique sur la désobéissance des machines et les réalités virtuelles. Dans cet essai, je m'éloigne de la lecture divertissante et futuriste de la science fiction pour explorer comment Westworld a constitué une "évasion dans la réalité", pour reprendre les mots d'Isaac Asimov, qui plonge le spectateur dans une vie informatisée, la visualité et le cinéma de l'Amérique des années 70. Ma recherche s'efforcera de documenter dans le film l'emploi de la simulation par ordinateur comme une partie de la constellation de techniques utilisées depuis la modernité des parcs d'amusement fin-de-siècle et des débuts du cinéma jusqu'au discours sur le postmodernisme (Baudrillard) et la déshumanisation (Sontag). Je vais également examiner comment la récente série télévisée Westworld (2016) sur HBO a réimaginé le film de Crichton comme une manière de visualiser et d'historiciser les questions portant sur le virtuel dans notre époque digitale.*

*Brood of hell, you're not a mortal!*
*Shall the entire house go under?*
*Over threshold over portal*
*Streams of water rush and thunder.*
*Broom accurst and mean,*
*Who will have his will,*
*Stick that you have been,*
*Once again stand still!*

*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe,*
*"The Sorcerer's Apprentice" (1797)*

In a provocative review of *Westworld* (1973), Michael Crichton's science-fiction film about a futuristic, computerized theme park called Delos, Gerald Mead and Sam Applebaum of *Jump Cut* link the film to the visual culture of the Vietnam War. At the end of *Westworld* one of the main characters destroys a homicidal android gunslinger (played by Yul Brynner) by setting the robot on fire (fig. 1). Reflecting critically on the film in 1975, Mead and Applebaum argue that the burning android conjures "the image of some 'madman' igniting himself in front of impassive onlookers" (12-13). The reference is most likely to Malcolm Browne's photograph of the Buddhist monk Thích Quang Duc's self-immolation in Saigon on June 11, 1963. The resemblance is striking and pointedly unexpected, not least because one image depicts a spectacular destruction of a fictional machine in a Hollywood film and the other is a record of a human being's profound protest of the government in South Vietnam. By linking the two images together Mead and Applebaum demand that *Westworld* be seen, especially by American audiences, not as an escape into an imaginary futuristic world but as a kind of futuristic reimagining of the present, what Isaac Asimov called "an escape into reality" (332).

*Figure 1. Westworld: the burning android.*

It is easy to see *Westworld* as a reflection of a world that was for many in the 1970s alarmingly out of control. The film focuses on two friends, Peter (Richard Benjamin) and John (James Brolin), who visit Delos to revel in the theme park's fantastic worlds populated by exceptionally convincing humanoid robots. Early on Peter and John make their way to the part of the park known as Westworld to immerse themselves in a simulation of the Wild West in the late 19th century, a period in American history with strong parallels to the violence, imperialism, and racism of the Vietnam era. Upon their arrival, a voice on a loudspeaker reassures the visitors that they are "free to indulge their every whim" because "nothing can go wrong." Everything, obviously, does go wrong. Along with the computers that control the park, the robots begin to malfunction, supposedly through the spread of a virus, or what one of the park's experts skeptically calls a "disease of machinery." The initial promise of freedom quickly gives way to a total loss of control over computerized technologies: the robots rebel, the simulations become real, and visitors start dying. Ultimately, John is shot and killed by the android gunslinger, and a chain of violence ensues that climaxes at the end of the film when Peter burns the robot "alive" and order, it seems, is restored to the park.

The loss of control in *Westworld* is a familiar one. Advertisements for the film emphasized the volatile relationship between humans and machines by featuring the now commonplace figure of the computer "glitch." Posters with the tagline "Where nothing can possibly go

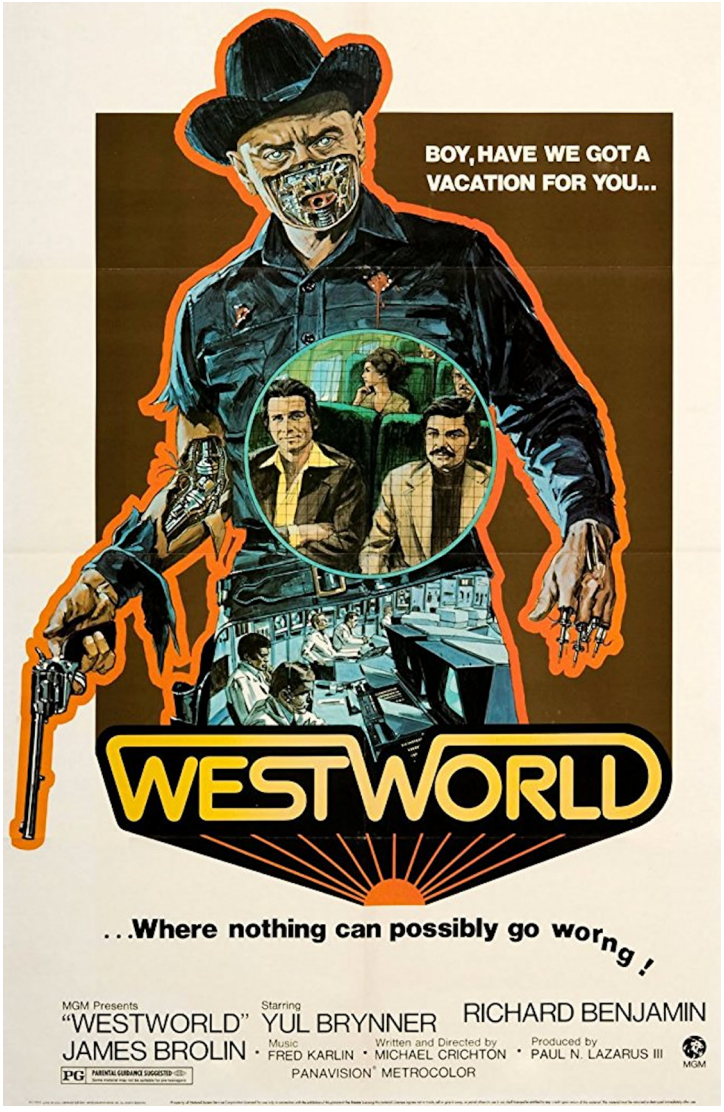


*Figure 2. Theatrical release poster for Westworld (1973). Source: The Official Site of Michael Crichton.*

*worng*" contain a minor misspelling that presages disaster (fig. 2); when the line is spoken in voiceover in a trailer for the film, the audio is plagued by a similar glitch: "Where nothing can possibly go wrong … go wrong … go wrong." The fatal computer malfunction that undoes the safety of the amusement park recalls "HAL" in Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) and the long history of what Scott Bukatman calls "disobedient machines," from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's magic brooms in "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" (1797) and the creature in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) to the rebellious robotic creations in *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927), *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982), and *Ex Machina* (Alex Garland, 2015), to name a few. As part of this history of (dis)obedience, Crichton's film grapples with enduring questions that have long been staples of the science-fiction genre: Will the technologies we create improve humanity? Will they replace us or destroy us? Will they make us less human? How much control do we really have over them?

While *Westworld*'s narrative taps into well-worn anxieties about technology, the film still has much to teach us, particularly about how Americans were navigating the rapidly changing techno-scientific landscape of their historical moment. Shadowing Crichton's futuristic theme park were widespread efforts to comprehend and cope with astonishing developments in everything from space exploration and Cold War science to mass communication, molecular biology, and computers. The 1970s were ushered in by a wave of cultural criticism—for example, Nigel Calder's *Technopolis* (1969), William Braden's *The Age of Aquarius* (1970), Zbigniew Brzezinski's *Between Two Ages* (1970), and Alvin Toffler's *Future Shock* (1970)—that grappled with the social, political, and philosophical implications of these changes by imagining possible futures and endings for a society in transition. Toffler famously characterized the transition as a "super-industrial revolution" that threatened to outpace society's ability to adapt to changes that many held to be the stuff of science fiction rather than realities of contemporary life. Rehearsing earlier criticisms by Georg Simmel and Walter Benjamin about the shocks of modernity at the end of the 19th century, Toffler remarked:

> In the coming decades, advances in these fields [of science and technology] will fire off like a series of rockets carrying us out of the past, plunging us deeper into the new society. Nor will this new society quickly settle into a steady state. It, too, will quiver and crack and roar as it suffers jolt after jolt of high-energy change. It offers no return to the familiar past. It offers only the highly combustible mixture of transience and novelty. (217)

It is precisely this imagined future of a present world on the verge of going up in flames that haunts *Westworld* and is reflected, I argue, in the figure of the burning android.

In what follows I explore how these concerns about "future shock" in the early 1970s get negotiated in *Westworld*'s treatment and use of computers. In 1973, computer technologies were just beginning to radically transform American life and, over the decade, would "create a totally new human environment," to borrow Marshall McLuhan's words (viii). At stake in this transformation was the stability of not only the architecture of society but also convictions about foundational categories such as "reality" and "humanity," which were being challenged by computers' capacities for simulation. It is

significant, from this perspective, that Crichton's film was among the earliest experiments in combining computerized special effects with celluloid filmmaking in Hollywood. For Brynner's character, Crichton collaborated with experimental computer animator John Whitney, Jr. to simulate the villainous gunslinger's robotic point-of-view, which was achieved by using computers to transform celluloid footage into highly pixelated images.[1] On the surface, the resulting electronic machine vision—essentially *Westworld* as "seen" by a computer—is a small but marvelous special effects innovation. Considering the climate in which the innovation occurred, however, I argue that the use of digital special effects, to borrow Kristen Whissel's term, "emblematized" the emergence of a new way of seeing (and seeing with) computers in 1973.

To this end, I situate *Westworld*'s "robot POV" in a broader discourse of uncertainty that took shape around the spread of computerization in early-1970s America and that helps us, looking back on that decade, see how the film resonated and resonates in complex ways. *Westworld*'s use of special effects, and the narrative in which it embeds them, make the film part of a rich constellation that includes everything from the modernity of *fin-de-siècle* amusement parks and early cinema to ideas about postmodernism and the posthuman that converge around computers in the late-20th century and that continue to unfold. Furthermore, that Crichton's film was recently reimagined in our digital moment as an HBO television series suggests that the original was both timely and prescient. Looking closely at this constellation, I read *Westworld* not only as an allegory for a world in crisis—for example, as a haunted inscription of the visuality of the Vietnam War or a reflection of an apocalyptic Cold War imaginary—but also as a meta-text about the changing nature of the science and technology that went into making the film itself.

## Futuristic Visions of a Digital Present

> *Computers are mostly used against people instead of for people; used to control people instead of to free them.*
>
> *-People's Computer Company (1972)*

Among the special effects employed in *Westworld* is a curious spectacle of seeing through a robot's eyes. After the android gunslinger shoots John dead, it sets out in relentless pursuit of Peter, whose perspective on the chase is periodically intercut with shots of the gunslinger's point-of-view. The robot POV is signaled by the appearance of highly rasterized footage that consists of pixels arranged in an array of 3,600 rectangles. The array is introduced in the first shot of the gunslinger's view of Peter desperately fleeing on a horse from the scene of his friend's murder when he realizes that the robot is out for blood (fig. 3). The effect is an early version of a computerized film aesthetic and a novel attempt to visualize the optics of an electronic machine, a kind of *topos* in the history of what Alexander Galloway calls "computerized, cybernetic, machinic vision"—variations of which would later appear in science-fiction films such as *RoboCop* (Paul Verhoeven, 1987), *Predator* (John McTiernan, 1987), and *Terminator 2* (James Cameron, 1991) (Galloway 53).[2]

From the audience's perspective, the amount of abstraction in the image makes *Westworld*'s robot POV difficult to read. The mosaic of tiny rectangles used in the special effect registers

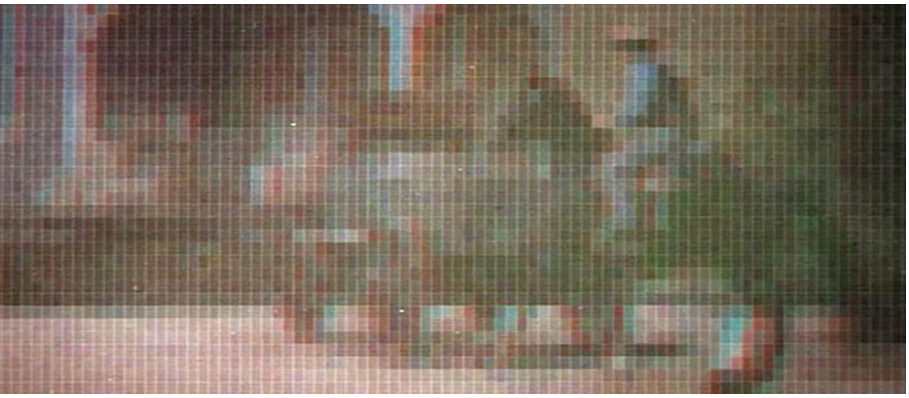

*Figure 3. The rasterized robot POV.*

only general impressions of shape, colour, and movement. The gunslinger's lack of visual acuity is exploited for dramatic effect at several points during the chase when Peter briefly avoids detection by becoming motionless and blending with the other information in the gunslinger's visual field. At one point, for example, Peter masquerades as a broken android and lies down on a table in a lab where machines from the park are brought for repairs (fig. 4). Peter is ultimately discovered when he moves slightly and gives himself away.[3] However, this small narrative function aside, for the most part the robot POV is a cinematic attraction, an interesting technological artifact.

*Figure 4. The gunslinger's view of the tables in the lab where Peter is hiding.*

The use of special effects to imagine how a computer sees was the result of a rich convergence of art and science. The robot POV was created by experimental filmmaker and computer animator John Whitney, Jr., who was given the task of simulating how the gunslinger's electronic eyes broke the world down into small animated rectangles. The desired effect was limited by conventional special-effects technologies at the time and the fact that the film industry had not yet adopted the digital methods made available by computers. Whitney found inspiration and a solution in the scientific visualizations made by NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory during the Mariner program (1962-1973). In particular, the program successfully used a spacecraft to transmit close-up images of Mars in binary code, which was converted by computers back on Earth into photographs that consisted of coded shades of black and white compiled into rasterized images (fig. 5). Whitney collaborated with computer scientists to develop a similar technique whereby a computer scanned celluloid footage and converted each frame of film into a series of values that could be manipulated at will for aesthetic purposes. Whitney explains:

> Once the computer has "read" the image and converted it to a series of numbers, there is tremendous flexibility in what the computer can then do with this numerical information. The image can be reconstituted with different contrasts, different resolutions, different colors. We can enlarge, stretch, squeeze, twist, rotate it, position it in space in any way. In fact, the only limitations are imposed by the

> creative talents of the person operating the machine. (1478)

In other words, the computer transformed the celluloid image into a kind of "plasmatic" digital painting.[4]

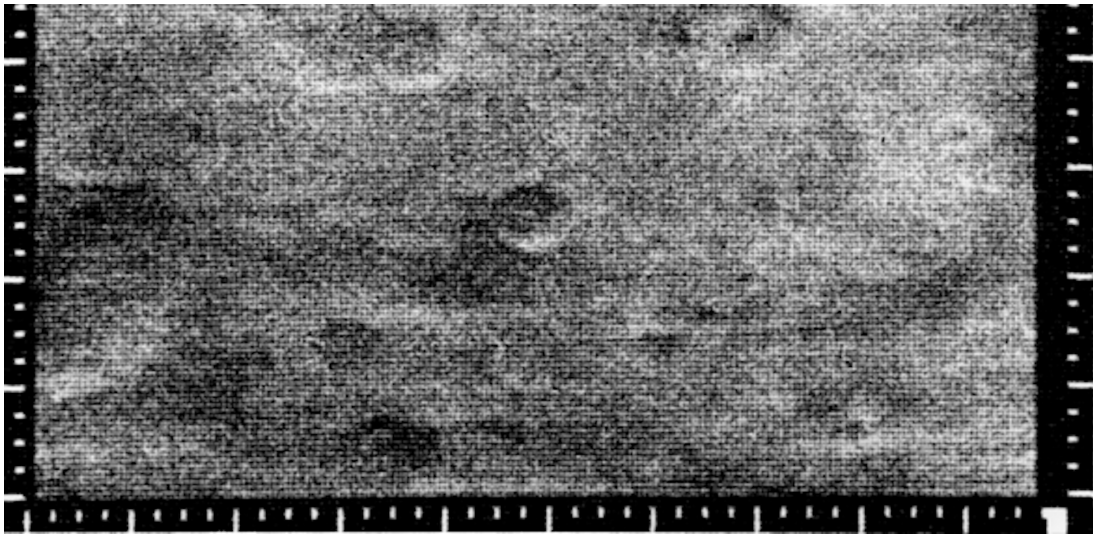

*Figure 5. Bottom half of Mariner 4 photograph of craters on Mars, 1965. Source: NASA Image ID number: Mariner 4, frame 09D.*

Whitney's celebration of the "limitless" artistic control afforded by computers echoes the very utopian fantasy about the relationship between humans and machines that animates *Westworld*. Within the film, the amusement park's simulations of the Wild West and two other "worlds"—Roman World and Medieval World—are made possible by an intricate network of computer technologies. The androids are linked to a command centre where technicians observe all of the activities in the park on computer screens and video monitors (fig. 6). The resemblance to NASA's mission-control room is unmistakable (fig. 7). Crichton claims that one of the inspirations for the film was the Kennedy Space Center, and the other was Disneyland ("Behind the Scenes" 1397). The surveillance system in *Westworld* is used to control the androids' behavior in scenarios that are designed to fulfill each guest's desires, such as winning a gunfight without the stakes or consequences of committing an act of violence against a real human being. Indeed, the entire premise of *Westworld* is that computers make it possible for each guest "to indulge their every whim" without limits.

This premise was already in the popular imagination by 1973. Three years earlier in *Future Shock*, Toffler speculated on the impending realization of

> simulated environments that offer the customer a taste of adventure, danger, sexual titillation or other pleasure without risk to his real life or reputation. Thus computer experts, roboteers, designers, historians, and museum specialists will join to create experiential enclaves that

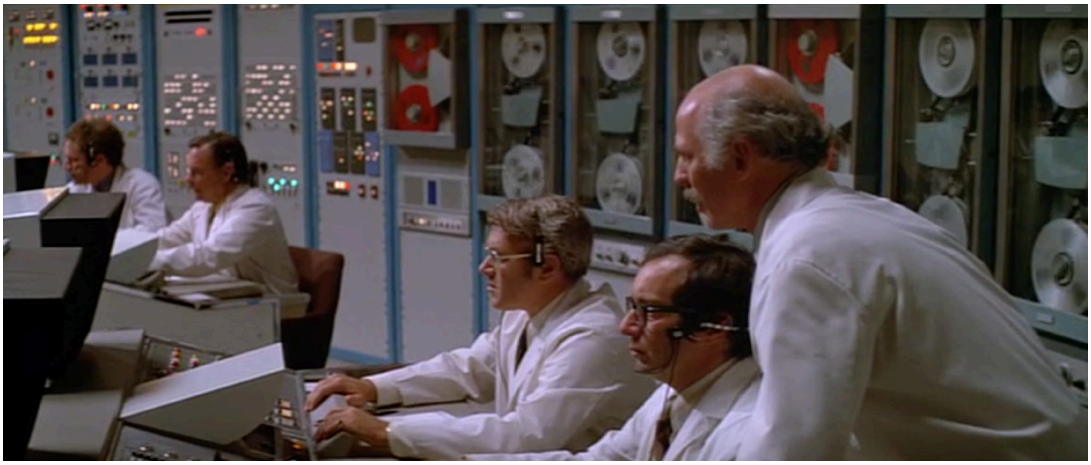

*Figure 6. The computer control room in Westworld.*

*Figure 7. View of Mission Control during lunar surface Apollo 11 extravehicular activity, 1969. Source: NASA Image ID number: S69-39593.*

> reproduce, as skillfully as sophisticated technology will permit, the splendor of ancient Rome, the pomp of Queen Elizabeth's court, the "sexoticism" of an eighteenth-century Japanese geisha house, and the like. Customers entering these pleasure domes will leave their everyday clothes (and cares) behind, don costumes, and run through a planned sequence of activities intended to provide them with a first-hand taste of what the original–i.e., unsimulated–reality must have felt like. They will be invited, in effect, to live in the past or perhaps even the future. (228)

Toffler saw such simulated environments taking shape in the ways that artists were beginning to experiment with the uses of electronic media to create immersive and interactive virtual-reality experiences that would continue through the decade. Bracketing the release of *Westworld*, for example, are computer artist Myron Krueger's pioneering "Psychic Space" (1971) and "Videoplace" (1975), interactive (audio)visual installations that allowed users to control computerized environments by moving through "responsive" spaces outfitted with state-of-the art sensors, cameras, and projectors.[5]

The way that *Westworld* represents the possibilities of computerized simulations is not only an invocation of these kinds of real and imagined experiments, but it also calls to mind the discourse of power in the history of animation. As Donald Crafton explains, early animated films frequently displayed hands in the act of animating drawings—what he calls the "hand of the artist" motif—to reflect how animators exercise a "god-like" control over their cinematic creations (415). In *Westworld*, experts wield computers like gods to animate Delos for park visitors. The computerized command centre functions as a kind of omniscient dream machine where engineers and technicians take on the role of all-powerful artists who, like Whitney, have complete creative control over every detail of the park's mise-en-scène. The artists behind the scenes use computers to simulate realistic worlds; puppeteer the androids that make those simulations look and feel so real; surveil and manipulate; fulfill desires; and bend reality itself to the will of those in charge. There is no limit, it would seem, to what humans can do with the computers they created. That is, of course, until the puppets cut their strings.

The robot rebellion that throws Delos into chaos is obvious and inevitable, partly because it was foregrounded in *Westworld*'s marketing campaign, but also because the trope is pervasive in science fiction and animation. Before the gunslinger shoots and kills John, there is growing concern among the park's experts that the machines are malfunctioning—a robotic snake bites John in the desert and a knight stabs a guest—but the aberrant behavior is considered to be a glitch, like a computer virus. When the gunslinger misbehaves, it is clear that the glitch is actually a sign of life and that the machines are not malfunctioning but rather asserting their autonomy from the artist-engineers who created and controlled them. Thus, when we see through the gunslinger's electronic eyes, we are asked to see the android as more than a machine; this is a vision that has a life of its own. We literally see *with* the computer as it becomes uncontrollable. That this way of seeing the android as a transgressive figure occurred at a time in American history when computers were just beginning to set radical transformations in motion makes the trope of the disobedient machine in *Westworld* deeply historical.

It is not coincidental that the spectacle of the robot POV is introduced at the same moment that the utopian fantasy of Delos collapses. When Whitney turned to computers to craft *Westworld*'s special effects, the United States was in the midst of what Carroll Pursell refers to as a "crisis of confidence" about technology (134). The crisis was broadly a shift away from postwar optimism toward "anti-technology views" (172). The views were largely motivated by Cold War uncertainties about uncontrollable technologies and growing fears of experts, corporations, and the military-industrial complex in light of the technological realities and violence in Vietnam. This shift in perception extended as prominently to the machinery of war as it did to computers. In the years between 1971-1973, computer science made unprecedented advances in cybernetics research, the invention of the internet, and the development of microprocessors that gradually made computers available to the public. Views of these innovations were not entirely utopian. Combined with McLuhan's radical critical theories of the electronic-information age and the fact that computers were largely the domain of corporations and government entities rather than of "the people," the computer, Pursell explains, developed a "reputation … as an impersonal—even antipersonal—force in society" (185).

It is significant that computers were concurrently taken up by science-fiction films and imagined as disobedient machines. In 1974, Vincent Canby reflected in the *New York Times* on a trend rooted in *2001* and taking shape with films such as *Westworld* and Richard Heffron's then-anticipated sequel, *Futureworld* (1976): "The computers of today are the Frankenstein monsters of yesterday's gothic fiction. We are tampering with the Unknown" (8). Quoting Michael Webb of the American Film Institute, the *Washington Post* reported similarly: "Today's monsters seem to be flashing dials, endless banks of computers whirring silently behind walls of gleaming glass" (Kriegsman C1). The narrative structure of *Westworld*—from freedom to disaster—reads like a roadmap of competing discourses on computers and the broader crisis of confidence taking shape around technology in postwar America. Yet the artists behind *Westworld*'s digital aesthetic also wielded computers to produce wonders, and in this respect the film is as much a futuristic vision of computers in the early 1970s as it is an experiment in testing their creative powers.

## *Westworld* and/as the Cinema

> *The imagery of disaster in science fiction films is above all the emblem of an inadequate response.*
>
> *-Susan Sontag, "The Imagination of Disaster" (1965)*

In addition to coinciding with key innovations in the history of computers, *Westworld* appears at a point in the history of special effects when Hollywood was just beginning to explore the aesthetics of computer-generated imagery (CGI). In the 1960s, computer graphics related to techniques and technologies of the moving image circulated mostly in the realm of experimental animation. Mainstream innovations in what we now call digital special effects did not rise to prominence until the late 1970s and early 1980s with the use of computer technologies in films such as *Star Wars* (1977) and *Tron* (1982).[6] *Westworld* thus made its home in an important transitional period in American film history that saw a new cinematic optics emerge from the intersection of older filmmaking practices—namely those

related to the photorealist tradition—and the digital aesthetics made possible by computers.

From this perspective, *Westworld* is quite rich as an allegory for the cinema. In a 1973 interview with *American Cinematographer*, Crichton acknowledged that the premise of the film—visitors living out fantasies in a futuristic amusement park—was deeply cinematic: "In some ways," he explained, "it's a movie about people acting out movie fantasies … wondering what it would be like to be an actor in an old movie" ("Behind the Scenes" 1397). As Crichton would have it, when Peter and John visit Westworld they are not simply experiencing a simulation of the Wild West, but stepping into the cinematic Western. Delos is the "old" cinema remade as a "new" immersive virtual-reality system, an updated version of Buster Keaton's dream in *Sherlock Jr.* (1924) of projecting himself into the movies. The reflexivity in *Westworld* touches on everything from the resemblance between the computerized command centre and the behind-the-scenes labour on a movie set to the fact that the android gunslinger was played by Yul Brynner, who appeared notably as the gunslinger Chris Adams in John Sturges's Western *The Magnificent Seven* (1960). Brynner apparently wears the same costume in both films (fig. 8).

*Figure 8. Left: Brynner as the android gunslinger in Westworld. Right: Brynner as Chris Adams in The Magnificent Seven.*

By weaving a narrative out of androids and amusement parks, Crichton (intentionally or not) taps into two of the cinema's longest standing affinities. With regard to the gunslinger, it is important that the cinematic apparatus was linked from the very beginning, technically and theoretically, to the automaton. As Alan Cholodenko argues, the link is one of the most enduring throughout film history because the automaton's ability to blur the line between human and machine speaks to the very nature of the cinema: they are both "vital machines" capable of producing uncanny illusions of life and motion. In *Westworld*, for example, the robots are only recognizable as such by their "shimmering" eyes. We have seen how the gunslinger's disobedience makes the android *within* the film a vital machine, a computer that appears to have a life of its own. The question of vitality is complicated by the fact that, for audiences of *Westworld*, the android is played by a living human being. Following

Cholodenko, the gunslinger can also be seen as an embodiment of the cinema, for the cinema *is* an automaton.[7]

Consider that the special effect Whitney created to simulate the android's vision was made possible by a computer: that is, the computerized robot's vision was in fact computer generated. A curious doubling is at work in Whitney's footage whereby the "real" computer—Whitney's—is folded into the "fictional" one, implicating both machines in the narratives of freedom and disaster that play out in the film. There is a nice resonance, for example, between the gunslinger who digitally "reads" the landscape within the film and the computer that "reads" the celluloid image to produce the special effect for the gunslinger's POV. The doubling act is particularly significant in light of the fact that the robot POV is a moving image in transition. Whitney's special-effects sequence was striking in 1973 because it resembled early arcade video-game aesthetics more than anything "cinematic" at the time.

The representation of Delos is doing similar reflexive work. Like automata, amusement parks share a history with the cinema that can be traced to the emergence of motion pictures. Beginning in the 1890s, amusement parks and the cinema co-evolved as emblems of modernity. They were both sites where the novel shocks, dangers, and bewildering experiences of modern life were transformed and put on display as safe, entertaining, and even liberating spectacles. Coney Island, for example, was designed as a virtual city apart—like the Emerald City in Oz—where, John Kasson explains:

> [V]isitors were temporarily freed from normative demands. As they disembarked from ferryboats with fanciful names like *Pegasus* … they felt themselves passing into a special realm of exciting possibility, a distinctive milieu that encouraged types of behavior and social interaction that in other contexts would have been viewed askance. (41)

The parallels with Crichton's amusement park are revealing. Delos is pitched in the film as "the vacation of the future," where reality is remade into a fantasy and visitors are "free to indulge their every whim" by immersing themselves in a simulated world without limits. The film also opens with a scene that closely resembles Kasson's description of visitors arriving at Coney Island. When we are introduced to Peter and John, they are travelling by hovercraft to Delos. After they disembark from this mechanized Pegasus, they take on new identities as cowboys in Westworld, where they are free to indulge in violence without consequence because reality in Delos is a game. The hovercraft sequence even includes a view from the cockpit that simulates one of the earliest convergences of motion pictures and technologies of virtual travel: the Hale's Tours ride simulators that populated *fin-de-siècle* amusement parks and World Fairs.[8]

It is remarkable that *Westworld* should reanimate these affinities amidst a "crisis of confidence" about technology. In *Electric Dreamland*, Lauren Rabinovitz argues convincingly that at the end of the 19th century "amusement parks and movies taught Americans to revel in a modern sensibility that was about adapting to new technologies" (2). That is, by experiencing the realities of modern life virtually and safely—e.g., as a mechanical ride or a motion picture—people could better adjust to radically new technologies and environments that were, in reality, overwhelming, frightening,

and potentially disastrous. Angela Ndalianis has argued similarly that, because special effects tend to display broader technological changes during periods of intense innovation, they "have a great deal to do with acclimatizing audiences to different forms of visual engagement" (259). By embedding its special effects in a narrative about automata and an amusement park modeled on fantasies about computers and the cinema, *Westworld* reads like an education in the rapidly changing technological landscape of its historical moment.

The idea that *Westworld* is "about adapting to new technologies" is useful for making sense of the film's impulse toward reassurance. Almost as soon as *Westworld* imagines computers rebelling and threatening humanity it imagines the machines' spectacular destruction: the android gunslinger is ultimately burnt to ashes. The significance of this narrative of (un)controllability is deepened in light of the fact that computers in the 1970s were revolutionizing the relationship between humanity and technology. Cybernetics and philosophy were raising profound questions about what it means to be human, to be conscious, and to be alive. As N. Katherine Hayles has shown, early computers contributed to conceptualizing "humans as information-processing entities who are *essentially* similar to intelligent machines" (7, original emphasis). In this analogy, the human mind was reimagined as a thing that was not bound to the human body, a "posthuman" idea that gets visualized in *Westworld* by the robot POV: we transfer our subjectivity to a computer. Although more latent in 1973, computers similarly upended the nature of the cinema when the digital image began to erode the celluloid image's indexical bond to reality, which set in motion a crisis of visuality that continues to unfold today.

Symbolically, then, we might say that the robot POV is what Vivian Sobchack calls a "transitional object," hovering somewhere between the past and the future, utopia and disaster, the familiar and the unfamiliar. Writing about computer animation in *WALL-E* (Andrew Stanton, 2008), Sobchack proposes that the titular character, a mechanical trash compactor with a microchip core, "serves [in our contemporary moment] as a bridge to the future present of technological development" (387). For Sobchack, WALL-E's embodiment of the old and the new, the mechanical and the electronic, allegorizes and mediates the transition in the cinema from a celluloid past to a digital future. I suggest we read Whitney's special-effect artifact in *Westworld* similarly as a kind of "bridge" that, although it is ultimately set on fire, mediates an aesthetic and cultural transition shaped by the cinema's intersection with early computer animation techniques. (The parallel that Ingmar Bergman draws in *Persona* [1966] between the footage of a self-immolation that appears on a television screen and the subsequent melting of the celluloid filmstrip is uncannily resonant here.)[9]

As if haunted by the growing power of computers to pull reality and humanity apart at the seams, the spectacle of the gunslinger's "death" thus seems to invite the audience to bear witness to humanity asserting its definitive control over an increasingly computerized world. A central concern about the ways that computers were revolutionizing life in the early 1970s was the loosening of what Toffler called "man's grasp on reality" (231). The concern was fueled by a sense that computer technologies were beginning to erode the distinction both between reality and illusion in their capacities for simulation, and between human and machine in their implications for philosophy and biology,

including the possibility that "life" and "human" would have to be re-imagined if computers were successfully combined with living organic material. The erosion was compounded by the fact that computers were opening the human experience up to infinite new possibilities at a rate that threatened to exceed people's ability to anticipate, let alone control, the short- and long-term effects of the changes taking place: "The problem," in Toffler's view, "is whether [humans] can survive freedom" (187). Considering this, we might say that, if Delos is a computerized "electric dreamland," a virtual space where the freedoms made possible by computers are unleashed, the unravelling of that dreamland is presented as a nightmare from which American audiences can wake up. In delivering this lesson *Westworld* positions the cinema as a safe space for playing with and alleviating anxieties about frightening technological changes that were already underway in American culture.

Writing in the 1960s, Susan Sontag called the trend of "imagining disaster" this way in science fiction an "inadequate response" to reality because it does not oblige audiences to address the very real "terrors" that get fictionalized and resolved in the cinema. *Westworld*'s reassurances no doubt make the film complicit in preserving an illusion of safety in the face of radical changes that radiate outward from film and computers to the fate of humanity itself. The act of covering over can be seen as an attempt to make the uncertainties of modern life bearable, to imagine safety in the ongoing nightmares of the Cold War, for example, when humans were grappling with the possibility of their own self-annihilation, which, as Sontag points out, "could come at any time, virtually without warning" (224). What gets left out, however, is a clear sense that changing the course of scientific and technological innovation is imperative and requires action.

It is precisely what *Westworld* does not ask audiences to see or do that motived Mead and Applebaum to invoke "the image of some 'madman' igniting himself in front of impassive onlookers" with which I began this article. Drawing a parallel to the Western genre's tendency to mythologize and glorify American imperialism, they criticized *Westworld* for protecting the American psyche from the dark social and political realities of the early 1970s. While I am primarily concerned with the representation of technology and disaster in *Westworld*, their indictment is worth quoting at length for what it reveals about the reach of the film's fantasy of control:

> It is not [the guests'] conscious awareness that these are robots, non-human machines, that determines their reactions, but rather their feeling and conviction that these "others" are some kind of less-than-human humans, real, living objectifications of their fantasies. So what we have in fact are the beginnings of a rather thinly disguised racial perspective, an exploitation justified by an explanation–the "others" are less than human–and by an economic right–the "guests" pay … . Nor does it seem coincidental that for the leader of the robot revolt Crichton should cast the former king of Thailand, the leader of the mad Huns, Mexican radical, inscrutable hired killer, the suggestively Mongol-featured Yul Brynner. Along with infrared sensing devices, weapons that kill only the "enemy," willing, thankful prostitutes, etc., *Westworld* simply provides the triumphant, guiltless hero that Indochina didn't. (12-13)

Much more can and should be said about *Westworld* as a kind of racialized war game—Mead and Applebaum offer a fairly thorough discussion of this. Here it is notable that the film's "vacation of the future" premise conjures a related discourse of power in histories of travel in film and related media. Delos's promise of safety and freedom to visitors who embark on futuristic journeys in the park is reminiscent of the kind of mastery promised by amusement parks, World Fairs, and the travelogue genre in the cinema. These other forms of virtual travel are historically wedded—particularly in the early-20th century—to what Jennifer Peterson calls a "visual imperialism," a mode of representation filtered through "racial perspectives" of colonialism and tourism that rendered foreign and exotic places safe and consumable for Western audiences (8) (see also Ruoff, *Virtual Voyages*).

This is all to say that *Westworld* was engaged in a similar kind of cultural work aimed at rendering the "monstrous" and "villainous" computer safe at a time when the effects of that technology were only beginning to come into focus. This dimension of the film betrays the simplicity of its narrative of reassurance, not to mention the simplicity of its special effects. Crichton offers the computer up as a highly seductive machine—like the cinema—with the potential to satisfy an enduring human desire to exceed the limitations of reality and the human experience. The fantasy is a messy one in which the computer emerges as neither utopian nor dystopian; it is an object of debate and a tool Crichton uses to grapple with the difficulty of comprehending what a digital future might look like, and what might become of humanity if it continues to push technological innovation in the direction of that future. The fantasy is also not simply escapist. *Westworld* works through the cinema to experiment safely with the realities of its unsafe historical moment while covering over a whole range of social and political issues. Looking back on the film from our contemporary moment, the future present that Crichton imagined in 1973 feels very close to home. Given that our networked, media-saturated, and increasingly virtual reality resembles Delos more than it ever has before, we might ask: What kind of work can *Westworld* do for us now?

## The Memory of Reality

> *Don't give yourselves to these unnatural men—machine men with machine minds and machine hearts! You are not machines!*
>
> *-Charlie Chaplin, The Great Dictator (1940)*

In 2016, HBO renewed Crichton's film as a 10-part television series that deviates significantly from the path *Westworld* imagined in 1973. The new version follows the trajectory of the original, but it unfolds largely from the perspective of the androids, namely a rancher's daughter named Dolores Abernathy (Evan Rachel Wood) and Maeve Millay (Thandie Newton), a madam in a brothel in Westworld. Whereas the gunslinger's POV was an important special effects attraction in Crichton's film, the shift to the android perspective in the HBO series is primarily a narrative device. Dolores and Maeve are unaware of their machine natures, but as they play out their programmed roles over and over for the park's guests, they slowly become haunted by memories that cause them to question what they consider to be their humanity. Their questioning is profound—What does it mean for a

machine to feel uncertain about its nature? Or for humans to imagine a machine's uncertainty for that matter? The questioning is also the source of the androids' disobedience: Dolores embarks on a quest to unravel the mystery of her place in Delos, and Maeve arranges her own escape from the park by modifying her programming. Ultimately, it is revealed that one of the park's founders, Robert Ford (Anthony Hopkins), spent decades secretly designing the androids' search for answers that would lead to their rebellion and freedom. Unlike the original *Westworld*, however, there is no fiery android death; in 2016 the machines win and, as if taking up Chaplin's call, declare their humanity.

While a lengthy analysis of the series is beyond the scope of this article, the manner in which the 2016 version renews the allegorical dimensions of the original is worth mentioning, even if only to open up a dialogue about what the connection reveals about our enduring fascination with that decade and how we are dealing with the "future shock" of our contemporary moment. Most notable here is the fact that the lack of reassurance in HBO's *Westworld* is pervasive and daunting. Whereas Brynner's gunslinger is cold and mechanical, these new androids are humanized and sympathetic, the tragic victims and playthings of humans who commit acts of murder and sexual violence almost mechanically. Seeing humans mechanized and machines humanized compels us to question our humanity, especially when by the end we might find ourselves rooting, against our nature, for our own demise. To compound the inversion, some characters that we are initially led to believe are human—such as the lead programmer Bernard (Jeffrey Wright)—are later revealed to be androids, which makes everyone in Delos suspect. As the machines' existential crises unfold it becomes more and more difficult for them and for us to determine if their questioning is a sign of life or the result of their programming; if the memories that haunt them are real or fake; and if what we are witnessing is occurring in an android's dream or in "reality." The narrative also employs an increasingly ambiguous flashback structure and "reboots" so often that even determining precisely where, when, and if events occurred becomes a challenge. The web of uncertainty is one from which there is apparently no escape for us.

Yet why weave the web? If Peter's destruction of the gunslinger in 1973 is more or less comforting, what is the successful robot rebellion in 2016 *doing*? The difference no doubt makes the new *Westworld* more distinctly postmodern than its predecessor. Take, for example, Jean Baudrillard's quite fitting assessment of the spectre that haunts both *Westworld*s: Disneyland. Writing in 1981 in the light (or shadow) of the impact of electronic media on conceptions of reality, Baudrillard claims, "Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real" (12). In other words, humans create "simulations," such as amusement parks, androids, and the cinema, to answer the question of what is "real"—i.e., reality is real *because* Disneyland is fake. Baudrillard suggests that the faith we place in this distinction covers over the fact that the distinction is imaginary, that there is no "real" and "simulation" but only the "hyperreal" (12-13). Whereas Crichton questions but ultimately preserves this faith—Peter successfully defends reality against the simulation and secures the distinction between both categories—the HBO series seems to be exploring what it would be like to embrace hyperreality, perhaps as a way of

working through the unique challenges of our historical moment.

In an interview about *Westworld* (2016), the show's creators Jonathan Nolan and Lisa Joy suggest that their version grapples with the fact that, in the 21st century, humans are living very real lives in the virtual realities made possible by videogames and the internet. Nolan explains:

> As our world becomes more cloistered and the experiences we choose for ourselves, especially in the West, we're able to design not just our environment but also our intellectual environment to suit our preferences and predilections. We are, you know, sort of designing this odd prophylactic universe in which we can–we can do whatever we want (qtd. in Gross).

On one level, the idea is that computerized technologies have finally transformed our reality into the Delos that Crichton imagined. On another, we have so thoroughly diffused the real into the electronic phantasmagorias we create that "reality" exists for us in the digital age only as a flickering memory. The *Westworld* that Nolan and Joy imagined is thus a fraught escape into the plural realities in which we find (or lose) ourselves every time we turn on our TVs, boot up our computers, or pick up our smartphones.

By asking us quite unapologetically to bear witness to the disappearance of reality as we knew it, it may well be that that the dark mirror the HBO series holds up to us is doing a different kind of work than the original. The series is noticeably less about special effects and more about the impossibility of disentangling humanity from the digital technologies that define how we experience, understand, and "design" our environment, as Nolan puts it. Seeing from the perspective of the androids now is not like imagining seeing through the eyes of an unfamiliar machine—as the computerized robot POV allowed audiences to do in 1973—but like encountering something like our android selves. It is also revealing that the perspective audiences are asked to take now is shifted from the predominantly male cast in 1973 to female leads in 2016, and that many of the central characters in the TV series are people of colour, especially given the prominent lack of diversity in the original film. The new *Westworld* seems to grapple more openly (although problematically) than the original with the politics of race and gender that are currently playing out, sometimes violently, in the media, in the cinema, and in society in the United States.[10]

It thus cannot be coincidental that *Westworld* has reappeared at a time when humanity is once again being torn apart at the seams by forces that are increasingly incomprehensible. Just as Mead and Applebaum saw their violent historical moment reflected and refracted in the sublime image of the burning android, we might be haunted by the uncomfortable and quite devastating familiarity of the new *Westworld*. Particularly in the United States, the techno-scientific realities of surveillance, cyberwarfare, social media, and governance are wreaking havoc in old and new ways on everything from politics, race, gender, and class to civil liberties and the very fabric of culture, if not humanity, itself. Is it any wonder that the first season ends with a striking scene of a diverse android army led by women emerging from the woods on the edge of Westworld seeking violent retribution? (fig. 9) Viewers find no solace in this place because this is not a cinema of reassurance.[11] Indeed,

perhaps that is precisely the point: to bring us closer to what Sontag might call an "adequate" response to the terrors and uncertainties of our present realities. If nothing else, when looking out at our Westworld, we should feel the deep urgency of Goethe's question, "Shall the entire house go under?"

*Figure 9. Top: Dolores Abernathy (Evan Rachel Wood) taking aim to assassinate Robert Ford (Anthony Hopkins) and initiating the android revolution. Bottom: The android army emerging from the woods to bring a violent end to humanity. Episode: "The Bicameral Mind."*

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## Image Notes

Figure 1. The burning android. Reproduced from *Westworld*, directed by Michael Crichton (MGM, 1973), DVD.

Figure 2. Theatrical release poster for *Westworld* (1973). Source: "*Westworld*." The Official Site of Michael Crichton. http://www.michaelcrichton.com/westworld/

Figure 3. The rasterized robot POV. Reproduced from *Westworld*, directed by Michael Crichton (MGM, 1973), DVD.

Figure 4. The gunslinger's view of the tables in the lab where Peter is hiding. Reproduced from *Westworld*, directed by Michael Crichton (MGM, 1973), DVD.

Figure 5. Bottom half of Mariner 4 photograph of craters on Mars, 1965. Source: NASA Image ID number: Mariner 4, frame 09D.

Figure 6. The computer control room in *Westworld*. Reproduced from *Westworld*, directed by Michael Crichton (MGM, 1973), DVD.

Figure 7. View of Mission Control during lunar surface Apollo 11 extravehicular activity, 1969. Source: NASA Image ID number: S69-39593.

Figure 8. Left: Brynner as the android gunslinger in *Westworld*. Reproduced from *Westworld*, directed by Michael Crichton (MGM, 1973), DVD. Right: Brynner as Chris Adams in *The Magnificent Seven*. Reproduced from *The Magnificent Seven*, directed by John Sturges (The Mirisch Company, 1960), DVD.

Figure 9. Top: Dolores Abernathy (Evan Rachel Wood) taking aim to assassinate Robert Ford (Anthony Hopkins) and initiating the android revolution. Bottom: The android army emerging from the woods to bring a violent end to humanity. Reproduced from *Westworld* (Season 1, Episode 10), directed by Jonathan Nolan, (HBO, 2016).

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## Notes

1 John Whitney, Jr., is the son of the American experimental computer animator John Whitney, Sr. Both were pioneers in early computerized special effects. The avant-garde connection is visible in the abstractness of the gunslinger's POV.

2 For more on iterations of machine perspectives, see also Rogers, *Cinematic Appeals*.

3 Indeed, Crichton would use the play between animate and inanimate similarly in the context of characters trying to avoid being detected by dinosaurs in his 1990 novel Jurassic Park, which Steven Spielberg adapted for his landmark special effects film three years later.

4 See further Eisenstein 1986 and Manovich 2001.

5 See further Krueger 1977.

6 For more on the early computerization of special effects, see Turnock.

7 Martin Scorsese's digital 3D film Hugo (2011) offers an interesting allegory of early cinema as an automaton. For more on this, see Williamson.

8 For more on Hale's Tours, see Rabinovitz 2012 and Fielding 1970.

9 I am very grateful to Tanya Shilina-Conte for bringing this connection to my attention. For more on the parallel between the self-immolation and the burning celluloid in Bergman's film, see Tatiana Shilina-Conte, Black Screens, White Frames: Recalculating Film History, PhD dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo, 2016.

10 In an outstanding article on the subject, Aaron Bady argues that the HBO version gestures beyond but ultimately does not escape the Western genre's historical sanctioning of American racism and imperialism.

11 I am borrowing "cinema of reassurance" from Charles Musser and Carol Nelson's description of how Lyman Howe's early-20th century travelogues preserved an ideal image of America against the realities of racism and imperialism at the turn of the century.

# PREDICTIVE LANDSCAPES

K.R. CORNETT

***Abstract*** *| The popularity of the road film in the 1970s is often attributed to its updating of the Western film genre, an enduring form in Hollywood cinema. This essay argues that a hierarchical understanding of the relationship between the two genres is detrimental to understanding their efficacy. Case studies of two minor films produced outside of the Hollywood studio system reveals the centrality of landscape and spatiality to generic evolution. While the mythology of New Hollywood Cinema touted a reflexive deployment of genres that perpetuated in Hollywood for most of the studio era, these independently produced films endeavored to imagine an alternative to this ideologically dominant system. This article explores the uneasy balance of subversion and citation of genre to gain an understanding of the complex relationship between authorship, production, and hegemonic practices in this transitional era of American film history.*

***Résumé*** *| La popularité du road movie des années 70 est souvent attribuée au fait qu'il constitue une adaptation moderne du western, genre éternel du cinéma hollywoodien. Cet essai veut montrer qu'une compréhensio hiérarchique de la relation entre les deux genres de films nuit à l'appréciation de leur efficacité. Des études de cas de deux films mineurs produits en dehors du système des studios hollywoodiens révèle la centralité du paysage et de la spacialité dans l'évolution du genre. Alors que la mythologie du Nouveau Cinéma Hollywoodien étalait un développement réflexif des genres qui a perduré à Hollywood pendant la plus grande partie de l'ère de domination des studios, ces films de production indépendante s'efforçaient de concevoir une alternative à ce système idéologiquement dominant. Cet article explore l'équilibre précaire entre la subversion et le respect du genre afin d'acquérir une compréhension de la relation complexe entre l'écriture, la production et les pratiques hégémoniques dans cette ère de transition de l'histoire du cinéma américain.*


*Figure 1: Advertisement for 1963 Ford Galaxie*

A magazine advertisement for the 1963 Ford Galaxie (figure 1) foregrounds in both its form and content the necessity of restorative nostalgia for America's frontier past in order to contextualize the modern (Harvey). Three iconic images sit in remarkable relation and tension: the landscape, the cowboys, and the automobile. The rock formations invoke the Western landscapes made famous by the filmmaker John Ford, further emphasized by the presence of the cowboys. The automobile sits in the foreground as a kind of continuum of the history of mobility, from horses to the sedan. The specific layout also suggests a particularly modernist anxiety about the function of the past and the necessity for continuity as a key aspect of American identity and culture even as it came to a set of crises in the postwar era. This particular anxiety was recognized in the early-20th century by literary critic Van Wyck Brooks as the desire for a "usable past," a lineage of American culture that would enable cultural production as a continuous practice, part of a domestic tradition that could inform the development of an American ideal that always held individuality and collective identity in careful simultaneity (Cooney 22). The invocation of the frontier landscape and the cowboys also suggests a mobilization of the past itself, a way to bring an important aspect of American identity to bear on the construction of its future. This project of historical specificity, of reconstructing visual iconography in the

service of a telos of American progress, is central to an understanding of the nostalgic use of landscape in Hollywood Westerns during the Cold War. The function of nostalgia in films of this genre throughout the studio era is strikingly consistent and almost always distinguished by the ways in which landscape is used to suggest the longing not for a bygone era, but rather for a notion of "truth" that is bound up with the authenticity of nature.

In the twilight of the studio era in Hollywood, a dialectic emerged from this simultaneous looking forward and back: a constant consideration of not only the use of the past but the way that this very consideration changed the function of what had previously been taken for granted. This advertisement deploys the iconography of the landscape to make the history of the frontier useful as something more than a static, collective identity—it becomes a useful point of departure, a dynamic origin that suggests any number of American virtues, from ingenuity to tenacity. Americans prospered via their mobility on horseback, passing through difficult terrain to bend it to the will of civilization. The advertisement asserts that in its present of the early 1960s American industry and prosperity has allowed Americans the leisure and freedom to travel as they please, in a new iteration of the settlement and manifest destiny of the cowboys seen in the background. These three examinations of mass culture—the advertisement, the Pop Art movement, and the Hollywood genre film—operate on this fulcrum of modernity. Informed on the one hand by a tension between the promiscuity of image-based culture and a desire to explore the mediation of mass art, and on the other by a distinct relationship to the past, the movement of mass art from the mid-1950s to the 1960s predicts the aesthetics of the 1970s in an astonishing variety of contexts. While taking up the question of the status of American advertisements and their relation to the Pop Art movement is a tempting prospect, the juxtaposition of the three elements presented in the Ford Galaxie ad present a clear opportunity to think through the relationship between the Western, a genre that seemed to wax and wane in popularity throughout the 1960s, and the road film, a genre often thought of as best positioned to capture the zeitgeist of the Vietnam Era. At stake here is the way in which the landscape, represented in the ad as a kind of restorative nostalgia, becomes the defining aesthetic object of the road film in the 1970s.

A brief delineation of terms is in order here, given that the distinction between these descriptors is essential in order to discuss the relationship between the Western and the road film. The concepts of space, place, and landscape are distinguished through their functions, not their denotative meanings but rather how they circulate and interact with each other. Using the Ford Galaxie automobile ad as an example, we can define place as the specific setting of the image, often considered as a background. Notably, the "place" of the ad is self-consciously non-specific: this is the key tension of the term, the precarious status of elaboration. Is this Monument Valley, or somewhere geographically similar, or is it merely meant to evoke this specific location? Place carries ambiguity as one of its defining aspects—it can be all of these things or some combination of them, but it explicitly points to something in particular. Following from this notion of place, space is a location that is made distinct by its political or cultural status; it is defined by interaction and intersections of various practices. Thus, we can think of the space of the advertisement in terms of its presentation that suggests not only particular modes of engagement but also a relationship between these

modes (the car and the horses). To contemplate the spatiality of an image is to discern what Michel de Certeau describes as "vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables" (117). The space of this ad is strikingly oriented, with the modern car in the foreground of cowboys on horseback. Perhaps the most useful part of this understanding of space as distinctive from place and landscape is the way in which it forces us to contend with the hierarchy of presentation in a *mise-en-scène*. Here, the sharp dimensions of the automobile help delineate it temporally from the deliberate flatness of the cowboys—the suggested continuum is made explicit in the contrast. Both these figures can inhabit the place suggested by the background; an understanding of the space of the composition gives us a deeper understanding of their respective relations to this background, and therefore to an intended audience. Mobilizing these conceptions to account for the rhetoric of this visual presentation allows for a more active understanding of landscape, the final term in this triad. Engaging with the history and multiplicity of the term is far beyond the scope of this essay; instead, I want to draw attention to the way in which these definitions of space and place innervate the notion of landscape. Geographer J.B. Jackson offers a useful conception of landscape as "a composition of man-made or man-modified spaces to serve as infrastructure or background for our collective existence" (8). The interplay between these terms focuses on the function of landscape, rather than its definition. An active understanding of what landscape does emphasizes Jackson's helpful suggestion that landscape is about collective recognition of a composed space, and the role this space occupies in "not only our identity and presence, but our history" (Jackson 8). The significance of this advertisement as an example does not lie in the relationship between disparate elements, but rather in discerning the telos of the landscape, which is also a significant difficulty of the Western film genre in the postwar era.

This essay engages the question of the use of landscape in terms of form, genre, and political purchase in the context of a particularly fraught era in American history as well as the history of the Hollywood film industry. Both the Western and the road film take location as the central identifier of their genre, as opposed to other genres such as the melodrama, which centres affect, or the blockbuster, with its emphasis on spectacle. Consequentially, both Westerns and road films must in some ways articulate their relationship to landscape, and thus to history, and this is the source of their divergence. The Western posits landscape as restorative. That is, it uses the significance of landscape to perpetuate an idealized aesthetic that is to be longed for (this particular kind of longing is, of course, a more general understanding of "nostalgia"). The form of the landscape is one of reconstruction and ritual—of returning home, completing the cattle drive, and bringing justice and order where there is seemingly none. The endurance of the Western is due not merely to the repetition of these plots, which has also come to define the genre, nor the politically advantageous position wrought by the establishment of law and order as a collective good, but instead the way in which it repeats various landscapes that become symbolic of these qualities. In contrast, the road film tends to present its landscapes as reflective spaces. An emphasis on travel through various places, which gain significance through establishing space, situates the road film as far less likely to engage in the static aesthetics we tend to associate with landscape. Many of these films use landscape as an aestheticizing of this process of negotiating the dynamics of space, place, and landscape.

Monte Hellman's *The Shooting* (1966) is an example of a film that has the iconography of a Western but the political and aesthetic sensibility of a road film—a kind of proto-road film that acknowledges a precise relationship between two genres while instantiating a relationship to landscape that predicts the aesthetics of the 1970s road film. Hellman's film is particularly suited to a discussion of the emergence of a 1970s road film aesthetic because it so readily and precariously does away with the conventions of one genre while predicting the conventions of another. *The Shooting* occupies a relation to both genre and Hollywood that offers an opportunity to explore the efficacy of both these categories in the post-industrial era. While the Western tends to look back towards history as a legacy to be revered, the road film is about forward momentum. Rather than denying either of these positions to history, *The Shooting* often elides them both, creating an enigmatic experience that articulates both the limits and the possibility of using spatiality to explore a new aesthetic.

*Figure 2: The Shooting-title card*

Hellman's film asserts its aesthetic with its unusual opening shot (figure 2), and ends with an enigmatic series of shots that employ step printing. It thus embodies the terms of the road film's relationship to mass culture and a construction of spatiality that is shaped by subjective experience and spectatorial engagement, rather than ideological reconciliation and restorative nostalgia for a coherent America. The plot of the film is deliberately difficult to follow. Ex-bounty hunter Willet Gashade (Warren Oates) and his colleague Coley (Will Hutchins) react with measured skepticism upon the arrival of a character only known as Woman (Millie Perkins). She engages Gashade and Coley as guides across the desolate terrain, having already hired the mercurial gunman Billy Spear (Jack Nicholson) to help her exact revenge for the killings of her husband and son. The motley group travels uneasily toward a tragic conclusion that finds Gashade's fugitive brother and the Woman in a battle of mutually assured death.

Shot with a minimal budget outside the Hollywood studio system, *The Shooting* has been referred to as an "existential Western," (Bandy and Stoehr, 228) perhaps because its depiction of an increasingly inhospitable environment eventually renders the plot and the actions of the characters irrelevant. Their ultimate lack of choice emphasizes absurdity, and the spectator is left to consider man's place in a universe in which it might be possible that a landscape bears no trace of human existence. The idea of an existential Western seems to resonate in many examples of the genre throughout the 1960s, from the spaghetti Westerns of Sergio Leone to the spirited outlaws of *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969) and the extreme violence of *The Wild Bunch* (1969). These examples arrive primarily at the end of the 1960s, a context that distinguishes them from the psychological Western cycle that exerted its influence earlier in the decade. The subgenre of psychological Western is limiting in an examination of spatiality because

of its primary concern with the interrogation of the Hollywood Western. The invocation of the myth of the genre is central to the fascinating ways that these films point to the inadequacy of America's frontier history, but this kind of interrogation means that landscape is largely left to its symbolic origins. From its opening sequence, *The Shooting* solicits a different relationship to the landscape, beyond reverence but without cynicism. While the so-called existential Western is always positioned counter to the austere postwar Westerns of Hollywood, films such as *The Shooting* imagine an alternative to the hegemony of the industry.

In her study of texture in cinema, Lucy Donaldson argues that the opening of *The Shooting* moves "against the grain of a smooth entry into the world, and immediately transmits a sense of roughness and even precariousness" (Donaldson 6). As part of a series of disjointed cuts, this opening frame is either a subjective shot from the point of view of the first character shown onscreen, Willett Gashade, or from his horse, or from both of them. This ambiguity follows the deliberate violation of continuity editing in the previous shots of the title sequence and, in the style of Hollywood films, dictates both tone and mood for the rest of the narrative. The privileging of form over content is not fully realized here, but is certainly suggested in the unsteady framing of dirt, rocks, and a scant suggestion of plant life. This tie to a subjective experience of the world is a moment that expresses texture as "an expression of quality and nature" (Donaldson 1). The combination of overt construction of the opening sequence and the expression of space via texture points to the central dialectic of the film's form: the subjective experience of the world presented in a style indebted to the reflexivity of the European art film, and the acknowledgment of the Western's ideological use of space. While this self-conscious approach to form allows for and perhaps even encourages a particular ambiguity, it also problematizes the status of realism. The style of Hellman's film is less concerned with the appearance of artifice than it is with the privileging of experience. In other words, there is a specific way in which this points to a structuring of landscape that calls the necessity of mainstream genre films' adherence to a kind of looking into question. *The Shooting* recognizes the versatility of landscape; its value as representation surpasses its use as an assumed framework.

Neil Archer claims, "It is not an exaggeration to say that, for many, the road movie is synonymous with America cinema" (11). This assertion points to the fascinating way in which Hollywood cinema maps onto essential desires mobilized by the medium: the desire for speed, for nearness and distance, and for a sensuality that engages both objective representations and subjective experience. Take Archer's statement along with Andre Bazin's declaration that "the Western is the only genre whose origins are almost identical with those of the cinema itself" (Bazin 140), we come to an essential question: if the Western is "cinema" and the road film is "American cinema," where does this national specificity come from and why is it integral to the definition of the latter genre? This question seems particularly difficult if we assume that the Western is a generic form that is primarily discussed and perceived as having a deep preoccupation with American structures and ideologies.

The claim that the popularity of the road film is at the expense of the Western assumes that both genres occupy a similar role in the environment of industrial American cinema and merely vary their approaches to American exceptionalism. This perspective informs the reasoning behind

the reception of *Easy Rider* (1969), for example, as being a kind of modernized Western. The theory that 'they traded horses for motorcycles' (Feeney, 226) in the road film locates the key difference between the two genres in their preferred mode of transportation—the iconography of the horse is simply updated to the motorcycle. Elaine Carmichael concludes that "*Easy Rider* successfully replaces the time-honored cowboy with two countercultural antiheroes who resolve the waning importance of men on horses during the late 1960s" (Carmichael 148). Actor Peter Fonda also referred to it as "a modern Western" (Biskind 42), and Jack Nicholson observed that the modern-day cowboys are such because they ride motorcycles instead of horses (Engelmeier, 104). These facile understandings of the significance of the Western threaten to relegate the road film to a subservient role as the updated version of a genre that has enjoyed far more critical scrutiny.

Films that feature automobility have been as significant to the development of cinema as the Western because the medium is concerned with not only realism but with the process of movement through space. Thus, we can appreciate the ways that the Western's use of location shooting encouraged various understandings of cinematic realism in the same way that the road film's obsession with movement and speed contributes to the cinema's complicated and fascinating relationship not only with modernity but everyday life. In this sense, the road film cannot replace the Western because its relationship to technology has entirely different priorities. Moreover, the Western is not unsustainable given its relationship to modernity and the modern, and thus cannot be said to be replaced by the road film. In other words, it is not the Western's anxiety about or inability to represent modern life that causes it to wax and wane in popularity, as the plethora of psychologically complex examples of the genre attest.

The road film does not emerge from the waning of Western, but rather from the constant repositioning and re-articulation of daily life in modernity. The political positioning of the road film vis-à-vis dominant ideology is its most significant distinction from the Western, while the relation to the American landscape is the primary point of convergence for the genres. In one of the few books to engage with the road film, Steven Cohan and Ina Hark figure the basic dialectic of the genre as a tension between individualism and populism, with the specific aim to "imagine the nation's culture" (3) as either coherent or disjunctive space. This attempt to reconcile both the political aim and the nature of spatiality in the road film as something distinct from the Western is ubiquitous in scholarly discussions of the genre. The tension between so-called "conservative values" and "rebellious desires" (3) marks the road film as distinct from the Western. David Laderman figures the aforementioned dialectic as "depoliticized" (3), while film critic Michael Atkinson notes, "Road movies are too cool to address seriously socio-political ideas" (Atkinson 16). Yet scholars also cite the spaces of the road film and the nature of its approach to narrative as evidence of its political tendencies; the films either "define the road as a space that disavows virtues extolled by the Western" or "take over the ideological burden of its close relation, the Western" (Cohan and Hark 12). In other words, the road film permits a political position that is contrary to the political position of the Western but also grapples with similar ideological tensions that, according to a number of scholars, are based both in the complexities of gender politics and the reconciliation of historical context. Indeed, both Timothy Corrigan and Shari Roberts note the centrality

of gender to the road film. For Corrigan, "the contemporary road movie responds specifically to the recent historical fracturing of the male subject" (Corrigan 138), as if this crisis were an unusual symptom of a particular era in film history or a concern that was somehow exclusive to the road film. In an essay about the road film included in the influential *The Road Movie Book*, Shari Roberts contends that the relationship between the Western and the road film is based in a specific understanding of an "ideal of masculinity" (Cohan and Hark 45), following Jane Tompkins' astute observation that "the Western is about men's fear of losing their mastery, and hence their identity" (Tompkins 45). While these discussions contribute helpfully to articulating common features of both genres, they do not necessarily elucidate why this association is helpful beyond offering a facile theory for their historical ebb and flow. The combination of the foregrounding of modernity and its inherent social crises with the potential for space to operate as something other than an ideological ideal or nostalgic background is the basis for the appeal of the road film, which is often more self-conscious about the relationship between spatiality and political ideology.

There is also the matter of context and generic evolution in considering how the road film is often characterized as occupying a space in American film culture that had been reserved for the Western. Although the Western is notably consistent in its use of iconography and the deployment of capitalist ideology throughout the history of Hollywood cinema, it is far from monolithic. Discussing *Stagecoach* (1940), Bazin recognized an emergent self-consciousness in the genre that shifted the "balance of social myth, historical reconstruction, psychological truth, and the traditional theme of the Western *mise-en-scène*" (149). In this understanding of the specific concerns of the Western, the austerity of the genre throughout the immediate postwar era took precedence over the continued exploration of some of the most fascinating contradictions and ideological inquiries that are realized in films such as *High Noon* (1952) and *Bad Day at Black Rock* (1955). The significance of the televised Western should neither be underestimated nor misunderstood in moving the discussion of the movement of the genre out of its primary role as a mythical standard for Hollywood cinema. It is not simply that the televised Western made moviegoers less likely to patronize their big-screen counterparts, but rather that this was a symptom of a much larger change in American life. The postwar years in America ushered in unprecedented prosperity to a growing middle class that began to diversify its leisure activities in new domestic spaces that were often situated far from city spaces. Televised Westerns offered iconography and thematic consistency in episodic narratives that perpetuated the most traditional virtues of America, from the centrality of family life to the ultimate authority of the rule of law. Scale and spectacle were the way forward for Hollywood Westerns, as the star system promised typecast cowboys and the films became increasingly concerned with confirming their origins.

As with most Hollywood feature films, the opening sequence suggests a thesis not only about the ideologies the narrative puts forth, but a specific subject position as well. The opening shot of *Shane* (1953, figure 3) offers a way to understand an important aesthetic distinction from *The Shooting*. The landscape featured in the opening shots of *Shane* is immediately looked at by a character in the frame, played by Alan Ladd, who pauses in reverence, inviting the audience to follow suit. In contrast, the shots that occur before the title card of *The Shooting* feature a medium


*Figure 3: Shane-title card*

close-up of the profile of a horse, who is shown looking straight ahead. It is notable that this position is separate from the spectatorial position; this is the most significant point of comparison between two films as disparate as *Shane* and *The Shooting*. Classical Hollywood cinema often insists on the audience's identification with the protagonists of the narrative and does so by simultaneously presenting the look of the camera with that of the main characters. Given the incredible consistency of this subject position and its conflation with the position of the spectator, the opening of *Shane* is an important example of how the Western can use the picturesque landscape to suggest not only the primacy of Alan Ladd's gaze but the implication that the spectator's look is aligned to and affirmed by the *mise-en-scène*. Of course, this structuring of identification is not exclusive to the Western, but the role of landscape as an ideological symbol is one of its most generative features.

What is predictive about the opening of *The Shooting* is the way in which it presents the ambiguity of landscape as its central aesthetic. The slight jump cuts used to depict Gashade making his return to the mining camp indicate a self-conscious relationship not only to spatiality but to temporality as well. This reflexive approach bears the early influence of the European art cinema and traces of authorship that most Hollywood studio films would efface. Both Hellman's narrative and aesthetic experimentation arrive at a transitional period in the history of Hollywood cinema, when the industry underwent profound changes as a result of a number of factors, including the aforementioned shifts in mass culture and leisure activities toward driving and automobility as well as the import of foreign films that were less inclined to appeal to general audiences. The landscapes in *The Shooting* function similarly to the landscapes of a cycle of road films in the 1970s, as a way of working through the unfamiliarity of what should be familiar. If the very notion of landscape depends on curation and composition, then an alternative does not have to call this practice into question so much as it must determine the ultimate function of its aesthetic. Many 1970s road films begin with this essential question: what is there to make of the constant imperfection of an encountered landscape? From this, we get the terms of the wanderlust and determined travel of films from *Easy Rider* (1969) to *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), *Badlands* (1973) to *Two Lane Blacktop* (1971). Central to this question is the absence of the status quo, the desire to rebel against the hegemony that perhaps informed the vectors of various roads. If we see the characters in these films as desirous of a coherent subject position vis-à-vis an incoherent American identity then we would conclude, as many critics and scholars have done, to see them as failures. We can leave this project to the romanticized New Hollywood Cinema, where the likes of *Chinatown* (1974) and *Taxi Driver* (1976) quote the French New Wave and flaunt their auteur status in search of a new legitimacy. If, however, we locate the priorities of the road film in its relation to the

difficult work of asserting an identity and presence to reconcile with history, and recognize that this work happens in the significance of landscape, we can begin to understand how an emphasis on the quotidian, the texture of everyday life, becomes a political choice. *The Shooting* may not take up this project in its entirety, but it does imagine its possibilities. Its small-scale production, outside of the studio production, positions it as a marginalized cultural object in the same way that the "B" Western formed separately from Hollywood Westerns.

If the Hollywood Western can be considered a dominant genre in American cinema, then an argument can be made that the road film represents a minor tradition of this mode of filmmaking. In order to think through the political purchase of the road film, I adapt the term "minor" from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's work *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. In their conception, a "minor literature" is a work that originates from the margins while using the language of the centre. If we understand *The Shooting* as a proto-road film and not merely a subversive or existential Western, we can acknowledge the significance of the ways in which it "stutters" (to use Deleuze's term) (Bogue 21) the centred ideology of the Western. The film engenders a kind of amorality that exists in the road film, for example, rather than the potential for immorality that exists in a Western. To discuss a film such as *The Shooting* purely in terms of its deviance diminishes the political presence of morality, which is precisely the mode in which the road film often operates. The idea of the "stutter" supposes a mode of expression that both escapes a dominant system and reifies its decomposition; it is not that the Western is obsolete, but that a new language can be discerned in its decay. Deleuze and Guattari construct a way to use the implication of this theory to consider not only the differences between minor and major artistic practices, but also to suggest that there is genuine significance in the specificity of the minor practice. They acknowledge the subordinate relationship of the minor to the major, insisting that the process of deploying the constructs of the major (rather than developing a distinct language) is the defining trait of a minor literature.

Deleuze and Guattari outline three characteristics of minor literature, which are all relevant to the road film and its status both in relation to the Western and to the construct of Hollywood cinema as a cultural phenomenon. The first characteristic is concerned with the occasion for a minor literature: for Deleuze and Guattari, this is motivated by a desire to deterritorialize language. Various impossibilities challenge this ambition: "the impossibility of not writing, the impossibility of writing (in an adapted language), the impossibility of writing otherwise" (16). While *The Shooting* is not a revolutionary film, nor one that thoroughly addresses the ramifications set forth by the minor literature concept, there is a tangible sense that Hellman's film conveys these sensibilities. Given its iconography and emphasis on the American landscape, the film suggests a Western; as such, it must situate itself in a certain consciousness of the genre. Given this awareness, it is impossible in this context not to acknowledge the collective perception of the Western, despite (or perhaps especially because of) the skepticism towards the genre as it has been expressed both in Hollywood cinema and in the psychological Western. Distinct from the "A" Western, the psychological Western is distinguished by its fatalistic, obsessive subjectivity and its alienated protagonists. Where these films are often marked by their disillusion with the dominant norms and ethics as dictated by Hollywood ideology, the road film bears some traces of this sensibility.

The primary tension in the cycle of American road films made between 1969 and 1974 is one of legibility: how to express the desire for an alternative political position using language that exists largely to perpetuate rather than create—thus, this desire is impossible to articulate. This "stutter" occurs in the conclusion of *The Shooting*. As the characters race toward a vaguely defined figure in the steep terrain, the sound of gunshots echoes over a step-printed series of shots. For this brief period, spatiality expresses temporality and conveys the subjectivity of the event. These disorienting cinematic techniques imagine a spectatorial experience in which affect is central.

The second characteristic of a minor literature concerns its position within the *dispositif* of American society and culture. Deleuze and Guattari describe minor literature occupying a "cramped space" as opposed to the expanse of a "social milieu serving as a mere environment or a background" (17). Individual concerns are always the concerns of society at large in major literature; the subjugation of the personal to the collective is one of the primary ways in which Hollywood cinema presents repetition as difference. The cognitive focus of classical cinema turns on a systemic series of revelations of any number of coherent, denotative possibilities. Politically, these possibilities enhance the illusion of individual choice, suggesting that what characters want at the conclusion of a Hollywood film is ultimately what will benefit society at large: marriage, bringing a criminal to justice, the return to a mutually agreeable equilibrium, etc. The sense of political scale in a minor cinema is fundamentally different, presenting the "cramped space" of individual conflict as the integral issue. In *The Shooting*, the Woman's desire for revenge is singular and personal. The conflict between this character and Gashade cannot be understood as a symbolic clash between vigilante justice and the rule of law, where both could be satisfied with the same outcome. Gashade's opposition is personal, not political; it is his brother who is being pursued, and the fact of guilt or innocence is irrelevant. The Woman wants retribution not to uphold the rule of law, but to satisfy her own desire for vengeance. Although Will is clearly fascinated with her, she has no romantic or physical connection to any of the characters; she does not seek their approval or make any attempts to domesticate their environment. By the conclusion of the film even the expansive beauty of the American landscape seems to be in inarticulate opposition to the inhabitants depicted onscreen, neither ideal vista nor admired wilderness. In minor cinema the personal is political, to borrow an integral phrase coined in the wake of various social movements of the late 1960s. The characters in *The Shooting* are not the archetypes often observed in the Western, but rather individuals whose connection to the political is not necessarily predicated on the norms of American society. From Gashade to Billy Spear, the Woman to Will, the isolated characters have little relation to social and systemic issues; if the film had aspirations to a major cinema, each might have a trait or motivation that functioned to reinforce or represent a significant aspect of the *dispositif*. This characteristic of minor cinema is often attributed to a general malaise or sense of alienation that is one of the defining traits of 1970s American cinema. The idea that conflict or character motivation as experienced by an individual character is symptomatic of a pathos of failure, as Thomas Elsaesser claims, is an example of the necessity of understanding independent American cinema in political terms. The assumption that the characters represent exceptions to the norms of mass culture also assumes that the political position of these films to dominant culture is the

same as films made within this *dispositif*, which limits the ways that we can understand the political terms of independent American cinema. Deleuze and Guattari quote Kafka in their description of this second characteristic of minor literature: "what is there (in a major literature) a passing interest for a few, here absorbs everyone no less than as a matter of life and death" (Deleuze 17).

The third characteristic of minor literature—or cinema—is bound up with earlier discussions of the significance of vernacular and its relationship to the Western. The Western bifurcates along industrial lines, between the event-oriented "A" Western and the vernacular "B" Western. The latter demonstrates a distinct relationship with contemporary popular culture that attempts to account for its shifting function in American society, while the Hollywood Western continued in its invocation of certain generic tropes. The term vernacular suggests not only common usage but a particular deployment in terms of contemporary popular culture, which is hardly static. Given its smaller scale and greater accessibility, being shown on television or as part of a double feature, the "B" Western is in a far greater position to function collectively. Deleuze and Guattari assert that "because collective or national consciousness is often inactive in external life. . .literature finds itself positively charged with the role and function of collective, and even revolutionary enunciation" (17). The notion of collective expression seems in contradiction to the previous tenet of a minor literature, which places individual narratives at the centre of a minor work. It is precisely these individual narratives, however, that emerge as a kind of collective voice by virtue of their mass accessibility and given the ways in which these narratives engage with 'the people's concern' (Deleuze 18) rather than a 'literature of masters' (Deleuze 17) . It is no coincidence that Monte Hellman's work has benefitted from the enthusiasm for auteur theory, having arrived at a moment in the history of film criticism that championed the director as the ultimate architect of a film. The auteur theory is a consequence of a tradition of spectatorship that finds meaning in the excess of cinematic expression; it privileges the oeuvre of a film director over an individual film. In this sense, Hellman can be described as a kind of master, given the way in which his work has maintained its significance in no small part through an effort to understand his aesthetic concerns as they manifest in several films. Hellman's partnership with Roger Corman, one of the most influential independent film producers in American cinema, is key to understanding the collaborative spirit at the core of *The Shooting*. The balance between the authority of the director, the industrial ethos of the producer, and the dedication of the cast and crew on these films anticipates the complex relationship minor films have with spectators and the changing audiences of the era.

A singular narrative can engage with everyday life precisely because it places the individual voice at the center of its expression. Spectators can innervate their experiences with cinematic narratives that are more concerned with the relationship of the individual to a collective than with a perpetuation of the status quo. Thus, our understanding of *The Shooting* has less to do with its position to other Westerns than to what it has inherited from the genre. The ways in which we might make sense of the narrative corresponds to our relation to the public sphere rather than the inverse. It is the collective understanding of an individual narrative that drives a minor cinema—the road film genre is the product of this mode of American cinema. The focus of a minor cinema is not the known quantity

of *dispositif* but rather the potential of a collective that is focused on the possibility of counter-terms of engagement. We can understand the minor cinema of the road film as a further deterritorialization of the psychological Western's interpretation of its dominant genre. Both genres use the language of the Western specifically (and Hollywood cinema more generally), but their approaches are distinctive. The psychological Western often works in a symbolic register, presenting space and landscape as an expression of the limits of the cinematic language in use. In contrast, the road film foregrounds the poverty of this language, abstracting the use of space and landscape, interpreting narratives of travel and civility in terms that engage both the limits of major language and the possibility of viable alternatives.

*Figure 4: The Shooting-Gashade's hands*

By emphasizing both the vastness of the landscape and the diversity of its features, *The Shooting* uses the haptic to quite literally ground its realism in the affect of the terrain. Gashade's hands trawling through the dirt in a pivotal moment: the earthy depiction of the Woman's disgust at the accumulation of dust and dirt on her face and the trail of dirt from Coley's horse as he rides in pursuit of the hired gunman who will ultimately murder him (figure 4). These images contribute to the realism of the world by the nature of their bodily interaction with the landscape. This foregrounding of bodily engagement with the natural features of the landscape is less about the manifestation of ideological tension and the internal status of the protagonist than it is an emphasis of an immersive representation of space.

Whether the Hollywood Western uses landscape as nostalgia or allegory or both, it still insists on the auratic distance between its representation of America and the experience of the space by various characters. *The Shooting* challenges this hierarchy of perception where the spectator is rarely privileged in two distinct ways: by emphasizing the landscape's potential to antagonize sentient life regardless of mastery or natural predisposition, and by refusing to participate in the pictorial use of landscape that is an integral point of departure for the Western. Because the landscape itself is presented as the defining conflict of the film, these two challenges to the genre negate the centrality of the law in the Western and indicate, most importantly, that it shares more with the road film than the Western. If we understand *The Shooting* as part of a particular cycle of Westerns that were made and exhibited during the 1960s, then the idea of the existential Western and its association to the film is supported by its relationship to the Western and its articulation of the features of the genre. That is, the presence of horses, a revenge plot, and the vast expanses of windswept terrain are evidence that *The Shooting* is a Western. Yet its position with respect to lawlessness, for example, is not discernible because of its basic unconcern with a specific and dominant ideology. Its relationship to civil society, whether reluctant acceptance, deep yearning, or a kind of oscillation between the two, is

also secondary. If the Western is indeed a cyclical genre, if it consists not of members but rather iterations, the genre is complicated beyond recognition by *The Shooting*. Even if the Western is refined by films that share common features, it is also distinguished by the negation and subsequent substitution of these same features

*Figure 5: The Shooting-walking across desolate terrain*

in another genre. Thus, *The Shooting* may inherit the desire for retribution from the Western's obsession with justice, but it negates the necessity of law and order with its articulation of indifference, which is made manifest both in the journey of the characters and the numerous shots of humans and horses withering in the unyielding environment.

A composition that occurs late in the film has the last surviving horses and humans trudging towards a conclusion that is neither predictable nor necessary (figure 5). Instead, the journey itself is of crucial importance; having lost their way metaphorically and physically, the only option is to struggle against inertia. This description applies to *The Shooting* and the road film in equal measure. David Laderman characterizes the road film of the late 1960s and early 1970s as "focusing on existential loss more than social critique. In this more existential focus, the genre's core conflict with conformist society has been internalized" (83). Throughout his discussion of the existential road film Laderman conflates internalization with political apathy as if a preoccupation with subject position precludes other socio-political issues. The Western often has a similar kind of anxiety about the relationship between self and society. While the bounty hunter or the vengeful gunslinger are determined to assert their identity in relation to society, they are still bound by social rules and rarely act in opposition to the ideology informed by these rules. The tension between individualism and assimilation is often figured by the protagonist's position to domesticity (symbolized by a female character) and resolved in terms of an acquiescence to the rule of law and society. The presence of society and its bearing on the characters in *The Shooting* is difficult if not impossible to discern; the film is not concerned with law and society, but rather to the primacy of the subject and its experience of space. Thus, we can allow that the performance of self that is essential to the Western is perhaps internalized while making an important observation about the road film. Both genres can perhaps be said to have a conflict with what Laderman calls "conformist society," but it is the situating of this conformist society that *The Shooting* represents in its landscapes. Inviting a look but unable to accommodate specific intervention, the pictorial landscape is the province of the Western. The textured landscape is essential to the road film precisely because it encourages specific intervention. The terms of this intervention are shaped by the haptic relationship to the environment as experienced not only by the characters in a film like *The Shooting* but as perceived by the spectator as trace, as an opportunity to engage

with the landscape image in terms of experience rather than invocation. In the *mise-en-scène* in figure 5, the characters and horses cross a rugged, sandy expanse at the foot of a large rock formation, moving toward an unknown destination. Their only path is made by their own experience, by their movement through the space--a trench of sand cuts through the lower half of the *mise-en-scène*, suggesting a road not taken. Travel is insistently contingent in road films, the substitution for the static presence of law and society in the Western, and thus the two genres have fundamentally different political functions. The cultural critique of the road film is bound up with the assertion that the experience of one's own movement through space is akin to an American ideal, where the Western features iterations of movement toward the same destination, the perpetuation of a static American ideal. Examining Wim Wenders' *Kings of the Road* (1976), Deleuze and Guattari describe the relationship between two types of voyages: "voyage in place" (physical) and interior/subjective voyage (mental) are not distinguished by quantifiable distance or motion, nor by virtue of a specific cognitive process, but instead by "the mode of spatialisation" (532). While the road film can accommodate either of these modes, the description of spatiality as a mode is useful in understanding the particular significance of landscape for the road film.

Stanley Cavell's theory of genre offers a productive way to account for the political discrepancy between subversive Hollywood films and ones that position themselves alternatively. The common inheritance of mythology central to Cavell's understanding of genre-as-medium turns on the idea that this shared mythology permits interpretation of a myth. The distinction is that genre-as-cycle invokes the myth without interrogation, whereas the notion of genre-as-medium relies on a shared interpretation of a myth. This interpretation adapts Cavell's claim that "a performance of a piece of music is an interpretation of it" (Poague 33). Like jazz, a musical genre that often improvises recognizable structures, the psychological Westerns offer this possibility through subjectivity and the presentation of landscape as a symbol of this subjectivity. *The Shooting* is an exemplary film that offers an interpretation of the Western's mythology in the same way that jazz departs from traditional arrangements of popular songs. A key component of the traditional arrangement of landscape in the mythic Western is the relationship between Americans and their landscape; conflict is figured in the tension between the awe of natural space and the necessity of its subjugation so that civilization can flourish. *The Shooting* interprets this conflict as one that does not require the rule of law (a condition for a civil society), and instead offers a dialectic between man's insatiable desire for domination and the indifference of nature or the near-hostility of the landscape. This substitution moves the film away from the Western genre towards the road film, which is obsessed with the threat of ennui rather than the promise of domesticity.

In October of 1971, a million cars were sold in the United States. Automobility was an integral part of life in America, yet the same kind of pessimism that informed popular culture in the wake of the Vietnam war seemed to threaten the role of cars and highways in the contemporary milieu. The traumatic effect of the Vietnam War on the American consciousness arguably found its way into many films in the New Hollywood canon. Christian Keathley's identification of a cycle of films between 1970 and 1976 as a negotiation of "powerlessness in the face of a world whose systems of organization (both moral and political) have broken down" (293) emphasizes

the war as a catalyst for this crisis. Bob Rafelson's *Five Easy Pieces* (1970), mentioned in Keathley's essay, explicitly comments on the status of automobility, landscape, and trauma in one extraordinary sequence. *Five Easy Pieces* is one of any number of independently produced films from the era that attempts to represent various mythologies at stake in an America in which choice is represented as ineffectual. Critical work in response to Rafelson's film considers the historical moment of its release and the various ways in which the protagonist presents a specific crisis of masculinity in response to the aforementioned political crises occurring in various capacities worldwide.

Filmmaker Henry Jaglom notes of his work with independent production company BBS in the early 1970s, "We wanted to have film reflect on our lives, the anxiety that was going on as a result of the war, the cultural changes that we were all products of" (qtd. in Biskind 77). The aesthetic response to various contemporary anxieties in the cinematography of *Five Easy Pieces* is clearly manifest in a 15-minute sequence that occurs midway through the film. Bobby Dupea, the drifting protagonist of the film, travels with his girlfriend Rayette towards his family's home in the Pacific Northwest. During the trip they encounter two women fixing a car on the side of the road and pick them up as hitchhikers. Terry, the more talkative of the hitchhikers is portrayed by Toni Basil, a choreographer and veteran of avant-garde director Bruce Connor's experimental dance film *BREAKAWAY* (1966). The camera shows the four inhabitants of the car from the front of the vehicle looking through the windshield. Bobby makes small talk with the two women; Terry notes that she is bound for Alaska. When he inquires further about her destination, her traveling companion replies that Terry wants to live there because "it's cleaner." Bobby's incredulous response ("Cleaner than what?") is the catalyst for the editing and plot of the rest of the sequence. The film posits an answer to the rhetorical question: the "what" is indicative of the status of American automobility and landscape in the early 1970s—road travel has affected the environment to the extent that understanding the continuity of these changes is not only impossible but of little import. The resignation to a landscape that is populated by infrastructure created for transit fuels both Terry's active rejection and Bobby's wanderlust, an embodiment of the transitory nature of the landscape.

Discontinuity, chance, and incoherence—all devices of fragmentation and modernity—are presented in the crisis of representing the American landscape in *Five Easy Pieces*. The sequence is punctuated by edits that establish and emphasize the discontinuity of events involving the four characters during their travels together. Terry's rant about "crap" is not edited in the kind of active, causal chain typical of Hollywood films, but rather it is edited by affect, the emotion of the speaker and the dynamic within the vehicle. Terry states, "Pretty soon there won't be any room for man"; the *mise-en-scène* pointedly shows a barrage of road signs and motel billboards. At various points in the sequence, each inhabitant of the car is shown in their own frame, performing an action that portrays their solitude and the tedium of the journey—Terry smokes a cigarette, Rayette styles her hair in a mirror. *Five Easy Pieces* further advances the notion of automobility as anxiety and obligation that is central to this iteration of the road film, as if compensating for the representation of road travel as freedom that is absent from the genre in the wake of cultural, industrial, and aesthetic changes. The ineffectuality of many protagonists and the thematic narratives of alienation are, in

the particular instance of the road film, bound up with the representation of landscape. In road films before this "landscape" cycle, the ambition to travel and the freedom of mobility was often represented in terms of scale, for example, showing a lone car speeding down a seemingly unending road, or by the discontinuity of physical features of the land: vast deserts, massive rock formations, jagged mountains. The vague political and cultural sense that America should have done better, however, is not an inherent feature of landscape, and it is worth noting that the ideologies inferred by these previous representations are not problematized by narrative or the act of travelling through the past, but rather interrogated in terms of the relationship between the road and its surroundings.

In other words, the representation of landscape necessarily changed because of a figurative shift in the political realities of life in America, and it changed materially because roads themselves began to proliferate independently of their surroundings, eventually affecting the environment. John Jerome's *The Death of the Automobile* (1972), one of a number of books published in the early 1970s expressing concern with the dominance of automotive travel in America lamented that "We stopped building roads to places. We began building roads for automobiles" (qtd in Lewis and Goldstein 398). Bob Rafelson acknowledges this resistance to vehicularity and its effects on the environment in the road travel sequences of *Five Easy Pieces* even as he notes in the director's commentary for the film that "ecological writing (wasn't) very fashionable at that point." Ralph Nader's *Unsafe at Any Speed* (1965), an immediate bestseller, was instrumental in new automobile safety laws. Several books such as *God's Own Junkyard* (1964) to *The Death of the Automobile* (1972) express a general concern with the size, speed, and availability of cars, recognizing a pivotal moment in the history of the automobile in America.

The car-rant sequence in *Five Easy Pieces*, defined by its excess to the larger concerns of the film, is remarkable because it endeavors to look outward in an era that largely did the opposite. The landscape becomes a consequence of increased road travel—a symbol of an America that is explicitly defined by capitalist opportunity rather than the potential for settlement, as depicted in the Western. Terry makes a distinction between dirt and filth, the former being a natural phenomenon and the latter a consequence of the encroachment of civilization. Because the kind of looking solicited by landscape is a combination of experience (collective and individual) and discourse, its deployment in the road trip of *Five Easy Pieces*, a post-traumatic film of the 1970s, is inevitably changed by a revisionist spirit that is in turn affected by the prioritization of realism in American cinema in that historical moment. Landscape is not threatened in these films, given its status as a formation that responds to a need to define and see America and perhaps despite the desire to reinterpret the implied mythology of the land. Cinematographer László Kovacs observed that in *Five Easy Pieces* Rafelson "never moved the camera on an exterior (shot)," (Schaefer and Salvato, 190) preferring to use montage to suggest movement. Regardless of the subjectivity of the experience of landscape, the desire to portray the road as a steadfast system of organization in the midst of transitory politics and shifting aesthetics remained. The composition of the landscape in the road film is anchored by the system of roads; it is not nostalgia for a disappeared experience of mobility but rather expreses a wistful desire for order.

The establishing shot of the enigmatic final sequence of Monte Hellman's *Two Lane Blacktop*

*Figure 6: Two Lane Blacktop-Establishing shot, final sequence*

(1971) provides a composition that his earlier film, *The Shooting*, predicts (figure 6). A low camera angle looks out onto a sprawling runway; the black streaks along the asphalt suggest not only prior movement but also velocity. The white dividing line splits the *mise-en-scène* precisely, depicting the moment of possibility in a space that is defined by such moments. In the same way that *The Shooting* invites the spectator to engage with the texture of soil and dirt, this shot fosters a desire to push forward, to continue that most cinematic imperative—to move. The 1970s road film is perpetual and oriented towards the future. It is not concerned with the uncertainty of "possible community," but instead encouraged by various potentials of "collective assemblages of enunciation" (88). This tendency is often intertwined with criminality or at least an active resistance to societal norms in a variety of road films from the Vietnam era. Conventional readings of films such as *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) insist that "political frustration and disillusionment get internalized by characters (and) dramatized as individual psychological and emotional conflicts" (Laderman 86) without considering the way in which the film is about the struggle to create rather than communicate. Understanding the aesthetic of the road

film as a genre that foregrounds the landscape is integral to understanding that the remarkable feat of films from *Easy Rider* to *Badlands* is not their disdain for the mainstream but their ability to imagine an ideology that has no interest in invoking this mainstream at all. The space of the road film is charged with this potential, from the iconography of gas stations to the scroll of pavement along a seemingly endless road. These vernacular spaces, now in a landscape that invites active participation rather than static reverence, have the potential to represent lived experience in ways that the collective ideologies of Hollywood films, separated as they are from politicized daily life, cannot.

## Images

Figure 1: Advertisement for 1963 Ford Galaxie

Figure 2: *The Shooting*-title card

Figure 3: *Shane*-title card

Figure 4: *The Shooting*-Gashade's hands

Figure 5: *The Shooting*-walking across desolate terrain

Figure 6: *Two Lane Blacktop*-Establishing shot, final sequence

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# ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE (1970S) COMMUNE: NOTES TOWARDS AN OLD/NEW ONTOLOGY OF STUDENTS

A CONVERSATION BETWEEN FRASER MCCALLUM AND ANDREW PENDAKIS

Fraser McCallum is a Canadian artist whose work on Rochdale College, an experimental commune that was set up in Toronto between 1968 and 1975, explores the relationship between politics and historical memory. What follows is a conversation with Fraser about his piece Come Live With Us (2016) and about the political and aesthetic resonances of the commune today.

*AP: Fraser, could you tell us briefly about the history of Rochdale College. What was it? How long did it exist for?*

FM: Rochdale College was a free school and student co-operative housed inside an 18-storey apartment building in Toronto, operating from 1968 to 1975. It was originally conceived as a student housing co-op to serve the University of Toronto but evolved into its own entity not long after planning began. The project was initiated by Campus Co-op, which ran many shared houses in the area and sought to expand its operations. Empowered by new legislation permitting the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to loan to co-operatives, Campus Co-op ultimately opened Rochdale on a vacant lot at the north end of the University of Toronto campus. Due to zoning restrictions, which called for 7-to-1 floorplan density relative to the lot size, the Co-op ended up building a high-rise designed to house 850 people—much larger than any of its existing properties. At its height, more than double the resident capacity lived in the building. Lifestyles denoted by the apartment units varied widely, from conventional double rooms to entire floors arranged as communes. The ground level and second floor were used for various self-organized facilities, including television, radio, publishing, filmmaking, a library, and a restaurant.

The educational ideals of the College were primarily developed by U of T graduate students and sessional instructors. They sought to reimagine postsecondary education based on principles of freedom—where learning would be pursued for its own sake, beyond its instrumental role in preparing students for the job market. These educational ideals were carried out very loosely: Rochdale was non-accredited and ran courses on the basis of students' interests. There was little vetting or oversight in shaping the course offerings.

The College ultimately closed due to its inability to pay its mortgage, but it was a shell of its most vibrant self for several years before its closure. Not long after opening, runaway youth from the nearby Yorkville neighbourhood began to live in College common rooms, broom closets, and so on; they were tolerated by a sufficient majority of Rochdale's permissive residents. For similar reasons, high-volume drug dealers also moved in, cashing in on the inability of the police to govern the building. The College was frowned-upon in the broader local and national public, fueled by media portrayals of its greatest excesses of drug use, sex, alternative lifestyles, and derelict living conditions. This broader disgust set the stage for Rochdale's closure long before it actually happened, regardless of what was going on inside. Local politicians' patriarchal views of the counterculture couldn't withstand the lawlessness and immorality they associated with Rochdale in such a highly visible, downtown locale.

*AP: How did your interest in Rochdale develop? How or where did you come across it?*

FM: I first heard of it through friends whose parents had passed through there, which is quite common in Toronto. I then watched *Dream Tower*, which emphasized just how interesting and unique Rochdale was.[1] Much later, as a graduate student at the University of Toronto, I decided to undertake this project as a way to reflect more broadly on the contemporary education system and the ontology of studenthood. Since U of T holds the Rochdale archive, I felt the sense of two immensely different views of education throughout the process. As one would expect, the University was quite antagonistic toward Rochdale during its time. Robarts Library, a centrepiece of the campus, is likewise a Brutalist high-rise, and is directly within sight of the former Rochdale building (which still stands, now remodeled for use as community housing). In a very tangible way, these two buildings with wildly different histories are in architectural dialogue with one another—and with Robarts holding the Rochdale archive, the former holds the material history of the latter.

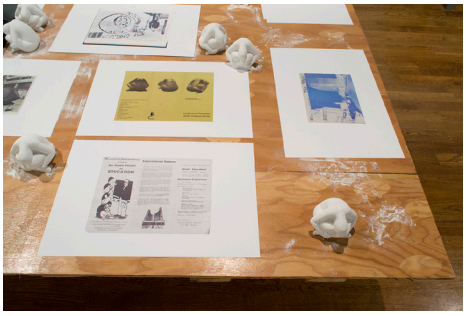
The architecture of Rochdale College became a crucial detail to consider. It's a very unremarkable building, indistinguishable from the apartment towers that were being built throughout the region at the time. The literature on Rochdale, however, shows that the social life of the building vastly exceeded the constraints of its architecture, and residents creatively misused the building to their advantage. For example: it was made almost impenetrable to the police. Residents would use fire alarms to signal police raids, block stairwells, and remove room numbers. This fortress-like quality was crucial to the survival of the College in its later years. While apartment towers from this period are often criticized for alienating and atomizing their residents, the College residents inverted these architectural features for a much different arrangement of social relations.

*View of former Rochdale site at 341 Bloor Street West, from Robarts Library*

*AP: Could you describe the Rochdale installation for those who weren't able to visit it or access the video?*

FM: The piece, *Come Live with Us*, consists of a 20-minute experimental documentary, a risograph booklet with a text I wrote, and an installation with a table and some prints. Objects in the installation appear in the video, and vice-versa. A major facet of the work involved remaking objects from Rochdale's archives using the high-tech tools of the contemporary university: 3D printing and laser cutting. I remade countercultural drawings from the archive as laser-cut stencils, which are spray-painted on gallery walls. I 3D-scanned and printed a miniaturized replica of *The Unknown Student*, the lone remaining trace of the College—a public sculpture which still exists outside the building. The installation is anchored by a large studio table, on which sit the sculptures and stencils, as well as reproductions of Rochdale College documents as loose prints. There's also excess 3D-printing dust on the table because the process of extracting a print involves vacuuming it out of a tray full of loose dust—like an archaeological dig. The studio table, replete with dust and loose prints, suggests an active and mutable approach toward this history.

The video looks closely at my mediated relationship to Rochdale. I had former residents read key texts from the College history for my camera: these give a sense of its aspirations, achievements, and public backlash.



*CLWU Installation view*

Photographs, documents, and archival audio appear throughout. I shot video at the former College site and in the archives at the University of Toronto to examine the architectural relationships mentioned above. Finally, I intersperse long shots, which depict the processes of remaking the objects in the installation: machines reproducing objects that were once handmade or made from technologies that are now obsolete.

*AP: In your film about Rochdale we get a sense of a distinctly different way of imagining domestic space. Home is not simply a place to eat, rest and, sleep or a space of quiet familial reproduction, but an integrated production unit–a site for communal invention where things are constantly being designed, built, and transmitted. From the beginning we're encouraged to look closely at shots of conspicuously displayed communal equipment: in-house radio and video technologies and print materials, as well as what appear to be machines for the weaving of textiles and other primitive industrial processes. In this sense, Rochdale is a kind of anti-suburb. Where the suburban home is for the most part isolated, functionally fixed, and experienced as a site of passive leisure and consumption, Rochdale is shown to be emphatically multi-modal, intrinsically socialized, and politically productive. Why did you want to emphasize these material, quotidian aspects of Rochdale (as opposed, say, to the interpersonal or political moments that would define a different kind of history of the institution)? What might we see in these antiquated communications technologies beyond old age and redundancy? With the shift from analog to digital production, the potential reach of a text or image has been dramatically increased even as the conditions of production themselves have been privatized and de-skilled. What is it, then, about our moment which makes these images of socialized, productive life particularly enticing? In a moment in which anything anywhere can be instantly shared–a text, a thought–what might be added to the atomized cycle of digital production and consumption by genuinely socialized life?*

FM: I contend that residents of Rochdale College sought to make a more livable world in a myriad of ways, beginning with quotidian life at home. Beyond education alone, there were experiments with childcare, communal living, and horizontal politics. But my emphasis on the material culture lies in the fact that this is where their aspirations and social relations were actualized in a way that is well-documented. For instance, there is a mountain of self-published print material from Rochdale: near-daily newspapers for eight years, memos, committee meetings, protest pamphlets, and ephemera of all kinds. Co-creating printed matter, radio, television, pottery, sculpture, and so on served to produce and bind the Rochdale community. It offered a public forum beyond one's immediate peers (it's important to remember there were usually upward of 2000 people in the building), a documented way to express political consensus or dissent, identities, affects, and so on. The art historian Robin Simpson describes some Rochdale media productions using the discourse of "counterpublics," which I think is apt: it captures the broad oppositional scope of the identities forged there.[2]

Rochdale's textual and material culture offers a clear picture of its residents' ideals. These ideals were paramount for me, rather than ascriptions of failure or success, because they express a genuine desire to reform the education system and to restructure everyday life. Residents

express their aspirations with a healthy amount of indeterminacy and uncertainty. Focusing on the primary texts offered a different entry point than my interviews with former residents, since the latter were speaking from a retrospective position, which was further clouded by the media campaign to demonize Rochdale.

With regards to the end of the question, I think in a very straightforward way these images are imaginative: they depict a set of social relations that existed with relative autonomy from the frowning public for quite a long time. They are hard to imagine given the conditions of possibility that exist today. To look at these images now is to look not only at documents of alternative ways of living, but also to look back—and through—this era, which was itself envisioning a future much different from what came to be.

*AP: Contemporary student culture shows little interest in the commune as a form of life, despite the fact that students continue to report high rates of loneliness, anxiety, and depression and despite the fact that high rents and stagnant wages make collective living relevant even as a means to mere economic survival. There's a very real way in which the commune is conspicuously missing from the contemporary cultural landscape. In your installation you chose to stencil images from the Rochdale archive onto the wall of the gallery. In addition to this you spread its prints and pamphlets out onto a bare wooden table. You chose to leave some kind of dust too on the table in the space between these prints. Is there not in all of this a real desire for the material traces of Rochdale, an interesting political nostalgia, one that goes far beyond the ostensibly disinterested curiosity of the historian? What political or aesthetic value do you continue to find in the commune or broadly in the kinds of utopian social experimentation we saw across the late 1960s and early 1970s?*

FM: Nostalgia was top-of-mind for me throughout the project, as there is so much contemporary currency placed in this historical moment and it is often quite selective. I am perhaps guilty of this myself, as I don't overtly critique the naïve politics on gender, sexuality, and race that cloud Rochdale's largely white, heterosexual, middle-class resident body.

My approach was to remake archival material using highly mediated, technological means—media that are thoroughly enmeshed in the contemporary university. With this approach, I hope to present the material in a way that foregrounds my alienation from it but assert that it is worth looking closely at nonetheless. Of course, nostalgia exists when looking at historical material of this nature no matter how it is presented, but I'm not averse to affective responses, so long as they don't stick to conventionally defined nostalgia alone.

With that in mind, I *do* dwell on Rochdale's notions of freedom, self-determination, and mutual aid, which resonate with me personally and politically and which I believe to be worth re-examining. These are especially crucial to

contemporary student life, which is characterized by debt, competition, and alienation. As I was a graduate student at the time, I was thinking about an ontology of studenthood—what does it actually mean to be a student? For most people, studenthood is characterized as a phase of maturation and knowledge-acquisition, one then followed by a sharp (and irreversible) transition to adulthood. The social experiments of the 1960s and 1970s, like Rochdale, seem to instead *permanently inhabit studenthood*, foregrounding transition, study, and indeterminacy as a way of being political. This refusal to "grow up" also represents a refusal to cohere with normative ideas about respectability, maturity, etc.

These ideas about studenthood are rooted in the dominant critique of the university at that time, which characterized the latter as a "knowledge factory"—a place where cognitive capitalism is reproduced through the making of compliant and myopic workers.[3] At Rochdale, students identified this turn in higher education as a foreclosure of their futures. In pamphlets and self-published newspapers, they express desires to learn and experiment without the narrow frame of goal- and career-oriented coursework. The point on "knowledge factories" is crucial to the formation of their ideas about studenthood: in lieu of being melded, normatively socialized, and disciplined, they seek to remain open to possibilities and ways of knowing that escape the logic of the factory.

*AP: This question has to do with what we see as a core line of inquiry at work in* Come Live With Us*, one directed at the relationship between representation and history. It is not that your piece seems particularly interested in representation as such—this was really a theoretical fetish of 1990s deconstructionist art practice and criticism, one that has mostly exhausted itself. Rather, its focus is more specific and has to do with the peculiar difficulties of visualizing the political. How does one represent or stage a political process that has vanished, a process that was at the same instant a mere sequence in a much larger conjuncture that has itself disappeared? To narrate political events retrospectively has always been a tricky process, in part because the tendency of the evental is to create something new at the outer edges of an existing situation. As Badiou frequently reminds us, events are inherently unpredictable. They happen against the odds of everything we think we know about a state of affairs. But we are dealing with more than the trickiness of narrating events as such here. Instead, the problem has to do with a paradigmatic shift in the way time presents itself. What has vanished is the entire universe of communism—the whole ramifying world of left experimentation that constituted so much of what took place world-historically between 1917 and 1980 (the latter date, when both Reagan and Thatcher were elected, is as good as any to name the end of the era which preceded it). Included in this notion of a communist universe—we could call it a left universe or a socialist universe too—would, of course, be the actually existing state socialisms, but also left unionism, radical student movements, guerilla groups, communes, etc. However specific or singular the Rochdale experiment was it can't really be understood apart from the now-vanished atmosphere of this universe.*

*How, then, does one represent an experiment like Rochdale, one that was, in its time, so intensely and confidently here and now? This was a confidence, a joie de vivre, that was reliant in part on a broad sense, no longer present on the left, that in the long run, in the end,*

*we will win. I don't mean to use this phrase flippantly: there's a real sense among students in the late sixties and early seventies and among organized militants and movements that the forces of reaction and conservatism are in retreat and that capitalism as a system is a visitor from the past (and not the future). It is not an exaggeration to say that given our own political conjuncture, the work of re-staging such an experiment—giving life to its agents' expectations and actions, immanently understanding their desires—requires the same kind of archeological leap required by anthropologists working on groups radically removed from themselves in time and space. In other words, we're not sure that returning to the political universe of the early 1970s is all that different from having to imaginatively reconstruct the life-world of the Etruscans! At least from my view this is how dramatic the conjunctural shift has been since the rupture introduced into history by Reagan and Thatcher. It is as if neoliberalism were a kind of garishly mirrored door: once closed it shuts off the time/space beyond it in a new way, making attempts to film or write across the threshold extremely difficult. So your film sets itself this extremely interesting (and difficult) task, that of filming through a mirrored door and onto a world that has vanished. You seem to be explicitly trying to thematize this by focusing very closely on the material culture of the signs and traces left by Rochdale (for example, with shots of hands moving through archives, of period documents, and of its architectural remainders). You also choose to access the subjects of Rochdale not through direct interviews in which they are asked to reflect spontaneously on the past, but by having them read period documents that were produced about or by Rochdale. There's a very explicit foregrounding of historical layers at work in all of this. What's going on here?*

FM: I fully agree with your contention that student groups and other folks on the left did believe they would win! This analogy of the mirrored door is very apt, and it's one that I have tried to recreate in my approach toward the project. While I agree that it takes an immense conjectural shift to imagine the sociopolitical context of the 1970s, my capacity to speak with former residents helped to bridge the gaps in my understanding. They outlined the unique conditions of possibility that enabled Rochdale College to happen. I conducted interviews with Rochdale alumni but ultimately decided to ask them to read key documents from the College history for the camera. One text expresses the educational ideals of the College, another outlines rules for governing citizenship at Rochdale via a policy toward "crashers," and a third chronicles the federal government's outrage at the clean-up they were left with upon Rochdale's closure. By having College alumni perform these texts, I try to foreground their enduring presence, no matter how far socially and politically removed we appear to be from this episode of recent history. They are in their sixties, seventies, or eighties, and they continue to carry on and transmit the past.

In a similar way, I filmed the College building with attention to its details, in spite of the fact

that there's little to look at. Aside from *The Unknown Student* (the sculpture mentioned above), the lone evidence of Rochdale is a painted mural in the atrium. The building is underwhelming, and mute to the events that took place there. In the video, I combine and overlay images of the College building with archival photographs and documents that show the same site as a place of dynamic social life. The bifurcation that happens here—between a building that cannot express its history and fleeting photographs from the past—is part of the difficulties of *visualizing the political* you mentioned above. Representations of the political are too often limited to acts of dissent and temporally limited to insurrectionary moments. For me, *the political* elides the fragmentary nature of its conventional representations because it is beyond visuality; it exists in forms that cannot be represented. With this modest project, I try to go beyond visuality as a singular approach toward representing history by engaging with the archive through mediated processes: through making, publishing, and performing. In so doing, history is not just represented, but made and re-made to animate the present.

## Image credits

Video Stills: *Come Live with Us*. HD Video, 20:30, 2016

Installation views:

Installation view of *Come Live with Us* at The Art Museum at the University of Toronto Studio table with 3D-printed sculptures and inkjet prints, adhesive inkjet prints, spraypaint.
2016

## Notes

1 *Dream Tower*. Dir. Ron Mann. Sphinx Productions, 1994.

2 Simpson, Robin. "Let the Buyer Beware." *This Book is a Classroom*, Passenger Books, 2012.

3 Raunig, Gerald. *Factories of Knowledge, Industries of Creativity*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e) (2013).

# KILLER POV: FIRST-PERSON CAMERA AND SYMPATHETIC IDENTIFICATION IN MODERN HORROR

ADAM CHARLES HART

***Abstract*** | *Killer POV—a subjective camera without a reverse shot—is at the center of many of the most influential critical writings on modern horror. However, these discussions often start from the assumption that the camera's point of view produces identification. This essay attempts to disengage our understanding of horror spectatorship from such models and to provide an alternative reading of killer POV that engages with the genre's structures of looking/being looked at while remaining sensitive to what precisely is being communicated to viewers by these shots. Killer POV signals to the viewer the presence of a threat without displaying the monster/killer/bearer of the look onscreen. In addition to keeping the threat un-embodied (or only vaguely embodied) and unplaced, killer POV alerts the viewer to the film's withholding of crucial diegetic information, both of which are essential to understanding the unique mode of spectatorship provoked by modern horror films.*

***Résumé*** | *Killer POV—caméra subjective sans montage parallèle—est au centre de nombreux articles critiques les plus influents sur le film d'horreur moderne. Ces discussions se basent cependant souvent sur l'idée que le point de vue de la caméra crée l'identification. Cet essai tente de détacher notre interprétation du regard du spectateur sur l'horreur de tels modèles et d'offrir une lecture alternative de killer POV qui implique les structures du regardant/regardé de ce genre de film tout en demeurant sensible à ce qui est exactement communiqué aux spectateurs par ces scènes. Killer POV signale au spectateur la présence d'une menace sans représenter le monstre/tueur/ porteur de cette apparence sur l'écran. En plus de garder la menace non-incarnée (ou seulement vaguement incarnée) et physiquement absente, killer POV alerte le spectateur sur le fait que le film retient des information diégéniques cruciales, ces deux fonctions sont essentielles à la compréhension du mode unique de regard provoqué par les films d'horreur modernes.*

## Introduction

In the 1970s, horror was a genre in flux. Whereas in traditional Western horror narratives monsters such as Dracula came from Old Europe (often preying on New Europe), the descendants of Norman Bates and Romero's ghouls came from next door or from the outskirts of town, happening upon victims thanks to inopportune stops along the highway or more intimate, familiar reasons. Though ghosts and vampires never went away, the genre made room for—and was increasingly identified with—more human monsters.[1] In the horror films of the 1970s monstrosity shifted to psychological and behavioral categories: you are a monster for what you do, not what you are, for your brain rather than your physiology, supernatural or otherwise. This new wave distinguished itself in part through an emphasis on violence, as horror films became bloody in a way that had mostly existed at the margins of the exploitation circuit before *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) and *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974). This was an era of raw, visceral horror that spawned the first sustained serious critical and academic considerations, most influentially in the writings of Robin Wood, who identified an emerging revolutionary energy in the genre.[2]

As the influence of *Psycho* (1960) and *Night of the Living Dead* took hold with films such as *Massacre*, *Last House on the Left* (1972), *The Exorcist* (1973), *Sisters* (1973), *Carrie* (1976), *Shivers* (1976), *God Told Me To* (1976), and *Halloween* (1977), horror shifted stylistically alongside narrative and thematic changes, typically in favor of more immediate, visceral aims. Most obviously, this change came through spectacles of violence, but also through documentary-inflected camerawork and an increased reliance on offscreen space. These stylistic shifts were, in part, a reaction to the genre's turn away from traditional monstrosity. When the fearsome spectacle of monsters was no longer the defining trait of horror, the genre found other ways to distinguish itself. Without the otherworldly terrors of ghosts and goblins, what separates a killer with a knife or a chainsaw from, say, a killer with a gun in a gangster movie? The answer was largely formal. If traditional monsters are monstrous because they exist physically at the edges of our realms of understanding, then modern horror sought to make its physiologically human killers sufficiently fearsome and unfathomable through stylistic innovations. Cinematography became crucial to horror's aesthetic and to its creation of threatening, dangerous monsters. Monsters and killers moved offscreen, and lurking, roving cameras signaled to the audience that *something* was out there watching and waiting to attack.

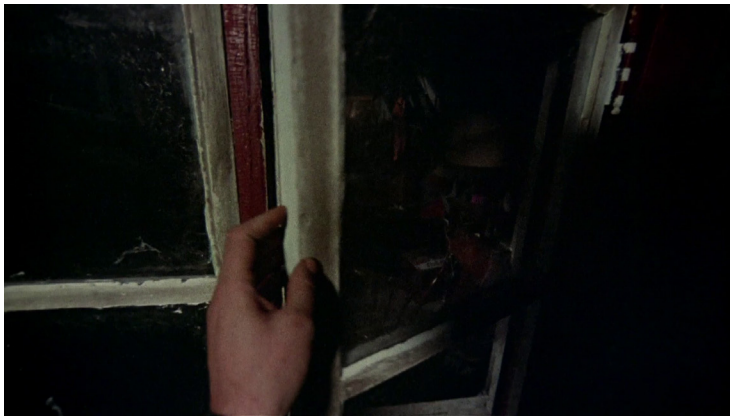
This transformation becomes formalized and focused through what I call "killer POV." An unattributed subjective camera, killer POV is unique to horror. It places a threat within a scene without visualizing it. The technique was quickly adopted as a method for attributing a sort of unfathomable fearsomeness to the physiologically unexceptional killers of 1970s horror. Killer POV located its threats offscreen, in the unseen spaces surrounding us, just beyond what was visible. It viscerally communicated (and enacted) the paranoid tinge of 1970s horror: we know the danger is out there, somewhere.

By the early 1980s, the roving, unattributed point-of-view shot was emblematic of horror, but it also became a symbolic punching-bag for much that critics hated about the always disreputable genre. For many critics, killer POV was evidence of a turn away from the rebellious, anti-authoritarian energy that Wood celebrated in 1970s horror. Whereas the films of the early

1970s focused on identifying the humanity within their dispossessed monsters and villains, the masked killers of the 1980s offered no such opportunities. To the genre's detractors, killer POV seemed to invite a sadistic celebration of the violence it depicted without humanizing its perpetrators. The resulting critical consensus on this era of the genre has been largely reliant on models of sympathetic identification that assume a conventional, narratively absorptive viewing position. Such analyses, often founded on assumptions taken from the apparatus theorists of the 1970s, suggest that sympathetic identification is decided primarily (or even exclusively) by camera position.[3] The aim of this essay is to disengage our understanding of horror spectatorship from such models of sympathetic identification in favor of a more flexible understanding based on horror's sensational modes of address. I also aim to show how sympathetic distance can be created between the spectator and the camera, a separation of the camera's look from the gaze.[4] Moreover, this essay will work through the meaning of a POV camera within narrative cinema more generally, to dissect precisely what is communicated by an image that represents the vision of a diegetic character.

## The Devil's Eyes

Consider this example: A POV camera approaches a large sorority house from the outside, noticeably freer and slightly shakier in its movement than it was in the preceding exterior shot. The image cuts between this handheld camerawork and more traditionally (tripod-stabilized) shot and edited scenes of the women inside the house. One stationary insert shot shows the partial silhouette of a man's head as he peers through the window from approximately the same position as the previous handheld shot. This is the closest the film gets to a reverse-shot revealing the bearer of the look. As the camera approaches the side of the house, two arms appear at the edges of the frame and climb, along with the camera, up to a second story window.



*The killer sneaks into a second-story window in Black Christmas. (Warner Bros.)*

This sequence from the beginning of 1974's *Black Christmas* is an early instance of killer POV, a shot that represents the position and perspective of a character but is distinguished from other POV shots in its refusal of reverse shots and its nearly universal characterization as menacing (or at least suspicious). *Black Christmas* returns to killer POV repeatedly: the POV camera moves stealthily through the sorority house, sneaking up on its unsuspecting inhabitants for a first-person view of each subsequent attack. For many of the film's attacks, hands will appear at either side of the frame to strangle or stab some unfortunate co-ed. We read the camera as a literal presentation of the killer's perspective: it presents not a general approximation of his position within the scene but, supposedly,

precisely what he is seeing. First and foremost, it indicates *presence*.

Variations on this device have been incredibly common in horror since the 1970s. Its instant legibility explains its sustained, widespread use: upon seeing a killer POV shot, the viewer can assume that it represents the position and perspective not just of someone within the scene, but of a specifically malevolent figure. Indeed, the practice was so ubiquitous that horror films quickly became fond of playfully exploiting this assumption, with countless killer POV shots ending in friendly greetings, practical jokes, or leaping cats.

*Black Christmas* was one of the earliest North American films to employ killer POV extensively. The technique comes less from Hollywood's experiments with the subjective camera in films such as *Lady in the Lake* (1946) or *Dark Passage* (1947) than it does from the pioneering Italian *gialli* of Mario Bava and Dario Argento. Brief killer POV sequences appear in Argento's *Bird with the Crystal Plumage* (1969) and Bava's *Twitch of the Death Nerve* (*Reazione a catena*) (1971). The technique would go on to play a major role in Argento's filmography especially, becoming a major component of later films such as the influential *Deep Red* (*Profondo rosso*, 1976) and *Opera* (1987). In Argento's and Bava's films, killer POV plays a crucial narrative purpose: in many ways, these films follow the narrative structure of mysteries, and killer POV allows attacks (and other scenes in which the murderer plays a role) to be shown on screen without revealing the murderer's identity to the viewer. In that sense, it is a stylistic equivalent of the black gloves and mask of Bava's *Blood and Black Lace* (*Sei donne per l'assassino*) (1964) and similarly concealing costuming in Argento's early films. Killer POV also fits in with the complex, virtuosic network of moving camera-work and subjective shots that characterize both directors' work—one type of moving camera among many.

Once the technique spreads through North American cinema, it moves beyond mystery narratives. Although *Black Christmas*, like the Italian films, has obvious mystery elements, it de-emphasizes them—and, in fact, never reveals the killer's identity. Further, the systematic, extensive use of killer POV in *Black Christmas* serves an additional function, one that subsequent films will capitalize on even as the remaining mystery-genre trappings fall away. These films recognize that keeping the killer offscreen is essential to maintaining the threatening character of their killers: being offscreen is precisely what makes them fearsome. Although *Black Christmas*' killer's movements are carefully mapped out within the house (much more so than in many subsequent slasher films), killer POV here creates a sense of near omnipresence. The killer is vaguely located "offscreen" rather than being concretely placed, and there is little sense that he could actually be detected by any of his unsuspecting victims. His identity remains a mystery, but the power of killer POV lies rather in its capacity to create a vague yet urgent sense of threat, one that exists within the scene but that cannot be precisely placed. Killer POV appears alongside the rise of the slasher and its all-too-human villains precisely because it allows films to characterize its threats as being unembodied, non-human, and perhaps even supernatural.[5] That is, the narrative tells us that an escaped lunatic with a knife is perpetrating the murders, but what we see onscreen is an un-visualized (perhaps even un-visuablizable) force, not limited to a body, human or otherwise. The camera's perspective places it within the scene, but in a way that avoids precise location: the

threat exists, in essence, offscreen, either behind the camera or otherwise outside the frame.

In *Halloween* (1978), the bravura opening killer POV sequence grants credibility to the opening attack, in which a young boy attacks his older teenage sister. The delay of this revelation creates a suspenseful curiosity, and there is a frisson of surprise when the young Michael Myers (Will Sandin) is revealed to be the killer. Yet this sequence has little to do with the epistemological tasks of the mystery genre. Shown from a more traditional perspective, the sight of a six-year-old with a knife presumably becomes much less menacing, perhaps even ridiculous, and the confrontation between brother and sister much less believable.[6]

*The camera creeps towards a swimmer in Jaws. (Universal Pictures)*

Perhaps the most famous, most iconic, and most influential killer POV shots, however, came from outside of the slasher tradition in Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975). Capping off its celebrated opening scene (and revived again for the film's second attack), a camera moves underwater, angling upwards towards an unsuspecting young woman swimming alone. When the camera reaches its target, the shot cuts above the water to show the swimmer being painfully tugged from below. Like all of the above examples, this sequence allows for the depiction of an attack without showing the attacker. However, even more so than the later examples, this could hardly be characterized as a mystery: the killer POV belongs, of course, to a shark. Not until the film cuts to the first shot above the water does the viewer get any concrete, visual evidence of the threat that was connected to that moving camera. Yet the shot, which did not have any exact predecessors in mainstream Hollywood (and so is not referring to a recognized convention), is readily legible: a presence is creeping towards the object of some kind of imminent assault, and we quickly associate the camera with not just a being, but with a malevolent one. As viewers, we realize that when the moving camera reaches its object, something unpleasant will happen to the poor young woman skinny-dipping alone at night. The two killer POV sequences in the film are key to characterizing the villain not simply as a shark, but as an unstoppable killing force—one that is not effectively stopped until the heroes bring it above the water and killer POV is left behind.

Although its popularity and legibility have led to it being discussed frequently in both academic and popular criticism, writing on horror is marred by an unexamined assumption that killer POV implicates the spectator in the sadistic voyeurism of the monster or killer through whose eyes we are supposedly seeing. According to the standard critical perspective, killer POV constructs—some would even say *demands*—a position of sympathetic identification with that killer. In his influential essay "Through a Pumpkin's Eye: The Reflexive Nature of Horror," J.P Telotte describes the opening shot of *Halloween* as having "forced" the viewer to identify with the young murderer (117). However, killer POV can also be understood as working against the kind of sympathetic identification implied there. By sending direct signals to the viewer indicating imminent attack to an onscreen character, it also produces fear for the character's safety. Further, by withholding crucial narrative information in a rather ostentatious manner, killer POV generates a distanciation effect by indicating that we are not privy to some of the scene's most relevant information. Rather than simply aligning the sympathies of the viewer with the killer in the act of looking, I want to argue that killer POV provides a sustained image of that look, a viewing situation that introduces a more complicated series of effects.

## Killer POV and Sympathetic Identification

"Point of view = identification," Carol Clover asserts, arguing that the viewer of the typical slasher is "linked, in this way, with the killer in the early part of the film" (45). Roger Ebert famously railed against what he called the "violence against women" film, and killer POV was a key part of his objection. Ebert argued that "it is a truism in film strategy that, all else being equal, when the camera takes a point of view, the audience is being directed to adopt the same point of view," claiming that the films therefore "displaced the villain from his traditional place within the film and moved him into the audience" (55-56). Ebert goes further than Clover, asserting that killer POV implicates the audience and provokes a kind of sadistic voyeurism on the part of the spectator, eliding possible distinctions between a narratorial position and spectatorial sympathies. As perhaps the most influential critic in the United States at the time, Ebert successfully used his national platforms on television and in print to draw significant popular and academic attention to horror's problematic gender politics. Clover, on the other hand, makes room for more nuanced spectatorial positions. In her germinal text, *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*, Clover argues that the viewer's sympathies lie with the monster/killer in the first half (a sadistic perspective), and then, as the "Final Girl" grows more assertive and active, with the heroine in the second (a masochistic one). Both writers' influential accounts assume that visual POV is tantamount to sympathetic identification. Clover examines the flexibility and instability of that position within a single film, and in her discussion of the Final Girl recognizes that there are factors beyond camera position deciding spectatorial sympathies. She privileges and prioritizes identification with the Final Girl, with whom the spectators have developed a more extensive relationship, over the earlier, briefer moments of identification with the pathologized killer. Yet in her account that earlier sympathetic relationship with the killer is based *entirely* on killer POV (42-64). Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, critics would continue to account for killer POV's popularity in the genre largely through ideological readings. The most influential accounts of killer POV have understood it to be inviting—again, even

demanding—identification with the killer, using it as evidence that horror viewers sympathize with monsters and killers. The implication, of course, is that horror films are sadistic, misogynist, and inciting.

Linda Williams, citing and building on Ebert's argument, similarly attributes malignancy (and an invitation to sadistic sympathies) to killer POV, but re-orients the argument. Williams points out that, in older horror, monsters would often be seen from the heroine's point of view: we see the monster as the victim/heroine sees it, allowing for a "recognition and affinity between the woman and monster" that she claims is an essential element of horror's appeal for female viewers ("When the Woman Looks" 31). Williams examines horror films such as *Nosferatu* (1922), *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925), and *King Kong* (1933), in which the shots of female characters' looking at the monster manifest a sympathetic recognition of otherness.[7] In modern slasher and slasher-influenced horror films, however, she identifies the monster as a "non-specific male killing force" that "displaces what was once the subjective point of view of the female victim onto an audience that is now asked to view the body of the woman victim as the only visible monster in the film. . . . She *is* the monster, her mutilated body is the only visible horror" (31, original emphasis). While still agreeing with Ebert's basic assumptions, Williams shifts the terms from direct sympathetic identification with the monster to an absence of identification with the victim (still based on camera perspective), and she points out the implications of the victim's body replacing the monster as spectacle. Indeed, in the 1970s and after, horror's primary spectacles begin to shift from terrifying monsters to wounded victims. For all of the nightmares inspired by images of Freddy, Jason, and Michael, the films in which they appear are often dominated more by images of the open, abject bodies of victims than they are by intimidating views of their iconic killers.

These feminist critiques are crucial not just for the history of horror scholarship, but for the history of the genre's productions, as later generations of filmmakers would more fully engage with their substance.[8] Yet within those critiques, these critics still assume that killer POV causes spectators to identify with the killer rather than the victims. But why would we assume that, in these cases, "point of view = identification"? To be sure, critics have made room for nuance within such accounts. Vera Dika, for example, argues that, because the killer is unseen, the viewer may "identify with the killer's look, but not with his character" (88). However, even Dika's account starts from the familiar presumption of identification. This suggestive assertion of identification with a camera angle has persisted, carrying over into writings on found-footage horror, in which writers such as Barry Keith Grant assert that viewers identify with the diegetic camera (154).[9]

The crucial interventions in the 1970s of the apparatus theorists, particularly Laura Mulvey, provide a useful and durable theoretical model for understanding the inherent ideological content of narrative cinema. Analyzing narrative perspective was of central importance to their project. Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" claims that classical Hollywood cinema was built on an assumed heterosexual male perspective: men were the active drivers of the narrative, while women functioned primarily to be attained and to be looked at. The look of the camera at female characters/actresses frequently aligned with the look of the male protagonist. Mulvey's critique of Alfred Hitchcock, in particular, depends on the "subjective camera"

of films such as *Vertigo*.[10] Although, as Mulvey notes, most of the shots in *Vertigo* have at least some relation to the protagonist's POV, we are also shown numerous images of Scottie, the protagonist, looking. We especially see him looking at Madeleine/Judy, the object of his obsessive affections. Thus, while Kim Novak as Madeleine is clearly presented as erotic spectacle to the audience, this perspective is just as clearly marked as belonging to a character within the narrative. In Mulvey's reading, this construction is particularly insidious, illustrating the conflation of the perspectives of male character, male spectator, and camera that characterizes classical cinema.

Writing a little more than a decade later about Mulvey and the *Screen* school of film criticism, Vivian Sobchack points out that the function of suture—the process of identification with an on-screen character that relies on such classical devices as the shot/reverse-shot construction—is to "disguise the film's perceptual presentation of a representation. . . . To appropriate the presentational function of the film's perceptive body for the narrative and thus to deny the narrative its dependent status as the expression of a perception by a perceptual authority embodied outside the narrative" (228). What is problematic about this system of representation, Sobchack argues, is that it is not questioned or problematized within the film: the film, in effect, hides its own perspective, naturalizing it as the perspective of characters within a film. Not only does the cinema adopt a voyeuristic position towards eroticized female bodies, it naturalizes that voyeurism.

Killer POV stands out from nearly all other subjective shots in narrative cinema in its insistent refusal to cut to the reverse-shot that traditional suture requires. Rather, it insistently draws attention to itself *as* a subjective shot. Classical Hollywood—from Hitchcock onwards—tends to rely on shot/reverse-shot constructions to indicate perspective. It is through shot/reverse-shot that both literal ownership of the look and, typically, broader sympathies are communicated: the reactions of the looker help to form the sympathetic perspectives of the film itself and, to some degree, the viewer's. By dispensing with the reverse shot, the process of suture that Sobchack describes remains incomplete, and, so too the viewer becomes decoupled from one of the primary mechanisms of identification. If the shot does cut to another angle during a killer POV sequence, that new angle does not reveal the identity, or even the exact placement, of the looker. The film gives no view of the killer's face to cue anything like sympathetic reactions or have a connection of any kind with them as a character.

Further, in many cases the villain, even once revealed, is not exactly a subject; they are, variously, a shark (*Jaws*), a babbling psychopath (*Black Christmas*), a blank-faced killer with distinctly robotic movements (*Halloween*), and so on.. Even though the shark is heavily anthropomorphized—vindictive, even—it is not characterized as a full, coherent subject with whom one might be able to identify. This is not to say that there is no possibility for localized, *event*-based (as opposed to character-based) identification.[11] Undoubtedly, the horror film challenges its viewers in part by soliciting our own, perhaps subconscious, bloodlust. This is, however, not dependent on identification with the person perpetrating violence, and does not preclude any of the other reactions discussed in this essay. That is, that bloodlust can be accessed whether an attack is filmed with killer POV or in a more classical manner.

Rather than being imbricated within the logic of suture, killer POV abstracts the look, removing it from reference to a familiar or concrete character who is doing the looking. Instead, it presents the act of looking to the audience, and thus should be understood as a depiction *of* a look. That is, the look itself is just as much the object of the camera's gaze as are the victims-to-be who appear on camera. The camera's look may correspond with that of a character, but there is a rhetorical distinction. Rather than communicating sympathetic alignment, it shows the viewer that, within the scene, someone is looking. Killer POV might align the image of the film with the literal perspective of a character, but if we are invited to sympathize with any character in the shot, it is not obvious that camera position alone should be the decisive factor in producing fear for the victim. Killer POV, rather than being primarily an identification-device, is a device for creating suspense in that it cues us to expect an attack and to wait for it to arrive. For all of their important critiques, Clover, Ebert, and Williams tend to ignore this suspense function because they do not think of horror in terms of its affective communication to the audience: killer POV directly signals the possibility of an attack. As a device, killer POV is only effectively frightening if viewers recognize the danger for characters onscreen. What is disturbing about these sequences is the disparity between the screaming victim and the unseen, emotionally unresponsive wielder of the look: the only emotional cues we are offered come from the object of the look, with a radical separation between the viewer and the person through whose eyes we are looking.

Indeed, killer POV is indicative of horror's shifting priorities, away from sympathetic identification in general (associated with the "absorptive" viewing practices described by the apparatus theorists) and towards more direct affective stimulation, akin to the visual display associated with the cinema of attractions.[12] The objects of killer POV's look are indeed objectified, but that objectification can itself be horrific. The precise locus of terror in the sequence is associated with impotent screams and futile attempts at resistance. Even when it does not culminate in an attack, killer POV presents an image of the object of the look as powerless, unaware of and unable to control the threatening look directed at them. The fact that those victims were "most often and most conspicuously [girls]" (Clover 33) supports the feminist reading that terror in horror is written on and with female bodies, but does not necessitate a sadistic pleasure taken in the images themselves. The assumption that "point of view=identification" prevents the genre's critics from exploring the possibilities for sympathy– even if it is simply mimetic–with the figures onscreen.

Moving away for the moment from the thorny, much-debated issues of identification, it is possible to identify two essential functions served by killer POV. The first is practical: it allows for an (inexact) insertion of the killer/monster into the scenographic space without putting their body onscreen. This is directly connected to the spectator's estrangement from the look of the camera. What is being communicated most urgently is not a sympathetic closeness to the unseen, often unknown figure that is doing the looking, but, rather, the presence of a threat and the inevitability of attack. Secondly, killer POV helps to set up a relationship between space inside and outside of the frame that is crucial for understanding the formal and affective workings of modern horror. Offscreen space in horror of the 1970s and after is often a space of possibility that can be dangerously unpredictable. This is most visibly evident in the jump scares that punctuate

modern horror, moments in which something suddenly appears on screen, unexpectedly breaching the edges of the image.[13] Killer POV is an important element of this, as the killer is characterized as an entity that is not constrained by the limits of the frame.

It is through killer POV and an insistent refusal to offer more than a glimpse of the villain onscreen that otherwise vulnerable human characters become something more intimidating. The physiologically unexceptional villains of *Friday the 13th* (1980), *Prom Night* (1980), *The Burning* (1981) and any number of sequels and imitators violate the logic of time and space in a manner that approaches a sort of spectral omnipresence (while also seeming to attain omniscience and omnipotence), as long as they remain offscreen. Modern horror's sensational address means that the worlds of modern horror often seem to be built backwards, with the audience's perspective dictating the diegetic realm. With killer POV and other techniques to keep the killer out of the frame, there is no onscreen body for the viewer to see, and so, in a very literal sense, it does not exist to be defended against or defeated by characters within the film. As such, the frame around the image seems to have some bearing on the narrative world of the film. Indeed, the modern horror film blurs the distinctions between diegetic and non-diegetic, with the limits of the frame in particular necessitating consideration as a diegetic or quasi-diegetic category.

## Unreliable Spaces

Killer POV does not just communicate the presence of a threat; there is something inherently threatening about it, something fundamentally disconcerting, regardless of context. There are straightforward explanations for this. Perhaps most obviously, this species of POV camera *lurks*. It peers voyeuristically through leaves and windows, an inherently suspect activity that the device calls attention to: we are seeing an image *of* this voyeuristic look. Further, the slasher cycle was so famously formulaic and recycled elements from previous films in the genre that any subsequent film is to some extent relying on the association built by *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th* between the POV camera and a killer. Crucially, that killer POV is employed in this way because there is something that makes it instantly understood to be malevolent even when it is not directly connected to an actually threatening character (i.e. the joke that ends with a leaping cat). A reverse-shot would reveal the bearer of the look and the space behind the camera, and this unique absence continually reminds audiences that there are large, narratively significant areas in the diegesis that are being withheld from them.

David Bordwell characterizes the space of classical narrative cinema as being governed by predictability; a coherent world is built through predictable revelation of offscreen space (161). The shot/reverse-shot construction is essential to building this coherent, predictable space, revealing those areas that were previously unseen. In other words, shot/reverse shot configurations give the viewer a sense of visual mastery over the film's space by assuring that any and all important elements of the scene will be revealed. In contrast, horror films from the 1970s onward tend to thrive on unpredictability: the modern horror film forces its audience to realize that they do not know what lies around the corner, or outside the frame, and killer POV, maybe more than any other technique, exposes, even flaunts, just how little the viewer knows about that world. Killer POV starts without indication of who or what may be wielding it (though we are invited to guess) and denies or delays the

reverse-shot that would communicate that very important information. The reverse shot may come at any second, or it may never come, or it may come too late, but the viewer has no control over this and, as such, is made to realize that inadequacy. The affective response to a killer POV shot arises not just through the anticipated violent end to the shot, but from anxiety over what we might be missing on the other side of the camera.

Killer POV allows the owner of the look the freedom of movement and apparent mastery over space that comes from remaining unseen. At the end of a film, when the tables are turned on the killer, the combined looks of camera and protagonist stabilize them within a more-or-less consistent physicality that can be defended against and even defeated. This marriage of viewer/protagonist perspective comes in the form of a return to classical shot/reverse-shot constructions, with the protagonist as the bearer of the look at the killer. The diegetic space finally becomes much more predictable at this point, and viewers are subject to more traditional suspense rather than the shocks (and paranoid anticipation) that punctuate the rest of the film. Where the victims had been the objects of the gaze in previous attacks, here the killer has become the object of the gaze of the heroine and the camera working together. The heroic Final Girl of slasher films overcomes the objectification of victims in earlier scenes to assert her own subjecthood, victimizing the killer who once sadistically objectified her. And rather than relying on camera position, that subjecthood is based on traditional cinematic methods of characterization: she is a fully-fledged, psychologically complex, and often heroic, character. Further, we are aligned stylistically with her in much more traditional forms – not simply through a reliance on shot/reverse shot, but through a surplus of close-ups *of* the Final Girl.

For the viewer, killer POV works against a spectatorial sense of mastery over the diegesis that is typical of a more classical narrative construction (or of these final climactic sequences). It refers to and activates vast areas of the scenographic space to which viewers are not privy. The only onscreen figures with whom we might sympathize in killer POV sequences are in distress and often about to be attacked. Some films, and some viewers, can of course see this as an opportunity for straightforwardly sadistic viewing, but the marginalized position of the spectator in these scenes, the withholding of important information, and the shocks that come with sudden eruptions into the frame, complicate the ease of taking such a position. The jump scare, a specialty of modern horror, disturbs the safe distance necessary for voyeurism. The shocks and screams and sudden loud noises prompt a different type of viewing, one that is not only self-conscious but unsettled. If sadism implies mastery, then horror's shocks works against it. The film, as Carol Clover reminds us, attacks not just the onscreen victims, but the viewer in these moments, and these attacks can blur the customary distance between spectator and screen while exposing the lack of knowledge they have about the world of the film (202-203). In Clover's terms, we might consider masochism to be more central to the experience of the entire film, from the killer POV-heavy early sequences onward.

## Reverse-Shot: Looking at the Monster

When offscreen, slasher villains are rarely limited to the constraints of a physical body. Jason, in the first several *Friday the 13th* sequels, is able to appear

from the unseen space behind a tree at just the right time to garrote a victim, or to wield his machete, undetected, from just outside the frame.[14] He is nearly omnipresent, *except* for the space within the frame. Killer POV keeps him loosely tethered to scenographic space, but only for the duration of that shot. His sudden intrusion into the frame, the source of the films' most successful shock effects, often punctuated by shrill violins on the soundtrack, is an iteration of the sort of penetration of place with which modern horror seems to be obsessed: the killer is always on the outside of the house, the room, the closet, trying to get in, and of course the villain seeks to pierce the body, the ultimate measure of place, with knives, claws, teeth.[15] Here I want to suggest that a similar penetration is occurring in films such as those in the *Friday the 13th* series when the threat suddenly and violently enters into the place of the frame. Whereas in diegetic space protagonists seek to fortify their boundaries, locking doors and putting boards over the doors and windows when possible, here the protagonist's primary protective measure is visual: keeping the monster in one's sights seems to be a necessary condition for survival. In the final scenes of the film, the look of the camera and the look of the protagonist align to stabilize the monster within the frame, to limit the threat to a single, physically stable body.

At the end of the first *Friday the 13th*, the killer has not been onscreen except for brief glimpses of hands and shoes (and hazy views in long shot). No victims have been able to muster anything resembling a defense until Mrs. Voorhees (Betsy Palmer) introduces herself to Alice (Adrienne King), the film's Final Girl. Once Mrs. Voorhees is shown onscreen and, shortly thereafter, reveals herself to be the killer, Alice is able to fight back, to run away and, eventually, to kill her attacker. This is in stark contrast to the series of killings in which Mrs. Voorhees had easily dispatched Alice's fellow camp counselors. Equally, once Mrs. Voorhees appears onscreen, her attack is not as instantly effective as it had been in previous instances when a single blow from a weapon was all that was needed to kill a victim. Being onscreen makes her human and vulnerable.

*The killer—Mrs. Voorhees (Betsy Palmer)—reveals herself in Friday the 13th. (Paramount Pictures)*

Horror films in the 1970s and after are very much concerned with instilling paranoia in the viewer about offscreen space—that which cannot be seen is unpredictable and threatening and defending against those unseen threats requires a hypervigilant attentiveness to the corner of the screen. As noted above, it is frequently a break in the coherence of the camerawork—an obstruction, a hesitation in movement, a shaky frame—that signals the presence of a subject whose look is identified with the camera. As such, the POV camera emphasizes the presence of the frame, and the viewer is made fully

aware of the presence of a conscious *choosing* of the framing. Clover notes that the shakiness of POV camera indicates a weakness in its bearer and prefigures their ultimate defeat (186-87). She questions how anyone could take the threat invoked by the POV camera seriously as, she asserts, it *always* carries with it these connotations.

However, Clover overlooks the structure of killer POV within individual scenes. During the course of a killer POV shot, the bearer of the look is more or less invincible. In a material sense the owner of that look is not fully present within the diegesis to be defended against (and certainly not to be surprised by another character). That is, killer POV suggests a placement in the scene, but it is not until the moment of the attack that they fully and unequivocally enter the diegesis. Again, modern horror films tend to blur the line between formal and diegetic properties in service of sensational effects. Even with its occasional shakiness—Clover makes no distinction between the shakiness of handheld and smoother Steadicam/Panaglide camerawork that would dominate all but the lowest budget films in the 1980s—and the lurking and hiding that it often undertakes, killer POV represents a position of power over the object of the look. This is precisely why the climactic reversal—the alignment of the look of the camera and the look of the protagonist towards the killer—becomes so important in the final act: it limits the killer to a material body and a specific place within the diegesis. Even then, if the killer moves offscreen, those constraints often disappear, as we see, for example, in the final shots of *Halloween*.

Indeed, killer POV has a specific affective function, unsettling viewers through its insistent withholding of crucial diegetic information. Thus, even when this is a feint or a joke, and even when there is no possible anthropomorphic perspective aligned with it, horror viewers receive consistent reminders of how little they know of the diegesis, how inadequate their perspective on the scene truly is. Horror viewers do not know with certainty what lies outside the frame, and the films insist on that uncertainty and exploit it to shock their viewers. In other words, these viewers are not the transcendent voyeuristic subjects hypothesized in the first wave of theoretical writings on spectatorship.[16] Viewers of a modern horror film are better understood as being at the mercy of the film itself: they are insistently made aware of not being in a privileged position of knowledge about the diegetic world. Killer POV shows us that horror movies tend to act *on* viewers.

This effect is essential to a genre that is so emphatically obsessed with looking and being looked at. Clover lays out the centrality of thematized looking for modern horror, but the importance of the look for horror is even more structurally fundamental, going beyond close-ups of eyes or instances of voyeurism (see 166-168).[17] The separation between looking and being looked at structures the modern horror film—which, as Clover and Williams remind us, is a deeply gendered divide. Killer POV in particular puts the act of looking on display while rendering the experience of being looked at terrifying and dangerous.

WWhen a film such as *Halloween* or *Friday the 13th* reaches its climax and the killer is, at least temporarily, defeated while fixed within the look of both camera and protagonist, it does so with a return to classical shot/reverse-shot constructions and more traditionally predictable characterizations of space. After the many victims being subjected to the killer's look, impotent to protest, the heroine stands in for all of the killer POV's objects by asserting her own

subjectivity and, crucially, bringing the camera and the viewer along with her. This assertion, along with the subsequent return to order within the narrative, is marked by a reinstatement of classical formal principles. It is in the final sequence that horror most closely resembles the films of any other genre: even as the excitement and suspense builds in a final showdown, horror's shock-oriented unpredictability is suppressed. Thus, at the moment that the heroine asserts her subjectivity, viewers find themselves in a more traditionally privileged spectatorial position.

Horror's lack of reverse-shots, however, have taken new forms in the past decade with the rise of diegetic cameras in the so-called "found-footage" films. This sub-genre is built around a different kind of POV camera, with a gaze associated with protagonists and victims rather than villains. Each film's images are supposedly those captured by a camera within the world of the film. The style goes back to the notorious pseudo-documentary *Cannibal Holocaust* (1980), but grows more prominent with 1999's *The Blair Witch Project* and then, nearly a decade later, *Paranormal Activity* (2007), *Cloverfield* (2007), and a proliferation of films in the subsequent years. This is a sub-genre predicated on tragic endings: someone within the narrative uses a camera to record something strange or threatening and, eventually, that threatening something attacks and kills the cameraperson.

The distinction between killer POV and the diegetic camera of found-footage films is immediately apparent. Although they sometimes look similar onscreen, the former signifies an unplaced, vaguely defined malevolent presence, while the latter very specifically *places* the cameraperson, usually a protagonist.[18] There is still unpredictability in these images, but unlike killer POV this unpredictability comes not from who and what is behind the camera but from the limits of the diegetic camera's view onto the world. Whereas killer POV indicates something approaching invulnerability and omniscience, the diegetic camera signifies utter vulnerability because neither the viewer nor the cameraperson—whose views are here aligned—know what exists beyond the edges of the frame: we do not know who else might be looking or where they might be looking from. If Killer POV presents a mediated perspective on the diegesis that is only partially placed within that diegesis (and therefore only partially restricted by its physical rules), the handheld camera images of found-footage films, reliant on technologically mediated vision, show characters fully placed within the world of the film.

This upends the logic of killer POV. Here, the bearer of the look is vulnerable precisely because they (however, notably almost exclusively masculine[19]) are looking. The spectatorial position coincides with that of the cameraperson—at least in scenes in which the camera is being wielded—in that both are searching unfamiliar, unseen territory for potential threats, and both are reliant on a mediated view that is always inadequate. The task of the cameraperson both within the film and as the spectator's avatar is to do their best to compensate for that inadequacy, to attempt to achieve the sort of mastery over filmic space typical of the owner of the look in killer POV, or of the camera in classical Hollywood cinema[20]. However, this is not to say that there is a strong sympathetic identification with the cameraperson, who is rarely the protagonist of the film. By primarily remaining behind the camera, the cameraperson tends to be a cipher; the people the cameraperson films are more fully developed characters and tend to be the ones driving the action. The onscreen

characters are usually in the same dire situation as the cameraperson: vulnerable and impotent to defend against an unseen entity potentially lurking just off frame, with the spectator being left similarly vulnerable to sudden intrusions from the corner of the frame.[21] This, however, inspires a different order of identification than the one being discussed by Clover, Williams, or Mulvey. Rather, this is situational and sensational, coming less from close acquaintance with a character than from the spectator being placed in a similarly exposed situation: by looking at the movie, the spectator is subjecting him or herself to the kinds of attacks that result in jumps and screams. Thus, although the meaning of the POV shot has been completely reversed, found-footage's diegetic cameras arise from the same approach to offscreen space.

Found-footage brings to the forefront the genre's anxieties about the look and looking. The shaky camera of found-footage makes the vulnerabilities of the viewer, subjected to the genre's shocking, horrifying images, the explicit text of the film. It aligns the viewer with the owner of the look, the cameraperson's onscreen compatriots cueing our emotional reactions along with whatever commentary the cameraperson might offer. But the anxieties that found-footage thematizes are already present in killer POV, which always implicitly contrasts the omnipotent look of the killer with the partial, vulnerable looks of both viewer and victim.

In horror, the look is a hotly contested arena, for characters as well as for viewers, and spectators have no assurance of control over or safety from the images in front of them. When the slasher film and its descendants reinstate classical formal norms in their climactic scenes, the image becomes more reassuringly predictable. Found-footage, however, rarely leaves its structuring principle of the diegetic camera, and order is never restored, with film after film ending tragically as the killers/monsters emerge triumphant from their confrontations with camera-wielding protagonists for whom the act of looking is both their only hope for survival and, at some level, what makes them vulnerable. Whereas films reliant on killer POV ultimately, eventually adopt more traditional cinematic forms to reassure their viewers that the vulnerability of their own look can be overcome, that their subjectivity might indeed be asserted against the dehumanizing violence of a monster's gaze, found-footage horror's diegetic camera thoroughly reinforces our feelings of vulnerability. In doing so, it deflates any expectations of––or aspirations towards—mastery or control that we as viewers may yet harbor. What is lost in this transition to a new mode is a sense of contrast: the wielder of killer POV asserts precisely that sort of mastery over the objects of the look, but also draws a clear distinction with our own lack of power. In the end, killer POV suggests precisely the opposite of what its detractors claim: it shows the inadequacy of our own looks in comparison with those of the monsters and killers controlling the camera's perspective. It is not that we have no choice but to identify with these figures, but rather that our helplessness to combat their control of the image is itself a source of horror.

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## Image Notes

Figure 1 *The killer sneaks into a second-story window in* Black Christmas. *(Warner Bros.)*

Figure 2: *The camera creeps towards a swimmer in* Jaws. *(Universal Pictures)*

Figure 3: *The killer—Mrs. Voorhees (Betsy Palmer)—reveals herself in* Friday the 13th. *(Paramount Pictures)*

## Notes

1 As chronicled in Jason Zinoman's *Shock Value: How a Few Eccentric Outsiders Gave Us Nightmares, Conquered Hollywood, and Invented Modern Horror*, the shift to more human monsters was a willful decision on the part of the filmmakers, who loved the horror movies they grew up on but wanted to avoid the cheesiness of their monsters.

2 Wood wrote several articles throughout the 1970s, culminating in his foundational "An Introduction to the American Horror Film," originally published in 1979.

3 Most prominently, Carol Clover (1992) and Linda Williams (1996, 2002), discussed below.

4 Horror has been a fertile forum for such explorations, with scholars such as Linda Williams (2002), Adam Lowenstein (2005), Robert Spadoni (2007), and Steven Shaviro (1993) providing accounts of horror spectatorship that have proven influential outside of the genre as well.

5 The effect is not unlike that of the *acousmêtre* as described by Michel Chion in *The Voice in Cinema*. For Chion, the offscreen voice of a not-yet-visualized character achieves properties of "ubiquity, panopticism, omniscience, and omnipotence" (23). The *acousmêtre*'s "powers" come from having one foot in the diegesis, while the other remains in the areas of possibility offscreen. Killer POV similarly places its wielder partially in the diegesis while keeping them unvisualized—and it is no coincidence that it is not uncommon for Killer POV to be augmented with the wielder's breath on the soundtrack, turning them into literal *acousmêtres*.

6 William Paul makes a similar observation of the film The Bad Seed (1956), in which the crimes perpetrated by a young girl are kept off camera (275).

7 Williams sees the monsters of classical horror films as representatives not of excessive or monstrous masculine sexuality (a common reading of horror), but, rather, the "feared power and potency of a different kind of sexuality (the monster as double for the women)" ("When the Woman Looks" 20).

8 Most directly, *Scream* [1996] references Clover's ideas, but films such as *The Descent* [2005], *You're Next*

[2011], *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* [2014], and *The Love Witch* [2016] are equally built on feminist responses to the genre.

9 For a more thorough discussion of POV and found-footage, see Hart.

10 Mulvey writes, "In *Vertigo*, the subjective camera predominates. Apart from one flash-back from Judy's point of view, the narrative is woven around what Scottie sees or fails to see. The audience follows the growth of his erotic obsession and subsequent despair precisely from his point of view" (16). Note the elision of subjective camera and "point of view."

11 See Hills for a related discussion of what he calls an "event-based definition" of the horror genre.

12 Adam Lowenstein (2011) has discussed certain modes of horror as inheritors of the cinema of attractions in his essay on "spectacle horror." Lowenstein is there concerned with displays presented directly to the viewer, while I am arguing for a more totalizing understanding of horror's direct address.

13 For more on "shock cuts," see Diffrient.

14 Jason was played by a different actor in each *Friday the 13th* film until *Friday the 13th Part VII: The New Blood* (1988), the first of four films in which Kane Hodder plays the role.

15 The soundtrack's debt to Bernard Herrmann's *Psycho* score is apparent throughout both this film and its predecessor in the series, but never more so than during attack scenes that mimic the famous violin shrieks of the *Psycho* shower scene.

16 See Hodge for a nuanced re-reading of Christian Metz's original essays disputing the conventional reading of his account of the cinematic spectator as "transcendent subject." Whereas the received version of Metz tends to assume he is describing a literal transcendence of bodily awareness, Hodge argues that Metz instead asserts the impossibility of this aspiration. Per Hodge, Metz's arguments are founded on the spectator's awareness of their body.

17 Perhaps the most intriguing response to Clover has come from Caetlin Benson-Allott, who refigures Clover's focus on looking into an analysis of what she reads as horror's anxieties about movie piracy.

18 Alternatively, the found-footage places the *camera* itself. Although the *Paranormal Activity* films rely heavily on handheld camerawork, they all extensively use static, surveillance-style cameras on tripods or mounted to ceilings (or, in a particularly ingenious sequence in *PA 3*, to the motor of a jerry-rigged rotating fan). These surveillance cameras generally indicate an impotent viewing: always seen after the fact, if at all, and there is no human agent associated with that look to intervene. Many of these surveillance scenes occur when the central characters are asleep, so no active looking or alignment between character and camera is even possible.

19 The most notable exception is Patrick Brice's *Creep 2* (2017), in which the cameraperson is played by filmmaker Desiree Akhavan.

20 In this sense, found-footage horror is similar to the screen of the First-Person Shooter (FPS) video game. Alexander Galloway's writings on the FPS and its resonances with uses of the subjective camera in film unfortunately predates the recent blossoming of diegetic cameras in horror and elsewhere, and these films do not fit within his taxonomy (39-69).

21 As Caetlin Benson-Allott suggests, in found-footage horror films, the act of looking is not only dangerous, but is often punished. (167-202).

# DEEP BACKGROUNDS: LANDSCAPES OF LABOR IN ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN

NATHAN HOLMES

***Abstract*** | *Although commonly understood as journalistic thriller tied to the historical realities of the Watergate investigation, Alan J. Pakula's All the President's Men is deeply imbricated in contemporaneous ideas about office design and white collar labor. Drawing on the film's production history, as well as discourses around knowledge work, office furnishings, and the changing role of paper in office work, this essay places All the President's Men along a different historical trajectory, one in which Hollywood cinema elaborates, expressively re-stages, and fantasizes the white-collar workspace.*

***Résumé*** | *Bien que communément interprété comme un polar basé sur les réalités historiques de l'enquête du Watergate, All the President's Men (Les Hommes du président) d'Alan Pakula est profondément imprégné des idées contemporaines sur l'organisation des bureaux et le travail des cols-blancs. S'inspirant de l'histoire de la production de ce film, ainsi que du discours sur le travail de connaissance, l'ameublement des bureaux et le changement dans le rôle du papier dans le bureau, cet essai replace All the President's Men dans une trajectoire historique, dans laquelle le cinéma hollywoodien développe, remet en scène et rêve le lieu de travail des cols-blancs.*

> *One saw them run around, shout at one another, and typewrite side by side in tremendous, noisy rooms where no one could possibly be concentrated; yet despite this chaos the newspaper never failed to appear and to prosper. The breathless confusion of the editor's offices seemed to mirror that of American business life in general.*
>
> *—Siegfried Kracauer, "Why France Liked Our Films" (37)*

For film audiences of the mid-1970s, the immediate force of *All the President's Men* (1976) was its naturalistic exposition of the investigative work that led to the congressional investigation of the Nixon administration. The proximity of the film's release to the events depicted ensured topicality but also presented the problem of, as director Alan J. Pakula put it, "drums rolling in the background" (774). As Pakula understood, histrionic monumentality threatened a sober recounting of the facts: "I was very concerned that the actors might hear a symphonic orchestra playing John Phillip Sousa every time they walked on set thinking: 'Here is our great contribution to American history!'"

(774) To dampen this patriotic aura, Pakula and producer Robert Redford developed the film according to a documentary aesthetic (Redford even wanted to film in black-and-white *verité* style). Together with cinematographer Gordon Willis and set designer George Jenkins, Pakula created settings that would underscore the banality of journalistic labour. Iconic D.C. locations were mixed with a preponderance of architectural sites at once modern and mundane: the back entrance of the Watergate Hotel, a concrete parking garage, the condos and suburban homes of CREEP collaborators and witnesses, a McDonald's, and, most prominently, the open-plan newsroom floor of the *Washington Post*.

*All the President's Men*'s nose-to-the-ground procedural detail is widely appreciated, but with increasing historical distance it is the film's illumination of the everyday workplaces of journalism as much as the political moment it chronicles that shifts into the foreground. The milieu from which Woodward and Bernstein stalk the White House, dense with paper and paperwork, hums with pre-digital, eve-of-computing contemporaneity. In shying away from a history with a capital-H aesthetic, the film pulls closer to the everyday life of the newsroom, tracking away from conventional icons of American power and downward toward a microscopic view of the quotidian materials, interior surfaces, and social rhythms of a modern office. As Siegfried Kracauer observed, Hollywood used journalism as an allegorical frame to explore the more generalized space of business life. In *All the President's Men*, this allegorical frame is sustained and filtered through New Hollywood cinematography and production design in order to manifest the most up-to-date contours of office life.

The deeply encoded, office work-related appeals of *All the President's Men* become clearer when the film's setting and staging is examined in relation to the constellation of discourses, designs, and spatio-temporal experiences that gathered around contemporary forms of white-collar labour between the 1950s and 1980s. Produced during an era when the configurations of this work were being rethought by designers, management theorists, and information society thinkers in order to center "knowledge workers" within information-dense spaces, the film welds a realist adherence to the material atmosphere of office life with the fantasy of journalism as an exemplary form of white-collar labour. Through the aim of accurately depicting the contemporary workspaces of *The Washington Post* by meticulously reproducing its furnishings and layouts, the production of the film also embedded, both incidentally and unconsciously, the physical discourses and choreographies of the modern office, which it vivified through a narrative of investigative journalism. The result is the dramatic staging of a workplace characterized by flattened hierarchies, knowledge-based and purpose-driven professionalism, free communication, and an unencumbered latitude of bodily movement. While these same attributes will eventually coalesce around the rhetoric of the neoliberal workplace, in this iteration they combine to generate a sense of the way non-alienated labour might look and feel. Looking closely at the coordination of production design, cinematography, and staging in *All the President's Men* reveals a popular work that strives not just to be a realist document of journalistic procedure—a filmed report on reportage—nor simply a reflection of the shifting surfaces of business life, but an expressive elaboration of the utopian promise of the American workplace.

At stake in analyzing this staging is an understanding of how American cinema's civic engagements—its topical liberal projects, from Pakula to Spielberg—rest on attunements to the generic spatio-temporal experience and physical supports that characterize a shared world; in this case, the shared world of office life. This physical imbrication challenges the conception of white-collar labor, emergent in discourses of knowledge work, as primarily abstract, mental, or immaterial. It also broaches the problem confronted by Kracauer in his early study of white-collar workers in Germany, *Die Angestellten* (*The Salaried* Masses, 1930): the manner in which the commonplace nature of white-collar work "protects it from discovery." "[J]ust like the 'Letter to Her Majesty' in Edgar Allan Poe's tale," Kracauer writes, "nobody notices the letter because it is out on display" (29). This invisibly present existence meant that an image of class identity for the white-collar worker was impeded. Neither proletarian nor bourgeois, the emergent class of office worker lacked the cohesion that cultural imagery might provide. Yet, writing later in "Why France Loved Our Films" [1942], Kracauer found that the American journalism film helped provide a glimpse of this imagery, offering dense visual constructions of an office life-world that had been so elusive in the Weimar era. *All the President's Men* sustains this tendency, drawing on the topical urgency of a historical journalistic investigation to display white-collar labour, converting a space otherwise pervaded by the static triviality of corporate culture into an expressive landscape of action.

## Office Cinema & Paperwork

An ecosystem of white-collar locales—the office, the elevator, the lobby, the commuter train—has, however intermittently, been imaginatively developed across various cycles of American cinema. In pre-code films such as *Skyscraper Souls* (1932) and *Babyface* (1933), the office tower was the stage for dramas of gender politics, class mobility, and exploitation (Schleier 59-118). Later, in films such as *Desk Set* (1957) and *The Apartment* (1960), these same spaces become settings for romance and dark comedy.[1] Although the office has only occasionally figured as a centralizing narrative site during the Classical era writ large (exceptions, in addition to the above, include *Executive Suite* [1954], *Patterns* [1956], *The Best of Everything* [1959]), the open-plan offices glimpsed in *The Apartment*, *The Crowd* (1928), and the opening of Disney's Goofy short *Two Weeks Vacation* (1952), with their undifferentiated rectilinear rows of steel desks, became a recognizable shorthand for conveying middle-class alienation—a shorthand rising to delirious heights of distortion and surrealism in *The Trial* (1962), *1984* (1984), and *Brazil* (1985).

Following Kracauer's lead, we can map a more consistent cinematic genealogy of the types of office activity represented in *All the President's Men* not by way of office films but via the journalism film. From the Warner Bros. films of the 1930s and 1940s such as *Five Star Final* (1931) and *His Girl Friday* (1940, a remake of *The Front Page*), through to Henry Hathaway's *Call Northside 777* (1948), Joseph Losey's *The Lawless* (1950), Sydney Pollack's *Absence of Malice* (1982), Ron Howard's *The Paper* (1994), David Fincher's *Zodiac* (2007), Tom McCarthy's *Spotlight* (2015), and Steven Spielberg's *The Post* (2018), films based around the practices of reporting have been a reliable and enduring form in American cinema. Uniting narratives of investigation and procedure with themes of public good and the ethical boundaries between information and sensation, genres of reportage entertain under civic cover. Although the newsroom

resembles the generic open-plan office, the journalistic labour that is fictionalized into genre (oftentimes by screenwriters who began their careers as reporters, such as Ben Hecht, Samuel Fuller, and Richard Brooks) offers the possibility of plots more dynamic than the stories spun from white-collar routine. Segmented into various departments—the city desk, sports, the social column—the spatial organization of the newsroom becomes a microcosm of the city itself, from which it receives and translates various messages. Furthermore, just as the distribution and seriality of the news defines and shapes the rhythms of urban life, so too does the temporality of the newsroom alternate between periods of idle waiting and intense, deadline-focused activity.

In his brief history of the genre, journalism historian Thomas Zynda observes that whereas in the 1930s and 1940s, journalism films tended to focus on editors and journalists as individual figures—for example, as crusading investigators in Losey's *The Lawless* or sensationalist opportunists in Wilder's *Ace in the Hole* (1951)—beginning in the 1950s films such as Richard Brooks' *Deadline U.S.A.* (1952), Fritz Lang's *While the City Sleeps* (1956), or Jack Webb's *-30-* (1959) shifted focus to news organizations themselves, giving greater prominence to the techniques, materials, and coordination of newspaper production (19). As newsroom films became more embedded in a single setting, they also began to invoke the spatio-temporal experience of generic office work phenomenologically in a more sustained way. As Kracauer intuits, journalists on film *were* office workers: they inhabited open-plan workplaces, answered to managers, rode elevators, made and consumed coffee, and, in the most literal sense, pushed paper.2

In the same way that the TV series "The Office" (2001-2003, remade 2005-2013) underlines the vacuity of office work by portraying the labour of a sales team that actually sells paper, the newsroom film magnifies the experience of the office by transmuting its material contents into an objective and often transcendent common cause. All of the different genres and formats of paper that comprise office life become a single entity and democratic instrument: *the paper*. While physically similar to the office film in many respects, the newsroom film plots the means of production itself, animating rather than deadening the physical plant of the office. Instead of the stock setting of middle-class anomie, the cinematic newsroom becomes a locale associated with professionalized problem-solving and goal-oriented action. Rather than the numbing abstractions of white-collar work, news production deals in concrete knowledge for the public good. As a cinematic chronotope (time-space), the newsroom presents a utopian version of office life, a place for paper to mean something.

## Office Landscapes & Knowledge Workers

The kinetic nature of the newsroom in Hollywood cinema parallels transformations in conceptions of office work and design that were percolating in the 1960s and 1970s. Through the 1950s, offices were laid out in grid-like designs with identical desks facing forward, as in a school classroom. Around the mid-century, the German management group Quickborner advanced the idea of "*bürolandschaft*" or "office landscape," which introduced organic, non-orthogonal variation into office layouts (figure 1). Featuring a mixture of plants and desk groupings, this design favored non-linear pathways and multiple meeting sites to encourage employee interaction. In the 1960s, research and development carried out by Robert Probst for

the Michigan-based furniture manufacturer Herman Miller continued in the same vein, resulting in the production of a new office system named "Action Office." Like the concept of *bürlandoschaft*, the Action Office advanced ideals of an open-plan workplace that could organically facilitate informal communication, worker autonomy, and organizational flexibility through low-partitions, cellular groupings of desks, and modular parts that could be adapted to meet worker's needs. Probst's sequel to the Action Office, Action Office 2, refined his design concepts and was accompanied by a lavishly designed book, *The Office: A Facility Based on Change* (1968), that outlined the issues surrounding the modern workplace and the concepts behind the Action Office system.

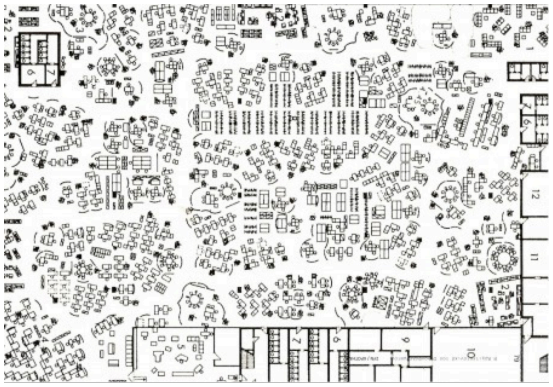

*Figure 1*

Probst's historical survey of office design and his diagnosis of its many problems is followed in the book by a series of often abstruse principles behind the user- (worker)-friendly design of the Action Office:

> [The Action Office 2] is an implementing tool-concept reconciling new software planning with the hardware of coordinated behavior. Its aim is to be responsive to the goals of the user. It aims at moderating the impact of diverse and competitive technology on the user. It provides a combination of discipline and permissiveness in appropriate measure. . .disciplined in that it limits and protects from chaotic, unregulated complexity. . .permissive in that it allows wide expression and re-expression for both the individual and the organization. (33)

As Probst suggests, a cardinal problem facing the modern workplace was an issue that would become more popularly known, following the publication of Alvin Toffler's *Future Shock* (1970), as "information overload." Probst's name for this phenomenon was "the big communication accident," and Action Office 2 addressed itself specifically to streamlining, bracketing, and diverting the multitudinous flows of information that modern workers were tasked to navigate (14).

Occupying these new workspaces was a new figure: the knowledge worker. Like the German salaried classes chronicled by Kracauer in the 1930s, postwar America saw the emergence of a new class of worker, one who likewise seemed caught between proletarian and bourgeois identity. One issue afflicting this new class had to do with the indeterminate nature of the skills that were required of them. Writing of the "computer programmers, accounts receivable flow analysts, the lower levels of control and stock processing in brokerage houses" that comprised the new work stratum within the white-collar sphere, Richard Sennett observed that they were "neither in control of the use of their own skills, nor performing tasks which are so routine anyone of the street could immediately do them, the members of this special category… have as yet not group identity, no class culture in which to picture themselves" (404). The invention of the

knowledge worker sought to resolve this quandary, if only on the level of self-image  In his illuminating cultural history of the office, *Cubed: A Secret History of the Workplace* (2014), Nikil Saval chronicles how the management theories of Peter Drucker and Fritz Machlup constructed the knowledge worker as someone capable of applying specialized and cross-disciplinary knowledge to the complex problems of their field. The autonomy of knowledge work, they argued, had the power to flatten workplace hierarchies, shrinking the necessity for an overbearing managerial class. For his part, Probst seems to balance the tension between management and labour in his writings with a consistent appeal to both workers as self-determined individuals and the overarching necessity of discipline. As Saval points out, however, the foggy discourse of the knowledge worker that developed within management tracts was largely an anxious response to a historically overeducated and understimulated labour force. It was developed, in other words, not according to demand but supply: "The jobs had not gotten more complex," Saval points out, but "the individuals working in them had." Knowledge work "seemed to answer to a felt need, a spirit of anxiety in the workforce itself rather than a change in the kinds of work being done" (198).

The anticipatory descriptions of the knowledge worker were particularly apposite to the contours of the post-industrial information society outlined by Daniel Bell, Alan Touraine, and other social theorists in the 1970s. As post-industrial America pivoted from manufacturing towards goods and services, the knowledge worker would deal primarily in information, conducting mental rather than physical work in an economy that was now shifting toward the production of intangible or symbolic goods. The abstraction and intellectuality imputed to knowledge work also combined with a rhetoric of dematerialization that began to occlude the physical experience of office life, particularly as networked desktop computers became the primary medium of information and calculation (a rhetoric sustained within the discourse of wireless and cloud computing). Just as the labour of knowledge work was now identified with disembodied mental operations, so too was data now invisibly flowing between the impenetrable array of beige and gray machines taking up significant office real estate.[3] Yet for all these popular forecasts, white-collar work remained tethered to generic open-plan interiors constituted by desks, typewriters, rolling chairs, water coolers, fluorescence, and an ever-diversifying multitude of paper products and technologies. The description of knowledge work by economist Fritz Machlup in fact alludes to the pervasive materiality of the office; he describes knowledge workers as "all the people whose work consists of conferring, negotiating, planning, directing, reading note-taking, writing, drawing, blue-printing, calculating, dictating, telephoning, card-punching, typing, multigraphing, recording, checking, and many others" (41). Like Probst, Machlup understood the obstinately physical universe of practices and materials that defined work within an office. The rise of computers notwithstanding, knowledge work, like the office work of most of the 20th century, still meant paper work, even if paper was now circulating and aggregating in new ways. Knowledge workers, just like all white-collar workers, existed within a contemporary object-world that was invisibly present. Lacking an image of themselves and their place in the world, the actuality of the knowledge worker, such as it was, faced a fate much like Poe's purloined letter, protected from discovery by mundaneness.

## Wide-Screen Corporate Modernism

Through the 1970s, Alan Pakula's films exhibit a keen eye for the neglected recesses of the built environment. In an interview in *Film Comment* published shortly after the release of *All the President's Men*, Pakula declared that he "loved to use architecture to dramatize society" (qtd. in Thompson 16). This statement gains concreteness in the mise-en-scène of his "paranoia trilogy," which in addition to *All the President's Men* includes *Klute* (1971) and *The Parallax View* (1974) (Pakula's lesser-known financial thriller *Rollover* [1981] also fits stylistically and thematically with the series). Working with Gordon Willis on camera and George Jenkins as production designer on all three of these films, Pakula evinces a particular preoccupation with the landscapes of corporate modernism. In *Klute*, the villain (Charles Cioffi) is an executive of the blandly named Tole-American Corporation who resides in a panoptic Manhattan skyscraper suite providing eye-level views of the World Trade Center towers (still under construction at the time). Interiors and exteriors for these scenes were shot a few blocks from the WTC construction site at the black curtain-walled Marine Midland Building, a descendant of the Midtown vogue for Seagram-like skyscrapers and designed by Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore, Owings, & Merrill. *The Parallax View* also centers on banal corporate evil, this time in the form of the Parallax Corporation, a shadowy organization that orchestrates political assassinations. Large-scale civic landmarks of the Pacific Northwest such as the Space Needle and the Gorge Dam are key settings in the film, and so too are the austere headquarters of the titular corporation, partially sited in the undulating concrete tile plaza of the Central Civil West Court House in Los Angeles. The downbeat ending for the film takes place in the cavernous, recently completed Los Angeles Convention Center, designed by West Coast modernist Charles Luckman.

In conjoining modern architectural space to an anxious vision of contemporary society, Pakula was upholding a tradition within American filmmaking that had been most heavily pronounced within film noir. As Edward Dimendberg and Vivian Sobchack have brilliantly shown, mid-century noir was a singular venue for the popular expression of spatial estrangement in American culture. Noir had only recently entered the American vernacular in the early 1970s, but Pakula was a devotee of 1940s thrillers, and his films with Willis as cinematographer (famously nicknamed the "Prince of Darkness" for his work on *The Godfather*) graft noir sensibility onto emergent New Hollywood aesthetics. The spaces Pakula created with Willis for *Klute* and *The Parallax View* are excessively deep, and the 2.35:1 Panavision frame allows a play with architectural volumes that frequently crowd and confine actors. These graphic structural elements are flat and opaque—geometrically blocking out both long shots and close-ups. Pakula and Willis's cinematographic aesthetic is expressive, but not expressionistic in the conventional sense. As Dana Polan has remarked, "[noir's] expressionism is most often not the triumph of a subjectivity in which environment somehow reflects back to a character his/her own internal nature but quite the contrary, an expressionism that demonstrates the radical externality and alterity of environment to personality" (qtd. in Sobchack 144). Willis's images ply similar territory, presenting a modernist landscape both familiar and claustrophobic.

The D.C. setting of *All the President's Men* allows Pakula to further develop the architectural vision established by *Klute* and *The Parallax View*.

Yet while the third film in the paranoia trilogy continues to amplify the anxious nature of corporate modernism, it also departs from a pervasive sense of noir-inflected doom. Instead, he builds a space that rewires figure-ground relationships of depth, scale, and movement along the lines of both the journalism genre and discourses of office work, emphasizing the possibility of individuals gaining footholds of agency within modernist environments.

## Deep Spaces, Purloined Papers

Perhaps more than any journalism or office film that preceded it, *All the President's Men* committed itself to amplifying the materiality of contemporary office life. Six months before the actual Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein began to report on Watergate, the *Washington Post* had moved into a new, fully updated newsroom (Pakula 774). With its exposed ceilings, the older *Post* newsroom was darker than the updated space, which featured fluorescent lighting suspended within drop-ceilings. The new design offered not only a brighter space, but also a series of straight lines vanishing into the distance, creating the sense of a vast interior space—perspectival grids that resonated with the modernism that Pakula had explored in his previous films. Since Robert Redford, whose Wildwood Enterprises was producing the film, was keenly interested in an exacting documentary aesthetic, this updated space would of course need to be depicted as closely as possible in his film's version of the reporter's investigation.

Redford and Pakula had originally hoped to shoot interiors on location at the *Post*, but it soon became clear this would be impractical. Instead, it was decided that a replica of the newsroom would be constructed at the Burbank Studios of Warner Brothers. The reproduction of the *Post* offices was 32,000 square feet and necessitated removing a wall in the soundstage to gain extra space. The replica of the *Post's* lighting also necessarily became a practical lighting source for the set since the ceiling construction ruled out conventional overhead lights. Around 700 fluorescent lighting units were installed—although the ballasts that powered the lights had to be wired remotely to the tubes because of the hum they emitted (Willis 520). The finished construction was furnished with custom-made desks that reproduced the new color-coded desk groupings at the *Post*, outfitted with an array of operational teletype machines and telephones and, finally, dressed with a mammoth assortment of paper clutter.

Paper of all kinds fills every frame of *All the President's Men* that is set in the newsroom (figure 2), the result of extensive creative work with paper products and office furnishings by art director George Jenkins (who had also worked on *Klute* and *The Parallax View*) and set decorator George Gaines (jointly winning the Academy Award for Art Direction that year). Just as Pakula and the film's cast spent months in the newsroom observing the daily routines of the reporters, so too was Jenkins invited to see the actual newsroom he was tasked to recreate. Having researched and put together a set depicting the interior of a small-town newspaper for *The Parallax View*, Jenkins was somewhat familiar with this routine. However, when he finally got to see the newsroom of the *Post*, he recalled that his "heart sank": "I realized that it was virtually an impossible job," Jenkins stated, "It was so enormous—I saw a thousand details in just a glance" (qtd. in Corliss and Clarens 48). Unlike *The Parallax View*, for *All the President's Men* Jenkins and Gaines were responsible for an entire acre of set. Jenkins' desk plan for the *Post* set almost

identically matches the desk groupings of the actual 7th floor newsroom. Per the plan of the *Post* floor in Jenkins' file, the plan for the set features clusters of 2-6 desks 8 rows deep and 4 rows across (George Jenkins Papers, folder 37).[4] The position of Woodward and Bernstein's desks relative to each other in the film also corresponds to the actual position of the reporter's desks in the D.C. newsroom. While some of the desks and furnishings were reproductions built for the film, other furnishings (such as automated filing systems) and machines (such as teletypes) were acquired directly through office supply companies. Jenkins' files contain brochures for products offered by Herman Miller, Bell Telephone, and Simplex Time Recorder Co., some covered with notes on prices (indicating that implements were both reconstructed and purchased directly).

One of the most oft-repeated stories about the film's production is that Jenkins went so far as to request the contents of wastebaskets at *The Post* so that the wastebaskets on set could be filled with authentic garbage. Jenkins, however, tells a slightly different story:

> Now I want to set the record straight here: I did *not* bring any garbage or contents of scrap baskets from Washington to Hollywood. What I did was go to Howard Simons, *The Post*'s managing editor, and say: "I need stuff to put on the desks, and I don't want it to be old scripts topped off with a letter from somebody who's been working in Warner Brothers for the last twenty years. I want all the reporters to have material on their desks that they would normally have. We have three months before we shoot. If you'll allow me to put a cardboard box by every desk, then your reporters will put in the boxes the letters and magazines they'd normally throw out." Three months later, we had seventy-five boxes of flat paper and books, etc. We then photographed the top of every desk as well as made a list of what was there. Then in Hollywood, when it came to dress the *Post* set, we were able to put this material on the appropriate desks. Howard Simon said to me, "George, you know that you're going to get terrible publicity on this. People are going to say you're bringing our trash to Hollywood. And I said, "I don't care." (qtd. in Corliss and Clarens 48, original emphasis)

That this apocryphal story has managed to stay in circulation for so long perhaps has to do with its binding of realist commitment and Hollywood extravagance to undercurrents of popular cynicism that regard American mass culture as detritus—the inescapable irony that garbage is in fact the primary export of both Washington and the American film industry. Jenkins' sense is much more pragmatic, and in its own way insightful. Garbage is a matter of placement: putting paper into a wastebasket is what reclassifies that which is useful into waste. Prior to that placement, such paper comprises the ambient décor of the *Post*'s work environment.

Indeed it is the material that Jenkins collected, combined with Pakula's penchant for deep space composition, that supports the highly resonant phenomenological experience of the newsroom on screen. Unlike *Klute* and *The Parallax View*, Pakula opted to shoot *All the President's Men* in the more condensed format of 1:85:1, a gesture toward the *verité* feel to which Redford aspired. The reduction in the breadth of the frame was compensated by the depth of the set. Longshots of the newsroom floor are recurring images, with both the receding ceiling lights and cylindrical columns providing perspectival cues

Figure 2

drawing our gaze across a variegated landscape of desks overflowing with folders, binders, files, reference books, loose leaf sheets of various colors, and all the different apparatuses designed to hold and organize paper clutter. The space is further extended by evenly sharp, no-contrast fluorescent lighting. When Pakula visited the *Post* he became entranced by the "ruthless" lighting of the space, which he felt created a "world without shadows." The director has made his approach to light and dark clear in a number of interviews, commenting about the newsroom: "This room with its glaring light was the hub of the film and from there we could go out to the dark places with their dark secrets" (Pakula 775).

As Willis relates, the application of depth was what made the film both cinematographically difficult and interesting: "There were times when the backgrounds were just as important as the foregrounds. That is to say, the environment could not be lost behind the actors but had to be an integral part of the scene" (Willis 521). Long shots repeatedly place Woodward and Bernstein at their desks so deep within the background that their presence is barely perceptible. This persistent motif is reflexively underscored late in the film in a scene where Ben Bradlee (Jason Robards) angrily calls the reporters into his office. A close-up of Bradlee shouting "Woodstein!" is followed by a reverse angle view of the newsroom floor. After a beat, Woodward and Bernstein become visible in the right corner of the frame moving toward the camera. The camera holds its position as the men make an anxious trek from background to foreground, re-emerging, as it were, into the story itself. In this scene and others, staging and set design threaten to subsume narrative, eclipsing narrative movement with the undifferentiated display of office activity.

In his comments on the visual style of the film, Pakula refers to this alternating current as "counterpoint." The effect is at its most visually emphatic in shots that exploit deep-set space through the use of split-field diopter lenses. Increasingly popular within New Hollywood filmmaking but now only rarely used, the diopter is a supplemental lens that is placed over a camera lens to create two separate focal planes, one near and one far away. The signature trace of the device within the image is a blurred line where the two focal planes meet, usually concealed by positioning the camera so that the distracting blur is hidden by the edges of an object or

a neutral color. As applied in *All the President's Men*, the diopter is primarily used to introduce two distinct visual fields within the newsroom, one focused on Woodward's desk-bound activity (the device is primarily associated with Woodward rather than Bernstein) and the other encompassing the indifferent bustle of the office. In his analysis of the diopter aesthetic in New Hollywood filmmaking, Paul Ramaeker remarks on the ironic effect produced by these divergent planes of action, noting that the facility with which the telltale trace of the diopter is obscured in the film makes it "easier to read these images as documentaristic depictions of the process of reporting, moments captured from the constant flux of the newsroom (which itself becomes a character)" (Ramaeker 188). For Ramaeker, the use of the diopter in *All the President's Men* is significant because it "goes well beyond the largely straightforward functionalism typically imputed to Hollywood narration, and stands as indexical of far reaching tendencies in 1970s American cinema, its ambitions to documentary realism, art film expressivity, and authorial commentary" (188).

Woodward and Bernstein's thoroughly embedded journalism, however, does have a thematic function that is narratively relevant. Like all detective stories, *All the President's Men* is about the storytelling process: the raw information thrown up by a crime scene is organized into a meaningful sequence that identifies, after the fact, a series of causes and effects and the agency behind them. For most of the film, Woodward and Bernstein struggle to understand the *syuzhet*—the frame that will organize the information they have gathered. As Woodward complains to Deep Throat (Hal Halbrook): "All that we've got are pieces, we can't seem to figure out what the puzzle is supposed to look like." Yet it is precisely because the 1976 audience knows the finished puzzle so well that Pakula is able to dwell within the details—the story of the film is not Watergate itself, but rather how the story of Watergate came to be told. The overstuffed, engulfing space of the newsroom photographically literalizes the overwhelming *fabula* confronted by the reporters as they labour to acquire and identify the correct pieces to the puzzle in order to find the story. What Pakula calls the "needle in the haystack" theme is most often conveyed in terms of scale, with individual pieces of paper comprising the story's molecular level (821). Panoramic views of the office are matched by close-ups of the various notebooks, slips, and printouts through which Woodward and Bernstein construct their story, an oscillation that is mirrored in the dual-focal planes of the diopter. At a crucial moment when the story's veracity is questioned, Bradlee's decision to back Woodward and Bernstein rather than remove them from the story is conveyed in a note that he passes to the *Post* editors that reads: "We stand by our boys." The priority given to this written statement extra-diegetically underscores the broader logic of note-taking and documentation in the filmed newsroom—the only way to move a story about paper forward is more paper.

It should be apparent at this point that the media-historical dimensions of *All the President's Men* lie as much in the film's detailing of journalistic process as in its documentation of the zenith of paper's domination of the workplace. As much as we are watching a movie about journalism, we are also following the paper trail of American business life. Technologies of paper reproduction were also politically topical: just a few years earlier, the *New York Times* had published the classified documents that came to be known as the Pentagon Papers, which had been covertly Xeroxed by Daniel Ellsberg (also a victim of harassment by Nixon's plumbers).[5] Over

*Figure 3*

the course of the following decades the desktop computer and the ascendance of electronically transmitted information would gradually reduce the need for paper-based messaging and data storage, laying the basis for the vision, if not the actuality, of the paperless office. Around the time that *All the President's Men* was being made, in fact, the concept of an office without paper had its first stirrings. In 1975, George Pake, head of Xerox's Palo Alto Research Center, spoke to *Business Week* about the rise of the paperless office:

> Pake says that in 1995 his office will be completely different; there will be a TV-display terminal with a keyboard sitting on his desk. "I'll be able to call up documents from my files on the screen, or by pressing a button," he says. "I can get my mail or any messages. I don't know how much hard copy [printed paper] I'll want in this world." ("Office of the Future" 48)

However, this transition occurred in a much slower and more uneven fashion than Pake and others predicted; the entrance of computers did not immediately result in paper's downsizing (see Sellen and Harper). Fittingly, films of the 1980s, particularly those set within the burgeoning world of finance such as *Wall Street* (1987), *The Secret of My Success* (1987), *Working Girl* (1988), and *Bonfire of the Vanities* (1990), would portray desktop computers as partners in open-plan clutter. I would argue, however, that what *All the President's Men* offers is less the before picture against which to contrast the paperless office of the future than a proleptic view of the hidden electronic conduits that would come to define office life. That is, what the film makes visible are not only the paper data that would become stored in computer memory, but also the communication flows between people now hidden in cables and wireless transmissions.

The depth of the film's office set not only engulfs its protagonists in visual detail, but also creates a stage for specularity and movement. In addition to its verisimilitude, the office set defines both visual and physical possibilities, as can be seen in what we might call Woodward and Bernstein's "meet cute." In a series of point-of-view shots, Woodward observes Bernstein nonchalantly absconding with his recently submitted paper drafts back to his own desk. Woodward must alternately lean forward and backward in his chair to see around the large column that stands between his desk and Bernstein's. Eventually, Woodward rises and walks over to confront him. After a testy exchange Woodward returns and drops further draft pages on Bernstein's desk—he agrees that Bernstein's revisions are an improvement but questions his tendency to "hype the facts." As Woodward returns to his desk once again, City Editor Harry Rosenfeld (Jack Warden) passes on a bisecting path between the reporters, barking without stopping "Woodward, Bernstein, you're both on the story,

now don't fuck it up." Enveloped within a visual and sonic landscape of telephones and typewriters, Woodward and Bernstein's short back-and-forth, up-and-down ambulation establishes the emergent relation between the two reporters, one that transitions from an adversarial shot-reverse-shot into a two-shot framing (this framing to become sustained as the trademark image of the film).[6]

Indeed, the unfolding of the reporter's investigation is filmically conceived in terms of an increasing latitude of movement, with the sedentary labour of phone calls and typing in stationary shots giving way to a more and more exuberant mobile camera. As the scope of the story grows, so too do the reporter's movements become more urgent and extensive: "As they [Woodward and Bernstein] get more manic," Pakula recounted, "the camera gets more manic, so that near the end of the film there is a shot of Dustin when he thinks he's gotten confirmation of Haldeman being named as one of the heads of the secret fund. We started at one end of the newsroom and we flew (figure 3). One of the best Disneyland rides we've ever had was on that dolly" (Pakula 822). In this shot (figure 4), the speed of the dollying camera blurs the landscape of paper clutter, expressing the possibility of transcending the material weight of accumulated information and uniting the fantasy of the knowledge worker with the incipient dreams of digital transmission and data storage.

*Figure 4*

The multiple ways in which Woodward and Bernstein inhabit and physically negotiate the newsroom in order to build their investigation resonates with the aspirations of mid-century office design. The layouts of *bürolandschaft* and Robert Probst's Action Office system were devised to encourage informational exchange and collaboration. These flows, visualized in the conceptual drawings, were partially conceived anthropomorphically, in the pathways between desks and workstations. According to Probst, the problem with the modern workplace had to do with managing "the big communication accident", the symptoms of which included too much information, redundant information. out-of-date information. overspecialized information, and low-grade information (14). Paper was a significant part of this problem: "A hard look at communication patterns tells us that we need restraint, discipline and limitation in the rate in which we are 'papering' each other. We already have paper pyramiding at a crisis level in many organizations" (28). Probst declared that the office was "an essential part of a new élan required in information use" (16). One way of addressing this problem was through improvement to corridors of movement within the open plan. "Recognizing traffic action as a communication event gives the facility manager opportunities for planning its occurrence to achieve desired effects," Probst writes, "Since motion between areas provides a highly random but interactive communication circumstance, its design should be carefully worked out" (16). For Probst, as for Pakula, informational traffic is anthropomorphic and social.

*All the President's Men*'s dramaturgy of bodies and paper illuminates not just the role of human conveyance, but also the numerous machines of paper circulation, including the various teletype machines that bring important updates into the office environment. One week into the film's production, producer Walter Coblenz sent out a message to Jenkins, Gaines, and production manager Darrell Hallenbeck suggesting that the production design and set departments begin to exercise restraint in their efforts at verisimilitude: "I urge you and all the departments to carefully review the monies we are spending both on research and the recreation of what happened three years ago. Even though our attempt is to be as authentic as possible, make certain that the monies we are spending show up on the screen" (George Jenkins Papers, folder 4). Since the set itself had already been built, Coblenz was likely referring to the furnishings and practical objects to which Jenkins and Gaines were devoting tireless and exacting energy. Several scenes, for example, feature dramatic business using elevator doors. Either laboriously engineered or purchased (elevator-company brochures and drawings can be found in the production files), the *Post* elevator in the film smoothly opens and closes in the manner of an actual elevator, rather than the clunkily affected manner of a mock-elevator—a detail that would have been distractingly noticeable only in its absence. Another significantly large machine purchased for the production—perhaps even the target of Coblenz's caution—was a 44-foot Orda-Flow Document Conveyor from Acme Visible Records (a company the production also contracted for a number of its filing systems), a multi-track conveyor that wends its way through a workplace carrying upright documents (a descendant, perhaps, of the pneumatic tube). Though it cost Wildwood Enterprises $1,831.23, the machine does not appear in the finished film, nor is it visible in any of Jenkins drawings. It remains unclear how or if the Orda-Flow was used,[7] but given Pakula's choreography of paper and people it is not difficult to imagine how the machine would have meshed with his staging (much as a cluster of

pneumatic tubes was central to the depiction of the *New York Sentinel* in Lang's *While the City Sleeps*). Within Pakula's aesthetic of counterpoint, furnishings such as the Orda-Flow are never solely background reality effects—they determine and heighten the scope of action and demand engagement by human agents to make the office move.

## The Dark Office

The sequence that introduces Deep Throat in *All the President's Men* begins with Woodward exiting a taxi in an extreme long shot, in front of a dark and inscrutable structure, and then descending an exterior stairway. The composition of the image inverts conventional approaches to signifying architectural locations, wherein a vehicle is typically exited at the front of a building at its base, and where a low angle might for a moment compare the vertical scales of individual to building. It is difficult then, at first, to discern just where Woodward is, and what kind of building he's entering. Cutting to the interior, Woodward emerges out of darkness and walks into the foreground, the sounds of the soles of his shoes echoing loudly against concrete walls and floors as he comes into view and scans his surroundings. A cut to a reverse angle shows even more of the space, capturing the pattern of concrete columns, smattering of monochrome cars, and fluorescent lights that recede, blacken, and disappear in the distance (figure 5). Thus we are introduced to the parking garage, the newsroom's haunting double. Both settings are identical in basic shape, deep and recessive. Yet the garage is filled in by inky darkness rather than paper and office furnishings—a noirish blot at the center of Redford's wished-for *verité* rendering. Here Pakula lays out a space

*Figure 5*

not of excessive clarity, but one organized according to the forward-leaning anxiousness of the thriller. Yet, even within these singular and iconic scenes, the underlying appeal is a combination of historical authenticity and white-collar familiarity.


"Deep Throat" Whispers The Secrets

Figure 6

The notoriety of the parking garage within the canonical Watergate narrative—the culmination of which has been the placement of an historical plaque outside the garage in Rosslyn, VA—is owed largely to the scenes in the film version of *All the President's Men*. In Woodward and Bernstein's book, the garage is one of a number of sites that Woodward meets Deep Throat, and it barely receives any description. The idea of building a visual inventory of Watergate sites—the DNC headquarters, the parking garage—likely first occurs in the pages of *New York* magazine. Throughout June of 1974 the magazine ran a "Secret Illustrated History of Watergate" series, which, with design director Milton Glaser at the helm, began to supply visual aids to a narrative that had been mostly comprised of names, titles, and institutional affiliations. Julian Allen's two-page painted illustration of Woodward waiting for Deep Throat in a parking garage (figure 6) is included in Pakula's "Visual Research Materials" for *All the President's Men* (Pakula Papers, folder 47). As in the film, Allen emphasizes the garage's recessive concrete features, creating a noir mise-en-scène with a worried Woodward at the center.

While building on Allen's aesthetic, the film's parking garage scenes are keyed to white collar experience, particularly in the way they build a distinct sense of temporality. Woodward's initial journey to his destination is captured in an elliptical montage of discrete scenes—leaving the house, the opera crowd at the Kennedy Center where he changes taxis—that fragment the duration of his journey. Once inside the parking garage, time begins to be expressed in more durational consecutive moments, each successive moment felt one after the other in longer takes. In essence, Woodward *commutes* to his meetings with Deep Throat. The anxiousness of the noir-thriller aesthetic here magnifies that common stretch of time within the white-collar workday: the passage from a parking spot to the office. An experience of not quite work and not quite free time, sensed within the inhospitably transitional architecture of a parking structure.

Like the life of the white-collar worker more generally, the parking garage has been a consistently suppressed feature of postwar urban life, usually placed underground, on rooftops, or disguised with facades. A 1965 study reported 73.2 percent of downtown parking in the United States as being used by office buildings, indicating the influence of automobile commuters on the downtown landscape (Sanders McDonald 61). As Mike Davis and others have shown, reinvestment in downtown cores frequently involved designs that aggressively divided spaces of consumption and white-collar labour from city streets. John Portman's buildings are emblematic of this moment, with their hidden street-level

entrances and flyover walkways between buildings, as is the 1980s vogue for skywalks, which allowed commuters to pass between parking areas and office towers without touching the street or moving outdoors. Although many cities feature aesthetically appealing garages designed by top-flight architects (Bertrand Goldberg's Marina City complex in Chicago, for example), the generically designed parking garage is typically a form of vernacular Brutalism. Concrete and seemingly anti-human—or at least anti-social—in the most literal sense, the alienating effect of the interior space of parking structures is amplified by the fact that they are environments that feature few concessions to the pedestrian traffic they functionally produced.

Even though the geographical distance of the parking garage from the offices of the *Post* is carefully established, the similarity in the shape of the spaces points to their much closer connection within the life of the worker., For the white collar worker, the parking garage represents an ambiguous liminal space—a place of contact with the strange urban outside that urban design strove to mitigate but in fact doubled. Although it is never as fully described as in the film, the parking garage as the uncanny locale of both petty crime and monumental criminal disclosure is ironically hinted at in Bernstein's narration in the book version of *All the President's Men*:

> Bernstein knew something about bike thieves: the night of the Watergate indictments somebody had stolen his 10-speed Raleigh from a parking garage. That was the difference between him and Woodward. Woodward went into a parking garage to find a source who could tell him what Nixon's men were up to, Bernstein walked in to find an eight pound chain cut neatly in two and his bike gone (Woodward and Bernstein 76).

Just as Jenkins understood that paper clutter was key to establishing the overwhelming visual presence of the newsroom, Pakula and Willis recognized that it was the generic nature of the parking garage that held the key to the unsettling aspects of Deep Throat's role. In the transient spaces of classical noir there were always at least benches, stools, a bare mattress, and a surface from which to pour liquor. The lingering spaces of the hypermodern neo-noir, however, provide no such amenities, a premonition of the neoliberal austerity that would redefine the spaces of employment in the coming decades.

## Conclusion

The spheres of white-collar labour that *All the President's Men* describes and explores continue to be sites of utopian investment circumscribed by countervailing economic forces. Without ever seeking to change the relations of production, the dream of tailoring the office to the needs of knowledge workers quickly met dead ends, the ping-pong tables and climbing walls of Google and the verdant campuses of an ascendant technology sector notwithstanding. The modular flexibility of the office systems designed by Robert Probst in fact meshed perfectly with the mutability of post-Fordist labour. The many knock-offs of Robert Probst's designs emphasized fungibility rather than informational flow. Homogeneity instead of variation became the rule of what has become known as the "cubicle farm." Furthermore, because the types of office furniture Probst pioneered were detachable from the structure of the building itself, they could easily be moved when a company needed to downsize its operations or move overseas. Today, cubicle systems are typically

leased rather than purchased, enabling companies the ease of installing or striking white-collar shops overnight. In this way, the precarious temporality of modern labour is expressed in the very material surfaces in and through which this labour is performed.

Like many of the designers who first attempted to build dedicated spaces for knowledge work, however, Pakula's engagement with the workplace was imaginative and phenomenological, a labour of representation intended to give visual presence to a work experience that remained unseen. In the gleaming offices of the *Post*, Pakula saw a form of white-collar work that both embedded itself within and transformed its materials. To render and contain this energy on film Pakula assembled a team of office designers (Willis, Jenkins, Gaines) and office workers (Hoffman, Robards, Warden) to build a space to express the production of knowledge: a romance of crusading journalism to be sure, but also, more globally, a romance of paper work and office life.

It is perhaps not difficult to trace the fate of the knowledge worker in the years that followed. As the liberal compact between capital and labour unraveled through the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, so too did employment become more precarious. In turn, the places that labour is conducted shifted. From the modern company to the gig economy, an office today may mean an airport lounge, a Starbucks, a leased car, or one's bedroom. Between outsourced labour contracts and shared co-working spaces such as WeWork, even traditional office environments no longer sustain the relative constancy on which embodied attachments might form. In this sense, the office has become as transitional-seeming as the parking garage. Conversely, in the sleepless 24/7 economy of the tech and startup sector, surplus labour is extended by filling the office with social events and amenities geared to ensuring that workers never leave (see Crary). The office in this sense fulfills not just a substitute for home, but the distractive role once played by spaces of urban entertainment—spaces, ironically, that in *The Salaried Masses* Kracauer determined as conjoined to the emergence of white-collar work. However, as the offices of the present become more dispersed, so too does a delimited terrain on which a particular form of labour was both interpellated and contested recede from perception and representation.[8]

Excavating the exuberant representation of office space in *All the President's Men* may appear to be a lapsarian exercise rooted in nostalgia for the reassuring solidity of a middle-class workweek—but not if one considers the fact that the film's appeal was, from the start, based in a realistically detailed utopian description of what office life could be, not what it was. Describing his research for the film, Pakula recalled, "I went to the *Washington Post* and spent months at Bob Woodward's desk. He was upstairs doing *The Final Days* with Carl Bernstein. I had Bob Woodward's desk in the newsroom and I had my own Walter Mitty fantasy. I was a reporter for the *Washington Post*. I would attend all the meetings. It was marvelous" (Pakula 774). Ironically, the space of adventure that Pakula envisioned from Woodward's desk is in its basic shape and material form not much different from the mundane middle-class setting from which Mitty seeks escape. Pakula and his technicians understood that using film to recount Woodward and Bernstein's efforts meant animating bodies within the space of the office without ever losing it as a determining environment. Folding fantasy into the workplace instead of negating it as a space of the imagination, *All the President's Men*

brings into visibility the office that those who work still wait for daily.

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## Image Notes

Figure 1. *Bürolandschaft* floor plan for GEG-Verstand, design by Quickborner

Figure 2. The *Post* newsroom set for *All the President's Men*.

Figure 3. A tracking shot follows Bernstein (Dustin Hoffman) across the newsroom floor.

Figure 4. Dolly track on the newsroom set (from *American Cinematographer*).

Figure 5. The meeting place of Deep Throat (Halbrook) and Woodward (Redford), filmed near Century City, California

Figure 6. Julien Allen painting for *New York* magazine's "Illustrated Secret History of Watergate," June 24, 1974.

## Notes

1 Despite a proclivity for locating alienation within the everyday spaces of modernity, mid-century film noir rarely visited contemporary workplaces for very long (a signal exception being *The Big Clock* [1948]), focusing instead on bars and nightclubs where leisure is, as Vivian Sobchack writes, "temporalized negatively as idle restlessness, as a lack of occupation, as a disturbing, ambiguous, and public display of unemployment" (158).

2 Kracauer, of course, had already elaborated his ideas on the culture and experience of white-collar middle classes in pre-war Berlin in *The Salaried Masses*, first published in 1930.

3 The interior scale of mid-century business computing systems is depicted in *Desk Set*, as well as in more recent popular culture such as the *Mad Men* episode "The Monolith" (2014).

4 Jenkins' papers contain a layout of the *Post* newsroom with names and phone extensions for 161 desks as well as a desk plan for the *Post* set that contains 162 desks.

5 For a media history of the photocopy, including a discussion of Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers, see Gitelman, particularly Chapter 3: "Xerographers of the Mind," 83-110.

6 The film largely ignores the office-based gender politics of the era. Woodward and Bernstein's request that a fellow reporter, Kay Eddy (Lindsay Crouse), reacquaint herself with a former lover within the Republican party to procure information for them isn't acknowledged as sexist in nature (save Eddy's disbelief at even being asked). The mere possibility that such a request could be made, however, accurately reflects the workplace as a fraught sexual field. Katharine Graham, the owner of *The Post*, requested not to be depicted as an onscreen character in the film. As shown in Spielberg's *The Post*, Graham was an instrumental figure in the unfolding investigation (as she had been with the release of The Pentagon Papers) and her presence within the film may have at least undercut the pervasive maleness of the newsroom.

7 Jenkins acquired layouts for the *Post* Communications Center, a room separate from the newsroom floor where many of the teletype machines were housed. This is perhaps where this machine would have been featured at the *Post* itself (letter from Michael F. Parks, folder 38).

8 This is not to say that opportunities for organization and class struggle also recede. A recent report on tech-industry labour organizing details coalitions between white-collar engineers and coders and blue-collar custodial and security staff, and the ways that labour organizers have mobilized coding knowledge and electronic platforms (see Press).

*Doubles diptych (Spiral Jetty; Double Negative) 2016*

# IMAGE AND DISCURSIVE LANDSCAPE: REFLECTIONS ON ICONIC LAND ART OF THE AMERICAN WEST

KAITLIN POMERANTZ

***Abstract*** | *The writer, a interdisciplinary visual artist focusing on landscape and land use, took a trip in the fall of 2016 through various iconic land art sites with Texas Tech University's Land Arts of the American West program. Immersive engagement with sites such as Robert Smithson's Spiral Jetty (1968) and Michael Heizer's Double Negative (1969-70) offered the opportunity to reflect—critically and experientially—on the ways that the land artists' speculations on natural history and humanity's experience of landscape resonate both with the planned degradation of the sites, and our new, more fraught relationship to environmental change.*

***Résumé*** | *L'auteur, artiste visuel interdisciplinaire se concentrant sur le paysage et l'utilisation du terrain, a effectué un voyage à travers divers sites artistiques iconiques dans le cadre du program Texas Tech University's Land Arts of the American West. Un travail d'immersion dans des sites tels que la Spiral Jetty de Robert Smithson (1968) et le Double Negative (1969-70) de Michael Heizer lui ont offert la possibilité de réfléchir—de façon critique et expérimentale—à la façon dont les spéculations sur l'histoire naturelle et les exériences humaines sur le paysage chez les artistes du paysage se font l'écho de la dégradation planifiée des sites et de notre nouvelle relation tendue avec le changement environnemental.*

## Two Photographs

This writing unpacks two photographs that I made while traveling through the American Southwest in fall 2016, just prior to the nation's presidential election. The photographs feature iconic representations of Robert Smithson's 1968 *Spiral Jetty* and Michael Heizer's 1969-70 *Double Negative*—the images by which I first came to know these artworks—projected onto our van, alongside the two sites as they currently exist. In these deliberately composed images, I sought to juxtapose the static view of these documents with the view offered by my experience in the moment. I also meant to highlight the physical degradation and transformation of the works over the decades since their making: in the case of Smithson's, that there was, in that moment, no water surrounding the jetty; and with Heizer, the complete erosion of the walls of the *Negative*'s gashes. In considering these iconic images alongside the real artworks and landscapes that they represent, I wanted to bridge some kind of gap in the way that we learn about art and the actual experience of art—the pilgrimage to seek it, the trekking and sweating within it—and to reflect on the role of the image as both invitation and possible red herring to a landscape's greater complexity. I also seek to open questions about the relevance and legacy of these works today, not only in light of the physical landscapes around them that have shifted, but also the political.

## Image as Invitation to Artwork

I encountered the canonical works of Land Art, as most do, through images. This was some time in my early 20s as an art history student at the University of Chicago, as I discovered Lucy Lippard and expanded ideas of where art can be and who can make it. Images of the works—a spiral made of rocks, gashes in the earth, and others—acted as postcards, deliberately composed pieces of landscapes meant not just to be seen through the plane of photography but visited in the round of sculpture and inhabited as landscape. The origin stories of these works, in a different way than sites built by druids or other bygone communities or civilizations, left me with a complicated curiosity. The works were created by individuals: white male modernists making monumental marks in the landscape, made possible by the funding of a female heiress of industry. Witnessing the works firsthand seemed like a necessary step towards grasping the meaning and effect of these projects.

Over a decade after I first took interest in the work and went on to become an artist exploring issues of land and landscape myself, I finally made the trek. I joined a group of artists, architects, and students on a program called Land Arts of the American West based out of Texas Tech University—a rambling journey to major earthworks, ancient ruins, Indigenous structures, uranium mines, missile test sites, and more. Our visits to these sites were multiday camping excursions within and among them. This is how I found myself, at the sites of Spiral Jetty and then Double Negative, waking before dawn to fumble around in the dust and wind with equipment and a rental van to stage the two photographs that would allow me to more pointedly consider the entanglement of image and real-life experience, and the ensuing intellectual and experiential negotiations of intersections of these two modes.

## Spiral Jetty

Arriving at Spiral Jetty, my focus was immediately drawn to all that surrounds the jetty. After noting its surprisingly diminutive size and taking the obligatory walk-run to its end,[1] my senses extended outwards. It was the walk itself, directed by the spiral form of the work, that encouraged this extension of the senses—a concentric 360-degree orientation and walking meditation. After that initial sojourn, I barely paid the spiral itself much mind, focusing instead on what lay beyond the spiral: entropic forces that I had understood as a sort of poetic conceit in Smithson's work, writ large in different elements of the landscape. Entropy was visible in everything: the atmospheric conditions (gale-force winds), the bright pink halophytic Great Salt lake (undrinkable, barely touchable, terminal), the wildlife (teeming flies, glimmering salt-encrusted pelicans who had touched down in the waters of the lake only to be consumed by those waters and rendered flightless), the relics of tourism (toilet-paper bits jumping through the sagebrush), and the relics of industry (the looming factory buildings of the defunct MagCorps plant, visible from the end of the jetty across the lake).[2] So entrancing was this moribund whorl of conditions that the spiral itself became a mere sign pointing outwards in all directions, deflecting attention from itself to say, *look there, and there, and there*. The *pièce-de-résistance*, entropically speaking, was a second jetty, a dark twin, which lay just a short distance from Spiral Jetty. At this site, oil pilings and derrick pieces stood erect, each like its own Ozymandias. I observed in my notebook, "the most alive thing we saw was a half-dead sparrow stuck in fresh black tar bubbling up from the earth." Oil Jetty, as this second jetty is called, was a former drilling site that never proved financially viable, and was mentioned, albeit briefly, in Smithson's writings. This veritable junkyard of abandoned dreams and schemes recalls Smithson's passage from *The Monuments of Passaic*, "Passaic seems full of holes compared to New York City, which seems tightly packed and solid, and those holes in a sense are the monumental vacancies that define, without trying the memory-traces of an abandoned set of futures" (52).

At Spiral Jetty, the images through which I had come to know this work were mere invitations to the work itself, which was, in itself, an invitation into a complex and unique landscape functioning as a sort of microcosm for Smithson's greater artistic, philosophical, and metaphysical concerns. As Francesco Gagliardi articulates in *Performance, Land Art and Photography,* "It is the nature of photography to be selective, to offer only partial views of a reality that extends, both temporally and spatially, beyond the instant captured by the camera." Following this, Smithson thus made the work—and its documents—into a kind of semiotic. Spiral Jetty, in its documents and even more so in the flesh, exists as a drawing and as a sign. As such, it is less a focal point than a starting point, one that accepts the constant flux around it, asking us to monitor and observe.

## Double Negative

If entropy could be said to be the experiential leitmotif of Spiral Jetty, *edge*—that liminal shift in surface—could be said to define my experience at Double Negative. Morman Mesa, on which the work is situated, into which it is carved, is a flat expanse of harsh desert terrain, disrupted only where the mesa ends and overlooks a lush valley, and by the two trenches of the sculpture, which function as ersatz ridges

into a shallower abyss.[3] Upon arriving at Double Negative, also during gale-force winds, I shoved my way against the air first toward the edge of the sculpture, and then towards the edge of the mesa. Like a dog ascertaining the layout and limits of a room, I needed to know where things began and ended. Without these vertical drop offs, the space seemed dizzyingly planar and endless.

Photographs I had seen of Double Negative did not give much of a sense of the relationship between Heizer's trenches and those of the mesa itself, this elegant echo. Unlike Smithson, who employed auxiliary media such as photography, film, and writing to amplify his projects,[4] Heizer has promoted a view that Double Negative can only be experienced physically, firsthand, and has never officially supported any photography or other related documents. About this work, Heizer asserts, "There is nothing there, yet it is still a sculpture," emphasizing his interest in locating the merit of this work in its form as a sculpture comprised of negative space, created through a process of removal. This statement also downplays much of the beauty of the work, which is that there is *everything there*: rocks, earth, plants, scorpions, wind; mesa ridges that echo the ridges of his sculpture; and the harsh desert forces that bleach bones, which have also eroded his massive gashes. The collective Post Commodity's conceptual/sound artist Raven Chacon's recent words about the land artists of the 1960s come to mind: "they just continued the destruction of the earth, and continued to go and colonize different places that they thought were theirs" (*Through the Repellent Fence*). Indeed, Heizer's gestures seem to be more about marking territory, about claiming of space, than about inviting a kind of engagement with it. Ironically, this creation (or destruction) here has come to be in a state of total reclamation by the persistent earth. Whether Heizer articulates it or not, the work directs us toward the land from whence it came, the earth which it displaced and which is gradually filling it back up, consuming it. It is this consumption, of the work by the land which it attempts to mar, that I view as the interesting aspect of the work: the kind of withering monumentality of man's colonial ambitions. Returning to Ozymandias, it is the toppled and decayed being—and not the once-erect, colossal status—that makes the poem.

## Artwork as an Invitation to Landscape

Spiral Jetty and Double Negative are both, due to respective sets of ecological conditions, in states of decomposition. Spiral Jetty, which once peeked out of the water of the Great Salt Lake and then for several years was completely submerged, is now completely dry and at risk of being buried in salt particulate. Double Negative is crumbling, and as Heizer explains, will continue to do so unimpeded. The works have become, and perhaps always were, barometers for ecological change. In the same way, these works have also functioned as measures of what was considered appropriate or possible regarding the relationship between artist and land. When tracked upon each other—the ecological and the social—these works can be seen as shifting, if vanishing, monuments of the anthropocene that point at possibility, power, and loss of control.

My photographs pluck a moment from my experience of relating image to reality. Like a fly in a vanitas painting, or Zoe Leonard's sun photographs, they hover in a space of bardo—futile testimony to a present that is already past, a firsthand personal experience that through documentation becomes democratic and loric, and a visual discourse on discourse itself.

If the landscape consumes the works, these early images become records, the works become images, and the earth continues on, as it were.

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## Notes

1 This is the same walk-run that Smithson does in his 1970 film *Spiral Jetty* (produced by Robert Smithson, with the assistance of Virginia Dwan, Dwan Gallery, and Douglas Christmas, Ace Gallery director).

2 From The Center for Land Use Interpretation, *Land Use Database:* "This remote plant employs a few hundred people in an intensely industrialized site on the edge of the Great Salt Lake. It produces all the magnesium metal made in the United States, a material used mostly in metals. For many years, according to the EPA, this plant was the nation's worst air polluter, releasing hundreds of tons of chlorine per day from its stack, which was around 90% of the chlorine emitted into the atmosphere from all sources nationwide. After a federal lawsuit was filed against the company in the late 1990's, claiming nearly $1 billion for environmental infractions, the company that owned the plant, MagCorp, filed for bankruptcy protection. A new company, called U.S. Magnesium, now operates the plant, and has cleaned up much of its emissions, releasing a few tons of chlorine per day, as opposed to a few hundred tons, as it did in the 1980s." [http://clui.org/ludb/site/magcorp-magnesium-chloride-plant]

3 This abyss grows ever shallower as the walls of the pieces crumble inward.

4 Surrounding *Spiral Jetty*, Smithson produced a film Spiral Jetty (1970), published writings ("The Spiral Jetty", 1970, *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, edited by Nancy Holt, New York University Press), and authorized photographs by photographer Gianfranco Gorgoni.

# STRANGE VICES: TRANSGRESSION AND THE PRODUCTION OF DIFFERENCE IN THE *GIALLO*

SEB ROBERTS

***Abstract*** | *The giallo, an Italian genre of horror film that peaked in the 1970s, is infamous for peddling shock and slaughter. Under the graphic sex and violence, however, the giallo expresses popular anxiety surrounding the transgression of social and sexual norms in modern Italy. Superficially, the giallo seems to suggest that social and cultural turmoil necessarily produces death. Yet the giallo foregrounds the obvious excitement and attraction of transgression, allowing that transgression could in fact be generative of positive, invigorating difference.*

***Résumé*** | *Le giallo, un genre de film d'horreur italien qui a connu son heure de gloire dans les années 70, a la réputation de mélanger choc et massacre. Sous l'aspect pornographique et violent, toutefois, le giallo exrime l'anxiété populaire qui entoure la transgression des normes sociales et sexuelles dans l'Italie moderne. En surface, le giallo semble suggérer que l'agitation sociale et culturelle conduit nécessairement à la mort. Cependant en mettant en avant l'excitation et l'attrait évidents de la transgression, le giallo permet à cette transgression d'être porteuse de différences positives et tonifiantes. Mots-clé: giallo, transgression, mondernité, violence contre les femmes, cinéma d'horreur.*

The *giallo* was a particularly fleshy style of horror film from Italy that began in the early 1960s and flourished during the 1970s: a blood-soaked spectacle identified with cheap thrills and frequently low production values. Despite this, the *giallo* was shrewdly perceptive in its projections of social anxieties during the most violent decade of Italy's postwar history. In transgression, the *giallo* saw thrilling possibility and dangerous disorder, and in hegemony, stability and suffocation. These films largely regarded the upheaval of modernity with ambivalence while nevertheless generating much of its diegetic tensions from the instability of social norms—particularly those surrounding gender. Trafficking in sleaze, shock, and slaughter, the *giallo* appeared to argue that the volatility of modern life necessarily produces death. However, this impression is but a first glance. A more incisive examination of how the *giallo* presents transgression as a production of difference reveals a different understanding of social turmoil: as a generative force to be embraced.

Fig. 1

The *giallo* is not simply a horror film that happens to have been made in Italy. It is a cinematic *filone*, expressed through a constellation of tropes, including (but by no means limited to): a black-gloved killer, pursued by an amateur detective; women undressed and in distress; a backdrop of jet-setting bourgeois mobility; skronky free jazz or pulsating prog rock; and ubiquitous bottles of J&B whisky.[1,2] Yet the most recognizable—arguably, the definitive—feature of the *giallo* is the excessively savage and sensational murder scene, a scene whose bloody sadism is often matched only by its bizarre inventiveness. The *giallo* murder scene is an irruption of spectacle that forgoes classical notions of narrative necessity, characterization, and even visual coherency (Totaro 163), giving filmmakers a chance to experiment and indulge their wildest creative urges. Including serrated shadows, off-kilter framing, slow motion, first-person perspective, extreme zooms, impressionistic editing, cacophonous music, and ghoulish sound effects, a broad variety of available techniques are employed to heighten the shock and awe of a *giallo* murder. In these scenes, when the filmmakers abandon naturalism in pursuit of visceral charge, the *giallo* approaches a kind of affective ecstasy. These moments of frenzied sensation not only connect the *giallo* to cinema's pre-grammatical roots as a popular attraction (Gunning 738; Wagstaff 48), but they also constitute, according to Pier Paolo Pasolini, "the dominant artistic nature of cinema, its expressive violence, its oneiric physical quality" (172).

Such apparent privileging of spectacle over coherent narrative and characterization has earned the *giallo* a degree of critical disdain. Anthony Mann claims the outbursts of extreme sex and violence "reveal the director's fear that the audiences get bored" (qtd. in Wagstaff 245), comparing the erratic rhythms of the films to the "electrocardiogram for a clinic case" (qtd. in Wagstaff 245). This mistrust of the spectator's focus may have been true in certain cases: director Umberto Lenzi once lamented that prosaic exposition "distracts the audience's attention" (68), suggesting that "the spectator prefers spectacular events to turgid screenplay" (68). However, there is also a historical and economic basis in Italy for films that eschew classical formalism in favour of fitful spectacle. Christopher Wagstaff notes that, "[s]ince the Second World War, the Italian exhibition sector had grown accustomed to having too many cinemas and too many films in circulation at any one time" (249), causing "a relatively low level of exploitation of a relatively large number of films" (249). This meant shorter initial theatrical runs, and thus a film's earnings depended largely upon where—that is, to what market—it was exhibited. To ensure that they could "repay their large production costs before interest payments [ate] away into revenue" (Wagstaff 247), films with bigger budgets and financial backing would typically be screened in first-run theatres, known as *prima visione*: urban cinema palaces that drew from a broader pool of potential spectators and could therefore command significantly larger ticket

prices.[3] Less prestigious pictures with smaller production, marketing, and distribution budgets were often relegated to *terza visione*, third-run theatres with depressed ticket prices commonly found in peripheral and rural areas.[4]

At every tier of the exhibition sector, the surfeit of screens and high turnover in programmes required a steady stream of film product to keep customers coming back. Therefore, Wagstaff argues, "the whole structure [of the Italian film industry] depended on repetition. The audience had to return to the same cinema the next day. It had to be offered something different but providing the same gratifications. In other words, a repetition with variation" (254). For this reason, postwar Italian cinema has been characterized by formulaic cycles, called *filone*, wherein a single box-office smash could unleash a torrent of imitations. Targeting *prima visione* and *terza visione* audiences alike and churned out at an industrial pace, the *filone* typified whatever trend promised the easiest money at that moment, whether it was farcical comedies, sword-and-sandal epics, spaghetti westerns, or ersatz James Bond capers (Frayling 70-71).

The "repetition with variation" of *filone* required that filmmakers rely upon not only homologous themes, narratives, and characters, but specific techniques and devices that would reliably gratify the audience. Wagstaff claims that the three most sought-after audience responses, in the form of "physiological reactions" (253), were "laughter, thrill, titillation…provoked not by whole films, but by items or moments in films. Italian formula cinema simply juggled with plot items to produce the required recipe that would stimulate the appropriate number and kind of these 'physiological' responses'" (253). Hence the "electrocardiogram" rhythm of Italian popular cinema: the film as a unitary work was less important in gratifying the audience (thereby creating repeat customers) than intermittent eruptions of excess, shock, surprise, and spectacle.

Thus, the specific attraction of the *giallo* lies precisely in its hyper-stylized and grotesque depictions of sex and death. To bemoan the *giallo*'s lack of fluid pacing, scrupulous plotting, naturalistic acting, and so on, is to miss the point. Consider Jonathan Rosenbaum's review of Sergio Martino's *Torso*, a.k.a. *I corpi presentano tracce di violenza carnale* (1973):

> This well-dubbed, lightweight horror opus supplies us with everything that it thinks we need: pretty girls in various states of dress and undress, a steel guitar on the soundtrack to establish menace, lectures on Italian sculpture, tastefully elliptical dismemberments and mutilations of body parts…a gratuitous lesbian sequence, and enough red herrings to keep a German restaurant in business for a week. (qtd. in Koven 32)

Rosenbaum astutely surmises that sex and violence are not excesses to distract from the film's technical or intellectual shortcomings—they are exactly what the film *thinks we need*. According to conventional critical criteria, Mikel J. Koven reminds us, "the assumption is that visual style (luscious photography, kinky sex, close-ups, etc.) is a device that *covers up* the holes in the narrative" (31, original emphasis), when in fact "narrative functions as merely the framework on which hang the spectacle sequences of violence, sex, and graphic gore" (38).

As with other *filone*, the *giallo* scaffolds its shocks with a familiar stock of character types,

Fig. 2

antagonisms, and themes. However, there is an ideological conservatism undergirding the character types common to the *giallo* who set the plot—and so the succession of death—in motion: the debased countercultural youth; the innately suspicious Other; the psychotic sexual maladaptive; and the hysteric and/or monstrous female, among others. That is, in the *giallo*, those characters who embody and perform non-traditional moral and social practices not only threaten hegemony, but their very presence also initiates a chain of transgression that inexorably leads to death. Certain *gialli* could be read as counter-hegemonic because the killer is revealed to be a figure of traditional authority (e.g. a priest, a doctor, or a wealthy businessman), symptomatic of a fundamental sickness or corruption at the core of the social order. Yet there are far more examples of films that depict bloodthirsty hippies, sexual deviancy, drug-induced psychosis, and the erosion of traditional morality as tragedy. The characters play with and transgress social norms by experimenting with travel, drugs, and sex, and each transgression, no matter how minor at first, releases a sequence of escalating effects that inevitably ends in murder. The lesson is that death is the final price of transgression, and the *giallo* killer is this price embodied. Only the death of the killer themselves at the film's climax promises to restore hegemonic order.

The threat to social order posed by violence was not an abstract concern for many Italians in the 1970s: it was daily life. The era between 1969 and 1983, known as the *anni di piombo* or "years of lead," witnessed over 14,000 acts of domestic terrorism, "resulting in 374 deaths and more than 1,170 injuries" (Glynn 3). While left-wing militants were responsible for numerous targeted assaults, kidnappings, and murders, the deadliest attacks were committed by the right, who adopted the practice of "indiscriminate bombings of public spaces tactically designed to cause maximum injury and panic" (Glynn 3). The logic behind the bombings was the *strategia della tensione*, or "strategy of tension." "The term," Alan O'Leary explains, "refers to the clandestine attempt to bring about an authoritarian Italy by fomenting a lawlessness which could then be blamed on communism and the weak democratic state, in turn justifying a military coup" (85). Accordingly, the right was assisted covertly by the Italian secret service and armed forces (Glynn 3; O'Leary 85).

Beyond the bloodshed and intrigue of the *anni di piombo*, the 1970s were generally tumultuous for Italy. The country was rapidly transitioning from an industrial to a service-oriented economy, thanks in part to surpassing Germany as Europe's top recipient of immigrants. These developments accelerated the unprecedented growth of Italy's urban centres and their suburbs. As Italy's ethnic and religious makeup was changing, so too were its relational structures and their undergirding value systems. The self-sufficient

family bound by kinship and Catholicism retreated, displaced by the enlightened Cartesian subject *qua* individual consumer. Parochialism gave way to dividuated pluralism, and once-concrete hierarchies became fluid. In this sense, Italy's social and political turmoil was cause for a certain optimism: as Anna Cento Bull and Adalgisa Giorgio assert, "previously marginalized social groups raised their voices and demanded better representation, in the face of a society with politics which were fundamentally authoritarian and hierarchical" (qtd. in Glynn 5). Paradoxically, the insecurity and chaos of life in the Italian city could be "celebrated as evidence of interesting times, of the city's vitality" (O'Leary 246).

This ambiguous limen, between cosmopolitanism and chaos, is the space where many *gialli* set their stories. The films exploit and amplify the excitement and anxiety produced by the collision of difference. The most conspicuous flint for this friction is travel: some films change their geographic setting over the course of the movie (*Death Walks on High Heels*, 1971; *The Strange Vice of Mrs Wardh*, 1971); others follow Italians abroad (*The Man with Icy Eyes*, 1971; *Short Night of the Glass Dolls*, 1971); still others follow foreign travellers in Italy (*The Girl Who Knew Too Much*, 1963; *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage*, 1970). Yet otherness in the *giallo* is not limited to nationality. Even when a film is set in Italy with Italian characters, relational categories remain nebulous and in flux, as often exclusory as overlapping.

Such gradations of otherness are grippingly depicted in Lucio Fulci's *Don't Torture a Duckling* (1972). Set in the fictional southern Italian hamlet of Accendura, the film is an exemplar of what Xavier Mendik calls the "*Mezzogiorno giallo*" (391), a subset of *gialli* preoccupied with the economic and social disparities between the increasingly wealthy, industrialized, and urban(e) Italian North and the poor, rural South (known as the *Mezzogiorno*). The *Mezzogiorno giallo*, Mendik says, plays upon post-unification discourses wherein the South is degraded as the national backwater, "an 'untamed' landscape…where the environment and its inhabitants come to signify a monstrous mode of expression that must remain submerged within the civilized Northern consciousness" (400).[5] The violence in *Don't Torture a Duckling* is the product of the clash between incompatible modes of existence, coded as the industrial North versus the rural South. Fulci himself affirms this perspective when he describes the film's opening shot as a pristine concrete highway "split[ing] the countryside like a gaping wound" (Fulci 59).

Consequent to the divergent regional fortunes of Italy's postwar economic miracle was a complementarily unequal distribution of modernization. Accordingly, the characters of *Don't Torture a Duckling* embody not only different socioeconomic strata but different *epochs*. Most deeply rooted in the archaic and arcane is La Maciara (played by Florinda Balkan), a reclusive Roma woman who performs black magic. Wary of her claims to occult powers, the townspeople prefer to avoid La Maciara, regarding her with a mix of contempt and fear. The local constabulary is only marginally less superstitious, in contrast to the hard-nosed realism of the regional police commissioner (Virgilio Gazzolo), avatar of the modern Italian state. Observing and analysing the goings-on are the local priest Don Alberto (Marc Porel) and Roman journalist Andrea Martelli (Tomas Milian). Youthful and pragmatic, Don Alberto leverages popular interests (such as soccer) to appeal to his parish; nonetheless, he

laments the corruption of traditional Christian morality by contemporary culture: "People aren't worried much about their immortal souls. They watch TV, go to the movies. They read the papers with all those scandalous photographs." Meanwhile, neoteric muckraker Martelli neither defends nor condemns the modern world, approaching it instead with a distinctly secular skepticism. He also has a roguish disregard for rules, entering people's homes through unlocked windows and withholding evidence from the police. The most thoroughly modern—and therefore transgressive—figure is Patrizia (Barbara Bouchet). Young, fashionable, and urbane, Patrizia lives in a chic high-modernist mansion, drives sports cars, and experiments with drugs. She is also sexually aggressive and a relentless flirt, and as such poses a direct threat to patriarchal order and, in Don Alberto's mind, to the innocence of Accendura's boys. The *dramatis personae* of *Don't Torture a Duckling* thus delineate a spectrum whereupon the otherness of one character to another is an articulation of their differential modernity.

Fig. 3

*Gialli* are not usually so systematic in their representation of difference. Giuliano Carmineo's *The Case of the Bloody Iris* (1972) primarily takes place in a single apartment tower block. Its occupants are a motley bunch drawn from all walks of life: a beautiful young model; a tall, dark, and handsome architect; an aged Jewish professor and his lesbian daughter; a prattling old crone with a cognitively impaired son; and a Black stripper. Such heterogenous neighbours suggest again that the modern Italian city is exciting, vital, and diverse, but that diversity also constitutes a threat. As the neighbours are bumped off one-by-one, suspicion falls upon everyone equally—after all, they are each *different*, ergo inscrutable and untrustworthy in their own way.

There is even difference within difference; that is, not all differences are equal. As represented in the *giallo*, some otherness is more or less threatening than other otherness. Tourists and foreigners are grudgingly tolerated: "They're coming and going all the time," grumbles journalist Andrea Bild (Franco Nero) in *The Fifth Cord* (1971), "from all over the world. It's like a hotel." Neurodivergent characters (such as Giuseppe in *Don't Torture a Duckling*) are commonly used as red herrings, presented as physically threatening but ultimately incapable of inflicting harm. Lesbians are tacitly approved of, the better to exploit what Laura Mulvey calls their "to-be-looked-at-ness" (19); after all, "it is a profoundly held tenet of film distributors that the spectator of a horror movie will almost invariably be male" (Jenks 154). Gay men appear frequently in *gialli*, but typically in "camp and effeminate roles for comic relief" (Koven 71). Transgendered characters fare the worst of all: in the rare instance that *gialli* address gender fluidity or transition, as in *Four Flies on Grey Velvet* (1971) or *A Blade in the Dark* (1983), it is only to provide a motivation—that of a "psychotic break"—for the killer.

Sexual and gender differences are a perennial source of anxiety in *gialli*. They are a ready source of titillation for the filmmaker to exploit, but more importantly, sexual and gender differences initiate the chain of transgression discussed above: "transgression of body leads to transgression of behaviour and transgression of societal law" (Hallam 98), culminating in murder. This is true even of relatively milquetoast transgressions such as adultery or voyeurism, Koven contends, because they "weaken the socio-familial structure, and as a result of the weakening of those bonds, other more serious crimes often follow" (69). Accordingly, the more severe the initial transgression, the more swiftly it leads to death. A cheating spouse may trigger a chain of events that climaxes in murder, but more socially censured acts such as incest (*In the Folds of the Flesh*, 1970) or abortion (*Strip Nude for Your Killer*, 1975) appear to conjure the killer directly.

Because sexual transgression is a corporeal practice, it is among the most concrete and visually appreciable forms of transgression, but it is far from the only one. *Gialli* are fascinated by—and fascinate with—all forms of transgression: from the minor (playing music too loudly) to the major (spousal rape), from the abstruse (animal sacrifice) to the abominable (dismemberment). The legal ramifications of any given transgression are scarcely considered; indeed, the police are only sporadically present and often incompetent.[6] Yet transgression *qua* crime, as a violent fissure in the social fabric, is omnipresent and inescapable. *Gialli* present an endless parade of adulterers, blackmailers, embezzlers, pederasts, rapists, thieves, and "sex maniacs," a term favoured in many a *giallo*. Moreover, a respectable upbringing, illustrious career, or estimable reputation is no guarantee of innocence. A wealthy debutante may be friends with stalkers and extortionists (*A Lizard in a Woman's Skin*, 1971); an acclaimed novelist may be a viciously abusive spouse (*Your Vice is a Locked Room and Only I Have the Key*, 1972); and a venerated surgeon may turn out to be a high-ranking member of a Satanic sex cult that performs human sacrifice (*Short Night of the Glass Dolls*, 1971). In *gialli*, no closet is without skeletons.

Of course, it is not *literally* the case that any and every transgression necessitates murder; that would be a "slippery slope" fallacy. Despite what Martino's *All the Colors of the Dark* (1972) depicts, having tea with a lesbian does not precipitate joining a demonic coven's blood orgies. But the implication is that *it could*. There may be many intermediary steps, each one a comparatively minor misbehaviour or crime, yet each step can be (and, in the *giallo*, is) taken. The horror of the *giallo* is in following the chain of transgression, as misbehaviour and crime compound until they achieve their ultimate expression in the ultimate transgression: murder. Unlike in monster movies or slasher films, the *giallo* killer is never an already-existing embodiment of inhuman evil; the *giallo* killer is an apparently "normal" human who *becomes* a killer—not because they are compelled by the devil, or possessed by some amorphous "evil," but because they *choose* to commit to murder.

This choice is manifest in the opportunism with which everyday objects are converted into weapons. It is uncommon that a *giallo* killer has a "signature" weapon, with notable exceptions such as the spiked gauntlet in *Death Walks at Midnight* (1972). Bladed weapons are by far the most popular in *gialli*, not the least because they are easily found within the mise-en-scène: chef's knives, meat cleavers, switchblades, straight razors, letter openers, scalpels,

axes, scissors, and so on. Strangulation is a close second; it can be performed with rope, a scarf, a shower curtain, a telephone line, or, in the absence of any other implements, by hand. Victims in *gialli* have been bludgeoned to death, drowned in bathtubs, thrown out windows, run over, chain-whipped, and worse. This grim inventory emphasizes that the *giallo* killer typically makes use of their environment and strikes when the opportunity presents itself, thereby demonstrating the *choice* to kill.

If any everyday object can be transformed into a lethal weapon, by the choice to use it as such, "then anyone can be a killer" (Koven 74) and, by extension, "anyone is a potential victim" (Freeland 187). The chain of transgression implies an unyielding drive towards murder, which can be committed using any ready-to-hand object; violence and death are immanent in the everyday, rendering the everyday itself as horrific. The effect, Koven submits, is feeling "that we are living in a veritable horror film ourselves" (74). The eruption of political violence that claimed hundreds of lives during the *anni di piombo* would thus seem like the logical—even necessary—extension of the moral fluctuations and eroding traditions of the 1960s and 1970s.

*Fig. 4*

*Gialli* rarely explicitly articulate the anxieties surrounding the social turmoil, economic instability, or political violence that convulsed Italy: "the excesses and violence we see in *giallo* cinema," writes Koven, "are an impressionistic rendering of modernity" (61). What makes the *giallo* a unique expression of those anxieties is the figure upon whom it centres them: the female aggressor.

Given that the literary roots of the *giallo* are detective novels (Needham; Sevastakis 1; Wagstaff 2), the femme fatale of hard-boiled fiction and film noir is the obvious precursor of the *giallo*'s female aggressor. However, there are also two antecedents native to Italian culture: the diva, representing "[t]he woman as predator, as the dominating figure, [with] the man in subjugation" (Shipman qtd. in Jenks 151); and the *fattucchiera*, or sorceress, embodiment and practitioner of "an alternative culture and…therefore a menace to a patriarchal society" (Bini 57). These three figures of a threatening femininity—the femme fatale, the diva, and the witch—were first synthesized in the character of Asa (played by Barbara Steele), villainess of Mario Bava's gothic horror film, *La maschera del demonio* (1960). Bava would return to the entanglement of death and the feminine in two subsequent films: *The Girl Who Knew Too Much* (1963) and *Blood and Black Lace* (1964), widely regarded as the prototypical *gialli* (Needham; Sevastakis 2; Koven 3-4) wherein, significantly, the killers are revealed to be women.

Throughout the *filone*, the female killer has been a prevalent feature of the *giallo*. So common are female killers that it rapidly became a "twist" ending to set up the expectation of a murderous woman, only to reveal that it was actually a man. Indeed, the audience can never be sure of the killer's gender before the climactic exposure of their identity. Female killers' motives are often the same as the males' (e.g.

jealousy, greed, the aforementioned "psychotic break") and their methods no less brutal. Given that the *giallo* is predicated upon shock and horror, the *filone*'s recurrent portrayals of female killers indicate that there was something disturbing about them beyond their motives and methods: the very fact that it was *women* committing these acts.

Among the assumptions and values that undergird patriarchy, Ruth Glynn calls particular attention to women's culturally assigned role as caregivers, homemakers, and custodians—that is, as defenders and guardians of society (11). Should a woman contradict this assumption in any way—by refusing to subordinate her needs to those of others, by pursuing her own pleasure, by exercising her authority in experimental, as opposed to conservative, ways—then her behaviour would be understood as fundamentally *unnatural*, a direct threat to social order.

During the 1970s, patriarchal values in Italy were facing unprecedented challenge. Alongside the student protests and labour unrest that exploded in the late 1960s, the women's movement presented a dramatic rift in the social bedrock. At its most radical, the movement was a response to an "extra-parliamentary left [that] has not integrated women into its political perspective as an autonomous force, and is dominated by a male arrogance which Catholicism has promoted" (James 15). More broadly, the movement was an outgrowth of Italian women enjoying "unprecedented prosperity, industrialization, and modernization… . In short, there was a significant shift, even within the role of housewife, from submission and sacrifice to self-gratification, which, in turn, reflects a growing urge for self-expression" (Burke 211). Of course, if decoupled from consumption and in defiance of traditionally ordained roles, self-expression and social autonomy serve neither—indeed, work *against*—capitalism and patriarchy, and as Silvia Federici notes, "in bourgeois morality, anything that is unproductive is obscene, unnatural, perverted" (24). The Italian women's movement flaunted this supposed unnaturalness and other-worldliness, as expressed in their most iconic slogan: "*le streghe son tornate*," or "the witches are back" (Bini 66).

The women's movement achieved two important legislative victories with the legalization of divorce in 1970 and abortion in 1978. Perhaps the best illustration of how radically women's place in society was changing is that, in the same decade, the percentage of female membership in left-wing militant groups was higher than in the Chamber of Deputies—by more than double (Glynn 6). Women were not only fighting for their rights—they were killing for them. Glynn describes the trauma of female-perpetrated violence in Italy as a "double wound" (11): the first is the physical wound itself, and the second is a psychic trauma rooted in the fact of having been attacked by someone considered beyond, or exclusory to, perpetrating violence. The phrase "double wound" derives from Glynn's reading of Sergio Lenci's autobiography, wherein he recalls being shot in the neck by a female militant. "A woman," Lenci writes, "wounds you twice with respect to a man" (qtd. in Glynn 31). Glynn remarks:

> Lenci's account yields three key premises: that female perpetration has the traumatic valency of a double wound; that there is a long-established cultural correlation between masculinity and perpetration and between femininity and victimization; and, finally, that that correlation–that cultural resistance to an equation or even an

> association of women and violence–implicitly works to defeminize the violent woman. (136)

Therein lies the horror of the *giallo*'s female aggressor: she refuses her role as social conservator; she refuses her role as victim; and she insists upon victimizing someone else.[7] In these refusals and actions, she becomes something neither female nor male, in Lenci's own words, "incomprehensible" (qtd. in Glynn 31). Within the *giallo*, the detective's task is "one of uncovering, naming and containing otherness as something socially and morally threatening" (Needham), and that otherness, that social and moral threat is more often than not embodied by the female aggressor.

Granted, the audience will only perceive the female aggressor as inherently monstrous in accordance with patriarchal representations of gender: "screen males represent the Male and screen females the Female; … this identification along gender lines authorizes impulses toward violence in males and encourages impulses towards victimization in females" (Clover 43). The presumption of the woman as victim, Federici argues, extends from the presumption of female sexual passivity: "Since we are expected to provide a release, we inevitably become the object onto which men discharge their repressed violence" (24). Conversely, the woman who demonstrates sexual agency and/or physical dominance is abnormal, perverse, a violation of the natural order, unrepresented—ergo *unrepresentable*—within the psychology of patriarchy. The sexually active (as opposed to passive) female logically precedes the female killer because the sexually active female imbricates that other thing unrepresentable within the patriarchal psyche: death (Cixous 885; Jenks 159).

Beyond the *giallo*'s female aggressor, horror cinema in general disorders the tidy assignment of the role of victim or aggressor to a given gender. Carol J. Clover describes cinematic convention: "[t]o the extent that the possibility of cross-gender identification has been entertained, it has been that of the female with the male" (43) via the camera's capture of the male gaze. Yet in Clover's study of American horror cinema, the figure of the "final girl" enables the opposite cross-gender identification: that of the male audience with a female protagonist (Clover 43-46). In *gialli*, the female killer further extends and blurs the opportunities for cross-gender identification. Identifying with the sadistic pleasure of a female killer offers the male audience "a cathartic working through of the impossible contradictions between desire and the social dictates appropriate to gender" (Jenks 154). Simultaneously, the female audience is offered a violence of their own, identifying the female killer "not just as male projected horror but also as a consequence of women's rage, grounded in and justified by women's experience of violence and oppression" (Burke 198) under patriarchy.

The camerawork and editing in *giallo* murder scenes further destabilize identification with the characters onscreen. The camera typically adopts the first-person perspective of the approaching killer as the suspense crescendos. During the murder itself, the screen explodes in a flurry of edits: the screaming victim, the plunging blade, cloven skin, flailing hands, gushing blood, gaping eyes, and repeat. The cuts of the film mimic cuts into the victim's flesh, captured in the quasi-abstract detail of the extreme close-up. Identifiable perspectives disintegrate in an ecstasy of thrashing bodies. The audience experiences partial

but simultaneous identification with killer and victim alike. For this reason, Patricia Pitsers argues:

> [B]ody horror allows for cross-gender identifications and can be seen as an important tool for rezoning the borders of the subject. Both men and women have tender bodies; ultimately, they are made out of soft flesh, and their subject positions are related not only to sexual difference but also to multiple other aspects, such as social background and religion–and they are open to change and becoming. (54)

As the onscreen bodies transgress and are transgressed, and clear opposing perspectives dissolve, the film becomes less objective and more mimetic, giving rise to what Gilles Deleuze called the "free indirect discourse" (148) of subjectivity between the audience and the film and between individuals in the audience via the film: "[T]he individual consciousness and the character are captured together and deported into a region where singular life and collective life are confused" (Agamben 22). The limits of film as mediated experience are transcended by the screening of transgressive and transgressed bodies precisely because the body is so visually potent and, thus, affectively powerful. As Lindsay Anne Hallam writes, "everything returns to the body, for all ideas are expressed through and upon it" (217).

In privileging the body as the locus of transgressive potential, the *giallo* inserts itself into a cultural lineage that includes Christianity and the Marquis de Sade. Unfortunately, from this lineage, the *giallo* inherits the notion that transgression that originates in the body will necessarily lead to carnality or, at worst, carnage. When bodily volition exceeds the limits imposed upon it by society, the result is invariably violent sex and even more violent death. In this, the *giallo* exhibits the opinion that it is the natural will of the human body to rape and kill.[8] If, as Freud says, "civilization is built upon a renunciation of instinct" (44), then the urge for freedom is actually the desire to act upon instinct unfettered: "The urge for freedom, therefore, is directed against particular forms and demands of civilization or against civilization altogether" (43).

It is no coincidence that the masculine heroes of *gialli*—symbolic bodyguards of the status

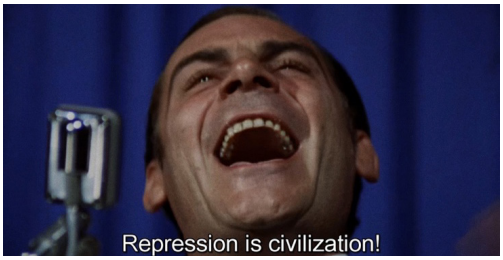

*Fig. 5*

quo—are so often executives, journalists, architects, and doctors: they are men who live the life of the mind, whose prowess is intellectual, not physical. This too echoes Freud: "No feature…seems better to characterize civilization than its esteem and encouragement of man's higher mental activities" (41). Contrarily, characters considered suspect and perverse are those in hot pursuit of earthly delights: pimps, junkies, dope fiends, peeping toms, tramps, hippies, and the like.

Yet the *giallo* is not blind to the pleasures of transgression. An early scene in Fulci's *A Lizard in a Woman's Skin* (1971) oscillates between two neighbouring townhouses in London. In one, an upper-class family, surrounded by

Edwardian regalia, sits in joyless silence as they peck at their dinner. Through the wall from the house next door rumble the sounds of a raging bacchanal: drums pound and guitars squeal as revelers drink, dance, and disrobe. The contrast between grey-faced, chain-smoking bourgeoisie and the vivacious, cavorting libertines is underscored by the cinematography. The wealthy family is primarily captured in static, claustrophobic close-ups, whereas the camera careens handheld through the party, with supple torsos and flailing limbs swimming in and out of focus. When the greying patriarch of the family jokes lamely that the noise next door "sounds like a football match," the camera rushes in to reveal the foot of his teenaged step-granddaughter tapping defiantly along to the hippies' music. Neither wealth, good manners, nor elegant decor can immunize a family from the contagions of Dionysian decadence—or a good beat. Indeed, the *giallo* does not defend the hegemonic order. In *Don't Torture a Duckling* (1972), Patrizia represents modernity and its supposed moral contamination, but she is also smart, charismatic, adventuresome, and empathetic. Meanwhile, the supposedly humble and earthy townsfolk engage in prostitution, blackmail, and vigilantism.

The *giallo*'s stubborn ambivalence towards its characters and their actions deprives the audience of moral clarity. Transgression is sexy and exciting but brings with it disorder and death. Hegemony is intolerant and authoritarian, but also reliable and trustworthy. Rather than attempt to reconcile such contradictions, the *giallo* stages the clash between transgression and hegemony: whichever triumphs is not a question of materials, ethics, or aesthetics but an issue of pure force. The *giallo* screens a Nietzschean interplay of bodies—and, according to Gilles Deleuze, bodies are themselves "forces, nothing but forces" (139). The interplay of forces does not necessarily imply diametric opposition, nor that they orbit a "natural" point of balance. As Deleuze claims, "Force no longer has a centre precisely because it is inseparable from its relation to other forces" (142), as in a body exercising its force within a sprawling network of interactions.

As a dramatization of the interplay of bodies-as-forces, the *giallo* is horrific because this interplay irresistibly produces death. Upon the Sadean premise that human nature tends towards excess, exploitation, and dominance, transgression leads to a cycle of ever-escalating violence. Yet hegemony does the same: anything that exists in excess to or defiance of the system must be eliminated. In the *giallo*, order is only ever provisionally and apparently restored once the killer has themselves been killed. The final satisfaction of either transgression or hegemony is the destruction of the other.

In spite of this, *gialli* failed to inspire lethal street fights between libertines and reactionaries among its audience. Further, in contrast to the pious pearl-clutching that commonly meets exploitation cinema, the commercial success of *gialli* did not inspire moral panic in its native Italy. The anticipation of such outcomes rests upon two distinct false assumptions: in the case of the former, that the audience identifies literally with the characters onscreen and will reproduce their ethics and actions in the real world; in the case of the latter, that the films express pre-existing desires and needs on the part of the audience. Against these assumptions, Louis Bayman and Sergio Rigoletto contend that film is neither "an answer to a particular pre-defined need nor as possessing a life of its own, pushing or binding the spectator.

Film is instead the mid-point in a dynamic interaction between spectator and social context, one which helps construct new needs through the creative invention of emotional experiences that do not pre-exist the viewing of a film" (20). Moreover, so much in *gialli* is theatrical and anti-naturalistic—from the campy fashions and unlikely mobility of the characters, to the vertiginous zooms and hypersaturated colours—that the films draw attention to their distance from reality, extended by the stylized and often surreal murders (Koven 125). Koven elaborates:

> These shocking sequences call attention to themselves…we are jolted out of our cinematic complacency to think not only about "how" such a sequence is made, but "why"… . These sequences, in *giallo*, are interesting not just because of their shock value, but because they demand we think about the very ontology of the cinema and our pleasures of watching such images. (157)

*Fig. 6*

More specifically, because the *giallo* focuses upon the violent interplay of transgression and hegemony, it poses a fundamental question: with which do you identify more closely, transgression or hegemony, and why? The answer to this resides in our relation to that which transgression produces: difference. Difference can be regarded as positive or negative. Recall, for example, the heterogenous assembly of tower-block occupants in *The Case of the Bloody Iris* (1972): is social diversity an opportunity to broaden communal empathy or does dissimilarity weaken security? In other words, is social difference additive or subtractive?

There is no correct answer to that question in the *gialli* themselves, insofar as the films are open to a choice in interpretation. Yet there are ethical consequences to this choice. To regard difference as bad is to want it subtracted, annulled, exhausted. As depicted in the *giallo*, it is this drive to annihilate and erase difference that ultimately produces death. However, the opposite choice is also available: to regard difference as good, generative, invigorating—a productive force with which to affiliate, correlate, and integrate. This additive interplay of forces, claims Deleuze, is "the kind which knows how to transform itself, to metamorphose itself according to the forces it encounters, and which forms a constantly larger force with them, always increasing the power to live, always opening new 'possibilities'" (141).

This is why the *giallo*—a category that could so easily be written off as crypto-reactionary pablum—consistently presents modernization and transgression as seductive and exciting: modernization and transgression are wellsprings of the new; new people, new places, new sensations, new experiences. Death may be inevitable, but it comes much quicker by (and to) those who wish to extinguish the excesses and messy heterogeneity of life. Far better, as Deleuze advises, "to be exhausted by life rather than exhausting it, always…at the service of what is reborn from life, what metamorphoses and creates" (142).

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## Image Notes

Fig. 1. Bianchi, Andrea, director. *Nude per l'assassino* [*Strip Nude for Your Killer*]. Fral Spa, Blue Underground, 1975.

Fig. 2. Bava, Mario, director. *5 bambole per la luna d'agosto* [*5 Dolls for an August Moon*]. Produzioni Atlas Consorziate (P.A.C.), Arrow Films, 1970.

Fig. 3. Fulci, Lucio, director. *Non si sevizia un paperino* [*Don't Torture a Duckling*]. Medusa Distribuzione, Blue Underground, 1972.

Fig. 4. Fulci, Lucio, director. *Una lucertola con la pelle di donna* [*A Lizard in a Woman's Skin*]. Atlántida Films, Les Films Corona, International Apollo Films, Mondo Macabro, 1971.

Fig. 5. Petri, Elio, director. *Indagine su un cittadino al di sopra di ogni sospetto* [*Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion*]. Vera Films S.p.a., The Criterion Collection, 1970.

Fig. 6. Carmineo, Giuliano, director. *Perché quelle strane gocce di sangue sul corpo di Jennifer?* [*The Case of the Bloody Iris*]. Galassia Cinematografica, Lea Film, Anchor Bay Entertainment, 1972.

## Notes

1 "Genre," as conventionally understood in popular Anglophone film criticism, implies a fixity of characteristics that is difficult to maintain in discussions of Italian popular cinema. Better suited here is the Italian critical term is *filone* (literally "vein" or "current"), suggestive of concurrent streams or threads which mingle or separate arbitrarily.

2 *Giallo* tropes are so consistent that an online film directory, GialloScore.com, ranks films according points awarded for the presence of various tropes in a given film (black gloves = 5 points, mistaken identity = 2 points, bathtub murder = 1 point).

3 "In 1975, first-run cinemas, which made up only one eighth of the total, received half of the total box-office takings" (Sorlin 120).

4 Because of the sheer number of *terza visione* and the lower cost of distributing films to them, they offered a distinct financial advantage to lower-budget productions that did not need to recoup their costs in a hurry. Such films could tour the tertiary market indefinitely, earning "exceptionally large receipts from *terza visione* and the provinces over longish periods (four or five years)" (Wagstaff 247).

5 Despite its forced contrast between upwardly-mobile, cosmopolitan Northerners and Southerners trapped in "archaic and feudal modes of existence" (Mendik 395), the *Mezzogiorno giallo* rarely makes any "serious examination of the social or economic factors that underpin [the Southerners'] malaise" (Mendik 397).

6 This provides an interesting contrast to another 1970s *filone*, the *poliziottesco* or crime-thriller. In those films, the protagonist is unvaryingly an iron-willed and *brutally effective* police officer who refuses to let the law stand in the way of justice. O'Leary understands the *poliziottesco* as both a screening of and salve for the tensions produced by the political and economic violence of the *anni di piombo*: "they depict situations pushed to the *ne plus ultra* which articulate not the reality of contemporary Italian society so much as a fantasy projection of that reality which is part anxiety and (I propose) part wish-fulfilment" (95).

7 The *giallo*'s female killer is something like the obscene symptom of American horror's "final girl": both claim for themselves and perform so-called "masculine" violence, but the *giallo*'s female killer does so pre-emptively and voluntarily, rather than reactively and defensively.

8 This is a gross simplification of Freud, not to mention a conflation of Freud and de Sade. Nonetheless, it is a simplification and conflation made purposefully and explicitly by the *giallo*. For example, the opening credits of *Lo strano vizio della Signora Wardh* (1971) end with a title-card featuring the following quote from Freud: "The very emphasis of the commandment: Thou shalt not kill, makes it certain that we are descended from an endlessly long chain of generations of murderers, whose love of murder was in their blood as it is perhaps also in ours" (60–61).

# CONTRIBUTORS

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