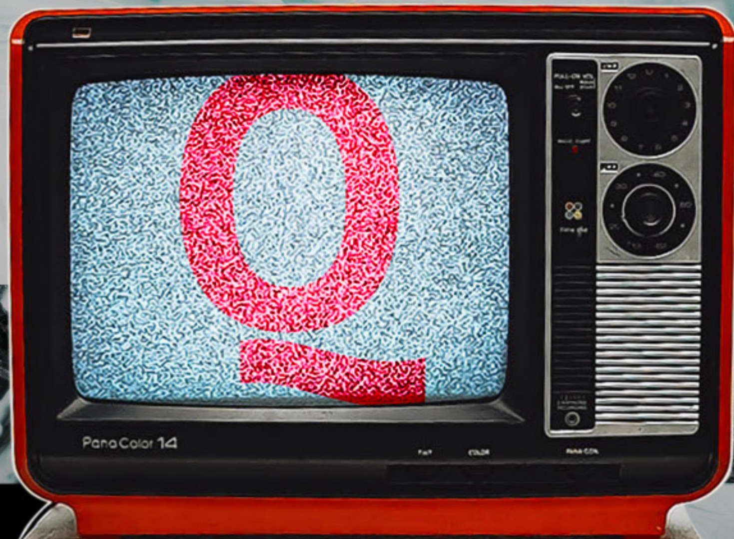
SYNOPTIQUE

An Online Journal of Film and Moving Image Studies



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From the Editor

Amanda D'Aoust

After a four year hiatus, Synoptique, a film journal written and published by graduate students in Film Studies at Concordia University in Montreal, is back! After a few hiccups and with the very kind assistance of Adam Rosadiuk, a former editor of the journal, Kina de Grasse, a Computational Arts student at Concordia, and Peter Rist, our academic supervisor, we were able to pull together what we hope will be a quarterly, academically oriented, online journal about film culture. Our articles have been exposed to a peer-editing system. That being said, authors have had the final say in what was published under their names and we intend to continue to publish using this approach. Since re-starting Synoptique took a great deal of energy, it would be wonderful to see more writers contribute pieces in the future. We would especially appreciate articles related to work being produced by fellow Concordians. Prior to submitting your pieces, please contact us, so that we can inform you of our tagging process which needs to be performed by your peer-editor.

Designed by Kina de Grasse, Synoptique 11's layout features work from various artists found on deviantART. If you are interested in learning more about these artists, there is a link at the end of this edition with additional information.

You can contact us at editor.synoptique@gmail.com.

I would like to thank everyone for all of their hard work and for sticking through until the end.

Amanda D'Aoust
Editor-in-Chief
11th Edition

*Editor's Note (2021): The layout referenced is visible in the legacy version of this PDF hosted on the Synoptique website and in the cover from this edition.

For A Sentiment of Beat Infancy: *Conceptions of Childhood in the American Avant-garde*

Graeme Langdon

An interpretation of the representation of the figure of the Child, as it has been treated by different theorists and historians through out time, in the work of the filmmakers from the Beat Generation.

In his 1969 survey of America's Underground Film, Parker Tyler deftly identifies a spiritual contiguity binding the material practice and aesthetic qualities of the form to the universal youth movement of the 1960s, and its travail towards the democratic emancipation of expression for all. From the Cabaret Voltaire to the New Wave cinemas of Europe and the Americas, from the birth of punk rock to the pluralist art gangs of the 1990s, any history of the Avantgarde in the West is also a history of young men and women dissatisfied with the material conditions of their upbringing. Unsettling, however, is Tyler's postulation of this connection, its relevance and import, for its introduction is immediately followed by certain value-based extrapolations discursively bound by a particular rubric of infantilism. For Tyler, the "indeterminately young" (p. 25) is "inexperienced and unproven … [it] is a great big toddler, the Underground Film" (p. 30). A considerably pejorative connotation accrues to the figure of the child in its repeated usage throughout his study. This betrays a certain prejudgment of the works in question, a latent desire to trivialize certain films and their makers, and most disconcertingly, some inclination to short-circuit the energy which courses through both.

Tyler's conception of the child and childhood (deployed with an aim to aspersion) is not without precedent. Thankfully, it is not the only way one might think of such subjects. As an object of social and cultural construction, variously co-determined by a number of variables, childhood is not without a history in which it has served, and for which it will continue to serve a myriad of functions. As a source of inspiration and as an object of thematic significance in certain works of the Avant-garde cinema addressed in Tyler's study, the representations of the child and of childhood are approached in numerous ways. While Tyler offers praise for certain works, negative judgments of others tend to be couched in the derisive language of a particular conception of childhood which is incompatible with childhood as it figures variously in the minds of other filmmakers. As there are many ways that one can approach such constructs, it is possible that analyses which presuppose other conceptions of children and childhood might better serve the aims of criticism.

First, we should note, for the most part, children and childhood were egregiously overlooked as objects of critical and historical study until 1962 when Phillip Ariès's hugely influential survey, *Centuries of Childhood*, inaugurated a wave of work by historians (who, for the most part, dedicated themselves to disparaging Ariès for his slack methods and immoderate conclusions) and social scientists (who were perhaps too willing to overlook such weaknesses). Quite provocatively, Ariès wrote, "in Medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist" (p. 124). The writer argues that such societies lacked a sentiment de l'enfance, "[any] awareness of the particular nature of childhood, that particular nature which distinguishes the child from the adult,

even the young adult" (p. 124). He maintains that such a sentiment did not begin to develop through the 15th and 17th centuries. Ariès has been critiqued for this conclusion on the grounds that the mere absence of a conception of childhood resembling that of his era does not constitute a total lack (Ashplant & Wilson, 1988). It is possible, as Doris Desclais Berkvam (1983) has noted, that Medieval societies possessed "a consciousness of childhood so unlike our own that we do not recognize it" (p. 165).

Evidence seems to suggest that Medieval societies did possess some *sentiment de l'enfance,* if perhaps an unpleasant and unsympathetic conception, though many theorists remain reluctant to pin it down. Historian James A. Shultz (1985) has suggested that from antiquity until the 18th century, children in the West were thought of as imperfect, deficient, or incomplete adults (pp. 244-51). Childhood was a period of transition, the time of a subject's becoming complete, or fully human. Of course, opinion as to the character of the incomplete human could vary wildly. In *A History of Childhood,* Colin Heywood (2001) suggests such opinions fell somewhere between 17th century French cleric Pierre de Bérulle's observation that childhood "is the most vile and abject state of human nature, after that of death," and the sentimental belief later posited in the Victorian Era that purity and innocence characterized childhood (p. 9). Whether understood as a period during which sin is largely relinquished in the interest of becoming perfect, or during which sin accrued, corrupting the child in the interest of its adaptability to the community of adults, childhood was nevertheless something one sped through in order to join the work and play of what Ariès has labeled the "great community of men" (pp. 125-30).

For the Romantics, however, the child was something of a mystical figure, a creature blessed by God. Childhood was less a period of becoming-adult, but, as Heywood suggests, "a source of inspiration that would last a lifetime" (p. 2). John Locke's 1693 treatise, S*ome Thoughts Concerning Education*, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's 1762 work, *Emile, or On Education*, certainly encouraged such sympathy for children. For the Romantics, such sympathy would blossom into something more. Children were, as David Grylls (1978) has observed in *Guardians and Angels*, "creatures of deeper wisdom, finer aesthetic sensitivity, and a more profound awareness of enduring moral truths" (p. 35). "The Youth, who daily farther from the east/ Must travel, still is Nature's Priest, And by the vision splendid/ Is on his way attended," wrote Wordsworth in 1807 in his "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Childhood", and here one finds something of the Romantic belief in the visionary abilities of the child, its interconnection with the child's purity (1998:701 lines 72-5).

Nevertheless, this unabashed belief in the child's purity and innocence would wane with the popularization of Freudian theories of human personality and sexuality, and with the demands of the Industrial Revolution. In the Modern Era, the child would become a source of anxiety and a figure of ambiguity. Heywood notes that against an increasing awareness of the realities of childhood sexuality and acute economic demands, American reformers and Puritans deployed something like a "new and politicized version of the Romantic child" (p. 28). One might conclude that this period was characterized by the desire to protect what Viviana A. Zelizer (1985) has labeled the economically "worthless" but emotionally "priceless" child (pp. 3-6) from the rapidly changing physical and moral conditions of advanced society, and the often contradictory need to prepare children for life in this very milieu. Thus, we see in the Modern Era a commingling of multiple discourses of children and childhood, and it is perhaps for this variety that one finds amongst works of American Avant-garde cinema a variety of means and intentions explicit and implicit in the treatment of such themes. As Marjorie Keller (1986) notes in her analysis of childhood in the films of such artists as Joseph Cornell and Stan Brakhage, "childhood is a particularly central theme in a tradition where artists have used the film medium to reflect on their own uniqueness" (p. 14).

It was Cornell who most wholeheartedly dedicated his artistic practice to the subject matter of children and childhood, and it is Cornell who most wholeheartedly duplicates the Romantic conception of childhood in his work. In his boxes and cinema, Keller identifies a "Romantic and Victorian representation of women and children as motif; structures created in the spirit of play and pre-rational thought; and content that is veiled in the asexual innocence of the mythology of childhood" (p. 101). In the first and third characteristics of Cornell's thematic insistence on childhood, the influence of French and German Romantic poetry and prose is apparent. Impetus for the iconographic privilege of the female child in Cornell's work can easily be traced back to Dickens and Carroll, but the function of androgyny in Cornell's work can be traced back further, to Goethe's Mignon. In the second characteristic, however, one finds something of a break with the Romantics (if ultimately in the interest of further developing the figure of the

Romantic child): the child uncorrupted by civilization is both Cornell's privileged object of representation and his ideal audience.

In the manner by which narrative flow and realistic space are broken down in such films as *Centuries Of June* (1955), *The Aviary* (1955), and the *Children's Party Trilogy* (1968), Keller identifies the influence of Jean Piaget (1923) whose *Language and Thought of the Child* was among the works collected in Cornell's personal library at his family home. For Piaget, the communicating child knows the logical order of coherent communication, but it does not consider it important, and it will first relay and decipher information according to his or her individual logic. Thus, Keller suggests, "as an artist, Cornell gave new contexts to images that were once part of a rational or otherwise representational system" (p. 110). Moreover, Keller writes, "as a filmmaker, the order of events was altered as well as the context, and it is to the films that one can most apply Piaget's understanding of mental sequence in children" (p. 110). The child is here exalted as a figure of visionary capability, and one might conclude that the androgynous child in Cornell's work may be understood as one who has not yet learned, or refuses to learn (and perhaps become corrupted by), the purported binarity of sex.

In Brakhage's cinema, the child and childhood alternately enjoy and suffer a more varied representation than in Cornell's work. As Keller observes, the child functions something like a barometer in Brakhage's development as a filmmaker (p. 16). "At almost every juncture in his prolific career," writes Keller, "[Brakhage] calls upon childhood to represent an aspect of film theory, perception, artistic creation, universal history, or autobiography. Childhood represents the Romantic Self and the Other" (p. 179). Keller is quick to note that mere Romantic idealization would not long remain an option for Brakhage as it was for Cornell, who nevertheless remained an influence: Brakhage fathered children of his own. Thus, Keller suggests that one can easily distinguish between the glowingly Romantic representation children enjoy in Brakhage's early films, which coincided with the birth of his children, and the increasing disavowal of this idealism as the filmmaker encountered more and more difficulty subsuming his children into his artistic practice (p. 180). One cannot deny a shift in perspective between Brakhage's early and later work. In *Metaphors on Vision*, the artist wondered "How many colors are there in a field of grass to the crawling baby unaware of 'Green'?" (1963:12). Later, in *The Weir-Falcon Saga* (1970), his growing disillusionment leads to a virtual rejection of his son. And finally, *Murder Psalm* (1980) is characterized by Brakhage's attempts to "deeply perceive" his children, to wrest them "from the dominant culture," but his efforts lead only to "his continuing alienation" (Keller:180). This shift is perhaps best understood as Brakhage's abandonment of a Romantic conception of childhood for a new conception of childhood distinctly modern in character, and its correlative modes of representation.

With the cinema of Beat filmmakers such as Robert Frank, Ron Rice, Ken Jacobs, and Jack Smith, one finds not only cinema about children and childhood, but a collective attempt to embrace childhood itself, to become children again, against the alienating implications of Modern adulthood. In Robert Frank and Alfred Leslie's *Pull My Daisy* (1959), for instance, Beat poets horse around at an intimate party and later jam out a jazz tune with their host's son. In Ron Rice's *The Flower Thief* (1960), one finds poet, actor, and filmmaker, Taylor Mead, as a child-like hero ambling about in an adult's world, finding comfort in youthful play with a child's teddy-bear. In Robert Nelson's *The Great Blondino* (1967), the eponymous hero is dwarfed by a gigantic chair and a rhinoceros pacing in the distance. In such films, children function not as the idealistic figures of Romantic literature and art as in the boxes and films of Cornell, nor as the problematic Modern figures increasingly objectified in Stan Brakhage's broad body of work, but as peculiar combinations of the traits of each. One finds children exalted above all others for their moral, spiritual, and aesthetic sensibilities, but no longer as idealistic abstractions: these are children actively shaping and shaped by an undeniably material reality.

This is perhaps the particularity of the Beat conception and mobilization of childhood for which Mary Batten (1962) is reaching for in her *Film Comment* analysis of Taylor Mead's performance in *The Flower Thief*. "The child-like hero tries desperately to become involved," writes Batten:

> **[H]is pathos and his madness are such that he must search for involvement by playing with toys. He scrubs his teddy bear and sets it on a latrine in an attempt to project real functions onto something—a palpable object; and playing with toys seems to be the only method of recognizing reality that is acceptable to society. This, the film seems to be saying, is the irony of play, i.e., play for children is total involvement—a direct socialization of feeling. Yet play for adults is**

the least terrifying way of objectifying reality. (p. 31)

What if not an invested objectification of reality is afoot in the Beats' liberal indulgence in pot in *Pull My Daisy,* and Blondino the tight-rope walker's conscious playing at the limits of life and death in Nelson's film? What we learn from Piaget is that in the total involvement of play it is the child who makes its world his or her object precisely because the child has no regard for a unilaterally defined reality as such.

The irony of play in *The Flower Thief* and other works of Beat cinema then is far more complicated and it is best understood with regard to the theory of subjection Michel Foucault (1977) develops in *Discipline and Punish*. First, the becoming-adult (of Mead's performance) who objectifies the world in play becomes object himself. This is because the becoming-adult (on his or her way to adulthood) allows his or her material world to function as reality, an authoritative source of enjoined expectations, symbolic injunctions, ideological interpolation, and so on, which limit the playful actions available to the becoming-adult, and delimit his subjective possibility in direct accordance with his reality. But subjection in Foucault's work, as Judith Butler (1997) has observed in *The Psychic Life of Power*, "is a kind of power that not only unilaterally acts on a given individual as a form of domination, but also activates or forms the subject" (p. 84). There exists always the possibility of counter-movement, for the process of becoming-adult is also, potentially, the occasion of becoming-child. And thus, the irony of play is doubled in the figure of the becoming-child (Mead himself acting in *The Flower Thief*), and tripled in the figure of the becomingchild- becoming-adult (of Mead's performance reconsidered). Mead's characters may be "eternal children, divine fools, pure-hearted simpletons detached from the world and innocent of its machinations," as Ray Carney (1995) suggests in "Escape Velocity: Notes on Beat Film" (p. 202), but Mead's work, the play of other Beat actors, and the Beat conception of childhood, which is the basis for it all, are not so innocent.

A similarly complex conception of childhood is present at the level of Beat cinema's aesthetic qualities and material production. Here, however, it is the formal conventions and narrative logic of classical Hollywood cinema which are shirked in the interest of free expression and play. One need only consider Ron Rice's playfully sloppy manifesto, "Foundation For the Invention and Creation of Absurd Movies" in the Spring 1962 issue of Jonas Mekas's *Film Culture*, for some indication as to how a willful ignorance, or innocence with regard to "proper" filmmaking, functioned as a privileged starting point for artistic expression. Rice writes:

We decided to completely throw out contient and concentrate only on form. After this was decided I called Hollywood and asked J.B. to send up to San Francisco a complete 'Direct it your self techinician kit'. [sic]

The following Friday I received a CABLEGRAM, it read….SORRY: HOLLYWOOD UNABLE TO SEND KIT: SUGGEST YOU CONTACT THE NEAREST MENTAL HOSPITAL: J.B.. [sic] (p. 19)

Against the Hollywood standard, the films of Ron Rice are particularly rough, with planning and detailed scripting abandoned in the interest of greater freedom and possible creativity. "[By] using a cheaper method of working, one can afford to discover new things that can be discovered," suggests Rice in a 1962 interview with Mary Batten for *Film Comment* (p. 32). The crude aesthetic of such cinema is both index of its production, and sign of its makers' unfettered visionary power, something like Brakhage's child who ventures out into a field of grass without having learned 'Green'. And so, to critique or to seek to analyze such cinema apropos of other cinematic modes of expression, or with reference to a worldview characteristically un-Beat, is to lose the object of criticism or analysis in translation.

Parker Tyler, for instance, is not without somewhat complimentary remarks for certain works of Beat cinema, but the language he uses serves ultimately to undermine a wholly commendatory reading. His observation that "neither the child nor the madman can be overlooked as valid dimensions of Underground aesthetics" suggests an awareness of the films' subject matter and its significance, but he resorts to a value-based appraisal incompatible with the Beat sensibility when he observes, "only in a very few films does childlike or lunatic imagination achieve real poetic articulation, and then perhaps but fragmentarily" (p. 200). Whatever praise Tyler offers is re-figured with an aim to trivialize when he concludes his survey with an admonishment directed towards "young artists and students who like imagining they are as good as or better at sixteen or seventeen than those who are classifiable as adults" (p. 238). The critic thus maintains a distinctly Medieval

conception of childhood, with children no more than incomplete adults and certainly *less-than* fully human, but the Beat cinema demands precisely that childhood not be regarded as the period of the subject's completion, his or her realization in the figure of the status quo adult. Beat cinema proffers no coherent or uncomplicated representation of the process of becoming-adult. And while a Medieval conception of children and childhood is particularly unsuited to understanding Beat cinema, Romantic and Modern conceptions of children and childhood also fail to illuminate the complexity and political significance of the Beat investment in the figure of the child. There is, however, a remarkable affinity between the Beat conception of childhood and Giorgio Agambem's scattered musings on the concept of infancy.

In "For a Philosophy of Infancy", Agambem (2001) notes how the axolotl salamander—a discrete species that retains characteristics of the larva throughout its lifetime, but which will metamorphose into an adult specimen of the speckled salamander upon an injection of a particular thyroid hormone despite its ability to reproduce itself in its larval state—has shed new light on human ancestry and evolutionary biology. Humans, after all, share a number of morphological characteristics with the anthropoid fetus not found among adult apes, and human evolution could be said to resemble the trajectory of the axolotl. Beginning with the hypothesis that human beings evolved from baby primates as something like "eternal children", resistant to their genetic encoding, Agambem advances a significant reinterpretation of the uniquely human traditions of language and culture.

Agambem ventures that unlike the axolotl, which simply settled into its larval environment, the neotenic human "so adheres to its lack of specialization and totipotency that it refuses any destiny and specific environment as to solely follow its own indeterminacy and immaturity" (p. 121). "[W]ith its voice free of every genetic directive," writes the author, "with absolutely nothing to say and express, the child could, unlike any other animal, name things in its language and, in this way open-up before itself an infinity of possible worlds" (p. 121). Agambem suggests the infant is its own potentiality, living its endless possibility; and, in play, the infant no longer distinguishes between possibility and reality, choosing instead "immanence without place and subject, an adhering that adheres neither to an identity nor to some thing, but solely to its own possibility and potentiality. It is an absolute *immanence* that is immanent to nothing" (p. 121). But what is key in this celebration of infancy is Agambem's observation that such a form-of-life is not fantasy, as the reactionary adult might proclaim, but rather, an adherence to physiological life so close that the infant becomes "indiscernible from it" (p. 121). Thus viewed, adulthood and intellectual maturity as Tyler might regard it represents something of a regression, an introjection of linguistic and cultural injunction at the expense of one's potential to endlessly play in and reshape each sphere ad infinitum.

Viewed through such a conception of childhood, the Beats emerge as something like totipotent infants. In their play with language and movement, one finds they adhere only to the possibilities of the neotenic body and mind explicitly against pre-given directives, whether literary, cinematic, or those of the broad sphere of human culture in general. As Tyler opines, "only by annihilating history—that is, only by declining to measure time in terms of values —can Underground Film get its kinky, headstrong way and assert the nonhistorical values of existence over the historic existence of values" (p. 238), but this is to posit the transcendency of value, ignorant of ruptures and fissures in human history, not to mention the myopic reduction of history to its facts. History, for Agambem, is "that which is absolutely immanent," and so, he concludes, "the child is the only integrally historical being, […] the cipher of a higher history" (p. 122). What is needed now, and what is perhaps to be found in works of Beat cinema, is a sentiment of this neotenic and totipotent figure.

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Edited by Amanda D'Aoust.

Antonioni–La Grande tétralogie du malaise moderne: *une étude visuelle de l'absence et du vide*

Catherine Benoit

À travers une analyse brève et concise de la Grande Tétralogie du réalisateur italien Michelangelo Antonioni, décédé à l'été 2007, l'esthétique pointue et les thématiques de l'absence, du vide et du malaise moderne sont étudiées.

C'est à l'intérieur de ce qui se développa d'abord comme une trilogie que naquit vraiment la maturité filmique de Michelangelo Antonioni. En constante recherche esthétique, le cinéaste, à l'intérieur du corpus de films représenté par *L'avventura* (1960), *La Notte* (1961) et *L'eclisse* (1962), a réussi de façon exceptionnelle à capter les images de comportements humains, avec ses faiblesses, ses doutes et ses douleurs. Cette trilogie, à laquelle vint s'ajouter *Il Deserto Rosso* en 1964, est à elle seule si vaste, si riche esthétiquement et thématiquement qu'il nous serait impossible de tout condenser ici, ou d'en faire une étude exhaustive. C'est pourquoi nous étudierons les quatre films de façon conjointe, cette Grande Tétralogie articulée autour du thème de la "maladie des sentiments", centrée sur des personnages féminins en crise, porteurs de regard, en nous penchant sur une seule thématique, celle de l'absence et du vide, démontrant ainsi le "malaise moderne" dont sont victimes les protagonistes. Bien évidemment, il nous est impossible de parler de cette thématique sans parler de l'aliénation que vivent ces personnages en crise. L'aliénation, thème fondamental de la tétralogie, celle-là même que ressentent les quatre femmes, se sentant rejetées –ou absentes- de leur environnement et de leurs relations, est dépeinte de façon esthétique à l'intérieur des films. Cependant, n'étant pas le sujet principal de cette étude, nous n'en discuterons que brièvement.

Principalement, il est de notre avis que la tétralogie a pour essence thématique l'absence – de ce qui n'est pas mais aurait pu être, aurait dû être, ou de ce qui a été mais n'est plus. Cette absence, représentée dans les films par la perte de quelque chose, est déclenchée par un événement qui déterminera la suite de l'histoire, permettant le développement du film, l'évolution entre cet événement et les conséquences qui s'ensuivent. En effet, si l'on observe les éléments déclencheurs des films, du point de vue des quatre protagonistes, on retrouve une disparition d'une amie dans *L'avventura,* la mort d'un être cher dans *La Notte*, une rupture dans *L'eclisse* et une tentative de suicide (déguisée en accident) dans *Il Deserto Rosso*. Ainsi, ces quatre événements déclencheurs agissent de telle sorte que l'héroïne ne sera plus la même, qu'elle devra ensuite s'accommoder à vivre avec l'absence de quelque chose, cette perte, qui crée le vide autour duquel le récit s'enveloppe.

Allant plus loin encore, nous pourrions affirmer que la fin (nous entendons par là les quelques derniers plans) des quatre films est elle aussi régie par l'absence: ces fins sont épurées des êtres humains, après que les êtres humains aient eux-mêmes été épurés de leurs émotions. Puisque nous désirons plutôt nous attarder au cadrage et à la composition qu'aux thématiques, nous essaierons ici de retranscrire ce qu'il est possible de voir à la fin de chaque film: Dans *La Notte,* le couple s'étreint sur le sol, à droite de l'écran dans un plan d'ensemble. Les protagonistes, entourés d'arbres, sont presque à l'arrière-plan, nous ne pouvons donc pas distinguer si

leur étreinte est amoureuse ou si Lidia essaie de s'en défaire.

La caméra effectue alors un travelling vers la gauche en reculant lentement, et le couple se retrouve hors-champ, le cadre devenant donc vide de présence, empli d'absence.

L'eclisse contient si l'on peut dire deux «fins»: la première, celle où les protagonistes se séparent et où l'on voit Vittoria pour la dernière fois du film. En plan rapproché, en légère contre-plongée, elle est dos à la caméra, à droite de l'écran, dans cette composition toute particulière que semble affectionner Antonioni (le plan se retrouve dans les quatre films).

Puis, elle sort du champ en marchant vers la caméra qui demeure immobile à filmer les arbres qu'elle contemplait. Ainsi encore, la caméra capture son absence. La deuxième fin du film, la très connue séquence où sont mis bout à bout les plans des endroits fréquentés par le couple, souligne elle aussi l'absence, d'abord parce que les protagonistes ne s'y trouvent pas, mais aussi parce qu'en leur absence, les endroits perdent leur signification, deviennent des lieux vides.

Dans *Il Deserto Rosso*, Giuliana et son fils marchent vers la caméra, qui les filme en plongée. Lorsqu'ils ont disparu du cadre, la caméra continue de filmer les usines au loin, et les champs qui les entourent. Dans cet espace, aucun être humain n'est visible, il ne reste que le monde que Giuliana méprise, le monde duquel elle se sent étrangère.

Dans *L'avventura,* Antonioni nous donne l'impression qu'il effectuait alors une recherche quant à la meilleure façon de transcrire l'absence empoisonnante entre les personnages. Ainsi, après qu'elle se soit mise à courir, Claudia s'appuie à la balustrade, dos à la caméra, à droite de l'écran. Puis, Sandro vient la rejoindre, s'assied sur le banc et Antonioni nous offre alors une composition profondément chargée de sens: à l'arrière-plan se trouvent des ruines, et tandis que Claudia se tient debout, à gauche, dos à la caméra, Sandro se tient assis, dos à elle, à droite de l'écran. Entre eux deux, tout ce vide, et probablement l'absence d'Anna qui les hante, qui les aura conduits à leur perte.

Ensuite, Claudia s'avance vers Sandro, et c'est dans cet ultime plan qu'Antonioni impose une composition encore plus singulière: ce plan d'ensemble, divisé en deux, contient à droite le mur d'un immeuble prenant tout le champ, et à gauche, le banc, dos à la caméra, faisant face à la mer. Sur ce banc, Sandro est assis à gauche et Vittoria se tient debout à sa gauche. Devant eux, la mer où Anna s'est peut-être noyée, à leur droite, un mur, comme si toutes leurs issues étaient bloquées:

> Antonioni a toujours cherché à filmer au plus près du manque qui est au coeur du réel, des êtres et des événements. Il s'agit pour lui de suggérer un nouveau sentiment de la réalité qui ne peut se déployer que sur fond de vacuité, dans une sorte de vacance apparente de l'énonciation, au fil d'une fuite permanente du sens, à fleur de cette béante inconsistance où les choses qu'on ne peut tenir à l'oeil, ni contenir dans un récit, parce qu'il est dans leur nature de s'évanouir, de se taire ou simplement de se manifester, se rechargent constamment de mystère, s'exposent à la puissance ou à la virtualité du vide. [1]

L'avventura, 1960

L'avventura comporte sans aucun doute la thématique de l'absence la plus évidente des quatre films: la disparition d'Anna, au plan physique du terme, mais également sa disparition dans les pensées de Claudia et de Sandro. Cette absence, créant un malaise chez le spectateur (l'étonnement de constater que les protagonistes, au bout d'un moment, ont en fait arrêté leurs recherches) devient de plus en plus persistante au cours du développement de l'histoire, et les images qui étaient alors "pleines", c'est-à-dire "normales" aux yeux du spectateur, deviennent de plus en plus dépouillées. Ainsi, à la suite de la disparition d'Anna, Antonioni met en scène des paysages trop vastes et trop hostiles, qui prennent à eux seuls tout le cadre. Chaque plan dans l'île est cadré très large, de façon à laisser sensiblement trop de champ à l'oeil du spectateur, de sorte qu'il se prend à chercher Anna, lui aussi, se confrontant donc à chaque fois à son absence:

> L'évidement de l'image antonionienne se mesure principalement à la plus ou moins grande raréfaction de ses composantes (décors, figurants, accessoires, richesse de l'arrière-plan …) et des données informatives ou narratives qu'elle exhibe au spectateur. [2]

Dans *L'avventura*, la vacuité est là, mais thématiquement surtout. La composition de l'image demeure assez simple, en tout cas beaucoup moins incongrue que celle de *L'eclisse.* Le vide, dans le film beaucoup moins "présent", si l'on peut dire, que l'absence, généré par cette absence soudaine, n'apparaît en fait qu'après la disparition d'Anna. Antonioni suggère bien ce concept

dans la scène où le couple entre dans la ville sur le chemin de Noto, cette ville fantôme où personne ne réside, ni même s'y trouve.

***La Notte*, 1961**

Dans *La Notte*, c'est la fatigue émotionnelle et l'absence d'amour qui sont dépeintes, et ce n'est pas un hasard si Lidia passe une grande partie du film à errer sans but dans des espaces vides. L'omniprésente pensée, tout au long du film, de la mort de Tommaso est probablement responsable du vide que Lidia ressent, et Antonioni suggère ce manque, ce malaise avec probablement la plus connue des images du film: le plan où Lidia, cette minuscule silhouette, se tient debout, à gauche de ce gigantesque et imposant mur de béton.

Cette image, que l'on considère à prime abord comme pleine (étant donné la plénitude du mur dans le cadre) est en fait une image vide. En effet, son pouvoir de figuration est absent, mais l'interprétation est assez évidente : Lidia, se sentant minuscule, aliénée du monde qui l'entoure, oppressée, et surtout prête à abandonner sous la pression, sous la masse, prête à se rendre.

***L'eclisse*, 1962**

Ce sera dans *L'eclisse* que le cinéaste réussira le mieux à traduire le vide de l'existence des personnages. *L'eclisse* commence là où *La Notte* s'était terminée. Il débute en une longue scène de silence et de soupirs; c'est clairement la suite de quelque chose, mais le spectateur est laissé en retrait. Le vide est installé dès le premier plan, où rien ne semble occuper le cadre, rien que des objets. Pourtant, lorsque la caméra effectue un panoramique vers la droite, on découvre qu'un de ces objets était en fait la manche de Riccardo, comme si celui-ci ne représentait rien de plus qu'un objet, maintenant, pour Vittoria.

Allant encore plus loin que dans les deux films précédents sur le plan de la vacuité, Antonioni va jusqu'à dépouiller son héroïne de toute émotion. Après cette nuit, dont nous n'avons pas été les témoins, voilà cette héroïne tellement vidée émotionnellement que tout ce qu'elle entreprendra ensuite sera en vain.

Encore plus, *L'eclisse* met en scène des espaces de rencontre, de rendez-vous. Le pessimisme, la fatalité ou simplement la discrétion de cette fameuse dernière séquence, ou les deux amants ne se rencontrent pas, est ellemême un sommet de l'absence suggérée tout au long du film, le montage de tous ces endroits où les protagonistes ne sont pas. C'est cette fin ambiguë qui permet au spectateur de pleinement ressentir le malaise qui le guettait depuis le début du film. Également, la scène de la Bourse où le futur couple se retrouve de part et d'autre d'une immense colonne suggère habilement ce malaise, l'idée que quelque chose ne va pas (« techniquement », un couple devrait se retrouver dans la proximité).

Cette colonne, si imposante en elle-même et dans le plan, nous procure une des images les plus symboliques du film, suggérant ainsi l'obstacle qui perdurera entre Piero et Vittoria. Cette colonne, par sa présence, traduit à elle seule toute l'absence se trouvant entre Vittoria et Piero, tous ces non-dits, ces sentiments cachés, cette crainte d'aimer, mais aussi l'absence de contact, de proximité, d'intimité, de possibilité de communication, de compréhension, en fait, deux mondes à l'opposé, qui ne se rejoindront jamais. Toutes ces absences qui les conduiront à ne pas se présenter au rendez-vous: « L'image vide se présente […] par l'espacement entre les figures qui, séparées les unes des autres par des intervalles béants ou parasitaires, se voient littéralement isolées. » [3]

***Il Deserto Rosso*, 1964**

Il Deserto Rosso est un point tournant dans la carrière d'Antonioni, et c'est souvent pourquoi certains [4] croient qu'il se détache de la trilogie, qu'il n'appartient pas au même corpus de films. Bien qu'à première vue différent (le film est en couleurs, et, selon Antonioni lui-même, ne traite plus du malaise des sentiments, mais plutôt du personnage confronté à son environnement social), il est de notre avis qu'il constitue une partie intégrante de la tétralogie, par les similitudes qu'il entretient avec les autres films analysés dans cet essai. Reprenant les mêmes thématiques émotionnelles et esthétiques auxquelles la trilogie s'était intéressée, *Il Deserto Ross*O met en scène l'absence de compréhension du monde face à Giuliana, et son incompréhension face au monde. Filmant le vide qui entoure son héroïne, Antonioni impose une ambiguïté purement cinématographique: cette vision du monde si particulière (monde dans lequel les couleurs sont fades, éteintes, où la brume avale les gens, et dans lequel les sons et les objets sont menaçants), est-elle celle de Giuliana, qui perçoit le monde qui l'entoure comme aliénant, comme un ennemi? Ou est-elle en fait la vision du cinéaste quant au monde moderne, sa désaffection, sa dénaturation?

Si la grande tétralogie d'Antonioni reflète si bien cette qualité de malaise moderne, ce n'est pas simplement par sa thématique et sa structure narrative. Bien que ces derniers s'efforcent de rendre le "travail" difficile du côté du spectateur, l'esthétique du cadrage et de la composition des images demande elle aussi une

attention minutieuse et un effort de compréhension accru. L'attrait que suscitent les films d'Antonioni est immense, et, bien qu'ils traitent du malaise, ne sont pas dérangeants, comme par exemple le sont les films du cinéaste Atom Egoyan. Dans un contexte aussi restreint, il nous serait impossible d'étudier en profondeur un seul des films d'Antonioni, encore moins les quatre de la tétralogie. Cette étude aura donc simplement servi à mettre en lumière quelques aspects significatifs de l'oeuvre antonionienne, de son style visuel et de ses thématiques récurrentes. Si la déception de ne pouvoir que survoler les films est grande, elle le devient moins lorsque l'on se rend compte de la richesse de chaque plan, qui mériterait à eux seuls une étude exhaustive.

FOOTNOTES

1 Moure, José. Michelangelo Antonioni, *Cinéaste de l'évidement.* Paris : L'Harmattan, 2001, p.7.

2 *Ibid,* p.89.

3 *Ibid,* p.90.

4 Entre autres, la littérature critique de Peter Brunette considère le film comme une entité à part, mais Seymour Chatman dévoue la majorité de son livre à la tétralogie.

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Eye and Brain, Torn Asunder: *Reading Ideology in Sally Potter's* ***Orlando***

Zoë Heyn-Jones

An investigation of how gender, genre and politics play out in Sally Potter's *Orlando*.

Virginia Woolf thought the movies were stupid. In her 1926 treatise on the moving image entitled "The Movies and Reality," Woolf stated that "at first sight, the art of the cinema seems simple, even stupid" (86). She invokes a certain relationship between eye and brain, and implies gluttony of the former and lethargy of the latter when she describes the film-watching experience as an instance whereby "the eye licks it all up instantaneously, and the brain, agreeably titillated, settles down to watch things happening without bestirring itself to think" (86). It soon becomes clear, however, that this anti-cinema stance is more than a little literary bias. She, rather sarcastically, claims that

> ***all the famous novels of the world, with their well known characters, and their famous scenes, only asked, it seemed, to be put on the films. What could be easier and simpler? The cinema fell upon its prey with immense rapacity, and to this moment largely subsists upon the body of its unfortunate victim. But the results are disastrous to both. The alliance is unnatural. Eye and brain are torn asunder ruthlessly as they try vainly to work in couples… So we lurch and lumber through the most famous novels of the world (88).***

Her image of the cinema as a ravenous predator savagely feasting on the victimized corpse of literature is striking. What is even more compelling, however, is her insistence upon the separation of eye and brain that she believed to be inherent in cinema. Woolf's dabbling in film theory is riddled with a sensory binarism that is surprising, considering the stylistic and thematic fluidity and unconventional nature of her prose. The notion of the eye/ brain binary opposition becomes even more interesting when we consider a discussion of a cinematic feasting upon the body of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928).

In Sally Potter's 1992 filmic adaptation, Orlando's story begins in 1600. Before her death, Queen Elizabeth I bestows the gift of immortality upon the young courtier, ordering him "Do not fade, do not wither, do not grow old" (Potter, 9).

Thus Orlando lives through four centuries of English history, "albeit an imagined history told with a liberal amount of poetic licence" (x). Orlando experiences heartbreak at the hand of the Russian princess Sasha, and in turn breaks his fiancée's heart. He discovers poetry and politics, taking a position of English ambassador in the East. It is here that Orlando experiences the atrocities of war, and his confrontation of death and destruction leads to his uncanny and unexplained change of sex. The Lady Orlando proceeds to move through English society, legally dead and therefore dispossessed of title and property, and into a future consisting of an empowering romance with a representative of the New World and modernity, and a roaring motorcycle entrance into the digital age, daughter and video camera at hand.

Potter's *Orlando* exhibits a high degree of thematic, narrative, and stylistic fluidity and pluralism that would trouble any binary assertion. The film exists within a complex terrain of issues, from *Orlando*'S status as a literary adaptation, to questions of the politics of the film's aesthetics and representational strategies, to its engagement within a particular socio-historical context. This paper will address the issue of how these disparate strands of *Orlando's* matrix come together to create its "readable ideological orientation" (Monk, 181). An ideological reading of the film is inevitable considering the concerns stated above, and ideology in *Orlando* can be discussed in terms of the performance of gender, androgyny as transcendence, and the film's situation in the (post)heritagefilm debate.

COSTUME AND THE PERFORMANCE OF GENDERED IDENTITY

Analysis of costume is often ignored in film studies. Influenced by the work of Pamela Church Gibson, Sarah Street believes that

> ***the possible reasons for the relative scarcity of sustained analyses of film costume… [are] the assumption, held by many academics, that fashion is a frivolous, feminine field; the suspicion that fashion is merely an expression of capitalist commodity fetishism and the opinion, held by some feminists, that fashion is one of the primary ways in which women are trapped into gratifying the male gaze (1).***

Just as the analysis of costume itself is given short shrift in cinema studies, so, too, is the analysis of the 'costume drama'. Julianne Pidduck asserts that "often perceived as a woman's genre, costume drama shares some of the abuse regularly leveled at soap operas and popular romance" (5). This lack of critical analysis of the costume drama is surprising when one considers the myriad avenues for analysis within the genre: "gendered accounts of (historical) significance, taste and quality are intertwined with the development of the historical epic, literary adaptation, British 'quality' cinema and television, melodrama and the 'woman's film'" (5). It is with the duality of the under-examination of the costume drama, and its enormous potential, in mind that I will begin a discussion of Sally Potter's *Orlando*.

While a discussion of costume might, at first glance, appear to be perhaps a (literally) surface-level analysis, it contains possibilities for radical critique. On one hand, "'costume' suggests the pleasures and possibilities of masquerade–the construction, constraint, and display of the body through clothes" (Pidduck, 4). Contrary to its pleasures and emancipatory potential, however, is the sustained view that costume goes hand-in-hand with a patriarchal notion of gendered identity construction. The costuming in *Orlando* is both a source of visual pleasure and a comment on its inherent role in the construction of gendered identity.

Costume designer Sandy Powell's elaborate creations are preeminent in *Orlando's* diegesis and the focal point for discussions of the film's stylistic excess. In her discussion of the film's baroque scopic regime, Cristina Degli- Eposti states:

> ***The grandiose, the redundant, the trompe l'oeil, the excessiveness of the details of the mise-en-scene work together to produce an effect of estrangement and separation from previous aesthetic forms – those forms of the baroque style elaborated, manipulated, "staged", and translated to excess (79).***

The frame is consistently filled with ridiculously large and ornate ball gowns, heavy powdered wigs, and countless other stylized pieces of apparel, making costume the essential part of the mise-en-scene that translates to excess. While the sheer volume and ornate nature of the costumes could simply signify a postmodern parody or social commentary on the bourgeoisie through cinematic excess, costume also has narrative significance. Queen Elizabeth I slips a garter onto Orlando's leg as she declares her affection for the young Lord. This scene is remarkable in terms of gender performance: a decrepit Quentin Crisp plays the Virgin Queen, while the Lord Orlando is played by Tilda Swinton, both of whom are swathed in ornate garments. While the garter on Orlando's leg acts as a signifier of the Queen's affection for the Lord's youthful masculinity, it also acts as a narrative tool, as it is into the garter that the Queen slips the deed for Orlando's house as she coos, "For you, Orlando. And for your heirs." Costume here plays a central role in both the indexing of gender as well as narrative progression.

There is one essential segment of the film in relation to any discussion on costuming. After his/her mysterious change of sex, Orlando returns to England and its bindings, the metaphor literalized by Potter's mise-en-scene. Indeed, this notion becomes a visual joke: Potter cuts to a close-up of Orlando's side and back, looking in her hand mirror as the servants' hands lace her corset. The camera pans around to her front reflection, rises

and zooms to a close-up of her face as she watches her reflection. She looks uncomfortable as the servant jerks her around. Even the sound design privileges costume and its connotations, as the sound of the dress rustling and the corset crisply lacing is magnified. The next shot presents a medium-long shot of Orlando's full figure, centred in the frame. She wears a ridiculously huge white gown and the skirt fills the bottom of the screen. Two servants fasten the ties of her dress. There is a mirror screen left which reflects her figure on an angle. Orlando turns her head to gaze, in disbelief, directly at the camera/ spectator due to her ridiculous and consuming get-up. Potter then cuts to a long take that continues the visual joke. Orlando is presented in a long shot in the back of a great hall, the furniture draped with white sheets. The camera tracks back as Orlando walks forward towards it, screen left. A servant enters from screen right, and Orlando does an awkward twirl around the servant as she tries to maneuver herself and her huge dress out of the way. The servant disappears to the back of the frame as Orlando comically sidesteps the furniture. This sequence overtly comments on the construction of gender through costume while offering the spectator visual pleasure and humour. The film's social commentary is never far from the surface, however, and "the sheer crippling unmanageability of Orlando's bourgeois female attire… brilliantly conveys feminine physical and social constraint" (Pidduck, 106).

What are the ideological assumptions inherent in a discussion of costume in Potter's *Orlando*? Does this discussion locate the film firmly within the realm of feminist and queer theory, or are there other ideological positions inherent in the discussion of the construction of gendered identity? A reading of Judith Butler's work on the performative nature of gender can illuminate other avenues for analysis.

In "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology And Feminist Theory," Judith Butler theorizes gender performativity through her reading of the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and the feminist critique of Simone de Beauvoir, complementary in the way in which "phenomenology shares with feminist analysis a commitment to grounding theory in lived experience" (522). In both contexts, Butler asserts that "the existence and facticity of the material or natural dimensions of the body are not denied, but reconceived as distinct from the process by which the body comes to bear cultural meanings" (520). Butler believes that the human form is known only through its performance of gender. She states that "'the' body is invariably transformed into his body or her body, the body is only known through its gendered appearance… the body becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised, and consolidated through time" (523, my italics). With this in mind, Potter's *Orlando* can be read as a quintessential Butlerian text, as gender roles are constantly being negotiated through performative acts. The Lady Orlando moves through the diegetic world, constricted by the costume that indexes her femininity, and it is both her physical movement as well as her enunciations that highlight the performed quality of her gendered identity.

Butler's analysis of gender performativity relies on a notion of the punitive aspect of the performance, as she cautions that "there are strict punishments for contesting the script by performing out of turn or through unwarranted improvisations" (531). In fact, I would argue that the probability of various forms of 'punishment' is perhaps the main reason why our binary set of gender roles continues to exist and maintains prominence. Butler contends that

> ***because gender is a project which has cultural survival as its end, the term 'strategy' better suggests the situation of duress under which gender performance always and variously occurs. Hence, as a strategy of survival, gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences … those who fail to do their gender right are regularly punished (522, my italics).***

In the case of *Orlando*, the Lady Orlando's punishment comes in the form of being declared legally dead, and therefore losing her property and estate.

Judith Butler's assertion that gender is performed leads feminist analysis to question the "unexamined reproduction of gender identities which sustain discrete and binary categories of man and woman" (523). She states overtly that "regardless of the pervasive character of patriarchy and the prevalence of sexual difference as an operative cultural distinction, there is nothing about a binary gender system that is given" (531).

This perhaps leads to an ideological position that could be referred to as universalism; as the androgynous angel sings in *Orlando's* last sequence, 'we are one with a human face'. However, a sort of privileging of commonalities of human existence, the effacing of gender differences, or the singular universal of 'woman' (or 'man') can be seen as detrimental to feminist political struggle. Butler

invokes Gayatri Spivak's argument:

> ***Feminists need to rely on an operational essentialism, a false ontology of women as a universal in order to advance a feminist political program… Kristeva suggests something similar… when she prescribes that feminists use the category of women as a political tool without attributing ontological integrity to the term (529).***

While any notion of biological essentialism in terms of an unquestioned binary of gender identities is problematized by Butler's argument, so, too, is the abandoning of the distinctions of woman/man. 'Woman' must remain a functional category as long as 'women' continue to struggle against patriarchal oppression.

What, then, of androgyny? Is any notion of a sort of liberatory impulse in the blending or transcending of gender ideologically problematic? We will now turn to a discussion of androgyny and transcendence in relation to Potter's *Orlando*.

ANDROGYNY AND TRANSCENDENCE

In *A Room of One's Own* (1929), Woolf muses on the androgynous potential of the human mind. She wondered:

> ***Whether there are two sexes in the mind corresponding to the two sexes in the body, and whether they also require to be united in order to get complete satisfaction of happiness? And I went on amateurishly to sketch a plan of the soul so that in each of us two powers preside, one male, one female; and in the man's brain the man predominates over the woman, and in the woman's brain the woman predominates over the man… If one is a man, still the woman part of his brain must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her. Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous. It is when this great fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties (Woolf, 1929: 94).***

Orlando, in both literary and filmic incarnations, can be seen as a text that privileges the ideal that 'a great mind is androgynous'. Potter's film does so through many aspects of form, from the casting, to the costuming, to Orlando's consistent addressing of the camera, taking the spectator out of its inherently gendered sutured positioning, which essentially "causes the patriarchal eye to blink" (Degli-Eposti, 78). The film ends with Orlando and her daughter returning to the family's estate, the narrator explicitly informing us that Orlando has acquired the "slightly androgynous appearance that many females of the time aspire to" (Potter, 61). Why would a woman (or man) aspire towards androgyny? Is androgyny a subject position that transcends the trappings of masculinity and femininity, thereby attaining some sort of ideological and experiential superiority? Cristina Degli-Epsoti asserts this stance when she claims that, "since Plato the myth of androgyny has been a metaphor for awareness, for spiritual learning and growth" (86). Sally Potter herself states that the film is "not so much about gaining identity as it is blurring identity. It's about the claiming of an essential self, not just in sexual terms. It's about the immortal soul" (qtd. in Ehrenstein, 7). Again, there is a notion of an 'essential self' that exists outside of the binary of gender, leading to the notion of androgyny as transcendence.

Larin McLaughlin discusses this conception in his essay on "Androgyny and Transcendence in Contemporary Corporate and Popular Culture". The concept of androgyny was first studied empirically in psychology when, in 1974, the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) was introduced as a psychological test to measure relative masculinity, femininity, and androgyny. Since then "the psychological concept of androgyny has had three distinct forms: androgyny as 'co-presence', 'fusion', and as 'transcendence'" (192). As the terms implies, co-presence describes someone who exhibits both typically masculine and feminine behavioral traits, while fusion implies a blending of the two distinctions. McLaughlin states:

> ***The third and final (and present) conception of androgyny functions using a model of 'transcendence', where androgyny indicates not a blend of masculine and feminine characteristics, but an absence of them, and where androgynes are perceived to rely on neither masculine nor feminine behaviors (193).***

At first glance, one might be inclined to believe that this model of androgynous transcendence has a sort of emancipatory potential – essentially 'liberating' the subject from patriarchal and heterosexist societal

constructions. This is certainly the ideological position that Potter's *Orlando* takes.

Contrary, however, to this presumed liberatory nature of transcendental androgyny, McLaughlin theorizes several problematic aspects of this conception. Central to his argument is the notion of disembodiment:

> ***The idealization of a (disembodied) transcendent androgyny can have several detrimental cultural effects: it disembodies gender ambiguity and, in so doing, disavows any connection of androgyny to queer sexuality and thus perpetuates the heteronormativity of late-capitalist institutions; it renaturalizes the disembodied white masculine liberal humanist subject; and finally, it participates in the valorization of a mobile individual agency by working explicitly against gendered collectivity (206).***

Do these effects constitute *Orlando* as contradictory or problematic to feminist and queer film theory? McLaughlin would argue that the supposed liberatory nature of transcendental androgyny is actually detrimental to the subject positions that it would purport to liberate [1]. Essentially, McLaughlin implies that *Orlando* is an instance of the "mainstream filmic disarticulation of queer sexuality and androgyny" (209). The fact that "disembodied transcendence cam also have the effect of renaturalizing the disembodied white masculine subject" (210) is a problem for queer and feminist theories and their projects of 'positive image' representation and visibility. Clearly, *Orlando* is not as ideologically stable as it would appear upon first viewing.

THE HERITAGE FILM: NATIONAL CINEMA, IDEOLOGY, & GENRE

Following the work on British national cinema by Andrew Higson, Claire Monk describes the heritage film debate: "a perceived cycle of recent British (or 'British'?) films set in the past … became the objects of a critical discourse which treated them as a unified entity–indeed, a genre–about which generalized claims could be made and to which a monolithic critique could be applied" (177). These films were pejoratively referred to as 'white-flannel' films, and, while the groupings varied from critic to critic, some common examples of supposed 'heritage films' are *Chariots Of Fire* (Hugh Hudson, 1981), *Another Country* (Marek Kanievska, 1984), *A Passage To India* (David Lean, 1984), *A Handful Of Dust* (Charles Sturridge, 1988), *A Room With A View* (James Ivory, 1985), *Maurice* (Ivory, 1987), and *Howards End* (Ivory, 1992), to name but a few. Monk asks us to remember, however, that "'heritage cinema' is most usefully understood as a critical construct rather than as a description of any concrete film cycle or genre" (183). The critique of the 'heritage film' was predominantly journalistic, and noticeably arose in 1987-8, "doubtless in reaction against the media saturation surrounding *A Room With A View*" (187).

What, then, was the argument behind the widespread anti-heritage critical position? Monk states that "the critique of heritage cinema depended on an insistent coupling–even conflation–of aesthetic and ideological claims" (180). The critics believed that the films were aesthetically conservative; uncinematic in that they favoured a static pictoralism rather than making the fullest use of the moving image; and their claims to 'quality' rested on a secondhand affiliation with 'high' literacy and theatrical culture (178). Essentially, heritage films are intrinsically ideological without taking into account, say, questions of empire, multiculturalism, race, class, gender, and so on:

> ***(They) project and promote a bourgeois or upper-class vision and version of the national past which was organized around a narrow Englishness rather than any notion of hybridity or regional diversity … Heritage films were conceived as a 'genre' centrally engaged in the construction of national identity. (179)***

According to Andrew Higson, there was a generalized conception among critics of heritage cinema (and British cinema in general) as a sort of "Althusserian ideological state apparatus 'by which the dominant representations of the past were reproduced and secured' by means of presentation to 'the public gaze'" (qtd. in Monk 188).

The notion of the 'heritage film' as a genre or cycle is problematized by ideology:

> ***(The heritage film's) attributed 'genre' characteristics are centrally organized around its ideological character, and around its supposed raison d'être as the projection of dominant 'national' values and a specific version of the 'national' past which serves a bourgeois, southern-English hegemony. It seems questionable whether a genre (or sub-genre) can be defined pre-eminently by***

> ***such ideological and national functions, since such matters are highly dependent on the interpretive judgment of the viewer; certainly, such a genre will be a particularly unstable and contested proposition… If heritage films do share common ideological and 'national' traits, it seems more useful to conceive of these 'heritage' characteristics as pan-generic, potentially present across a range of period genres. An important possibility this raises is that 'heritage' ideologies – and ideological functions – are not specific to films set in the past (192).***

Essentially, it seems that Monk equates 'heritage ideologies' with white, male, southern, aristocratic, empiricist ideological positions (which, it could be argued, are the dominant founding ideologies of England).

How does one situate *Orlando* into this conception of the heritage film, with all its seemingly negative ideological connotations? As a literary adaptation, the film does attain some sort of second-hand affiliation with 'high' literacy. However, the film troubles many other aspects of the heritage film critique. The Middle Eastern segment comments on empire and war: the Khan is frequently wary of Orlando as an ambassador of a country that "make[s] a habit of collecting countries" (Potter, 32). Orlando proves incapable of conforming to the ideologies of war and masculinity in his inability to accept the Archduke's declaration that the dying soldier is "not a man, he is the enemy!" (38). As previously mentioned, it is the experience of the atrocities of war that lead to Orlando's change of sex.

The film also employs formal strategies that undermine the supposedly 'uncinematic' nature of the period film. While the mise-en-scene does consistently exhibit a painterly symmetry, the film is quintessentially 'cinematic' in its privileging of the camera. Orlando addresses the camera frequently from the beginning of the film, subverting the suturing codes of mainstream cinematic practice. Degli-Eposti claims:

> ***The stream of consciousness that characterized Woolf's style is rendered through the direct relationship that is established between Orlando and the camera from the very outset of the film … Orlando shares visual pleasure with the viewer. When looking into the camera, Orlando directs his/ her pleasure to an invisible audience of which he/ she is constantly aware (83).***

While Orlando is a literary adaptation that features period costumes and a trajectory through British history, it cannot be said to belong to the (troubled) critical category of the 'heritage film', as it transgresses the patriarchal and empiricist ideologies central to the construct of the heritage film.

Instead, we can place *Orlando* within the relatively recent critical formulation of the 'post-heritage' film. Pidduck believes that "this term evokes an increasingly self-conscious, sexual and performative tendency of late 90s British costume film" (10). She also places *Orlando* alongside Peter Greenaway's *The Draughtsman's Contract* (1982), Derek Jarman's *Caravaggio* (1986) and *Edward II (*1991), and Isaac Julien's *Looking For Langston* (1988) in terms of "stylistic excess and a 'flat' postmodern scenic sense," referring to this grouping of films as "anti-heritage" (105). Although the 'anti/post-heritage' film as a critical construct is still in its infancy, Sarah Gilligan asserts that, in differentiating the heritage from the post-heritage film, 'the most significant shift was towards an overt focus upon the ways in which costume functions in the construction and performance of gendered identity" (71). Essentially, since the heritage film is seen as inherently ideological, a new vocabulary is needed to describe films that fall outside of this formulation, of which Potter's *Orlando* is exemplary.

CONCLUSION

In *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger says:

To be born a woman has been to be born, within an allotted and confined space, into the keeping of men. The social presence of women has developed as a result of their ingenuity in living under such tutelage within such a limited space. But this has been at the cost of a woman's self being split in two. A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself (46).

Therefore women turn themselves into images, objects of vision, sights to be consumed by an implied male spectator. This has been the legacy of medieval tradition, Renaissance painting, mainstream cinematic practice, and an internalized facet of many women's lived experience.

Virginia Woolf, in her writing and life, refused to internalize and normalize this patriarchal ideology. Sally Potter's 1992 filmic adaptation of *Orlando* goes so far

as to overtly challenge this conception. Rather than assimilate to inherent self-surveillance, Orlando gazes directly into the camera and thus into the eyes of the spectator.

Does this make *Orlando* a feminist text? *Orlando* has certainly been championed by feminists and queer theorists alike for its 'progressive' ideological position. However, as illustrated above, nothing is entirely as it seems. The film exists within a complex matrix of issues, from literary adaptation, to politics, to aesthetic and representational strategies, to questions of history and nation. Therefore, ideology in *Orlando* must be discussed in terms of the performance of gender, androgyny as transcendence, and the (post)heritagefilm debate. It is only through a detailed and conscientious examination of these issues that we can begin to interpret the film's "readable ideological orientation" (Monk, 181.)

FOOTNOTES

1 McLaughlin also discusses "the racialization of androgyny as white" and the "consequence of invisibility for androgynous black men" (196). While this is not central to a discussion of *Orlando* as such, it is important to note that "androgyny may work within a logic of white supremacy" (211).

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Si le vent soulève la neige ...

Anne-Louise Lalancette

Anne-Louise searches for answers in this article as to whether or not foreign film can offer alternative ways of understanding one's own position within a nation. Can foreign conceptions of being solve our own existential concerns with living in the Western world?

Chaque humain est un jour confronté à ce qui sépare sa propre réalité de celle des autres. Depuis plusieurs mois, le Québec baigne dans un climat social influencé par ce phénomène. Notre subjectivité, mariée à un manque de connaissance générale des autres cultures, entraîne des jugements parfois sévères, voire même racistes. Comment pouvons- nous prendre conscience de la réalité d'autrui si l'on n'y est pas directement confronté? Qu'est-ce qui nous permet de juger ce que nous ne connaissons pas? En fait, l'ignorance est l'ennemie de toute société, peu importe laquelle. Les arts ont toujours eu la mission de faire grandir l'esprit humain, faisant voyager d'un continent à l'autre ce qui définit une nation. Le cinéma est, depuis ses débuts, un ambassadeur pour ce type de communication entre les peuples. Lorsque le spectateur est confronté à un film non Nord-Américain, il peut prendre le temps de se questionner sur la vision du monde qui défile sur l'écran devant lui.

Présenter la réalité d'un peuple, ses conditions de vie et la mentalité qui découle de ces conditions est probablement la manière la plus efficace de briser les préjugés envers une nation. Le film de la réalisatrice belge Marion Hänsel, *Si Le Vent Soulève Les Sables* (2006), entre dans ce type de cinéma. Tiré du roman *Chamelle* de Marc Durin-Valois, ce film nous fait suivre le tragique destin d'une famille africaine ordinaire. Loin d'être romancé, le récit nous transporte dans une vue dangereusement réaliste de l'existence au coeur d'un état de survie constant.

À travers le calme et la beauté enivrante du désert africain, le spectateur est confronté à la cruauté de la nature humaine. Images révoltantes de prises de pouvoir, de sacrifices et de la perte injuste d'innocents. Lorsque Rahne, Mouna et leurs trois enfants croient avoir enfin trouvé un refuge où se reposer, des hommes armés les entourent, réclamant les vivres, le chameau et les femmes (voir photo 1). Pour sauver sa famille, le père envoie sa petite Shasha vérifier le terrain et tracer un passage entre les mines anti-personnelles. Sans crainte, l'enfant s'exécute comme si toute cette situation n'était qu'un jeu. Le chemin étant libre, les agresseurs acceptent de partir les mains vides. Alors qu'ils s'éloignent dans les dunes, une balle perdue atteint le plus jeune des fils. Lui que le père avait tenté de sauvegarder (refusant qu'il soit l'éclaireur), meurt dans les bras de ses parents. Ironie du sort? Cela se peut. Mais surtout, ce revirement nous rappelle encore une fois qu'il existe un monde où la mort n'exclut personne. Que la mort n'attend pas l'arrivée d'un téléthon pour se manifester en public.

Avec humilité, on ne peut que se sentir touché par le sort de cette famille qui ne demande qu'à survivre dans un monde dépourvu d'abondance. Nous voyons ces gens continuer, portés par un espoir dont nous ne soupçonnons pas l'importance. Dans la douleur et la perte de ce qu'ils ont, les rôles s'inversent. Cette fillette

qui voit son destin détourner la mort depuis le début du film, doit soutenir l'espoir. Shasha doit veiller sur son père, et le garder en contact avec l'âme des disparus. La beauté humaine de ce personnage emplit l'écran autant que la chaleur qui se dégage des images. Nous sommes tous petits face à cette réalité que nous ne connaissons pas. Nous apprenons le sens de l'humanité, de ce qui nous lie les uns aux autres. Car sans tomber dans le sensationnalis-me, la forme quasi documentaire de ce film reflète une vérité dont le paradoxe entre l'horreur et l'espoir bouleverse. Bien que l'on sache qu'il s'agit d'une fiction, on croit en ce récit rempli de poésie et de fantômes.

Ici, au Québec, on n'a pas souvent la chance de voir des films de cette qualité universelle. En fait, les maisons de distribution ne croient pas assez en leur potentiel commercial pour leur laisser quelques écrans. Notre seule chance de les voir vient des festivals, comme celui de *Cinémania* (présentation de *Si Le Vent Soulève Les Sables* lors de la 13ième édition en 2007). Il faut chérir et profiter de cette possibilité d'être confronté à autre chose que notre quotidien. Quand on prend le temps d'observer le discours social qui nous entoure présentement, on ne peut que souhaiter que le vent soulève les dunes de neige qui séparent notre vie de celle des autres nations du monde. On ne peut que souhaiter que chacun ait la chance de raconter son histoire, de la partager avec l'humanité entière. Et qu'il y ait des gens prêt à les écouter.

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Edited by Catherine Benoit, Amanda D'Aoust.

Look At Me and Tell Me If You've Known Me Before: *Exploring Affect After Inland Empire*

Kate Rennebohm

Written in a style evoking the feeling of some of Deleuze's theories on affect, this article explores the author's own affective experience while watching David Lynch's *Inland Empire*. Perhaps an understanding of Deleuze is the best way to understand what IS actually going on in any of Lynch's films….

When I returned a second time to *Inland Empire* (David Lynch, 2007), after having seen it only two days before, I convinced an unwitting friend to accompany me to the film. When the lights came up in the theatre at the end of the three hour film, I noticed my friend's white knuckles gripping the seat in front of her. When I asked her if she was alright, she spectacularly replied, "I think I actually lost track of who I am!" Why is it that her response struck me then, and still does strike me, as the perfect response to this film? Did her (loss of) perception of her self echo my own experience? Did it echo the film's own experience of itself? By examining the film in terms of the concept of affect, I will attempt to answer some of these questions. I will also attempt that most difficult task of describing one's own affective response to something.

Inland Empire is a film perceiving itself; a film perceiving specific films; a film perceiving all film. A most basic, and inevitably false, description of the film presents Nikki Grace (Laura Dern), an actress, as she begins work on the new film, *On High In Blue Tomorrows*. Nikki soon learns that this film is actually a remake of a never-finished film from Eastern Europe. The production was effectively halted when the two lead actors were murdered. In addition to this information, within the first few minutes of the *Inland Empire*, we also see glimpses of 1920s Poland, a sitcom-esque space inhabited by giant anthropomorphic rabbits and a crying girl watching a television screen in a modern hotel room. Soon after, Nikki's role/ life/ identity begins to disintegrate, change, and multiply just as the various stories/ times/ places of the film do the same. The multiplicity and multifariousness of character, space, time, and meaning in *Inland Empire* preclude a traditional narrative approach to the film, both in watching it and recounting it here. What little narrative description I do attempt in this essay will simply be for the sake of providing clarity in this discussion.

As such, any narrative description of the film would be cursory and completely inadequate in explaining my friend's reaction to the film. Why did she lose track of herself? And, most importantly, why did she notice when she found herself again? We can lose ourselves in any number of activities throughout a day, and not experience this level of shock when we return to self-awareness. Perhaps, as Gilles Deleuze would say, "We are in the domain of the perception of affection, the most terrifying, that which still survives when all the others have been destroyed: it is the perception of the self by self, the affection-image." [1] This concept of the affection-image, or affect, must be outlined briefly before we can explore its relation to *Inland Empire*.

As part of his larger re-thinking of Henri Bergson's arguments about consciousness, movement, and perception, Deleuze identifies affection as occurring within a person, within the gap which opens between

the perception of something and the determination of a response to that perception. It is this gap, or centre of indetermination, with its individual processes of determining reaction, which Deleuze links to human subjectivity. [2] Within this gap between perception and action Deleuze also places Bergson's recollection-image: this is the mental image which allows us to recognize and respond to something through attentive recognition. Discussing the recollection-image and attentive recognition within the gap, Deleuze writes:

> ***Attentive recognition informs us to a much greater degree when it fails than when it succeeds. When we cannot remember, sensorymotor extension remains suspended, and the actual image, the present optical perception, does not link up with either a motorimage or a recollection-image which would re-establish contact. It rather enters into relation with genuinely virtual elements. Feelings of déjà vu or past 'in general' (I must have seen that man somewhere…), dream-images (I have the feeling that I saw him in a dream…), fantasies or theatre scenes (he seems to play a role that I am familiar with…).*** [3]

There is a connection in Deleuze's thinking between affect and this entry 'into relation with genuinely virtual elements' which will help us explore *Inland Empire* and my own reaction to the film. Affect is connected with these virtual elements in their shared location within each person's subjective gap between perception and action. When we cannot remember, and cannot find a response to something we perceive, we cannot close this gap, cannot cross it and, as such, affect roams; as the gap expands, so does the space in which affect operates. We can then see a first point of entry into *Inland Empire*—the majority of the film consists of aspects which cannot be placed, cannot be recollected, cannot be remembered – because they do not, and cannot, by our understanding of the world, exist. There are numerous elements of the film which fit this description (or, really, avoid any description). This experience is provoked, for example, by an event which occurs throughout the film: Nikki repeatedly encounters her own person existing outside of the self that she is now. Within the filmic space, these moments indicate to the viewer a larger, impossible simultaneity, a folding-over of time and space. As Deleuze writes, the viewer, unable to recognize this scene as realistic, would think to themselves: 'this is a fantasy,' or 'this is a dream' (and who among us does not remember thinking this, at one or another point, during a David Lynch film?). And, while such a conclusion may occur consciously, does arriving at this belief close the gap? Or does this grasping at the 'genuinely virtual' elements of dream and fantasy only extend and expand the affective gap in our consciousness? Other aspects of the film, and other theories concerning affect itself, suggest the latter is our answer.

In his article, "The Autonomy of Affect," Brian Massumi discusses affect, or intensity, in terms of the relationship between the stimulus and the embodied response, and the interchange between the conscious and autonomic responses to that stimulus. He states, "intensity is embodied in purely autonomic reactions most directly manifested in the skin – at the surface of the body, at its interface with things." [4] Massumi also separates these reactions of intensity from emotional reactions. Emotional reactions, unlike reactions of intensity, are dictated by the quality of the stimulus, and these are reflected in variations of breath and heartbeat. [5] While these emotional reactions are accessible to consciousness, reactions of intensity are not: intensity is a "non-conscious, never-tobe- conscious autonomic remainder." [6] Throughout the article, Massumi addresses various aspects of the things which may stimulate or limit these responses of intensity.

One effect which limits intensity, according to Massumi, is matter-of-factness. Similarly, language, when used to emphasize matter-of-factness, or to verbalize "a more or less definite expectation, an intimation of what comes next in a conventional progression," [7] also prevents reactions of intensity. My own inability to completely describe the film here is likely a good indicator to those who have not seen the film that *Inland Empire* does not contain anything that can be described as traditionally matter-of-fact. Presumably, a film would require a fundamental plane on which 'real' things occur for factness to even be possible, and, while *Inland Empire* contains many planes on which things occur, none could be described as any more 'real' (both by our everyday standards of the possibilities of reality and traditional filmmaking standards of how to present reality) than the other.

Rather, *Inland Empire* falls easily into the categories which, according to Massumi, open up possibilities for intensity. The first of these categories concerns linearity: "Intensity would seem to be associated with non-linear processes: resonation and feedback that momentarily suspend the linear progress of the narrative present from past to future." [8] *Inland Empire*, as a film, could

be said to consist almost entirely of these moments suspended in linear progress. While the scenes which compose the film might, on occasion, seem to follow the rules of convention within themselves–including a linear progression from beginning to end–this breaks down the minute we enter the next sequence of the film: we are constantly reminded that there is no real linearity in the film. How can there be any such linearity when one or many characters from the past live 'now,' characters in modern dress appear in the 'past', and Nikki can return to 'yesterday' to watch herself rehearse? This disjunction of time is one of the ways the film approaches another of Massumi's designations: "Intensity is the unassimilable." [9] *Inland Empire's* seemingly impossible presentation of time, however, is only one factor of the unassimilability of the film.

From my description of the film so far, it would seem a reasonable question to ask why anyone would watch this film under the rubric of narrative at all. Why not simply accept the film as experimental, as a series of strange and beautiful images strung together? Admittedly, in my own experience of watching *Inland Empire* the first time, there were periods during the three hours where I let myself wander in that interpretational direction. However, before I could step too far down that path, the film would always pull me back; this was, for me, caused by the use of specific lines within the film. Similar to the doubling of characters/ actors in the different time periods and places, certain lines are repeated throughout the film in wildly different circumstances. Two examples include, "Look at me and tell me if you've known me before," and, "Some people have a way with animals." And though, of course, the repetition of these lines across the film do not have a narrative explanation, they seem to imply, and to taunt, that, somewhere–buried within this film–there is a master plan, there are answers, there is some sort of narrative. It seems that you cannot approach this film as containing a narrative, but you also cannot approach the film as being entirely without narrative. In this way, the film is unassimilable. And there are, of course, myriad other ways: I, personally, have never been able to assimilate the rabbits.

It is important to note that I am not discussing these aspects of Massumi's work simply to say, "*Inland Empire* fulfills these requirements and is, therefore, a film which causes affect in its viewers." Affect relies on individual centres of indetermination, and, as such, I could not make a claim of affect on another viewer's behalf. Rather, I have chosen to employ these arguments because Massumi's article opens productive avenues to voice my own interaction with the film and to approach that impossible task–discussing one's own affective response to something. As stated by the remarks quoted from "The Autonomy of Affect," intensity occurs outside of consciousness and, as such, cannot be described. As well, the discussion of affect is further problematized by its relation to the virtual, those immanent elements of our existence which exist outside of the actual, or perceivable, in the space of the becoming-actual. [10] Massumi further discusses the relation between the virtual and affect:

> ***The autonomy of affect is its participation in the virtual. Its autonomy is its openness. Affect is autonomous to the degree to which it escapes confinement in the particular body whose vitality, or potential for interaction, it is. Formed, qualified, situated perceptions and cognitions fulfilling functions of actual connection or blockage are the capture and closure of affect.*** [11]

We can see then that it is impossible to discuss affect in any direct sense–if we were to become aware of the experience of affect, we would effectively and immediately end that experience. Similarly, the virtual cannot be described because the moment it enters a space available to description it has become actual.

This connection between the virtual and affect presents another way of discussing *Inland Empire*. When reapproaching the film on DVD, I discovered that watching one or two scenes individually, separated from the whole of the film, entirely changed my experience of them. On their own, they were only mildly strange scenes, albeit remarkable for their unusual use of sound, lighting and other numerous techniques. If we compare this to the night I watched the entire film, the moment when I took a break in the third act presents a distinct difference. As I hurriedly turned on all of the lights on the way to the kitchen, I slowly realized that I was absolutely terrified. The power and effect of *Inland Empire* are found not, or at least not entirely, in the construction of the individual scenes, but rather they are found in the space between the scenes. It is in these spaces–the territory that the film does not cover, the questions it does not answer (but distinctly presents), the virtual elements which are gone, have already-happened, before we realize it–that affect is able to operate on us.

As I have already outlined all the ways in which it is impossible to talk about affect and the virtual, how can

I now describe the way affect was able to operate on me as I watched *Inland Empire*? Here, again, I return to my friend's response to the film as a starting point. Just as Kristina was able to comment on the shock of finding herself again, I noticed certain things when I returned from being lost in the film, or rather, lost in my own affect. Even though I cannot describe exactly what I felt while in that affective state, I can attempt to describe the effects of returning from that state and of the remnants of affect. These were most noticeable, for me, at moments during the final sequences of the film; particularly, the sequence in which Nikki encounters impossible images on a movie screen, and then encounters the Phantom in the halls above the movie theatre. In my experience of the film, these scenes constitute the epitome at which we, the viewer, have been completely removed from any logical understanding, any recognizable plane, with which to approach the experience of the film. As the character of Nikki approaches the movie screen in the empty movie theatre, she sees various unsettling images onscreen: First, she sees an image of herself which could only be possible if the movie screen was simultaneously, impossibly, both a camera and projector. Nikki then sees an image that we have seen earlier in the film in which Nikki speaks to the camera/ an unnamed listening figure. Next, there is an image of that same unnamed figure on the steps of the movie theatre, an image which, again, could only be possible if Nikki herself were a camera and a projector at that very moment. Finally, we see another impossible image on the movie screen (within the real screen), that of Nikki walking up those same stairs. These things were, for me, at those moments, so far outside of the realm of physical possibility that were no questions to be asked; there was only wonder.

At moments throughout these images, the self-reflexivity of watching a movie screen onscreen allowed me momentary escape from a complete immersion in the experience of total metaphysical breakdown. It was in these moments that I became aware of my hands. While that may seem extremely dull, I would qualify that statement in that I became aware of my hands in a way which only occurs while I watch films. Really, I should say that, when this occurs, I become aware of the absence of the normal experience of my hands. In what is perhaps a strange link to Massumi's claim that that affect is "most directly manifested in the skin–at the surface of the body, at its interface with things," [12] I become aware that my hands do not feel separate from those things it is touching–my legs, the armrest, the air. I cannot tell where one begins and the other ends. Beyond this, I have the distinct sensation that, if I were to move my elbows, my arms/ fingers/ wrists would move right through these other solid objects touching them. Paradoxically, I can also clearly feel that my hands have a surface, a limit, because I can feel the inside, the internal, moving; moving as though the surface were expressing that movement. Because the surface actually expresses nothing (my hands remain quietly folded in my lap) a schism opens as the inner rends away from the outer. This makes me dizzy. But, then, the film grabs my attention completely again, and I forget.

And so, as Kristina tells me of the terror of realizing that she had left herself behind, I shake my hands, and the effect of the film begins to fade. I cannot tell you anymore about the affect of *Inland Empire* except, perhaps, that there were moments in the film when the affective response crossed into the emotional (quantifiable) response of pure terror. By outlining theoretical arguments about affect, and arguing that *Inland Empire* presents an ideal experiential terrain for engagement with affect, I hope to have put forward a possibility for understanding, or at least approaching, one's own individual affective experience within the realm of cinema. This avenue for exploration hinges on the fact that, while I experience the remnants of affect in my hands, I'm sure others do not. As such, while *Inland Empire* and films like it may be terrifying, they might, if we allow them, also present a way to understand how our minds and bodies bring us to that terror and why.

FOOTNOTES

1 Deleuze, Gilles. The Movement-Image. p. 67-68. Deleuze also notes that "the interval is not merely defined by the specialization of the two limit-facets, perceptive and active. There is an in-between. Affection is what occupies the interval, what occupies it without filling it in or filling it up…it is a coincidence of subject and object, or the way in which the subject perceives itself, or rather experiences itself or feels itself 'from the inside.' The Movement- Image. p. 65

2 Ibid. The Time-Image. p. 47

3 Ibid. The Time-Image. p.54-55

4 Massumi, Brian. "The Autonomy of Affect." p. 25

5 Ibid. "The Autonomy of Affect." p. 25

6 Ibid. "The Autonomy of Affect." p. 25

7 Ibid. "The Autonomy of Affect." p. 25-26

8 Ibid. "The Autonomy of Affect." p. 26

9 Ibid. "The Autonomy of Affect." p. 27

10 Massumi notes, "The virtual is a lived paradox where what are normally opposites coexist, coalesce, and connect; where what cannot be experienced cannot but be felt – albeit reduced and contained." "The Autonomy of Affect." p.30

11 Ibid. "The Autonomy of Affect." p. 35

12 Massumi, Brian. "The Autonomy of Affect." p. 25

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Edited by Paul Monticone, Amanda D'Aoust

About the Design & deviantART

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Editor's Note (2021): This article is in relation to the original design of these articles on the previous version of the Synoptique website. In order to see the design being referred to in this article, please see the legacy version of Edition 11 which preserves the visual approach being discussed.

The synoptic image for this edition (the horizontal image above) is pieced together using five works taken from the mega artist-sharing site deviantART, and they offer the collection of articles in *Synoptique 11* a curiously familiar, crafted, and careful loveliness—a style of design decidedly 'deviantART-esque'.

2 million people will visit deviantART today, submitting somewhere around 70 000 works. You can develop a sense of this site's importance if you compare this with YouTube's 65 000 daily submissions, the majority foisted without any thoughts of being art. There is a ticker at the top of deviantART counting up the number of submissions. When I started writing this article, the ticker, which has been running since the site opened in 2000, reported 53 million 189 thousand 359 artworks online. When I'm done there will be about 1400 more. With numbers like these it would seem ridiculous to talk about a deviantART style. In the presence of such big numbers, does the word 'art' start to falter?

If museums could be lived in they'd be like deviantART. The site itself is drab and functional. The squatters bring the colour, the tenants tend the new blooming galleries. To look at a work on deviantART is to see it simultaneously with many others, and always with the sense of the artist being nearby, peeking in. Like MoMA, deviantART lends the pieces on display a coherence by virtue of its space: the building itself tells us how to see them.

On the other hand, there is a lot about deviantART which keeps the casual gallery visitor out. The community is kept contained by its shibboleths, its traditions, and runes (member names are prefixed by a whole series of special characters identifying them to other members)—it is guarded by its own etiquette and oiled by quick allegiances. And, of course, there is the lingo: artists are 'deviants', works are 'deviations'. With hefty roots in Japanese anime and manga, the site — which is impressively international even though the language is English — is dominated by a sensibility which, in the eyes of many, marks it as a fringe culture. That being said, it is a massive fringe. There is something poignantly teenager-ish about deviantART —the site just *seems* young. Yet the pulsing potential of the environment is anything but shallow, superficial, or transient.

The site was started by web geeks who specialized in application 'skins'–little bits of colour and design you can use to change the look of your favourite program or browser, like when you change your Windows desktop theme. A new skin allows you to re-decorate your virtual world, to personalize it, to change your mood, to stave off boredom. The metaphor of skin — touching, shedding, stripping, wearing, exposing, and sharing — is central to what deviantART has become. This metaphor suits the deviant's penchant for photo and image manipulation. Since so many of the works

are fetishistically rescued from the real through the secret and the leet, through Photoshop incantations and kick-ass Illustrator tricks, the skins multiply. The web site becomes a layer over the work, the work a layer over the original image, and the original image a layer over the creator. These layers define a very definite body, and though it may indeed one day be outgrown, it is not discarded. It is in a museum.

DeviantART as a whole is an ever-expanding body of work. There is the sense that individuality must be impossible because it is so massive. The individual artists all have their names obscured by the huge multilayer fringe culture of web tech. The images so often predictably strive to exist indifferently and yet appear so uniformly polished. The sheer volume makes uniqueness statistically impossible.

However, this experience is not a limitation. For this *Synoptique* layout, expressing the ideas authors were getting at in their articles was as simple as typing keywords into the deviantART search engine and snapping up the deviations as they surfaced. The community's extensive vocabulary, its readiness to offer its 'deviation' on any idea one approaches it with, gives the images their final layer — a branding, a tattoo — of their participation in a culture much larger than themselves alone. Like a museum, deviantART gives us much more help in thinking 'through' a work of art than just thinking 'about' one.

The deviantArt slogan is "Where Art Meets Application" referring both to the site's origins as a place to 'skin applications,' and its interest in matching art to walls that support them and with the communities that appreciate them.

The *Synoptique* designer, Kina de Grasse, asked the artists, through the deviantART messaging system, for permission to use their work. They happily agreed, and we salute them for their talent, vision, and curiosity. It was wonderful to reach the individuals behind the art and to receive their help in creating more connections.

Kina de Grasse
http://www.kina-ink.com/
http://kina.deviantart.com/

Artist: **Roman Gordeev**
URL: http://softlanding.deviantart.com/
Original: http://softlanding.deviantart.com/art/soap-bubbles-78893478
Article: For A Sentiment of Beat Infancy: Conceptions of Childhood in the American Avant-garde

Artist: **"Ellenoir"**
URL: http://ellenoir.deviantart.com
Original: http://ellenoir.deviantart.com/art/empty-64425947
Article: Antonioni–La Grande tétralogie du malaise moderne: une étude visuelle de l'absence et du vide

Artist: **Nicoletta Fersini**
URL: http://bewel.deviantart.com/
Original: http://bewel.deviantart.com/art/marble-quot-1-78846100
Article: Eye and Brain, Torn Asunder: Reading Ideology in Sally Potter's Orlando

Artist: **Juuso Koivunen**
URL: http://outeq.deviantart.com
Original: http://outeq.deviantart.com/art/Arctic-Desert-21780399
Article: Si le vent soulève la neige …

Artist: **David Steiner**
URL: http://muetze.deviantart.com/
Original: http://muetze.deviantart.com/art/shattered-reality-8654168
Article: Look At Me and Tell Me If You've Known Me Before

Edited by Amanda D'Aoust