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Vision in Ruins

By

Michelle Yap Dizon

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Rhetoric

and

the Designated Emphasis

in

Film

and

the Designated Emphasis

in

Women, Gender, and Sexuality

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Trinh T. Minh-ha, Chair

Professor Kaja Silverman

Professor Colleen Lye

Fall 2011

Abstract

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Vision in Ruins explores the practice of art, video, and visibility in an era of globalization. In contrast to past writings on video beholden to its mechanisms and the legacy of western modernism, my inquiry approaches video from a philosophical, postcolonial, and feminist perspective. Sourced to its Latin root, the word *video* translates as "I see," a statement that illuminates how video encloses a sense of vision that is not only solely bound with the eyes, but is more broadly entwined with the transparency of a subject, its sight, and its presence. *Video* (I see) is the understanding of vision as an open field, one that is coupled with power and that I relate to both the visualities of modern warfare and liberal thought as it pervades the discourses of art and human rights. Against such understanding of vision as an open field, my dissertation approaches vision as a restricted site. With each assertion of *video*, I suggest that a boundary is drawn.

My dissertation approaches video from the other side of this boundary, from the position of subjects displaced by the political histories of global war, migration and exile, and describes their attempt to rework the field of vision. Rather than treat video as an object, I treat video as a lens onto the themes of vision, aperture, passage, opacity, disappearance, calling, and ruins. *Vision in Ruins* problematizes the openness of vision and seeks to write a different story of video. It reworks the visual as one attuned to the conditions of invisibility and unspeakability that often become elided in favor of 'appearance' in the forms of liberal thought. It suggests that when one works from the ruins, one invites a renewal of politicized practice, where appearance is not an object but a modality and where each appearance is also, always, a disappearance. The orientation is not to the 'appearance' of alterity but rather, but to the invisible, the unspeakable, and to the temporality of

other life worlds. In order to rethink visibility in an era of globalization, I suggest we must learn to work in a gap between visibility and alterity. It is a gap that shifts art's relation to the cinematic, to war, to human rights, and to conceptions of the global-- all of which I reconsider in light of a visibility of relation that works in a space where what remains invisible and unspeakable might direct us toward a different sense of world and how we see it.

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para sa inyo,
mahal na mahal kong magulang,
Remedios Yap Dizon & Liberato Rosario Dizon

In memory of my father
Liberato Rosario Dizon
August 17, 1926- November 10, 2011

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Introduction

This dissertation began for me with *Civil Society*, a three-channel video installation that I started working on in 2005 when Hurricane Katrina and the revolts on the outskirts of Paris happened within a month of each other. As these events reached me through the television, I had just moved back to Los Angeles, the city where I was born and raised. Both Katrina and the revolts in France revealed something important about the idea of *race*, which was that far from being essentialized in the body, race and racism was more clearly what the scholar and prison abolitionist Ruthie Gilmore has described as “the state-sanctioned and/or legal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerabilities to premature death in distinct yet densely interconnected political geographies.”¹ For Gilmore race is not housed in the skin, but produced by powers that subject individuals to lives of precarity. Race is the question of who is more likely to die young.

Just as this constellation of occurrences between Katrina and the revolts threw the operations of race, racism, and racialization into relief, they also raised an awareness in me that the city in which I was living, the city to which I had returned, had also been the site of an event with much resonance, the 1992 Los Angeles Uprising. But even as I was born and raised in Los Angeles to parents from the Philippine diaspora, and even as I was a teenager at the time of the 1992 Uprising, when I tried to remember anything about the event I found, nothing. Try as I might, I had no real memory of it-- no real memory, except for the Rodney King tape. Some thirteen years later, I began to try to understand what had happened in this lacuna, a work out of absence that would take me to archives of African American history, sites of the LA uprising, France where I would discover a new relation to the past through the events of the present, and perhaps most pertinent for this discussion, to interior of video itself, and the specificity of its role during the Rodney King trial.

The jury viewed three versions of the tape, one in real time, one slowed to 12 percent of real time, and one slowed to 6 percent of real time. In these three temporalities lay a sense of the video being offered as evidence, as if with this slowing down, time might dilate to allow for the jury to really see and make sense of what happened. Thus, the proposition of video in this instance was to offer the possibility to complete the proposition of "I see" with a predicate to complete the sentence and to say "I see what happened." In the case of the Rodney King trial, "I see," became a condition of collective judgment. The "I see" of video was a condition for the "we see" of the jury. The proposition made by video would move from an individual to a collective proposition, a legal judgment that would determine the fate of the four police officers on trial for the brutal beating. Yet when a jury acquitted the police officers and the uprising broke out across Los Angeles, what those on the streets during the uprising made clear is a profound difference at the site of this "we." There was a contradiction between the "we see" of the jury and the "we see" on the streets, and thus, also a contradiction in the proposition made by video that distanced it from its status as proposition was being contested in the political field. If the jury could say that "we see innocence" then those in the revolts could say that "we see brutality." In this difference lay the fact that one way of seeing could become universalized.

I started to work with the Rodney King tape, not so much as a eye-witness or as the truth to an event, but rather, as a kind of repository for cultural memory. In this repository lay not only the event of the Rodney King beating caught on video, but a whole set of apparatus like the technology of video, the juridical and legal frameworks through which video was used, and the fundamental question of interpretation that cut through all understandings of judgment and its determination. I also started to ask questions about time and the kind of malleability of time as evidenced in the use of the tape during the trial. As we consider the way that the lens of the camera is often compared to an eye, we might begin to think about the time of that eye.



"I see." When an eye is dilated, the pupil is enlarged to make the eye more visible or seen for a doctor's examination. With dilation, sight gradually escapes the seer, and what is in front begins to appear blurred and indistinct. The subject whose eyes are dilated grows vulnerable, both subject to the examination of the optometrist and subject to the flood of light that illuminates nothing more than vision itself, at its limit. The lens of a camera, so often compared to an eye, might be analogized here, but one cannot consider the camera apart from the network of forces that constitute it. Much like the scenario of a patient at the optometrist's office, video is not only an eye just as the patient being examined is not only an eye. At the optometrist, we have not only a naturalized eye, but a whole technology of health, the discipline of medicine, the machines or chemical compounds that enable this science, the various metaphors for vision and extensions of masterful subjectivity that inform it, the economy of health care, and the question of knowledge and power that determine how it is that the examiner gained the credential to be able to examine this eye and formulate an assessment of its condition. In other words, we have a whole apparatus that speaks of the inextricable web that creates this instance of the dilated eye. In the Rodney King tape too, there is an apparatus, but it is a juridical and legal apparatus, just as it is an instance of vision and its metaphors, just as it is an instance of understanding of subjectivity. What this event reveals about video is that video alone, in fact, sees nothing. Video is not a device for seeing, nor is it an image produced from this seeing, but it is deployed as a proposition as to the veracity of an event of vision.

As I began to work with the Rodney King videotape, I also began to travel to the outskirts of Paris and the sites where the revolts took place. The events of France in 2005 were triggered by the deaths of two teenagers in Clichy Sous Bois, Bouna Traoré and Zyed Benna. They had been running from the police whose abuse of power and outward racism in the suburbs of Paris is experienced as an everyday occurrence. On this day, rather than become subjected to this everyday violence, the two young men ran and hid in a power substation where they were electrocuted. Their deaths sparked the revolts that would continue for three weeks and would spread through many areas of France. A state of emergency, whose legitimacy dates from the French occupation of Algeria, was declared. The revolts were met with a depoliticization of the actions that were happening in the streets and an erasure that exists until this present day of not only the anger and frustration at the systematized violence of everyday life, but also, at the grief and loss that exists for these two young men.

In Clichy Sous Bois there are many words that exist in the landscape. They are written on the walls where Bouna once lived, standing as a clear call to justice. It is the irrecoverable loss, the cry, in which the dead are summoned by name. Who hears this cry? This is the question and commitment that remains for me as I struggle to understand the way that "life" is shaped in this world and to understand the forces that come to make some lives so much more precarious than others and how might it be possible to invite a consideration of the losses that are still not seen and stories that remain to be told? The politics of the lacuna rest here. If the "I see" of video means to accept the languages and histories that currently exist to describe the world, then *Civil Society* imbues video with a subjectivity that refuses such vision. It starts not from the site of saying "I see" but rather, "I don't see." Rather than presenting a vision of ruins, *Civil Society* offered a vision in ruins.

Sometimes, one finds oneself in the midst of a historical constellation where an insight is made available that had been impossible to understand before. It was this that happened to me over the course of working on *Civil Society* when I began to understand, in an intimate way, the way experience and feeling might guide action, the necessity of opening a space for such insight, and of the frontiers as they exist not only outside of the self but deep within. Over the course of working

on *Civil Society*, I came to understand that one of the primary struggles in which postcolonial and diasporic visibility is engaged is a struggle for memory as it vitiates the present. It is a struggle that begins not with what is remembered, but with what has been forgotten, with affects for which one has no words, and with experiences that remain unknown but deeply felt.

When I was working in France, I began searching for something that I did not yet know. I spoke with many people involved in the movements, young people in the banlieues, students, scholars, activists-- one of the most important conversations that I had, was with the scholar Nacira Guénif, whose deep insight into the politics of postcolonial France and became an important touchstone in the video.² Most importantly, I felt drawn to the site of the Clichy and to the traces left in the landscape one year after the revolts that bore witness to the deaths of Bouna and Zyed. Little did I know at the time that this exploration outward would also refract inward. I would question my desire to know, and encounter a frontier within subjectivity that emerged across the banlieues. Looking at these images later, transformed by the experience, I would write:

I am the daughter of immigrants
I am no one's daughter
I have no needs
I see nothing
I will forget
And this makes it possible to continue
And this makes it possible to continue

In the contradiction between "I am and the daughter of immigrants" and "I am no one's daughter" is an infinite riff. What this journey to Clichy Sous Bois helped me to understand was how fundamental this position, this history, this circumstance beyond my choosing was to the approach that I would take to video. To understand my relation to the field, emerging from this position, situated me very far from the claims to universality within "I see." And yet I was seeing, and I was trying to see what cannot be seen, trying to give visual form to experience, trying to tell a story that was neither mine or not mine, but belonged to not belonging. Storytelling, understood as "the other" of official history, is something that is intimately connected to our everyday experience. Walter Benjamin said that we are constantly negotiating that way that our experience is co-opted by the terms of power and global warfare. In his essay "The Storyteller," he writes "for never has experience been contradicted more thoroughly than strategic experience by tactical warfare, economic experience by inflation, bodily experience by mechanical warfare, moral experience by those in power."³ If we follow Benjamin's logic, each of us, as individuals, are caught within various fields of force that not only shape but actually contradict or co-opt our experience. We are, what Benjamin calls, "tiny, fragile human bodies" caught in the wind of larger processes and the intimate experience that each of our tiny fragile human bodies holds might be understood as subjugated knowledges-- ways of knowing that are disqualified as knowledge or that power attempts at every turn to keep in check.

In contrast to the violent appropriation of experience by such processes, Benjamin introduces the practice of the storyteller as one who takes human life as her material and "fashions the raw material of experience, her own and that of others, in a solid and useful, and unique way." This act, of reflecting upon and retelling the experiences of human life, is a practice of building out of the ruins. It is the glimmer of hope that surrounds each act of remaking and that I hold open as the possibility inherent not only in being an artist, but also and more importantly, in being in this world. From the other side of history, experience is forcefully silenced, sent into darkness and



buried beneath the vacuous forms of forgetting upon which the containment of democracy depends.

Civil Society evokes how precarity continues to be the inheritance of all of who occupy the position of invisibility. The lives of these two youths, Bouna and Zyed, are my life too. I did not know them, I never spoke with them, but with them and with the conditions of their young lives cut short, too short, something in me died too. Their deaths refracted into my life for how was I complicit with the systems that allowed for such violence? What was I doing to change it? Just as I died with the deaths of Bouna and Zyed, something in me was also reborn. This was a sense of the struggle in which each of us are engaged, for their deaths could be said to be based upon ways of life that go unquestioned, ways of being that remain utterly distanced from loss, ways of seeing that promote individual solutions rather than understanding the interwoven texture of our living together. Such began my journey of considering what is at stake in making videos that often revolve around not seeing, around not knowing, around absence, around something that has been forgotten or perhaps never known, around something that cannot be seen or is willingly left unseen.

This writing seeks a different conception of video that is neither located in the cameras and devices of video, or located in the images and sounds produced by video, but instead, find itself as a proposition that is made in the field of vision. The word "video" can be traced to its Latin root "videre" which means "to see." *Video* is the first-person singular present-tense form of *videre* or "I see." In contrast to the vision that this root might suggest, my works, as a maker of videos, have often been engaged with not seeing, with not knowing, with absence, with something that has been forgotten or perhaps never known, with what cannot be seen or is willingly left unseen. When the "video" appears in this dissertation, it is understood through its etymological root of "I see." One might understand this writing to occur not about video, but *through* video, for it is through a conception of video housed in the root of "I see" that it constellates. Rather than treat video as an object, it treats is as an opening onto the themes of vision, aperture, passage, opacity, disappearance, calling, and ruins. Working to expand the kinds of propositions that video might make and the different uses to which it might be put, my dissertation approaches video as an *aperture* onto the times and spaces of displacement, migration, and exile. It works across media, toward the struggles *within* visuality that face not only contemporary video practice, but the exploration of postcolonial visuality. In this dissertation, I explore how video's propositions find themselves in various guises of *video* traced back to its root in "I see." I press a question of seeing, not seeing, and power as it draws the contours of the field of vision and comes to shape the terms of visuality in which the 'global' is itself understood.

The filmmaker, Raul Ruiz, once called the images produced out of globalization "utopian images" because while everywhere, they seem to suggest happiness, in truth they ultimately served to derealize the world. They produced not only a psychic distance from reality but a material distance for these "utopian images" foster a sense of being in the world in which the populations of the global south, the "vast mass of invisible men whom we never see, and never wish to see," need not be seen. If *what* one sees is one way of thinking through the question of globalization, Ruiz suggests that that any analysis of these images would need to be preceded by a different question. He writes, "before any investigation of utopian images themselves, a naive question occurs to me, one I am not sure we can answer. Do we all see the same things?" In this light of this perhaps naive, but altogether pressing question, "do we all see the same things?" we move from asking *what* is seen to *how* this seeing takes place, from the visible to the visual.

But allow me to suggest that we must go one step further than thinking even about visuality. This next step is *plurivisuality*, a consideration of visuality through the lens of global processes. As the philosopher Raul Fonet-Bentacourt has offered, to see the world "pluri-visually" is to trace an alternative to the neoliberal globalization of our times.⁴ It is the site of a struggle that is not pulled from the air, but instead is grounded in life worlds from below. For Fonet-Benacourt,

plurivisionality does not begin from a zero degree of history but instead, takes the reductionist dynamics of marginalization and exclusion within the dynamics of globalization as its starting point. For Bentacourt, the times and spaces of globalization are a multilayered plane, one in which the processes of marginalization and exclusion relegate cultures to the second plane of a "cultural reservation." He writes, "in this way, their connection with the course of history is completely severed and their right to intervene with their own voice in the processes in which humanity crystallizes its future is trampled."⁵

Plurivisionality involves thinking across multiple planes and asking how the disappearance of these other planes are involved in the function of neoliberal thought. Fornet-Bentacourt offers that "by making the surface of the planet uniform, neoliberal globalization takes hold of the contextualization of the world; that is, it arrogates for itself the power to configure the forms [contornos] of culture. As contexts become uniform and part of a structural contextuality perfectly identifiable in any region of the planet, human cultures lose their materiality."⁶ What is at stake in plurivisionality are the very contours of culture as they come to describe the planet-- for all those subjects who find themselves forced to live beneath forms of spatial and temporal occupation, for all those subjects removed from a sense of their own place, for all those subjects whose voices demand the shape of their own existence.

Visuality, as it is staged across the Pacific, acts as a fulcrum in this work in order to explore relation to vision that emerged after the Second World War with the US bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. With this event, the orientation of vision shifted from the horizontal axis of quattrocento perspective, to include a vertical axis of modern warfare. That visual works that fill this discussion-- On Kawara, Shigeko Kubota, Yong Soon Min, Tran T. Kim Trang, Trinh T. Minh-ha and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha -- come to offer a counterpoint to both this horizontal and vertical axis. These works are not treated as objects to be studied, but as theorizations themselves, ones that I place in dialogue with written texts, be it poetry, theory, or literature. But like a spinning top, the point around which one pivots sometimes leaps. It is such leaps, linked by an energy of motion, that move this study away from the waters of the Pacific to other scenes where a work within and upon vision is elaborated.

Chapter 1, "Video as Vision" explores visuality as it is staged across global north and south and explores how *video*, or "I see," takes place in a liberal humanist framework. Rather than ask about subjective sight, this is a de-subjectivized understanding of vision, one that considers the structure of feeling that is assumed in the relation between image and spectator. Working primarily with the rhetoric of images from a UNICEF campaign entitled "Can You See Me?," this chapter interprets the structure of feeling that such images create for the viewer as a visuality of liberalism, one in which the figure from the global south is assumed to offer an appeal to the spectator of the global north. Yet, as images of the south emerge within the circuits of the north, the structure of feeling that these representations evoke show how liberal thought underwrites these visualities. Visualities of liberalism pose the visual relation as an open space, one in which the recognition that one might respond with in saying, "I see you," is evacuated of recognition and staged as a monetary donation. The logic remains within liberalism's doxa of maximum efficiency. I suggest that to ask the question "can you see me?" is a depoliticization of vision, a mythology of an open visual space that might be bridged across global north and south, and the naturalization of an economic doxa. It is an appropriation of alterity in which all that the figure from the global south represented in the image desires is *to be seen*. The visuality of liberalism falls in continuity with a legacy of Manicheanism and proposes two contradictory proximities: on the one hand an appropriated identity and on the other an infinite distance. Against the question of "Can you see me?" I suggest that Ariella Azoulay's theorization provides a much needed counterpoint.⁷ From the other side of the image, Azoulay suggests that the question one would ask themselves is "Why are they looking at

me?" a question which shapes the field of vision from a restrictive rather than from an open position. In the way the question that emerges from the image are the ways that a visuality of liberalism appropriates alterity. It is with this challenge to the appropriation of alterity that each of my subsequent chapters will be concerned.

Chapter 2, "Video as Presence," will return to the devices and images around which video is most often spoken and ask how art that has explore the limit of video provide one perspective toward video's undoing. It takes the statement of "I see" into the rhetorics of presence that surround discussions of video's temporality. While video entered the art scene as antithetical to the art establishment, much of the writing on video either tried to place video on par with or antagonistic to its art historical predecessors -- in either case, video remained beholden to western modernism. Yet in a number of these early accounts rests a provocative discussion of the spaces and times of video, ones that still bear upon the discourse and help to facilitate an exploration of video's contours. In this chapter, I explore the questions of space and time within two canonical essays of video theory, Fredric Jameson's "Video" and Rosalind Krauss' "Video: the Aesthetics of Narcissism." In both cases, video comes to be described as a form of temporal enclosure. One is said to either enter a void deluged by the time of a total flow, or one is imprisoned by the utter collapse of the present. Between these contours drawn around the idea of video we find that video has been understood not simply around the camera and its devices, but around the specific temporality that its mechanisms are said to confer. In this chapter, I develop the implications that such framings of space and time hold for the question of subjectivity, and ask toward the racial and sexual politics of address and appearance that have been presumed in past discourses on video. Rather than consider video as an enclosure, I develop the emptiness which emerged in my previous chapter as an *aperture* out of which a different practice emerges, a work in which video is put to the task of reimagining the multiple temporalities of the world and the self. I elaborate this temporalization of space and spatialization of time through the work of the video artist, Shigeo Kubota, whose practice between Asia and the United States shows video as a women's labor and as a work of translation between geographies, temporalities, languages, and selves. In Kubota's hands, video is no longer a proposition that is based on veracity, but instead where time itself is at stake.

Chapter 3, "Video as Passage" goes onto to develop the visuality between Asia and United States with On Kawara, whose negotiation with vision happens not only on the horizontal plane of quattrocento perspective, but also, on the vertical plane, with the virtualization of warfare. Video opens an aperture onto the registers of time and image, a passage that directs us toward the ways in which time and image have been addressed in the cinema and toward the vast interiors of history that awaken the creative capacity of video anew. In this chapter, I will move across media, with the works of On Kawara, Jean Luc-Godard, Mary Lucier, and Trinh T. Minh-ha, to locate a passage in which video (I see) opens laterally, to the possibilities that lie outside of a retinal understanding of the camera eye alone. In this passage, video is not the deadened site of a known entity but a journey onto a different awareness of time's registers and a way through the macrological and the micrological textures of history. By thinking of video apart from the camera eye, the horizon of this inquiry will touch upon the tension that is present in discussions of digital technology, where we seem return to the problem of representation and the rhetoric of realism that the machine-eye had founded. By exploring at the way artists have moved through the apertures of video, we are offered a glimpse into how the question of the eye be reframed, not as a proposition of truth or fiction, but instead, as a passage within time and a journey onto other sensual registers. If this chapter considers how video moves through the macrological and micrological textures of experience, the insides and outsides of history, then it is toward the question of history and its representation that I will turn to in my following chapter, which will take the aperture of video, to the boundaries that it draws around ethics and politics.

Chapter 4, "Video as Border," explores how video has been used as a metaphor for a distorted and reduced way of seeing and a construction of borders, is elaborated by the legendary Palestinian poet, Mahmoud Darwish, in his *Memory for Forgetfulness*, set in Beirut during the 1982 Israeli siege. In this text, Darwish presents video from two different positions: first, as a vision that emerges from outside of the Palestinian experience which desires to capture its tragedy, and second, as a vision that emerges from within the history of the Palestinian struggle and distorts the struggle into a narrow slogan. Between these two senses of video, emerging from both elsewhere and within, is a question of what forms of representation might be able to integrate public and private reality with the complex identities that emerge out of the war torn conditions. I also discuss the question of art war and suggests that if discussions concerning the work of art in times of war often revolve around the possible *effect* of art to enact change-- the way it might interrupt politics, or its capacity to transform consciousness-- there is an aspect to art that might become eclipsed if the relation between art and war is only understood as a matter of causality. If, on the one hand, there are demands placed upon the artist to create the conditions for the appearance of alterity, then on the other hand, there is a different practice that I hope to explore, one that works out of appearance not as a fact, but as a question. This path asks about the politics of language and positions out of which appearance might be forwarded. It begins not from the demand of representation but from a place of silence and invisibility. Between these two stances is a question of art's exteriority and of boundaries as they become drawn and redrawn in the field of vision. I question the terms through which art and appearance are understood when such demands are made. The demand for artists to make alterity appear risks fetishizing the ethics that lies at the heart of the demand. Art, I suggest, is everything that is not art.

Chapter 5, "Video as Layers," looks at visual relations as they write the bodies of women of color in the work of three visual artists: Tran T. Kim Trang, Yong Soon Min, and Lorna Simpson. Processes of objectification and visualization are tightly intertwined. As Rey Chow writes, "an engagement with otherness almost always involves some kind of imagistic objectification (of the other), it is difficult if not impossible to segregate considerations of otherness from visual relations (even if such relations are only implied, passed over, or suppressed)."⁸ My decision to explore the works of these artists is not because they *are* women of color, but because there is a specific exploration of the relation between visualization and objectification that their works reveal, one that explores the layers of history that are housed in the racialized and gendered body as well as the discourses that come to write it. In these works, I will suggest, the field of vision is understood not as open domain, but as a restricted rather in which they underscore the boundaries that delimit raced and gendered bodies in the field of vision. Rather than offer the bodies themselves for view, what they present are the layers of history and discourse as they write the body, a critical reflection on representation as mediated by power as it determines the field of vision. Through their work upon the visual itself, they demonstrate a gap between visuality and alterity, one in which the very desire to see (*videre*) must pass through and within the layers of history and discourse that shape the raced and gendered body.⁹ In the face of such layers, when one says "I see" (*video*) it is not access to a visual depth that one is offered, but instead one encounters visual layers, an opacity that locates a gap between visuality and alterity and reformulates the visual relation as one of exteriority. In this proposition of exteriority lies an opening onto resistance for it holds open a space in which vision is not one. It reformulates alterity not as 'the other', but as simply as, 'another', a shift that I will argue holds great importance for articulating visuality in and era of globalization.

Chapter 6, "Video as Calling," Once we do away with any fiction of the artist as the possessor of freedom, we come to ask different types of questions, ones which concern how the artist, as one articulation of a notion of freedom, is intertwined with the lack of freedom as it occur in the world. To work as an artist in this moment is to engage in a deep rethinking of the positions

within the visual and the spaces and times that comprise it. It is to examine the work of images as they inform our sense of both history and futurity. It is to ask how visibility is not universal but positioned and differentially negotiated. It is to ask about the shape of the world and what we can offer to it. But before one can leap to the shape of the world, one must ask about the ground on which one stands. In this chapter, I hope to explore how cultural practitioners might orient themselves in relation to way that the ground has shifted in recent years, and to discuss how the residual effects of colonial processes and their legacies in liberal thought continue to shape the terms through which culture is depoliticized. While the discourses of art would like to pose it as an open space that can absorb the forms of alterity that emerge within it, what is missing from the discussion is the fundamental tension and contradiction that reveals itself once we orient art away from its liberal stage and renew its commitment to the world. I suggest that one way to steer visibility away from liberalism might be to think between these two realms in which the liberal visibility is produced: art and human rights. If in the realm of art there is a developed inquiry into representation that tends to bracket its orientation toward the world, then in human rights there is a developed inquiry into the world that tends to bracket the question of representation. A practice that views representation as both embedded in politics and involved in a production of knowledge and power, reframes the demands that inhere in the discourse of human rights. Rather than demand the forms of address that bear a transparency, a practice invested in a question of representation might ask what apparatus constitute such communicative possibility. Rather than demand a legibility to video, a practice invested in a question of representation might ask how such received meanings are bound to the hegemony of forms that already exist in the field. And rather than demand that work raise public awareness, a practice invested in a question of representation might ask toward the terms through which a public is constituted. In each case, the site from which a practice invested in a question of representation begins is that content is inextricable from form and representation is never transparent. With such reframings new interpretative possibilities emerge that contribute to the terms through which we might reimagine the work of advocacy.

Finally, Chapter 7, "Video as Ruins," attempts to write a different story of video, one that I develop through a postcolonial approach to history and the temporal experience of marginalized subjects. The figure of the ruin enters my discussion here, on the one hand, as a metaphor for the way that 'vision' and its braiding of subject, sight, and presence, might open onto a time that is sensitive to the forms of absence that structure a displaced relation to the present, one in which the absence produces a semantic instability that allows the possibility of refiguration. By *vision in ruins*, I do not mean to suggest that vision rides the wave of neutral time and eventually reaches its decay or decline. Rather, in vision and the intertwining of subjectivity and temporality that it proposes, there was already an originary ruin. It is a ruin that emerges with each first gaze, which is already a memory as soon as it is seen. It is a ruin that emerges with the originary *displacement* of subjects from experience, a displacement that found itself in the eurocentricism's negation of anything that was not itself. And it is a ruin that lives-on in video and the various ways in which the apparatus is taken up to "see" in juridical, human rights, surveillance, journalistic, and artistic contexts; usually, this sight is transparent, as if there were no "I" that were present in this sight. Since ruins started being preserved during the Renaissance, Western modernity's sense of history, and self-reflexivity was shaped by a reconciliation, through reason, that the present will one day pass.¹⁰ As Hans-Georg Gadamer has read in Hegel's dialectic of history, within western modernity's take on the ruin, even this dissipation evinced by time itself, could be reconciled through reason. Against this model of reason's reconciliation with ruin, I develop ruins in another sense, one that is not of the ruin as it is preserved into a thing, but of a process that describes the movement, in time, of all things. Rather than relate it to the solid mass of an architectural structure, the ruin is like a running river that, in its constant flow, changes the surface of the earth. As rivers move through mountains, they cut rocks,

deposit silt, move boulders, and carve away at the land toward the ocean. Out of this different sense of video, one's work is based not on the fullness but on emptiness, one whose specificity I read through the work of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha who opens video as aperture toward diasporic memory.

Vision in Ruins hopes to contribute a broad-based, interdisciplinary, and dynamic theorization of postcolonial visuality, one that expands contemporary visual studies in five distinct ways. First, by developing its argument across film, media, art, and visual culture, it offers an expanded sense of 'the visual', one that links the interrelated forms of visual communication that shape our current moment. Second, it reflects on the visual across the Pacific, reframing the question of postwar vision from the Euro-Atlantic to the Asia-Pacific and extending the axes through which vision's relation to power is understood. Third, by approaching 'the visual' through an orientation toward cultural production, this study underscores the dynamism between theory and practice and the potentiality that unfolds once the visual is not simply an object to be studied but, itself, a space for thought and intervention. Fourth, it brings critiques of neoliberalism to bear upon the question of visuality and is grounded in the ethical stake of a plurivisional world. Lastly, it offers a sustained reflection on the question of politicized visual practice, one that links contemporary visuality with social struggle and the work of resignification that is involved in any creative endeavor.

¹ Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007.

² Nacira Guénif- Souilamas, *Les Féministes et le Garçon Arabe*, Paris: Editions de l'Aube, 2006

³ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, translated by Harry Zohn, New York: Schocken Books, 1968.

⁴ Raul Fonet- Bentacourt, "An Alternative to Globalization: Theses for the Development of an Intercultural Philosophy," in *Latin American Perspectives on Globalization: Ethics, Politics, and Alternative Visions*, Oxford, UK: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2002, p.235.

⁵ Fonet-Bentacourt, p. 232.

⁶ Fonet-Bentacourt, p.231.

⁷ Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, New York: Zone Books, 2008.

⁸ Rey Chow, "Toward an Ethics of Postvisuality: Some Thoughts on Recent Work of Zhang Yimou." In *Poetics Today*, Vol.25, Number 4, Winter 2004, pp.673-688, p. 686. Also see Chow's *Primitive Passions : Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography, and Contemporary Chinese Cinema. Film and Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, and *Ethics after Idealism : Theory, Culture, Ethnicity, Reading Theories of Contemporary Culture*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998.

⁹ The understanding of alterity, not only philosophically as a radical otherness, but politically through how it is mobilized in contemporary discourses is developed by Rey Chow in *Ethics after Idealism: Theory, Culture, Ethnicity, Reading. Theories of Contemporary Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998) when she writes of the way western forms of knowledge such as critical theory continue to center on the west despite claims made to radical alterity and heterogeneity. Thus, in critical theory a radical sense of otherness, one that we might trace to the writings of Emmanuel Levinas in *Otherwise than Being: Or Beyond Essence* (Duchesne University Press, 1998) actually becomes evacuated of its exteriority as it loops back to the west looking itself through the other.

¹⁰ Andreas Huysmann, "Authentic Ruins: Products of Modernity," in *Ruins of Modernity*, edited by Julia Hell and Andreas Schonle, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, p. 17-28.

Chapter 1

Video as Vision

The visuality of liberalism can be understood as a way of seeing that forwards a unitary vision linked to an economistic rationale. In this chapter, I will be exploring the address that emerges from liberal images and the structure of a feeling, a 'global' feeling, that is produced by this encounter. In this global feeling, the viewer of the global north is brought into a relation with the global south. The structure of feeling that is produced is one that draws these images of the world as both infinitely close and infinitely distanced, both identical and impossible, two parallel and contradictory proximities that occur simultaneously, a structure that I will argue in what follows as the way that visuality is bound to a conception of *video*.

In order to explore what this visuality looks like, let us take an image that is quite familiar: the impoverished third world child produced by various international humanitarian campaigns. It is almost always a frontal portrait, from medium to close distance, with the eyes of the child addressed to the viewer. There is often a caption so that the viewer might be given some information about the child, the name, age, location, and the circumstances of its photographing. For example, the caption to this image, from the UNICEF's "Can You See Me?" campaign reads:

December 2010: Jacqueline is a 'restavek', a child given by impoverished parents to a foster family in the hope that they will have a better life. Like many restaveks, Jacqueline has become a domestic servant, does not attend school, and has no toys. She lives in the Acra camp in Port-au-Prince for people displaced by the 12 January earthquake.¹

The question this campaign asks of "Can You See Me?" suggests that the child is addressing the viewer. The viewer is being asked to see, to be moved by this seeing, and then to give money to help this child and all the children like her, a philanthropy that some might believe comes to answer the question, "Can You See Me?" But in both the question that is posed and the response that is requested, there are a set of structures that predetermine the kind of 'seeing' that might emerge, structures that suggest how this form of 'seeing' is deeply embedded in the legacy of eurocentricism.

As Samir Amin's description of eurocentricism helps us to understand, eurocentricism is not merely the geographical radiation of Europe during colonialism, but rather, an essential dimension of capitalist ideology that, even in our contemporary moment, finds itself in all parts of the developed world.² For Amin, eurocentricism is a mythic construct that draws the worlds between global north and south. He writes, "the new European culture reconstructs itself around a myth that creates an opposition between an alleged European geographical continuity and the world to the south of the Mediterranean, which forms the new center/periphery boundary."³ The whole of Eurocentricism lies in this construct."⁴

Amin reminds us how central consciousness has been to imagining empire for Eurocentricism crystallizes at the moment when Europe imagines itself as truly capable of taking over the world.⁵ The modern period ushered in two transformations that determined the course of the modern world. The first was the development of capitalist economies in Europe. The second was the colonial expansion into the rest of the world. These two processes are inextricable and lay the ground for a European understanding of its own capacity for making the world in its own image. This sense of supremacism is urged on both by the knowledge they amass concerning the shape of



Figure 1, "Jacqueline" from UNICEF's "Can you See Me?" Campaign, 2011

the world and its peoples, as well as their military strength. Amin writes, “in a certain way, then, capitalism as a potential world system did not exist until there existed a consciousness of its conquering power.”⁶ The formation of a conquering subject was coextensive with the expansion of Europe and the capitalist world system. Within the Eurocentric imaginary, the world would come to revolve around Europe alone. It is this circling around what is no longer solely Europe, but what I will be calling the global North that I hope to explore in what follows.

Despite the many representations that exist of the global south, the long shadow of western modernism continues to loom across the equator. In these shadows, the images that one sees are either those of poverty, destitution, corruption, backwardness, war, victimization, and violence, or those of development, global cities, trade hubs, or progress, but what is rarely available in the images available for the global North are the history and politics out of which these circumstances arose, or the relations of power that choose to show these images to show now.⁷ As images of the south emerge within circuits of the north, visions of 'a world' or of 'globality' become ciphers of the global north. They stage a 'global affect', and contain the address within the terms of liberal humanism and the relation that is staged between North and South.⁸ The feeling that is produced is one that draws these images of the world as both infinitely close and infinitely distanced, both identical and impossible, two parallel and contradictory proximities that occur simultaneously, a structure that I will argue in what follows as a *visuality of liberalism*.⁹

From the beginning, it is necessary to clarify what I mean by two terms: visuality and liberalism. By visuality, I mean to historicize vision and mark a difference within it. If vision is commonly understood as the mere the mechanism of sight, then what is left out of this understanding is the place of power and the way that vision strives to subsume all other ways of seeing beneath one way of seeing. Visuality, as the art historian Hal Foster has argued, poses a critical challenge to the oneness of vision and asks toward the other ways of seeing that exist in the field of vision.¹⁰ Both vision and visuality are social facts, and it is in the differences between how we see, how we are able to see, how we are allowed to see, and how it is that we see this seeing, that the question of visuality poses a challenge and critical relation to vision as such.¹¹ Visuality can thus be understood to throw vision, and the forms of transparency or unity it proposes, into relief, and to ask under what terms vision comes to establish itself as fact. Vision, when understood as a unitary phenomenon, fails to account for the multiplicity of perspectives or diversity of visions that exist simultaneously, at any period of time. As Jacqueline Rose has said, “our previous history is not the petrified block of a single visual space, looked at obliquely, it can always be seen to contain its moments of unease.”¹²

But as I suggested in my introduction, I believe that it is necessary to go one step further with thinking about these moments of unease when some sense of 'the global' is invoked. As the philosopher Raul Fornet-Bentacourt has offered, to see the world "pluri-visionally" is to trace an alternative to the neoliberal globalization of our times.¹³ Plurivisionality takes the reductionist dynamics of marginalization and exclusion within globalization as its starting point. By basing its proposition for the 'global' upon the dynamics of marginalization and exclusion, it becomes possible to understand the times and spaces of globalization as a multilayered plane, one that *begins* from the processes of marginalization and exclusion that relegate cultures to the second plane of a cultural reservation. Plurivisionality involves thinking across multiple planes and asks how the disappearance of other planes is involved in the smooth function of a vision that is one. Fornet-Bentacourt writes, "by making the surface of the planet uniform, neoliberal globalization takes hold of the contextualization of the world; that is, it arrogates for itself the power to configure the forms [contornos] of culture."¹⁴ What is at stake in plurivisionality are the very contours of culture as they come to describe the planet. Plurivisionality begins from the experience of spatial and temporal

alienation. It demands that contours of culture be drawn again, from the reservation, to redefine the planet.

This senses of visibility I describe above are ones that I hope to be considered alongside liberalism, by which I mean to suggest an economic rationale that becomes naturalized within capitalist ideology and comes to limit the ways of thinking that might imagine the world otherwise. During Michel Foucault's 1979 course at the Collège de France, he explains that liberalism and conceptions of power are intimately linked.¹⁵ The primary logic of liberalism, Foucault argues, is "maximum economy."¹⁶ It is the method of rationalizing government with the aim being to increase effect while reducing costs. For Foucault, liberalism emerges simultaneously with *biopower* and the forms of European rationality that pervaded the early 19th century, and the management of life that would ensure the smooth and efficient function of capitalism. Biopower, as expressed in regimes of health, hygiene, birthrate, life expectancy, and race are entwined with the forms of rationalism out of which liberalism arose. It was the way to govern a populous with the least amount of cost and the maximum efficiency. Liberal forms of thought bracket the question of this efficiency and the power that subtends it, not only in government or repressive state apparatus, but also in our intimate selves, our subjectivity and understanding of who we are in the world.¹⁷ Biopower is not only from a power outside that exerts itself upon the individual, but also, an internal form of subjugation, one in which the work of representation and ideology become key to understanding its domain.

Liberal ideology is what the political economist, Samir Amin, has described as means through which real critique is foreclosed by the types of questions that one can ask. It is a fundamentally ahistorical account that promises humanity's salvation while actually, undercutting any real humanist action. "Really-existing globalized liberalism can produce nothing other than an intensification of the inequalities between peoples (an intensified global polarization) and within populations (of the global South and North)."¹⁸ In liberalism and its attendant ways of thinking, rather than reflect on the nature of the terms, one instead is called upon to adapt to it. From the perspective of time for example, one is not asked to question the system that produces its management but is instead encouraged to manage its strains. "'Live with your time,' 'adapt to it,' 'manage each day'-- that is, abstain from reflecting on the nature of the system, and particularly from calling into question its choices of the moment."¹⁹

The visibility of liberalism, which I would like to suggest that we see in this example of Jacqueline, seeks to bridge global north and south but does so through a depoliticized, transcendent, and abstracted vision, one that revolves around the gaze of the global north alone. In a world that has been cut into us and them through the forms of Eurocentric consciousness that Amin describes, vision is not innocent and cannot be so simply be bridged when the very modality through which that bridge occurs, i.e. the human rights framework, participates in the staging of visibility that ventriloquizes the subaltern subject, places them in a pose, marks them as victim, and writes their appeal as one that is solely of vision alone. Thus, as well-intentioned as the desire to bridge vision across the global north and south might be, any bridge that does not think about the political implications of such vision and the hegemonic understandings that it offers, only serves to deliver a world floating in an abstraction that recalls the Orientalist staging of the West's desires.²⁰ The visualities of liberalism, while seeming to bridge global north and south, us and them, in fact create a renewed division, one on which the stage is a transnational, borderless, global one, but only global insofar as it has been shaped by the abstractions of liberal thought. The liberal framework suggests that all that the subject on the other side of the image wants is *to be seen*, but it does not allow for the other forms of address that too might be understood to issue from the image. It is a form of seeing that follows in the long shadow of western modernity and the visions of itself on which it is based.

From the beginning, to this form of the question "can you see me?" we ask another. Who is

this “you” and who is this “me” and what are the terms of vision that pass between them? While the “you” is intended to suggest the viewer and the “me” is intended to suggest the child, “Can you see me?” might also be read differently. “Can you see me?” might be understood as spoken not by the child but by this international human rights agency, ventriloquizing the child. “Can you see me?” reflects a much broader question concerning how the address itself is framed. In this mythological formulation, vision walks from north to south to establish a dyadic relation between you and me. Yet this dyad assumes vision as an open field rather than a restricted domain, one in which vision is understood as unitary rather than multiple. It is in this way that vision is managed. The visualities of liberalism, while desiring to cross the line between north and south, actually consolidate the divide.

Allow me to demonstrate this with another example. Jacqueline’s image can be thought alongside a 2007 campaign by UNICEF in Germany. As a part of this campaign, a young boy with his face darkened is photographed in a medium shot against a plain backdrop. Next to his face is German text that reads: “I am waiting for my last day in school; the children in Africa are waiting for their first one.”²¹ After receiving criticism on the campaign, UNICEF pulled the ads and issued a letter stating that “children look different but are equal—we all want to go to school.”²² The discourse of ‘different but equal’ take on a strange turn in this sentence and while it is meant to suggest the good intentions of the campaign, at the same time, it resonates with critiques made against UNICEF’s ethnocentric conceptualizations of the family which mark the standards for a child’s well-being against the cultural norms of the west.²³ As the question of culture enters the discourse of human rights, so too do the challenges to western modernity and its constitution of the discourse of human rights.

The universal claim to “fundamental human rights” was challenged in 1988, when ASEAN, the nine member Association of Southeast Asian Nations argued that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights did not take “Asian Values,” into account, and that the concept of ‘human rights’ is in fact “shaped and deployed as an ideological instrument” by the West.²⁴ While Asian NGO’s have argued this claim as the obfuscation of human rights norms by elites, this challenge does serve as a reminder that the mechanism of rights is founded on the Western liberal concept of governance, an ‘origin’ which some human rights advocates claim as the only model of political legitimacy available to a world charted by markets and states.²⁵ When we extend this logic that it is the “only model” to the types of visual questions that this chapter asks, it is a logic that would seem to suggest that this way of imaging Jacqueline is the only way. But I am of the opinion that we must re-imagine the images that are possible. In order to think that this is not the only way, it is necessary to think through the visibility of liberalism, its structures of feeling, its communicative strategies, its symbolic productions all of which give visual form to the relations between north and south as we know it.

The symbolic production of non-governmental organizations is not innocent—it is in fact the very arsenal of biopolitics and the production of empire. Unlike the cultural critique that ASEAN made in relation to universal rights, Hardt and Negri go further to argue that universal ‘rights’ are part of the production of the economic-industrial-communicative force of a new world order which they call empire. According to their framework, NGO’s are “completely immersed in the bio-political context of the constitution of Empire” and enact an intervention that “prefigures the state of exception from below, and does so without borders, armed with some of the most effective means of communication and oriented toward the symbolic production of the Enemy.”²⁶ This transnational and borderless production of the symbolic is coupled with the militaristic metaphor of *armament* that Hardt and Negri use to describe the NGO’s communicative strategies and symbolic production, one that shows the janus-faced production of a mode of visibility based upon targeting.²⁷ If an enemy might be targeted as the one to be killed, this also turns upon itself in



Figure 2, UNICEF Germany, 2007

liberalism as the target who is to be saved.²⁸ In between the killing and the saving, one wonders what is left.

Although these blackface ads are not officially part of the “Can You See Me?” campaign, they reveal something important about the structure of visibility that exist in relation to the global south. The images of white children in black face show a racial logic that is in effect in the discourses of human rights, one whose minstrelsy of white children in black face shows the desire that underwrites the proposition of vision within liberal visibility. The minstrelsy of the white children in blackface reveals something more generally about the visibility of liberalism, one in which the minstrel is not only located in the action of darkening white skin, but rather, in the structures of feeling that the minstrel show can be understood to give form to and produce. What comes to light in these images of the white children in blackface is the stubborn persistence of a Manichean vision in the image of liberal humanism. Getting beyond the moralism and good intentions in thinking about such images, let us look to the approaches through which these ‘visions’ are revealed. Just as it might appear to suggest an extension of good will, an impulse to give, and just as it might be ‘representing’ a figure from a poverty-stricken, war-torn, third world, elsewhere-- the starting point and ending point of the visibility of liberalism looks back to the northern eye.

The minstrelsy of this UNICEF ad reveals a structure of feeling bound to a Manichean vision and while it seems to reach out to alterity, it in fact, consolidates the solidity of its place. Minstrelsy is productively considered side by side with the desire to cross the color line that some scholars have read during antebellum era. Eric Lott, for example, has argued that the minstrel show produced a space of transgression, one that unearthed the depths of racial relations. “Minstrelsy brought to public form the racialized elements of thought and feeling, tone and impulse, residing at the very edge of semantic availability, which Americans only dimly realized they felt, let alone understood.”²⁹ For Lott, the minstrel show crossed racial lines and made explicit the racialized elements of thought and feeling within experience. Rather than see minstrelsy as a form of racial aversion and absolute white power, Lott focuses on the forms of panic, anxiety, terror and pleasure that the minstrelsy produced, as well as the historical contradictions and conflicts that the minstrel show brought up.³⁰

The minstrelsy of this UNICEF campaign is one that I would not go so far as to call transgressive, resistant, negotiated, or creolized for it is not a space that invites a cultural dynamism as the antebellum minstrel shows did. Instead, it comes closer to what Saidiya Hartman suggests lies at the heart of the minstrelsy. For Hartman, the minstrel show is not only a work at the edge of semantic availability, but rather, a Manicheanism that installs the division between races.³¹ If there is a dynamic of desire and repulsion that emerged with the minstrel show, she suggests that it ultimately reinforced the master/slave relations that already existed.³² In the liberal image, while there is a desire to cross the line between north and south (one that is so strong that there is this expression in blackface) the form of identification that it suggests is one in which the politics of this crossing becomes evacuated. In blackface, the child of the south is abstracted from her historical conditions by the all-consuming appropriative desire, expressed by the international human rights agency, and in part by the viewer in the global North to *be* the other. Yet in this miming of the other of the global South is also an infinite distance.

While the image of Jacqueline may produce a sense of empathy and desire within the viewer of the north, at the same time this sense of empathy and desire does not shift the terms in which the relation occurs in the semantic arsenal of a non-governmental organization and its biopolitics of empire. While the precarity of Jacqueline’s conditions might be communicated in the visual language of the image or the textual narrative that comes to support the meaning of the image, the visible content of the representation does not serve to alter the visibility of the relation. The fact of it

being this specific young girl in Haiti does not really matter in the end for we must look to the structure, not the representation, to understand what is happening here. The relation to Jacqueline's fate occurs at arms length. She floats, set off from the very long history of foreign intervention in Haiti.³³ Even though we see Jacqueline in an image and we read the text of her situation, what remains unquestioned are the positions that are articulated in these visual relations of "Can you see me?" The minstrelsy of the blackface images reveals something important about the structures of feeling that the images of children who are not in blackface produce, as well as humanistic images more generally. If on the one hand, they seem to suggest the extension of good will, the impulse to give, the desire to share with a figure from a poverty-stricken, war-torn, third-world, elsewhere—it is a structure of feeling that both begins and ends with the global north. And as a structure of feeling, it is based primarily on a transparency of vision. Liberal visuality revolves around *video*, "I see," the entwining of vision with a subject and a time of the present.

Let us return to the initial question that Jacqueline's image asks: "Can you see me?" In this statement, at the level of the micrological texture of power, the image calls out to the viewer asking them to see what lies on the other side. It makes a proposition. As it is asked, "Can you see me?" there are only two forms of response that are possible, yes or no, and for the feeling to take place, the answer must be yes. The proposition that is produced by the liberal visuality is one in which the spectator can only respond in the affirmative or the negative, hailed to respond, "Yes, I see you." With affirmation, the feeling that the humanitarian image solicits limits the engagement from one side of the image to the other within a ground that already exists, a ground on which the photographed subject appears through the viewer's affirmation. It is the fantasy of a gaze issued and a gaze returned, an interlocking of eyes at the site of the image.

The scene of vision that the liberal image solicits is one that is not literal, but metaphorical. It takes place even in darkness, independent of the literal representation of face. In the same "Can you see me?" campaign are also images where the face is obscured and the image falls to shadow. The text that accompanies this image is:

June 2010: After the 12 January earthquake destroyed her home, Rachel [NAME CHANGED] moved to a camp for the displaced in Port-au-Prince. One morning she was kidnapped, raped and beaten, and abandoned near a river. After being hospitalized, she returned to her family's tent, but her assailant tried to attack her again, forcing them to move. Rachel is still recovering and is too weak to go to school.

In these cases of the image in darkness, the text comes to reveal that the reason for this form of imaging without image is unspeakable violence. The name is changed, the story is detailed, and the figure both anonymous and universal. The horrific story signals that this anonymity is a form of protection. Just as this shadowy image asks "Can you see me?" The response that is hailed from the viewer is "Yes, in darkness, I see you even better." The vision that is called for is one where the lack of image comes to stand in for the gravity of the circumstance. Vision, understood as metaphorical, shows that it is not lay in the image itself that is being seen.

In *The Civil Contract of Photography*, Ariella Azoulay reverses the question, not as one that emerges from the image but instead as one that she asks herself as her looks upon the images of Palestinians under Israeli occupation.³⁴ Rather than ask "can they see me?" she asks "why are they looking at me?"³⁵ It is this question of "why are they looking at me" that inspires her to formulation photography as not just an image, and not just the relation between photographer and photographed, but instead as a far more complex set of relations. In taking into account the question of why subjects living under occupation would want to be photographed, takes her toward



Figure 3, "Anonymous" from UNICEF's "Can you See Me?" Campaign, 2011

a critique of accounts of photography such as Susan Sontag's that only frame the relation as one between photographer and photographed and spectators, and toward the political relations that belie each and every photographic encounter. Insofar as the gaze that emerges from the photograph can communicate a vast range of emotions, "probing, passive, exhausted, pleading, unbalanced, skeptical, cynical, indifferent, or demanding" she opens the space of watching photographs as a space of political relations.

Considered in the context of the photographs of Palestinians in the Israeli occupied territories that fill her discussion, Azoulay, like the UNICEF campaign, introduces the gaze of the photographed subject. But rather than construct a relation between "you" and "me" the relation is between a "they" and a "me"—a shift from the dyad to the multiple that marks the relation as one within a political field. For Azoulay, it is this gaze that emerges from the image that introduces a challenge to any discourse of citizenship that might exclude the stateless. Her proposition of the "civil contract" that emerges with each and every photographic event is one in which this encounter. Azoulay hears a call from behind the image, an emphasis that allows her to theorize a civic space of photography, one in which the exercise of photography is understood as an exercise of citizenship, a citizenship that cannot be denied and where claims of injustice are set in motion through the encounter as it is continually staged in the photographic event.

Azoulay's proposition of the civil contract of photography is one that I would like to suggest offers a different proposition of video (I see). If the proposition in the UNICEF campaign might be understood to predetermine the field in which the address is made, where to say "I see you" would be followed by a monetary donation, then what Azoulay's theorization offers is an infinite relation into which all who participate in photography are involved. Each watching of photographs inspires the question of "why are they looking at me?" Azoulay's attempt to negotiate the representations of disaster and their specific relation to photography leads her to propose a mutual guarantee that is present in all photographic events, a civil contract, one that poses photography as itself a practice of citizenship.

If "can you see me?" returns us to the depths of eurocentricism that form the undercurrent for liberal humanistic forms of visuality and the structures of feeling based on *video*, based on "I see," then "why are they looking at me?" takes us in a diagonal relation, toward *vocare*, where there is always an exteriority to the visual and a question of the political that troubles the terms through which liberal visuality proceeds. In the nuance between the questions "can you see me?" and "why are they looking at me?" is the difference between an open position and a restricted position, between vision and plurivision. In the first, the spectator is consolidated by the look from the image. In the second, the spectator of the image is undone and must mine their own relation to the image and the reasons for its gaze. In the first the address is only for the viewer. In the second, there is the possibility that these subjects might be looking elsewhere. While these small differences may seem like minute details in the way a question is asked, they mean a world of difference for understanding the appropriated alterity that visualities of liberalism enact. If we understand that the visualities that we have of the global come to constitute the understandings of the global, then the way in which liberal visuality forms an address based in an economic doxa must be undone. The articulation of these erasures remains the challenge to any practice committed to a work of summoning such silences, of issuing a call to enter into a relation with alterity that remains, inassimilable.³⁶ My next chapter will return to the devices and images around which around which video is most often spoken and ask how art that has explore the limit of video provide one perspective toward video's undoing.

Chapter 2

Video as Aperture

Artists who have explored the limits of video's devices offer a way to rethink the proposition of video in the field of vision, a way to consider how the vision bound with liberalism might be plurivisionally undone. Integral to this undoing is the question of temporality, for what is presupposed in the encounter that is staged by "can you see me?" is also a sense of presence, a time in which one and another, through an encounter within vision, might be co-present. This is where a return to video's cameras and devices is helpful, as within the theories that have sought to describe video's temporality, any sense of presence is problematized by both the rhetoric of its delivery and of time as it both lags behind and skips ahead of the present. By understanding video as an aperture onto the time that is not present, rather than the enclosure of the present, a different practice emerges, one in which video is put to the task of reimagining the relation between the world and the self. It is here that one lacuna within video lies, for what this discussion also introduces is that subjectivity is intimately bound with temporality and there are subjects for whom such out-of-timeness is not an unusual phenomenon evoked only by entering into a time of video, but the very constitution of oneself in the world. From this site, video has the opportunity to be written again, as an aperture into time itself. In this chapter, I will revisit some of the theories of video in which rest what are still provocative discussion of the spaces and times of video, ones help to facilitate an exploration of video's contours and how an understanding of video as aperture might be developed today.

If video entered the art scene as antithetical to the art establishment, much of the writing of video history was an attempt to legitimate the medium against the legacy of western forms of visual modernism and *for* art history. Yet in such struggles within and against the legacy of modernism, video was contained as a logic rather than understood as a tool. To look again at video through its temporality, is also to approach video from a perspective that sees a historicizing opening that remains possible in its obsolescence. This chapters seeks to ask how video might ask a different set of questions, ones that do not presume vision, but press the politics that bear upon the very ways of seeing that are available. Video has long been 'the other' of many forms. Posed against painting, film, and television, early theories of video sought to hold video apart as a promise of the future, a beacon of a technological revolution with unique properties. With the rapid development of video technologies such future prospects, today, read more like a history of the future. They describe the future as it has already come to pass. The specific mechanisms that were being discussed are now antiquated and the range of artistic practice in video has expanded well beyond the scope of what could be imagined then. Yet, this outmoded status of video today also opens a site of possibility, a historical opening in which it might evoke a resistance within the ever-increasing turnover of technological development.

Video, some have argued, bears no memory. It is amnesia itself. For Fredric Jameson, video's amnesia can be sourced to its incessant delivery of images. In "Video: Surrealism without the Unconscious" he writes: "I have tried to suggest that video is unique—and in that sense historically privileged or symptomatic—because it is the only art or medium in which this ultimate seam between space and time is the very locus of the form, and because its machinery uniquely dominates and depersonalizes subject and object alike, transforming the former into a quasimaterial registering apparatus for the machine time of the latter and of the video image or "total flow."³⁷ Jameson's understanding of video is premised on the unique attributes of its machinery, a privileged work upon space and time that dislocates subject and object and turns whatever it captures into an endless and uninterrupted stream of images. Jameson's understanding of video is one that is based

on its machinery whose expression finds itself in two intertwined forms: commercial television and video art. "Commercial television is not an autonomous object of study; it can only be grasped for what it is by positioning it dialectically over against that other signifying system which we have called experimental video, or video art."³⁸ If both commercial television and video art use the same *material* of video, Jameson suggests that their difference lies in the style of editing, the "cuts and lengths" that comprise their assembly. Video art and commercial television are the twinned doubles of video, turning around each other, each finding itself through the other. Video's amnesia, its vacuous present-tense, will emerge out of this dialectical relationship between commercial television and video art.

If in film or the theater, there is the possibility of memory in the lights as they dim, the intermission, the beginning and end of the film, then in video there is none of this. Jameson posits video as a "structural exclusion of memory."³⁹ Video's amnesia is one that, for Jameson, is based on its machine properties and the way that it both "dominates and depersonalizes" the subject who becomes locked into the perpetuity of the machine's time. The effect is not one of spectatorship but one of a hypnotic and zombieified state, in which, ultimately, one is locked into the time and space of a world system. Jameson will conclude that video is the "art form par excellence of late capitalism," a systemically determined logic, one whose very structure is aligned with the world system of present-day multinational capitalism."⁴⁰ For Jameson, video's amnesia ultimately hinges upon a kind of perpetual, incessant, ongoing flow of television and his understanding of video is dominated by this flow.

In "The Cultural Logic of Video," Maureen Turim argues against Jameson's diagnosis of video and suggests that in the attempt to find a cultural *logic* to video, what is left out are the variations on its use. Video cannot be assigned an all-encompassing logic because there is nothing that can be universalized in how it is handled. What Turim's insight makes possible is a theorization of video where it does not only exist as an imprint of a world system, but also allows for the possibility of intervention and agency. If video can be pieced together in the ways of commercial television and produce the incessant deluge of images, it also can be pieced together in a very different way to confound the ways in which meaning and sense are delivered. Unlike the 'total flow' that encloses video in a unitary temporality, Turim suggests that video's temporality is multiple. "Video, then, exists simultaneously in a space of cultural lag and premonition, through which it strives to articulate a meaningful interaction with the present."⁴¹ Beyond the enclosure of time that Jameson's 'total flow' proposes, the multiple temporality of Turim's 'lag and premonition' conceives of video not as a container but instead, as an aperture onto a spatialization of time and temporalization of space. When one understands video as an aperture rather than an enclosure, a different practice emerges in which video is put to the task of reimagining the multiple temporalities of the world and the self.

Video has been thick with myth since its arrival on the scene of art practices since of the sixties and seventies.⁴² The myth includes a foundational moment inaugurated by the artist Nam June Paik. In the late sixties Paik purchased one of the first Sony Portapak and captured the pope's visit to New York on the way home-- a video that was shown at the Café a Go Go that same night. With this moment, so the story goes, video quickly became the medium of choice for pushing the limits of the technology in art. The story that becomes buried in the process of such mythologization is the way that activists and collectives grasped onto video's potential to disrupt the homogeneity of television and bring social issues to light. Grassroots organizations such as Videofreex, Peoples Video Theater, People's Communication Network, had been making video work since 1969, though little of this early video activism has come to light.⁴³ What has come to be known as video art was always concurrent with the establishment of grassroots television stations



Figure 4, Videofreex, Women's Liberation Demonstration, New York City, 1970



Figure 5, Videofreex, Interview with Fred Hampton, 1969

and media practices that sought an alternative to the domain of mass media, and these collectives spoke to the issue of who held control over technology and to what ends it might be conceived. In its collective uses, held over and against the legacy of modernity, video was deemed interruptive, rupturing, even revolutionary in its technological potential.

In line with the founding myths of video, Jameson locates the apotheosis of video's postmodern exploration in the work of Paik. Jameson argues that Paik's installations using television monitors in various arrangements that screen looped images simultaneously bring the spectator into a scenario in which they are confronted with their habits of viewing. If the modernist desire might be to concentrate on a single screen, the postmodern viewer, argues Jameson, will see them all at once. Paik's installations inspire this simultaneity of viewing and for Jameson, they are quintessentially postmodern because their elements could never be unified into a single whole. While Paik's inquiry into the logic of television is certainly a key moment of video, there are no doubt other video practices from the same moment that are left out of Paik's installment as the 'founding father' of video.

If video entered the art scene as antithetical to the art establishment, much of the writing of video history was an attempt to legitimate the medium *for* art history. Some such as the artist, Bill Viola, have argued that this narrativization *for* art history sometimes even preceded practices. Institutional pressure to write a history of video within the museum narrated video, the technology itself rather than its strategic uses, tried to place video on par with its modernist predecessors. It is against the backdrop of visual modernism that the second essay that I will be discussing emerges. If Jameson claims that video art holds a dialectical relation to television, then in Rosalind Krauss' "Video: the Aesthetics of Narcissism" video art might be said to hold a dialectical relationship to abstract expressionism, the legacies of visual modernism and tenets of medium-specificity and pure instantaneity that modernism's advocates asserted. If Jameson has enclosed video as a time of "total flow," then Krauss will suggest an enclosure that bears a difference nuance, a "prison of the collapsed present" that steals the subject from its coincidence with itself.

Krauss' study focuses on Vito Acconci's *Centers*, a twenty-two minute videotape in which Acconci faces the camera in close-up with his finger pointing directly at the center of the screen. Krauss reads the artist looking incessantly at himself. His vision begins with his eyes, moves down his arm to his finger and ends at the monitor in which he is looking back at his doubled self. "In that image of self-regard is configured a narcissism so endemic to the works of video that I find myself wanting to generalize it as *the* condition of the entire genre," she writes.⁴⁴ For Krauss, *Centers* is the apotheosis of video's narcissism because the line of sight that the video portrays begins and ends with Acconci himself. It is an equivalency and never-ending loop. "The body is therefore as it were centered between two machines that are the opening and closing of a parenthesis. The first of these is the camera; the second is the monitor, which re-projects the performer's image with the immediacy of a mirror."⁴⁵ In *Centers*, Krauss finds a narcissism so ubiquitous to the video works of this era of the early seventies that she will propose "the medium of video is narcissism."⁴⁶

It is helpful to contextualize Krauss' statement "the medium of video is narcissism" in the debates in which Krauss was involved over the status of visual modernism. When she asserts that "the medium of video is narcissism" it is an address to the forms of visual purity that had been associated with visual modernism. In particular, she is writing against Clement Greenberg's credo in his landmark essay, "Modernist Painting" in which he states "the essence of modernism lies, as I see it, in the use of characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself, not in order to subvert it but in order to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence."⁴⁷ With this definition of Modernism, Greenberg would install an idea of medium-specificity in which the modernist artwork would strive to realize the unique properties of its medium. Painting, for example, would no longer seek figuration but abstraction, and it would explore the flatness of the picture plane.

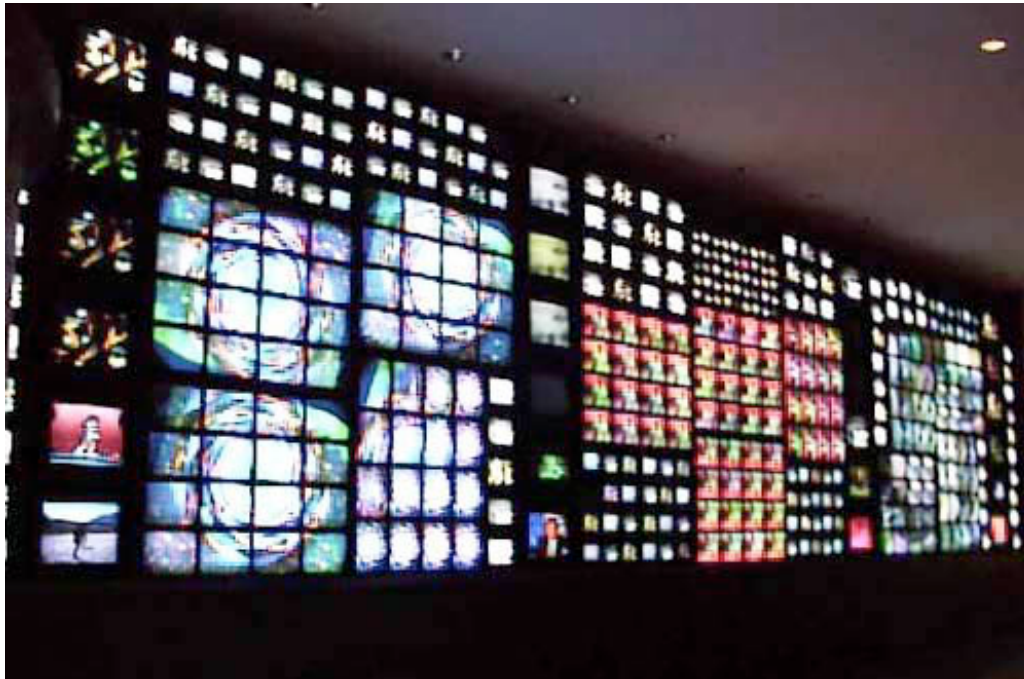


Figure 6, Nam June Paik, *The Chase Video Matrix*, 1992

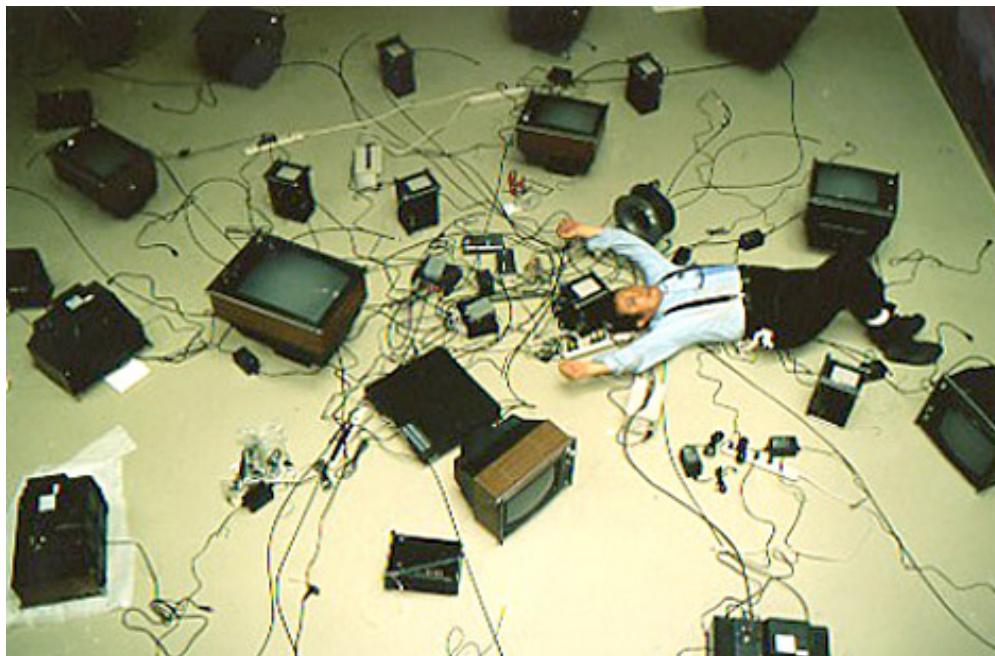


Figure 7, Nam June Paik with his televisions, 1991

Krauss argues against Greenberg's notion of medium-specificity, citing its universal and transhistorical character, and the seamless continuity it proposes which becomes completed by the aesthetic judgment conferred upon it.⁴⁸ Greenberg's description of modernism also produces an all-knowing subject and an autonomous gaze. Rather than understand video as a medium in the sense of a physical support as Greenberg does, she calls it an "appurtenance," an opening onto what she considers to be the *real medium* of video. Drawing from Freud's understanding of narcissism, she calls video "a psychological situation, the very terms of which are to withdraw attention from an external object—an Other—and invest it in the Self."⁴⁹ Thus, in her description of video as narcissism, Krauss dematerializes the concept of 'medium' and places it in what might be understood as the diametrical opposite of Greenberg's autonomous gaze. She moves the idea of medium toward the realm of the psyche.

If Krauss' discussion distances video from the first modernist tenet of pure opticality, so too does she dissociate it from a second modernist tenet, expounded by Michael Fried, of pure presentness. In *Art and Objecthood*, Fried opens Greenberg's idea of modernism beyond medium-specificity, and toward a conception of instantaneous temporality.⁵⁰ In contrast to the Minimalist works that he criticizes in this essay, Fried argues that modernist work is "wholly manifest" at "every moment." Modernist work "aspires to defeat or suspend its own "objecthood," whereas Minimalist work becomes and projects its own objecthood. What follows from this is that the modernist artwork does not require the viewer to exist. In each moment it exists as instantaneously and as convincingly as it had the moment before it. It is a model of visuality that is best expressed in the figure of Ted Williams, the star hitter for the Red Sox, who for Fried truly captured this pure instantaneity. Williams' vision was so precise that he could "see the stitching on the baseball as it came over the plate."⁵¹ In the figure of Ted Williams, we see how vision is identical with a time of the present. "Vision had, as it were, been pared away into a dazzle of pure instantaneity, into an abstract condition with no before and no after," responds Krauss. "But what is also implied in the optical and temporal purity of visual modernism is a subject of knowledge, the one who sees and knows. In that very motionless explosion of pure presentness was contained as well vision's connection to its object, also represented here in its abstract form—as moment of pure release, pure transparency, of pure self-knowledge."⁵² It is 'pure' connection through vision resonates with my arguments concerning the visualities of liberalism in the previous chapter. If for Fried, modernist artwork exists independently of the viewer, then Krauss' theory of video will present it as a technology whose structure depends precisely upon the simultaneity of artwork and viewer, seer and seen. Furthermore, if Fried suggested that visual modernism existed as a pure present then the time of video that Krauss will offer is one of a "collapsed present," a time and space in which a temporal delay produces not a subject of knowledge, but a subject who is non-coincident to itself.

Even thirty-five years after this essay was published in the first issue for *October*, "Video: the Aesthetics of Narcissism" remains a primary site for the discourse around video. If it is not celebrated in art and art history classes as a canonical text for addressing questions of video and subjectivity, then it is being torn from its place and outright blamed for setting a deeply misguided history of video in motion, one in which video becomes nothing less than a narcissistic and individual exercise. For David Joselit, "Video: the Aesthetics of Narcissism" has conditioned an entire generation's understanding of video and yet, Joselit argues, it is based on a primary misreading of the Acconci's *Centers*.⁵³ In contrast to the narcissism that Krauss declares as endemic to the medium, Joselit suggests that Acconci's gesture does not install him in a mirror reflection of absolute feedback, but instead, that in pointing to himself in the monitor, he is also pointing out of the frame and toward the viewer of the tape. For Joselit, rather than narcissism there is a "video public" that emerges, one that invites a relation between Acconci on one side of the screen and the viewer on the other side of the screen.⁵⁴ Acconci's *Centers* introduces a "televisual public sphere" where



Figure 8, Vito Acconci, *Centers*, 1971

identification emerges not through one's mirror image but through an identification with that which is nonidentical to it.⁵⁵

A further development of the argument against video as narcissism is posed by the art historian, Anne Wagner, if there is a notion of 'presence' that Acconci's video invites, this presence holds a rhetoric. Wagner nuances the debate by directing our attention to the signifying system through which Acconci's 'presence' is effected in front of the camera. She argues that not only does "Video: the Aesthetics of Narcissism," bracket the role of the viewer from Acconci's address, it also leaves behind the way in which Acconci's body signifies, its rhetoric, in order to create an *effect* of presence. For Wagner, the conjoining of performance and reproductive technologies in the 1970's allowed for an exploration of the directness of vision and the way it might survive technological media. Video allowed for an opening onto an encounter in which the image does not lie in the past and the viewer in the present, but rather one of an interminable suspension of the two. Importantly, for Wagner, this suspension is understood as a rhetorical effect. "Video and performance artists, I am claiming, have courted effects of presence, in the endless present—the absolute publicity—that their medium so ably supplies."⁵⁶ Thus, Wagner makes rhetorical not only the idea of presence but leads us toward how publicity is not self-evident but is itself conditioned by these rhetorics of presence. In Acconci's *Centers*, this rhetoric finds itself in the way that his body holds its pose in front of the camera. To be summoned by Acconci's pointing is also to be lured by the rhetoricity of his gesture, a presence whose semiotic analysis is bound not only to the pose of his body but also to the way that video indexes his bodily language. Wagner's focus on rhetoric brings us into a provocative question of representation for if the rhetoric of Acconci's presence can be left unsaid in so many analyses, then how does this question of rhetoric also imply one of representation? What does it say about how not only his pose, but how his body, signifies?

We are offered one possible answer to these questions by setting Acconci's *Centers* against Adrian Piper's *Cornered* (1988) in which Piper sits in a medium-shot in front of the video camera. Poised as the image of civility, she is dressed in a sweater and pearls, her arms folded upon a table. In the installation, the television is placed at the corner of the gallery. A table is upturned, its edge propped against two walls where the corner meets so that it falls at an angle from the monitor. Six chairs are set up in a triangle with its point, directed toward the screen. Two framed documents are in the background. One is her father's birth certificate—one in which he is white, the other in which he is black or "colored". Piper's speech is addressed outward, toward the viewer and her voice is calm to match her costume. But the content of her speech, directed toward a "you," is a charged encounter in which she speaks to a white viewing subject who finds out that they are not only white after all. Their ancestry is black and the legacy of slavery in the United States lives within them. "This piece is dedicated to my father. I had wanted a white, Diane Sawyer newscaster-type actress to do the monologue and actually auditioned some white actresses, but I wasn't a good enough director to elicit the delivery I wanted. People were too strident, or too campy, or too serious. I just couldn't get across what I wanted them to do. So I decided to do it myself."⁵⁷

In *Cornered*, Piper stages a public address but one in which the semiotics of her own body, as a light-skinned black woman, are molded into the forms of this white newscaster typology that she had initially sought out: bourgeois pearls, calm demeanor, domestic table—and yet the address that she invokes is one that is not only about being seen, but instead is rife with the political—not only the politics of race, but the politics of race as they manifest in the institutions of art and the type of distanced spectator that it invites. "Are you going to put this information about black identity out of your mind? Or perhaps relegate it to that corner of your mind you've reserved for interesting art experiences that bear no relation to your life?" she asks. Through Piper's *Cornered*, we are able to ask



Figure 9, Adrian Piper, *Cornered*, 1988



Figure 10, Richard Serra and Nancy Holt, *Boomerang*, 1974

a different set of questions, ones that not only address the forms of rhetoric that publicity implies, but also the politics that bear upon who speak where and from what place.

Building off these insights about the way that video not only collapses inward, but also opens outward, we might ask today where these distinctions between the inside and outside of video leave us and what they, in turn, presume. If the 'inwardness' of video is posed as a narcissism of the self, and the 'outwardness' of video is posed as the encounter between the 'I' and 'you', then what is conceived as of as the inward and outward turns of video hinge upon an encounter in which the 'I' and the 'you' encounter the other. But, as Piper's *Cornered* shows us, this 'I' and this 'you' do not always meet on equal ground and the questions of race that Piper's work raises show us how at the site of this unequal ground is a question of representation and the types of vision as it occurs within a field. The directness of vision as it extends from one side of the screen to the other must also be invested with a question of the frame through which such vision takes place. To press the frame means to ask how ways of seeing also imply blindness, opacity, and the out of frame that troubles any totalizing vision. Furthermore, one might press the frame not only of what is seen but also of the times in which it is seen. In light of these questions of visibility and temporality, video not only collapses inward into narcissism, nor opens outward onto publicity, but it is an aperture onto a difference *within* time and space, an aperture I hope to develop through a rereading of Krauss' description of the temporal enclosure of video as a "collapsed present."

Krauss' reading of a "collapsed present" takes place through *Boomerang*, a video by Richard Serra and Nancy Holt. In this video, Holt is filmed in a sound studio wearing a set of headphones. As Holt speaks she hears what she is saying with a slight delay that stirs a confusion. She is off-sync from herself and even as she describes the experience, the boomerang effect of her voice that comes back to her over the headphones causes her to feel as if she is both surrounded by and entrapped by herself. It is this hall of echos that Krauss describes video as a "prison of a collapsed present, that is a present time which is completely severed from a sense of its own past."⁵⁸ Thus, even as feedback might be understood as simultaneous in that what is recorded can be output to a monitor simultaneously, within this simultaneity is also an off-time or out-of-syncness. When one enters into the temporality of video, as Nancy Holt does in *Boomerang*, one finds oneself in lag time. There is a reverberation, a time that is out of time, she tries to speak but has great difficulty because what she said before echos back to her. "Because the audio delay keeps hypostatizing her words, she has great difficulty coinciding with herself as a subject," writes Krauss.⁵⁹ In the chamber of echos, the time of video, she is, in essence, desubjectivized. It is a disphasure of the self with itself, a self as it is heard everywhere. While Krauss interprets Holt's experience as narcissistic because in hearing herself aurally mirrored, she finds herself "surrounded by me," I would like to suggest that the "collapsed present" holds a potential apart from Krauss' diagnosis of narcissism, one that need not reinscribe the subject in itself, but instead, dwells in the subject as it comes undone.

For the spectator who is watching *Boomerang*, what we experience is not what Holt hears directly. Instead, we hear her processing her own confusion. In essence, we are watching the process of desubjectification occur before our eyes. Yet, it is a disphasure that will end as soon as she turns off the camera or as soon as we stop the tape. But this sense of being out of time with oneself can be extended beyond the machine time of video. It is the reality for many racialized subjects who have experienced themselves in the third-person and is described in a well-known passage of Franz Fanon's *Black Skins, White Masks*:

All around the body there reigns an atmosphere of certain uncertainty. I know that if I want to smoke, I'll have to reach out my right arm and take the pack of cigarettes lying at the other end of the table. The matches, however, are in the drawer on the left, and I'll have to lean back slightly. A slow composition of my *self* as a body in the

middle of a spatio-temporal world, such seems to be the schema. It does not impose itself on me, it is rather, a definitive structuring of the self and world—definitive because it establishes an effective dialectic between my body and the world.⁶⁰

At odds with the spaces and times of the world, Fanon experiences a molasses slow movement, a snail's pace to his gestures in which even to do something so simple as fulfill his desire for a cigarette, are caught within the dialectic of his body with the world. When Fanon describes what it feels like to be looked at with white eyes, so too is this slowness revealed. "I move slowly in the world, accustomed now to seek no longer for upheaval. I progress by crawling. And already I am being dissected under white eyes, the only real eyes. I am fixed."⁶¹ The non-coincidence of the self that Holt describes as she enters into the lag time of video is comparable to the spatiotemporal coordinates of the racialized body. Its slowness and its non-coincidence, the potential in Krauss' formulation of 'a collapsed present' might be reviewed for what also collapses in this present is not only time, but also the subject in time. Rather than seek to unify the collapse of this subject, one sees a moment in which video turns inside out. In the time of video also rests a theory of the subject and to think about video through a collapsed present is to open another side to video, a *borderland* video, one that is not premised upon a unitary subject and its confidence in the time of the present. To look again at video through the idea of a "collapsed present" is to approach video from a frame that is neither beholden to modernism, nor a rejection of modernism, but instead a view from the underside of modernism-- a view from the vantage of those for whom such non-coincident subjectivity is not an unusual phenomenon evoked only by entering into a time of video. Instead it is the very terms through which the subject emerges as a consciousness that is doubled, tripled, quadrupled—infinately multiplied by the borderlands on which they stand.

This border crossing is well understood by women of color who have theorized the ways in which this non-coincidence of the self is born out of a life as it is lived, across borders. From the other side of video, Holt's disphasure from the self and her fracture into many might be reformulated as a crossing into the multiple and flexible consciousness that Gloria Anzaldúa has developed in writings on *mestiza* consciousness. Against the dominance of a unitary subject, Anzaldúa argues that to live on the borderlands demands a multiple and malleable psychic composition. "Rigidity means death" she writes, "only by remaining flexible is she able to stretch the psyche horizontally and vertically."⁶² Such flexibility is not a choice made in leisure, but a historical circumstance in which the *mestiza* exists in "states of emotional perplexity" a non-coincidence of the self "plagued by a psychic restlessness."⁶³ The new *mestiza* consciousness develops out of this restlessness and reconfigures the difference as pluralized practice in which contradiction can be sustained. Out of the non-coincidence of the self, a third term emerges, one that is not caught in dualities of thought and out of which a creative motion forward might be sustained.

When video is understood not as a logic but as a tool, the type of consciousness that one brings to its use is fundamental for what can be imagined. From the stance of *mestiza* consciousness, a collapse of the present reveals the way that what is known as the present is built upon the erasure, exclusion, and violence of the past. Rather than reconsolidate this non-coincident subject as one entrapped by her ego, it is possible to approach the time of the collapsed present as an opening onto another side of video. Another subject of video. Another vision of video. It is video as a ruin of the present. Read against the grain and from the other side of video, *Centers* might be understood not as narcissism but as the utter *exhaustion of narcissism*. In its duration of twenty-two minutes, the look at the self reaches its outer limit. It dwells in a space in which the 'I' migrates. In this one gesture of pointing at the center of the screen is a suggestion that the 'center' rests anywhere but there. The center cannot hold. Instead, the center is made plural--centers—and from the plural contours of

video, the empty 'o' at its center, we set out on the task of writing video again—this time, from the ruins.

Shigeko Kubota, Paik's partner, but more importantly, an artist in her own right, wrote a piece entitled "Video Poem" (1968-76) that shows us another side of video:

Behind the Video Door

I travel alone with my portapak on my back,
as Vietnamese women do with their baby,
I like Video because it is heavy.
Portapak and I traveled all over Europe, Navajo land
and Japan without male accompany.

...

Behind the Video Life

Man thinks, "I think, therefore I am."
I, a woman, feel, "I Bleed, therefore I am."
Recently I bled in half-inch... 3 M or SONY...
ten thousand feet every month.⁶⁴

Kubota's "Video Poem" relates the weight and labor of a Sony Portapak to the way that women carry babies in Vietnam. Between the portapak and the baby, a specifically feminine relation to video emerges, one that is not only about unraveling the types of things that a woman are supposed carry, but also, about the freedom and strength of a woman as she travels alone. With her Portapak, Kubota has traveled the world, "without male accompany," and over the course of these travels, she produces lengths of videotape that she relates to menstrual blood. Video, for Kubota, is a way of "life" and through video she travels, bleeds, lives and climbs mountains. "Why do I climb the mountain?" Not, 'Because it is there,' a colonialist/imperialist notion, but to perceive to see. The mountains provide a visual storm of perceptual complexity in a setting of incomprehensible mass and volume.⁶⁵ She approaches the world with a sense of wonder and perception, and with a sensitivity to the dominant vision that would climb the mountain just because. Unlike the colonial vision, her, "seeing" means to tarry with the perplexity of that which lies beyond her self and her understanding. If video is understood through its etymology, *videre*, then when Kubota says "I see," she is undone by what she sees, just as what she sees might be said to be undone by her. She relates that her grandfather was a *sumi-e* painter and spent his entire life painting one and only one mountain. Thus, even as Kubota is filming Echo Cliff in Arizona, or the Grand Canyon as it extends onto the Navajo reservation, she says, "my mountains exist in fractured and distended time and space." Her mountains are these mountains at the same time as they travel to the mountain village in Japan where she was raised, to her grandfather's lifetime practice of painting, to Mt. Fuji where she camped for weeks. "My vanishing point is reversed, located behind your brain. Then distorted by mirrors and angles, it vanishes in many points at once. Lines of perspective stretch on and on, crossing at steep angles, sharp line cold, thin mountain air. Time flies and sits still, no contradiction."⁶⁶ Kubota's video is one of a simultaneous temporality. It both takes wing to all the mountains of the world, as it rests content, one mountain, infinitely perplexing. Kubota travels the Navajo deserts with hopes to create "a fusion of Asia and America." Her interest lies in the "tribal memory of the Nomadic Asians who crossed over the Bering Straight over 10,000 years ago," a migration of Asians to America that she then relates to her own migration on a Boeing 707 on July 4, 1964.⁶⁷ Kubota's relation of the two migrations means to consider the Asian in the Navajo and the Navajo in the Asian—a meeting at the site of "America" that reconstitutes the terms through which "America" might be understood.



Figure 11, Shigeeko Kubota, *Video Girls and Video Songs for Navajo Sky*, 1973

Kubota relates an encounter with an elder Navajo man who tells her: “ ‘Oh, poor Japanese, you traveled so long to such a small islands, you should have stayed here in America.’ I laughed. This old man thinks that the Native American immigrated to China and founded Chinese civilization in 4000 B.C. Another person told me that my name, Shigeko, means 'my daughter-in-law' in the Navajo language. The Navajo word for hello, pronounced 'Ya-tu-hey, ya-tu-hey' means 'Love, me, love me in Japanese.’⁶⁸ Crossing the boundaries between Asia and America, Japanese and Navajo, Kubota hear with many ears. Each time her name is said in Navajo country, she is as close as family. Each time she is greeted hello in Navajo country, she is enjoined to love. Shigeko, my daughter in law, ya-tu-hey, love me. "My mountains exist in fractured and distended time and space.” Language travels like the mountains. Let us redraw the contours of video in the shape of a mountain, in the shape of a womb, in the shape of a concentricity, emptied and full, where a migrant’s experience, where a woman’s experience emerges as an explosive spring.

Mountain-womb
My womb is a volcano.
Five-inch and eleven-inch images are dancing inside of it.
They sing of my history.⁶⁹

The proposition that video proposes in Kubota's practice, is one that begins quite literally, from the reservation and deeply related to the question of history. In it, video is an aperture that does not open onto an image, but onto the question of history. In the meeting between Asia and America, which develops from the site of the reservation, the plurivisionality of her project is shown in the way that there is not one vanishing point but many. In Kubota's hands, video is no longer a proposition that is based on veracity, but instead, it is a site where there are no contradictions for what is at stake is time itself, both as it flies and as it stands still. It is in this site between Asia and America that I will be exploring further in my next chapter, where the horizontal axis of vision and its vanishing point is one that Kubota multiplies and send spinning in many directions at once. If this is the case for Kubota, I want to introduce a different scenario as it occurs with On Kawara, whose negotiation with vision happens not only on the horizontal place of quattrocento perspective, but also, on the vertical plane, with the virtualization of warfare.

Chapter 3

Video as Passage

Video opens an aperture onto the registers of time and image, a passage that directs us toward the ways in which time and image have been addressed in the cinema and toward the vast interiors of history that awaken the creative capacity of video anew.⁷⁰ In this chapter, I will move across media, with the works of On Kawara, Jean Luc-Godard, Mary Lucier, and Trinh T. Minh-ha, to locate a passage in which video opens laterally, to the possibilities that lie outside of a retinal understanding of the camera eye alone. In this passage, video is not the deadened site of a known entity but a journey onto a different awareness of time's registers and a way through the macrological and the micrological textures of history. By thinking of video apart from the camera eye, the horizon of this inquiry will touch upon the tension that is present in discussions of digital technology, where we seem return to the problem of representation and the rhetoric of realism that the machine-eye had founded. By exploring at the way artists have moved through the apertures of video, we are offered a glimpse into how the question of the eye be reframed, not as a proposition of truth or fiction, but instead, as a passage within the registers of time and a journey onto other sensual registers.

If the founding myth of video art lies with Nam June Paik's first use of the Sony Portapak in 1965 to shoot Pope Paul VI's procession in New York City, let us move in a lateral motion to a different moment that same year, where an engagement with video, not in its devices but in its relation to vision with "I see," is also taking place. This parallel engagement with the question video rests with the date paintings of On Kawara, which will officially 'begin' one year later in 1966, but whose first strains can be seen to emerge in 1965 with *Title*, a work that explicitly addresses the war in Vietnam. In Kawara's *Title*, a relation to time is introduced through his handling of the image, one that is productively considered in light of discussions of the time-image within theories of cinema.⁷¹

The time-image, as theorized by Gilles Deleuze, allows for the cinema to suggest what lies outside of it, a time that is not only the spacing between images but also, where all that is outside of the image is made to pass within it.⁷² Deleuze marks a breaking point during the Second World War when the world was such that it no longer knew how to react and there were no longer descriptions for what was happening. At this moment, Deleuze suggests the cinema moves from the *movement-image*, or a cinema based in montage, to the *time-image*, which is no longer a matter of how images are linked but what images show.⁷³ He writes, "what is specific to an image, as soon as it is creative, is to make perceptible, to make visible, relationships of time which cannot be seen in the represented object and do not allow themselves to be reduced to the present."⁷⁴ With the time-image, a new kind of image emerges, one that tears the image from its clichés and empties the image from its sense of the present.⁷⁵ In the time-image, Deleuze directs us to the shadow of time as it has always haunted the movement of the cinema. "It took the modern cinema to re-read the whole of cinema as already made up of aberrant movements and false continuity shots. The direct time-image is the phantom which has always haunted the cinema." Cinema, after the Second World War, would give form to this phantom with the time-image.

If the question of time and image is one that has mainly been written about in terms of postwar Europe, we open its interpretation across the Pacific, with the sense of a time-image that arrives with On Kawara's practice some decades after the Second World War, in the shadows of great power machinations. In his steady refusal to visualize any scene, Kawara offers a vision of history as seen from beneath the mushroom cloud. In the marked avisuality of Kawara's paintings



Figure 12, On Kawara, *Title*, 1965

we read this time-image as it is negotiated across the Pacific, a time-image touched by the atomic light of the nuclear attacks and the visuality of global war. Kawara's work emerges during the long aftermath of the atomic attacks that the scholar of Japanese film, Akira Lippit, has called the era of Atomic Light.⁷⁶ Lippit suggests that the radiation produced by the atomic bombs issued a light that bore the power to burn, sear, and destroy the body, an *atomic* light that has permeated Japanese visual culture. The atomic bombs dropped by the United States on Japan produced an excess visuality, an unseen that Lippit calls the *avisual*. He writes, "avisuality is not a form of invisibility, in the sense of an absent or negated visibility: not as the antithesis of the visible but as a specific mode of the impossible, unimaginable visuality."⁷⁷ Rather than understanding *avisuality* as the antithesis of the visual, Lippit interprets it as the historical condition of the visual after the atomic attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It is vision at the end of vision, "a visuality without images, an unimaginable visuality, and images without visuality, avisuality."⁷⁸

Such *avisuality* might be considered in light of On Kawara's trajectory having left Post-World War II Japan for Mexico City in the 1950's. Kawara, at the time, was a young man who dreamed of being a Mexican muralist, a Rivera, a Siqueiros, or an Orozco.⁷⁹ Yet during these years in Mexico, he went from painting the iconic Quetzalcoatl on walls at the Academia de San Carlos, to removing all imagery from his work except for a date against a bare field.⁸⁰ He begins a series entitled *Today* that will continue for the rest of his life. A set of procedures determines Kawara's production of *Today*. On each painting is a hand-painted date in a sans-serif font against a matte background that is usually of a dark gray hue verging on black. On rare occasions, this background transforms into candy reds and vermillion blues, but mostly, it is dark gray that persists. Each painting must be completed within the span of one day, the date that marks the face of the painting, or else it is destroyed. The format of the date corresponds to the language and conventions of the country where Kawara is located. Finally, each painting of the *Today* series is stored in a cardboard box that includes a clipping from that day's newspaper pasted on the inside of its top cover. The boxes are handmade to fit each painting perfectly. Brown tape holds the corners of the structures together and a small, typewritten white label is pasted to the front cover. The boxes are not considered properly a part of the work, but are constitutive of their meaning all the same. They form the secret archive, the place where the paintings rest before emerging again with each showing.

Debates in the interpretation of Kawara's *Today Series*, seem to focus on whether one might to read his practice in terms of the American climate where he began the *Today* series or the Japanese climate that he was born into. The art historian, Pamela Lee, for example, has suggested that Kawara's *Today* series offers a practice of slowness and the temporality of a *longue durée* to the speeded and information obsessed age occurring in the United States during the 1960's.⁸¹ She suggests that Kawara's work shows how everyday activities open onto a conception of a long-term historical structure, one that lies apart from the anxious relation to history that the dawn of the information age produced. Arguing against Lee's enframing of Kawara within a strictly US-based teleology, Jung-Ah Woo suggests that Lee's inscription of Kawara within an American anxiety in time actually forecloses a different genealogy out of which Kawara's practice emerges, the postwar devastation of Japan. She writes: "The nuclear disasters of Hiroshima and Nagasaki literally marked the "end" of the imaginable scope of manmade destruction. They marked the end of the world, the apocalypse."⁸² Between Lee and Woo, American anxiety and Japanese apocalypse, what is thrown into relief is the frame through which one understands Kawara's placement and the globality of his trajectory.

In light of this question, it is helpful to reframe the *Today* series in a specific work that preceded it, for apart from the forms of Orientalism that often captivate the discourse around the work of Kawara and place him in the realm of eastern essences, the relation to time that he proposes is one that is also shadowed by global war.⁸³ In *Title* (1965), Kawara presents a triptych of three bright



Figure 13, On Kawara, *Today Series*, 1966



Figure 14, On Kawara, Boxes for *Today Series*, 1991

red panels. From left to right the panels read: ONE THING. 1965. VIET-NAM. At the center of the triptych, we have a year, 1965, which marked the astronomical escalation of the US involvement in Vietnam, the Americanization of the war. In 1965, US troops in Vietnam grew from 16,000 to 184,000 and a program of sustained, all-out bombing under the name of "Rolling Thunder". On each side of this year we have two panels. To the right, we have a name, a place, at least, as it exists in idea. VIET-NAM. The dash marks a difference within, a conjunction of two elements. The difference as articulated in the dash between VIET and NAM is one that can be read alongside the third panel on the far left, ONE THING, which when read with VIET-NAM suggests the 1954 Geneva conference during which Vietnam was partitioned into two zones, communist and non-communist, north and south.⁸⁴ In this constellation of terms around the year 1965, we are presented with the two Vietnams as it was determined by global mandates, and the invocation of a commonality apart from the forms of occupation that determine the division. While such commentary is no longer present in *Today Series*, I would like to suggest that they hold a spectral relation to each date as it becomes painted in the *Today Series*. Set against *Title*, the date paintings which will begin one year later become haunted by the words "VIET-NAM" and "ONE THING." If the marked avisuality of Kawara's paintings might be argued to emerge out of the apocalypse of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, then they are also linked with the shift in vision that emerged after the nuclear attacks, a vision in which the world is cut vertically between what is seen from the air and what is seen on the ground.

This vertical configuration of visibility is productively considered in light of Rey Chow's analysis on how the politics of vision have changed since the Second World War and the atomic attacks.⁸⁵ Chow suggests that if Martin Heidegger, writing seven years before the bombs fell on Japan, had described the politics of vision as one in which the world was made into a picture, then after the atomic bombs fell, this metaphor turned from *picture* to *target* and the world became, quite simply, "an object to be destroyed."⁸⁶ The shift from picture to target occurs for Chow with the emergence of technologies of warfare based not on physical battlefronts, but instead upon the accuracy of perception and the possibility to deliver unspeakable destruction from the air-- what Paul Virilio has argued as the eye that bears the function of a weapon.⁸⁷ This distance from the battlefront has been furthered through the virtualization of warfare, not only in distance-operated drones, but also in the way that the technologies of war seep into every aspect of our modern daily lives. This virtualization of war produces two worlds, one in which the soldiers are playing video games and another in which the Iraqi civilians of today bear the disaster of such virtuality. "Up above in the sky, war was a matter of maneuvers across the video screen by U.S. Soldiers who had been accustomed as teenagers to playing video games at home; down below, war remained tied to the body, to manual labor, to the random disasters falling from the heavens."⁸⁸ In this move from "world picture" to "world target" Chow grapples with the relation between the politics of vision and the rise and sustenance of US military hegemony from 1945 through to the contemporary wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Read through this lens, the strategies of Kawara's project cannot be sourced solely to the United States or solely to Japan, but instead in the relation between the two and the experience of time as it meets the politics of global war.

With regard to its time-image, Kawara's *Today* series orients us away from cameras, away from the eye, and is stripped down to what is perhaps most essentially cinematic: the subject in time.⁸⁹ It is a cinema that emerges from the underside of two worlds, where disasters fall from the heavens and destruction reigns below. Rather than *represent* history, it offers a suspension between multiple registers of time as it passes through the present. First, the standardized time of a calendrical system and newspaper-- homogenous and empty; second, the subjective time of memory or history, as seen with one's eyes closed, images in the mind's eye that vitiate homogenous empty

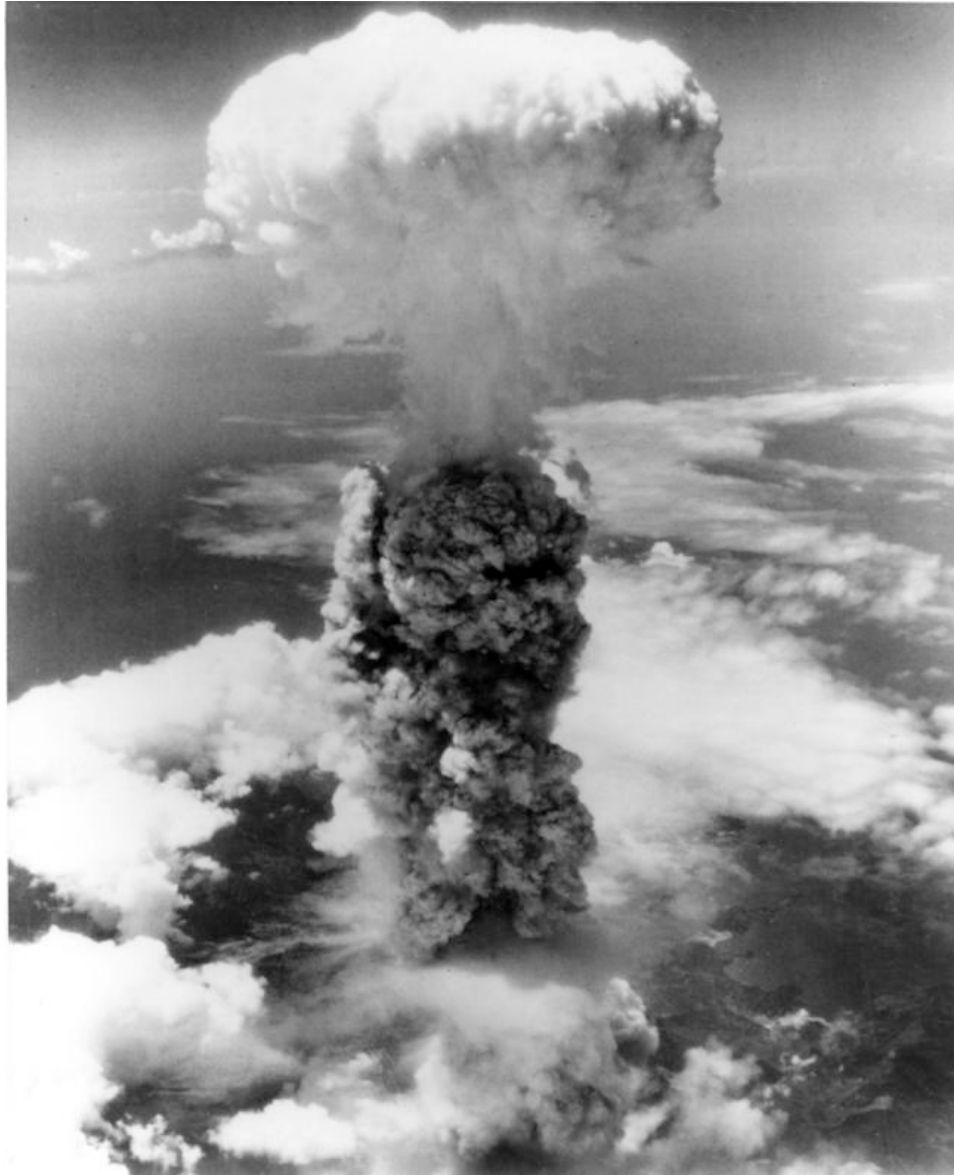


Figure 15, Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Blast, August 9, 1945
from the Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, Accession #: 85-7

time and return it to memory; and third, the time of finitude-- one life, anonymous and utterly singularity, as it bears its duration. In between these three registers, standard, subjective, and singular, Kawara expands our sense of the cinema toward the way that our relation to time is positioned.

In the first sense of time, the standard of homogenous empty time is taken up in both the dates and in the inclusion of the newspaper.⁹⁰ Dates are rote, familiar. They are 'Time with a capital "T"' in that their are the official form of its keeping. Kawara's symbolization of the date as a fact of calendrial time throws the aesthetics of homogenous empty time into relief. The format of the date is standardized for each locale where Kawara makes one of his paintings. When Kawara includes the newspaper clipping in the box, it blankets the symbol of the date with the *current events* of the newspaper. And yet we know that the today of the newspaper becomes yesterday very quickly. The cocoon-box is Dead Time, a moment when the element housed within are not performing any type of function. When these elements reemerge, they will be pulled from homogenous and empty time, and opened to memory.

Out of Dead Time, the works become vitiated through memory. The *Today* series offers us a visual without image, an *avisuality* in which the viewer is not directed in history but instead, invited to return memory to history and to return duration to time. Kawara invites a relation to dates in their singularity, a subjective time. In subjective time, each date, as solid and official, as standardized and as recognizable as it appears, refracts into itself, turns itself inside out only to show itself as empty. Upon seeing a painting with a date that bears an affect, one is sent to that time in the mind's eye. Memories emerge out of a constellation of references and one finds oneself in the interval between the mind and the image, between one's eyes closed and one's eyes opened, between the time of memory and the time of forgetting. We experience these intervals between memory and forgetting *as duration*. The paintings come to punctuate and spatialize the body as we move from one work to the next. Whether it is exhibited as one horizontal line around an exhibition space or as an explosive constellation of dates across a long wall, it is in the spacing that it offers a way into the question of history and the interval that offers the rhythm of the visual. The eye attempts but will never be able to grasp the whole of this work. Its span is time itself, which is greater than any one exhibition.

The third order of time registers a singular life and is witnessed in the attention Kawara gives over to each painting, an investment that divests itself of personality and occurs through the site of anonymity. Kawara does not give interviews. He has no portraits. He does not attend the opening parties for his exhibitions. He is not the master of time, but its servant for as long as he is still alive in this world. He surrenders himself to time. He works out of an empty 'I' using the "I" as a placeholder that is filled with singularity but not with individuality. Kawara's series stand as an index of one life lived-- a sense of this singular life and its eventual passing. One day, the paintings of dates will run out but what will not is the density of temporal experience found here, the accumulation of experience that haunt the work as an outside and comes to create the very conditions of place that his work suggests.

Jean-Luc Nancy has called On Kawara's art the essence of a spacing, one in which these is no production of any object, but only a passage.⁹¹ It is a spacing that produces an "outside" that is not another place, but instead, "a taking place of place in general and of all places."⁹² Understood as spacing, what Kawara's work suggests are the historical conditions through which place is made or the power geometries of time and space that give form to place.⁹³ It is a passage through place and the political histories and temporalities that have given shape to the field of vision, vertically differentiated between the strata of the celestial and the terrestrial, the sky and land, the drone and the world below.⁹⁴

As myth would have it, it is said that Kawara almost stopped making art. It was at the cave paintings of Altamira that he returns to art and reimagines it from the site where some have claimed



Figure 16, Cave painting of a bison, Altamira, Spain, Credit: Pedro A. Saura/AP

the cinema to have begun.⁹⁵ If the apparatus of cinema has been compared to the hallucinatory representations dancing across the wall of Plato's cave, then Kawara's visit to Altamira might be said to set in motion a different practice of cinema, one that is not bound to the pictorialism of representation or to the desire for visual perception that the cinematic apparatus inaugurates, but holds open this layered experience of temporality. Out of his time-image, we are returned to a passage through the registers of time that come to write us in and out of place. The visual is *displaced* from being oriented vertically as the aim of modern warfare, or horizontally as the vanishing point of quattrocento perspective, but as the vast interiors of history that awaken the creative capacity within cinema anew.

Moving from Kawara's Pacific across the Atlantic, cinema's failure to cinema to adequately represent the events of the twentieth century is evoked by Jean-Luc Godard's *Histoire(s) du Cinema*. This treatise, twenty-years in the making, advances the claim that cinema has fallen short of a responsibility to bear witness to the atrocities of the second world war. For Godard, cinema died during the world wars, when it turned its back on the war and the concentration camps. The question of cinematic history emerges in light of what the cinema has not been able to say. Rather than relate a history of cinema, Godard delivers *cinema as history* in which "all the histories" of the world, in their multiplicity, can only be realized through the cinema (1A). A history of cinema cannot privilege language as the *modus operandi* through which cinema is written in language. It can only be told through a collection of images and sounds. The plural, heterogeneous histories of cinema must pass through the language of cinema itself. In an important turn that reveals the passage *between* media as a site for history, the language of cinema that is used to render this history of cinema is not done in film at all, but rather, takes place in video.⁹⁶ It is a history of cinema that neither abides by chronological history nor acknowledges a boundary between cinema and history, but works in a space between. The passage that is produced by the idea of *cinema as history* is advanced through a specific proposition captured in one particular play of words that Godard performs between 'histoire(s)' and 'toi'. In this context, 'histoire(s)' comes to mean both the little stories of cinema, and the big stories of history. Contained in 'histoire(s)' is the possibility of a subject who is not interpellated as 'you' by history, but rather, already constitutive of history itself. Without the 'toi' there could be no 'histoire'. Furthermore, in the very act of calling attention to the 'toi' is the understanding that the 'toi' cannot exist alone. The political implications for subject and image, in and of history, shifts the cinema to a constellation between cinema, audience, production, and politics. Cinema is not understood as an object, but as a form of thought.

In *Histoire(s)* Godard visually asserts that the only a palimpsest might communicate this complex weave of history. The formal structure through which he maneuvers is that of images juxtaposed one on top of the other, with voice, text, and music playing over, under, and between the images. Images are slowed to reveal "all the stories of the films that were never made," quickened or stilled, and their speed of transfer becomes a variable to which we are normally denied access. Literary texts, paintings, newsreels, and production stills are all set in a dialogue with the cinema that has moved Godard, who is sometimes figured at a typewriter, a cigar hanging from his mouth, dressed in a white suit like a master of ceremonies. The sound of the typewriter permeates the series, as does the whirl of film through a flatbed. It is these sounds that remind us of Godard's entry into the Nouvelle Vague as a critic for *Cahiers du Cinema*, and also that even in image and sound, *Histoire(s)* is still a 'writing' of history. The cinema, through video, is understood as the mode through which history might be written.

What *Histoire(s)* achieves, at the surface of the image, is a *relation* to history, a Benjaminian constellation. "Yes, eight constellations, four times two... the visible and the invisible, and then within that locating, through the traces that exist of them, other constellations... to cite Benjamin who says that stars at a given moment, form constellations and there is resonance between the past



Figure 17 Jean-Luc Godard, Histoire(s) du Cinéma, 1988



Figure 18, Jean-Luc Godard, Histoire(s) du Cinéma, 1988

and present."⁹⁷ In the midst of these constellations, the cinema is not limited to lens-based technologies but moves across presents itself as a passage in the gap between seeing and saying, writing and painting, time and history. When asked if shooting in video, he felt as if he were outside of the cinema, Godard replies, "Never. Whether you're working with color pencils, watercolors, or oil paints, it's still the same. With video I liked the personal creation, the personal essay."⁹⁸ The approach that Godard takes to cinema is not one that is based solely in film, or even solely in video. In fact, it is not even based in what has come to be known as any of the 'time-based' media of film, video, or photography. Herein lies an expansive sense of what a cinematic project might look like. The tools might be colored pencils, watercolors, or oil paints, and still might still be in dialogue with the questions of the cinema. In this passage across media, the cinema opens laterally, to the possibilities that lie outside the camera alone.⁹⁹

The challenge of understanding cinema as passage seems to be particularly difficult in an age of cinema and digital technology, where well-worn debates concerning realism and representation seem to resurface.¹⁰⁰ With the digital, we return to the problem of representation and the rhetoric of realism that the machine-eye had founded. In one attempt to answer how an understanding of cinema shifts with digital technology, Lev Manovich claims that cinema moves away from the realism of indexical representation and toward something that more approximates painting.¹⁰¹ Manovich argues that in the twentieth century, the cinema had two roles: one was as a document of authenticity and the other was as a fantasy-laden production of genre films. In either mode, document or genre, the cinema is defined by the eye of the machine and the realism that is it believed to confer. With the advent of the digital, Manovich suggests that cinema experiences a turn in which the forms of realism that had been given over the machine eye of the film camera are displaced. Digital mages are proven to be flexible and manipulable and the presumption of realism that cinema once conferred is displaced. He writes, "in retrospect, we can see that the twentieth century cinema's regime of visual realism, the result of automatically recording visual reality, was only an exception, an isolated accident in the history of visual representation which has always involved, and now again involves the manual construction of images. Cinema becomes a particular branch of painting -- painting in time. No longer a kino-eye, but a kino-brush."¹⁰² Manovich returns cinema to a pictorial tradition, one in which the cinema, even if it is no longer bound to realism, is the province of vision. In light of the mystification of technologies that often subsumes discussion of new media, or the pictorial tradition that seems to be reinstalled, it is helpful to return to a question concerning video, its relation to writing, the bridges that it forms, and the relations to temporal experience that it makes possible. When media is understood not as a logic, but as a tool, it might be possible to demystify the technology, open other spheres of sensuous experience apart from the eye, and remove it from the privileged site that is so often reserved for all that is new.

In the relations to time introduced by both Kawara and Godard we open onto a work of chronography, an invitation onto an event that one is *written* by a temporal experience. In *chronography*, the one who writes is not the one who makes, nor is it the one who views; instead the writing might be said to occur in the passages created within the cinema where any distinction between the active author or passive receiver, as Barthes and Foucault have famously argued, falls away.¹⁰³ In past theories of the cinema, the analogy with writing was thought to pull cinema from its obsession with a field of vision aligned with the superficial hallucinations of entertainment. For Alexandre Astruc, writing would release cinema from its prison of entertainment and place it on par with the great complexity of thought offered by literature and philosophy.¹⁰⁴ "By it (writing) I mean that the cinema will gradually break free from the tyranny of what is visual, from the image for its own sake, from the immediate and concrete demands of the narrative, to become a means of writing just a flexible and subtle as written language."¹⁰⁵ Toward this end, he unites the camera with the pen



Figure 19, Mary Lucier, *Dawn Burn*, 1975, Installation as SF MOMA, 1993

as *camera-stylo*, and seeks to show how the auteur might express in film with the same nuance as the written language.¹⁰⁶

Some forty years later, Raymond Bellour would go on to expand Astruc's camera-pen from film to video, yet he goes a step further by proposing a kind of competition between film and video for proximity to writing. He says, "everything attests to the fact that video is more deeply rooted in writing than in cinema."¹⁰⁷ For both Astruc and Bellour, whether in film or video, the idea of writing comes to offer an emancipatory potential from the confines of the cinema, an umbrella across that which has not been expressed by the camera-eye alone. Video is "the presence of the image in real time" a fact that, for Bellour, bears two subsequent implications. The first is that in video, the presence of the image in real time creates a kind of relay between image and language, an inexhaustible reserve or stock of images that, unlike film and its less immediate mode of production, will never run out. The second is that video technology allows for a processing of the image, a "painting" that in fact, writes the image itself.

In contrast to the all-encompassing scope of writing that Bellour suggests, practitioners of video such as Mary Lucier, saw the relation between writing and video as a bridge. Between video and writing lay a realm of expansion, extension, and possibility. Lucier writes, "applying the methodology of writing to camera technique was a means by which I sought to extend video's referents beyond its own limited history. I was interested in the displacement that occurs when one tool is assigned the practices of another, the result being to infuse or enrich one set of aesthetic practices with those of another system commonly thought to be incompatible."¹⁰⁸ For Lucier, to relate writing to video meant to displace the terms of each, and expand the terms through which both video and writing might be practiced. Borrowing from Douglas Davis' manifesto, in contrast to the camera-pen, Lucier calls video a "camera-pencil,"¹⁰⁹ a tool for writing as it is for drawing. "The camera is a tool like any other tool which an artist uses to render signs and symbols onto a receptive medium."¹¹⁰ In thinking of the camera as an artist's tool, Lucier tries to demystify the technology and remove it from the privileged site that is so often reserved for advanced technology.

Lucier's relation to the camera to writing, and as a tool like any other tool, is one that posed against a sheerly retinal engagement. Her practice, at the limit of vision, finds itself expressed in a 1975 video entitled *Dawn Burn*. In this work, she pointed the video camera that she had borrowed from her friend directly at the rising sun for seven mornings. The camera that she was using, a vidicon, had tubes that were burned easily by the intensity of the light and the work documented the sun as it burned a spot onto the camera tube. Provocatively, she writes, "sometime around 1970 I became obsessed with the idea that video has been invented to satisfy an ancient longing: to allow the human eye to gaze directly at the sun without damage to the retina. Unlike Icarus, who died flying too close to the sun, or Prometheus, who was punished for his appropriation of fire, we have obeyed an old taboo out of a deep and instinctual fear of loss. Direct, unmediated confrontation with the source of light means, paradoxically, the death of vision—the clouding over of the eye that dares to look, that surrenders to the persuasion of desire over reason"¹¹¹ Video was a tool to place vision at its limit.

Contemporary filmmakers who work in digital technology are not so beholden to the sensorial unidimensionality of the eye. Trinh T. Minh-ha's cinema offers that place where the elements of cinema, eye, ear, and hand, play musically. She writes, "although I think that digital compositing has presented us with a host of capabilities in working with the painterly image, I am not at all working under the specter of painting, as a number of experimental filmmakers tend to do. Rather than using digital technology to reinforce the domination of the visual and the retina in cinema, one can certainly use it to propel image making into other realms of the senses and of awareness."¹¹² Trinh's approach is one that she calls "rhythmic." "Rhythm is a way of marking and framing relationships. Through music, we learn to listen to our own biorhythms; to the language of



Figure 20, Trinh T. Minh-ha, *The Fourth Dimension*, 2001



Figure 21, Trinh T. Minh-ha, *The Fourth Dimension*, 2001

a people, the richness of silence; and hence to the vast rhythm of life.”¹¹³ A temporality opens with the rhythmic, one that shifts us from the eye to the pulse.¹¹⁴ Heart beats, drumbeats, the insistence of a pulse as it shows difference and repetition. In her sensitivity to rhythm, Trinh’s cinema opens onto the interval between realms, a passage between the visual, the musical, the verbal, the mental, the physical, as well as a passage between image, music, and text in which one does not close off or dominate the other.¹¹⁵

Unlike Manovich’s conception of the digital technology as inaugurating a painterly mode of representation, Trinh’s conception of digital technology is one that is not opposed to film, but rather, acts as a bridge. She calls her work using digital video, “D-films,” an expression of the transversal of media. Trinh writes, “the term film is deliberately used here, not because of a lack of differentiation between the two media (video and film), but because of the “bridge” digital technology has extended between them”¹¹⁶ This digital bridge is experienced in *The Fourth Dimension* where Trinh takes time itself as a subject. The work’s title, *The Fourth Dimension*, takes on a number of different meanings-- as that of time, boundary, and what remains imperceptible. “Our life situations are regulated by time—by instituted work time or television time, for example; our bodies and daily activities tell us with precision how time takes on specific forms and leaves its marks in our landscape. And yet, when I introduce a work as a video or a D-film on time, it is like saying it is about nothing.”¹¹⁷ It is double negative in which time meets time. The “nothing” that opens in the space of this encounter is also the everything as it is made available for between nothing and everything is temporal experience, a work that is done both in time and to time. Trinh’s insight moves well beyond recourse to a pictorial tradition. It reveals not one of kino-eye versus kino-brush, indexicality versus painterliness. Instead, video and digital cinema returns us to a sensuous register of the cinematic, one that is not an exercise in vision but an awareness of the senses as they open beyond vision, and toward the multiple temporalities that shape experience.

By moving *across* media, not only forward into the time of the digital age, but backwards as well, toward negotiation with vision that has taken place in the arts and the cinema, we see how video is not solely about what the lens captures, but about the registers of image and time that have been so important to cinematic thought. Across media, in this passage through video’s aperture, the image opens to a relation to time that the cinematic facilitates. It is a move away from the image’s meaning and toward the differences within time that it bears, difference that offers a source of creativity where video is not the containment of an eternal present, but way through the macrological and micrological textures of experience, the insides and outsides of history. It is toward the question of history and its representation that I will turn to in my next chapter, which will take the aperture of video, to the boundaries that it draws around ethics and politics.

Chapter 4

Video as Border

If discussions concerning the work of art in times of war often revolve around the possible *effect* of art to enact change-- the way it might interrupt politics, or its capacity to transform consciousness-- there is an aspect to art that might become eclipsed if the relation between art and war is only understood as a matter of causality. In this chapter, I will explore this question of art and war and the demands that are placed upon the artist and her work at such moments. If, on the one hand, there are demands placed upon the artist to create the conditions for the appearance of alterity, then on the other hand, there is a different practice that I hope to explore, one that works out of appearance not as a fact, but as a question. This path asks about the politics of language and positions out of which appearance might be forwarded. It begins not from the demand of representation but from a place of silence and invisibility. Between these two stances is a question of art's exteriority and of boundaries as they become drawn and redrawn in the field of vision. Boundaries, as they are drawn and redrawn might be related to the work of video.

Video, as a metaphor for a distorted and reduced way of seeing and a construction of borders, is elaborated by the legendary Palestinian poet, Mahmoud Darwish, in his *Memory for Forgetfulness*. Set in Beirut during the 1982 Israeli siege, *Memory for Forgetfulness* presents video from two different positions: first, as a vision that emerges from outside of the Palestinian experience which desires to capture its tragedy, and second, as a vision that emerges from within the history of the Palestinian struggle and distorts the struggle into a narrow slogan. Between these two senses of video, emerging from both elsewhere and within, is a question of what forms of representation might be able to integrate public and private reality with the complex identities that emerge out of the wartorn conditions.

In the first case, Darwish presents a figure that he calls "Cause-Man" who is one who seeks out war and violence as material. Cause-Man is figured as a parachuting American who looks for war and destitution with his video camera. He is not a professional journalist whose job requires that he chase the news, but an amateur "who records tragedies on tape with the lens of a video camera."¹¹⁸ As the tool of choice for this morbid fascination, video allows Cause-Man to show destitution and victimization. He capitalizes off misery and he feeds his excitement for death by chasing tragedy with his camera. Darwish writes of Cause-Man as "the American who appears when he should disappear. An American elated to see what he's seeing, a happy witness to experiences not available to others. War and siege."¹¹⁹ The mode of "happy witness" that Cause-Man embodies may be productively considered in light of the challenge of what language might possibly bear witness to the depths of Palestinian experience, a difficult terrain that Darwish takes up through writing itself.

The limited and stereotypical representations produced by Cause-Man with his video camera, are ones that find an accompaniment in the way that video, as a metaphor, comes communicate a reduced way of seeing within the Palestinian struggle between 1967 up until the writing of this text in the early 1980's. In this same text, with word "video" as a refrain, Darwish moves from the unfulfilled vision of Arab Nationalism to the boundaries drawn to reduce the Palestinian struggle into a slogan. It is with the repetition of the word "video," and its passage through each successive moment to define Palestine, that we come to understand how video is not meant to signify vision, but instead, the impossible retreat of vision and of Palestine as homeland. He writes:

Video.

To see only what was comfortable at a moment when the contingency of our existence was being transformed into a vision drawn from the grand discourse of Arab nationalism, and then to have the vision turned into a mere promise that gradually retreated from awareness until those representing the mainstream became a minority under siege.

Video.

Because now is not the time for prophets—not a time in which isolation can be transformed into a compass for truth or a minority (the residue of the majority's project) become a guiding light.

Video.

Because the June 1967 war, cooked up to be the end of Arabism, was transformed by the Arab regimes (which helped to concoct it) into an excuse for neutralizing an anger they could not hold back, rather than into the initial stages of an alternative based on the people's revenge. Thus they confirmed their deviation into regionalism and sectarianism.

Video.

Because the Marquis of Sidon, who was waiting for a dispensation from the pope to put his sister under a Muslim, or if not his sister then his niece, was not suitable as a genuine ally against the English, who were holding Acre under siege.

Video.

Because the collapse of the center with the signing of a peace treaty guaranteeing the end of war has given the fringe an excuse to launch an attack against the heart of the question, transforming it from a cause to an issue of dissent and discord.

Video.

Because the aim of partitioning the land into coast and mountain between Arab and Frank was not, under prevailing conditions, to guarantee for the Arabs whatever forts and terrain had remained in their hands but to grant the enemy a respite that enabled him to establish a pattern that sanctioned his transition from exception to rule.

Video.

Because this rib of Arabia, the broken rib, has been summoned to court, accused of aggression against the comfort of the thrones by circulating words denied currency in Arab parts: *woman, opposition, book, political parties, parliament, liberty, pork, democracy, communism, secularism.*

Video.

Because Palestine has been transformed from a homeland into a slogan, not for action but for use as a tool to make statements about events and to embellish the discourse of the coup d'état industry, heavy and light, until the marriage of the last female descendant of the Caliph.

On borders, war is declared on borders.¹²⁰

In this passage, with each iteration of the word video is a moment where a border, at the level of name or space, is drawn. Video comes to describe, not a form of vision or seeing, but a boundary and a limit, a site where lines are demarcated and war is declared. In this repetition of the word video, from the grand discourse of Arab nationalism to a minority under siege, Darwish stages the ways that exclusion has been staged. But with the repetition of the word "video," so too does Darwish ask his reader to work at the limit of these boundaries, to push the border as it is being defined, and to ask what other ways of seeing might remain possible. "Was it within our power to see differently, to see anything other than what made it easy for us to set reality against its own materiality?"¹²¹ Video, as the construction of a boundary, is understood to set reality off from the material world. Against video's illusion of unity, foreclosure of possibility, and the reduction of experience that works in the time of the present to offer the objective truth of a situation, Darwish does away with objectivity in order to make available ways of seeing that might reimagine what comes to pass.

As Darwish's English translator, Ibrahim Muhawi, suggests, the borders that Darwish is negotiating in this text are not only those between Israel and Arab countries, but also those borders within writing itself. The political boundaries of the Palestinian experience are here, also the aesthetic boundaries on which Darwish trespasses, between the realms of myth, history, memoir,

poetry, fiction, and allegory with a fragmentary, imagistic writing that propels a motion toward an aperture that opens between writer and reader, one in which each must negotiate the sense of fragmentation, the multiplicity of voices, and the plurality of visions that might bear witness to the experience of dispossession. What is done away with in this process are the forms of objectivity upon which boundaries are drawn, those statements made that might assert without contradiction. It is a space where private and public realities cannot be untangled, and the density of experience is addressed in all of its contradictions.

Because of the state of dispossession, dispersion, and exile that define the Palestinian experience, Edward Said writes, "I believe that essentially unconventional, hybrid, and fragmentary forms of expression should be used to represent us."¹²² Only through this relation to the complexity of Palestinian identity can an integration between private and public realities and an expression of the density of life and of difference that describes the experience of Palestinians be expressed. In *After the Last Sky*, Said's collaboration with the Swiss photographer, Jean Mohr, he suggests that there is "double-vision" that informs his text as well as Mohr's images. This double-vision is one that in language, Said finds as he shifts between the pronouns of "we," "you" and "they" to designated Palestinians. In Mohr's images, shot in the West Bank, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Gaza, the double-vision is shown in the attempt to photograph not only the images of victimization and destitution, but of the texture of life as it persists in spite of it all. Said describes the importance of this plural vision as one that arises out of the politics of representation, and the fact that the experience of Palestinians is mediated by languages that are available and the power differentials within the possible networks of its distribution. He writes, "the multifaceted vision is essential to any representation of us. Stateless, dispossessed, de-centered, we are frequently unable either to speak the 'truth' of our experience or to make it heard. We do not usually control the images that represent us; we have been confined to spaces designed to reduce or stunt us; and we have often been distorted by pressures and power that have been too much for us." The forms of confinement and reduction that Said describes within the forms of representations that circulate around Palestine, ask what a critical relation to the production of images of Palestine might look like.

Critique is not pointing to something else but the very object as constructed. It is a work that negotiates the frame of one's own criticism, aware that the object that is constructed out of critique turns to define critique itself.¹²³ In contrast to the desire for art to effect change, for some of its practitioners and theorists, art is not a discrete object or event but a *process* that cannot be conceived in terms of cause and effect. Instead, *within* art rests a historicity that Walter Benjamin understood when he wrote: "attempts to place works of art into historical context do not yield insights into their innermost core... What emerges from current art-historical studies are always histories of forms or contents in which works serve merely as examples and models; a history of the works themselves is never envisaged. Nothing connects the latter in ways that are both extensive and temporal... The essential connection between works of art remains intensive."¹²⁴

Through Benjamin, we understand that the work of art is not something that can be used instrumentally to give an example or support a point. While this might trouble some critics for whom art's role is precisely, to illustrate, a growing sensitivity to the historicity *within* art would not empty criticism of its potential but instead, suffuse it with an intensity as yet unimagined. Entangled with history, art will always remain exterior to what can be known in the present and exceeds any capacity to be fully described and thus to fully account for what it might possibly "offer" in our present. When art is understood to hold an intimate relation to history, art comes to bear a potential for social transformation that is actually not the province of art, but of the world as it presses upon the work. *Art is everything that is not art.*¹²⁵

The temporal exteriority of art is one that troubles any identity between the spheres of art and activism. When art and activism are collapsed, what often accompanies this are injunctions to

produce art "now" in relation to a current political event. Art is expected to operate in the realm of appearance, to comment on events, to stir political resistance, or to comment on situations immediately after they have come to pass. The distinction between art and activism is elaborated by Darwish when he describes the role of the poet in times of war. If people constantly ask Darwish "Where is the poem?" he suggests that in this question is a confusion between a political conception of poetry and the notion of the event. To ask, "where is the poem?" in times of war is to understand the poet as a "commentator on an event, an inciter to *jihad*, or a war correspondent."¹²⁶ In each of these roles the poet is collapsed with the current event and the demand is to speak in the present. If some poets can write "now" in midst of war, some, such as Darwish, cannot. Darwish makes the point that there should be room for both temporalities. Yet, in the climate in which he writes, there is a dogmatic injunction made by intellectuals to "link the war cry to stirring verse," and it is a link that must be accomplished now so that it can have use for the present time. The temporality of this response is linked to a sense of urgency.

Darwish phrases the problematic in the following way: "If the poem is not born "now," then when will it be born? And if it is born later, what value has it "now"?" For the time being, Darwish says, as someone who cannot write "now," he writes in silence. He will return to poetry, "when the guns quiet down a little. When I explore my silence, which is full of all these voices. When I find the appropriate language."¹²⁷ In this writing in silence, Darwish makes room for a political conception of poetry whose temporality is not limited to the urgency of the "now" but makes room for the poet as he struggles to find language for not only his voice, but for the many voices that occupy his silence. Darwish's conception of art as it is written in silence is one that it is productive to keep in mind alongside recent discourses in the arts that have attempted to address the question of art and war.

For example, in a questionnaire posed by the prominent arts journal *October*, the editors ask: "in what ways have artists, academics, and cultural institutions responded to the U.S. invasion of Iraq?"¹²⁸ The introduction to the issue frames the discussion in terms of "an absence of visible opposition within the milieu of cultural producers working in the sphere of contemporary visual culture," and relates this to a kind of "anesthesia and amnesia" in the cultural sphere. Arguing against this diagnosis, the art historian, Rosalyn Deutsche proposes that the very frame in which the editors of *October* position the discussion is symptomatic of a "left melancholia" in the discourses of art.¹²⁹ She argues that in the introduction offered by the *October* editors, there is an intergenerational paternalism that installs a leftist vanguard replete with a mythic revolutionary subject. Building off Maurice Blanchot, she calls this an "impatient criticism" that elides the contribution that feminist theory has made to understandings of 'the political', namely the psychic processes that inhere in the production of subjectivity. Even as the questionnaire might seem to invite a discussion of political subjectivity, the way the subject is approached is as a "unitary, preconstituted, and self-possessed" one that presumes a Habermasian public space of protest.¹³⁰ Against this notion of unvariegated publicness, Deutsche supports a relational model, like the one expressed by Simon Leung in his response to the questionnaire, in which political subjectivity is "formed by a relation between self and other in the polis," a model of relationality that she relates to the ethico-political project of art.¹³¹ Yet, as appealing as this term of the ethico-political project might sound to the ear and as desirable as it would be to assert, in what follows I hope to explore how the production of the 'ethico-political project of art' risks depoliticizing the very terms it hopes to advance by papering over the politics of position.

In *Hiroshima After Iraq*, Deutsche considers three works of art that deal with Hiroshima, through the lens of the US occupation of Iraq. In her reversal of the time of Hiroshima and Iraq with the word 'after' lies a provocative opening in which history is not a linear progression but rather, something that can be turned inside out and Hiroshima might be reconsidered after Iraq.

Working with Fornari's *The Psychoanalysis of War*, Deutsche argues for an approach to war that is grounded not only in its economy, politics, or ideology, but also in its psychic dimensions. The war, she contends, is not only what occurs 'out there' with foreign policy, but 'in here' with the ways that we as subjects, are produced by, and respond to, war. She traces through the works of three artists, Krzysztof Wodiczko, Sylvia Kolbowski, and Leslie Thornton, all of who have created works that bring this psychic dimension to bear upon the problem of war. Through her reading of these works, Deutsche advances a model for the role of the artist in the 'public sphere' allows us to consider some of discursive frames through which the ethico-political project of art is understood.¹³²

"To be public is to be exposed to alterity. Consequently, artists who want to deepen and extend the public sphere have a twofold task: creating works that help those who have been rendered invisible to 'make their appearance' and developing viewers' capacity for public life by asking them to respond to, rather than react, against that appearance."¹³³ The role of the artist is figured as one who works within the visual to stage a response to alterity. Yet what this understanding of the ethico-political lacks is an understanding of who is speaking and who is not, who is describing and who is being described, a point that underscores the fundamental question of position. It is this place from which one speaks that is elided when alterity is conceived as an open relationship toward which one *should* gesture in the name of ethics, without an engagement with the differences within the field from which the realm of the 'ethical' might look very different.

Let us begin with the ethical task that Deutsche presents for artists who hope to contribute to the "public" and the forms of appearance it suggests. Deutsche grounds her understanding of appearance in the theories of Hannah Arendt, for whom the space of appearance is "where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things, but to make their appearance explicitly."¹³⁴ This space of appearance occurs whenever people gather together politically, by which Arendt means, "wherever men are together in the manner of speech and action."¹³⁵ Just as this gathering of people bears the potential for this space of appearance, so too does this space of appearance disappear as quickly as it had come. It is for this reason that the space of appearance cannot be understood as stable or finite, but rather, as a space that must be continually renewed. With each gathering is the possibility of this space of appearance, a potentiality that rests in each gathering in which action and speech are organized.

Yet, the idea of "organized" action and speech, itself, bears a question, namely, what are the terms through which 'speech' can be understood as organized? The 2005 revolts in the banlieues of Paris for example, were ones that were dismissed by many, even in the left, from the sphere of proper politics because the 'language' of their expression, i.e. burning cars, was not properly 'organized'.¹³⁶ Under whose terms is 'organization' legible and if this is to be understood as the precondition for making an appearance then what do we make of those events in which the language of such 'appearance' remains, untranslatable?

When we look at the etymology of the word, "appearance" we find that it does not only describes something that is only visible or shown. Instead, the understanding of appearance bears an action of coming into view that distinguishes it as a process rather than a product. Appearances are not something that can be made, whether by the artist or by the viewer, but instead, it is the modality itself, a phasure and disphasure that is the space of visibility, a site that is continually being done and undone. Each appearance is also always a disappearance. In light of the understanding of appearance as a modality, one understands that they could never make the disappeared appear, nor could their artwork, no matter how skilled or poetic or beautiful or moving or precious, ever create the material or psychic conditions for another's appearance-- for to make another appear is also to make that same other, disappear. It is in this space between appearance and disappearance that the work of the politics takes place. It is in this sense of appearance understood as a modality, that appearance might be linked with ruination. The ruin is something that is always in movement. It is

that which shows the way that time works upon all things. When one works with the idea of ruin, it is not to draw a boundary but to show the boundary's dissolution, the perpetual dissolve that shows the ever-changing landscape of experience in which the ruin which might not only be founded in that which is disintegrating but also in all that is being built, developed, and inaugurated. In the phasure and disphasure of boundaries, we see how the borders drawn by video might also be subject to a kind of disintegration.

In this sense of appearance, I believe what we find a thematic that has been running throughout this dissertation, one of video in which the stage that is set is one of vision. Yet, once the stage of appearance is understood not as an object but as a modality, a movement in the phasure and disphasure of the visual. In order to understand some of these terms more concretely, let us look at one of the examples that Deutsche describes: Krzysztof Wodiczko's *Hiroshima Project* which was made in 1999 for a public event to commemorate the anniversary of the dropping of the Atomic Bomb in the city of Hiroshima. For this project, Wodiczko conducted interviews with a variety of residents of Hiroshima, survivors of the bomb, Korean laborers, the survivors' children and grandchildren and other family members. He videotaped these interviews and projected them onto a structure known as the "the Atomic Dome" in the center of the city. But rather than show the faces of the subjects as might be expected from the form of the interview, Wodiczko only shows their hands projected into the water in front of the dome with audio from the interviews adding a parallel soundscape. By showing hands and voices rather than faces, Deutsche recognizes Levinas' ethical demand for a "vision without image" put into practice for in Wodiczko's strategy of address. By showing only hands and voices, Wodiczko is said to operate at the limit of representation and thus, open the viewer onto an ethical encounter with alterity. She writes, "to encourage the appearance of the public sphere of appearances is, then to promote a "vision without image" or nonindifferent ways of seeing. And since nonindifferent vision obliges us to call ourselves into question, artists who explore its possibilities take part in the psychic subjective transformation, which like material transformation, is an essential component-- and no mere epiphenomenon-- of social change."¹³⁷

For Deutsche, artists are at the helm of playing with vision, exploring the possibilities for change within the terms of this vision, and creating a field of possible witnesses who, as Giorgio Agamben formulated, "respond to the suffering of others without taking the place of others."¹³⁸ It is this witnessing that the artist inaugurates in their work, one that is described as an "ethico-political subjectivity" that makes us no longer be indifferent spectators to disaster. Importantly, the "ethico-political question is not of how we appear but of how we respond to the appearance of others."¹³⁹ The appearance emerges not in the making or in the presentation of the artwork, but in the response. The artist is, in a sense, a conjurer of this response. They are supposed to create "works that help those who have been rendered invisible to "make their appearance" and develop "viewers' capacity for public life by asking them to respond to, rather than react, against that appearance." Thus, their fundamental role is to urge invisibility toward visibility, to urge those lost to darkness toward the light of day.

When the position of the artist is assumed to be one that can aid in the appearance of others, the fundamental question is begged of *who* is the artist and *who* are the others? In Deutsche's description of *Hiroshima Project* we come to understand that 'the artist' must remain transparent so that this idea of 'witnessing', which is understood as the "ethico-political encounter" can emerge. Wodiczko was not present for the bombing of Hiroshima. He was not a survivor who bore the experience and lived to tell of the horrors as Primo Levi, who both Levinas and Agamben write about.¹⁴⁰ Instead, he has traveled from another place and another set of circumstances that perhaps bear a trace of his own, but it is a traveling which also shows something important about the processes of art and globality. And yet, there is transparency in terms of the witnessing and the politics of position that choose this artist to relate some notion of the public. Do such politics of

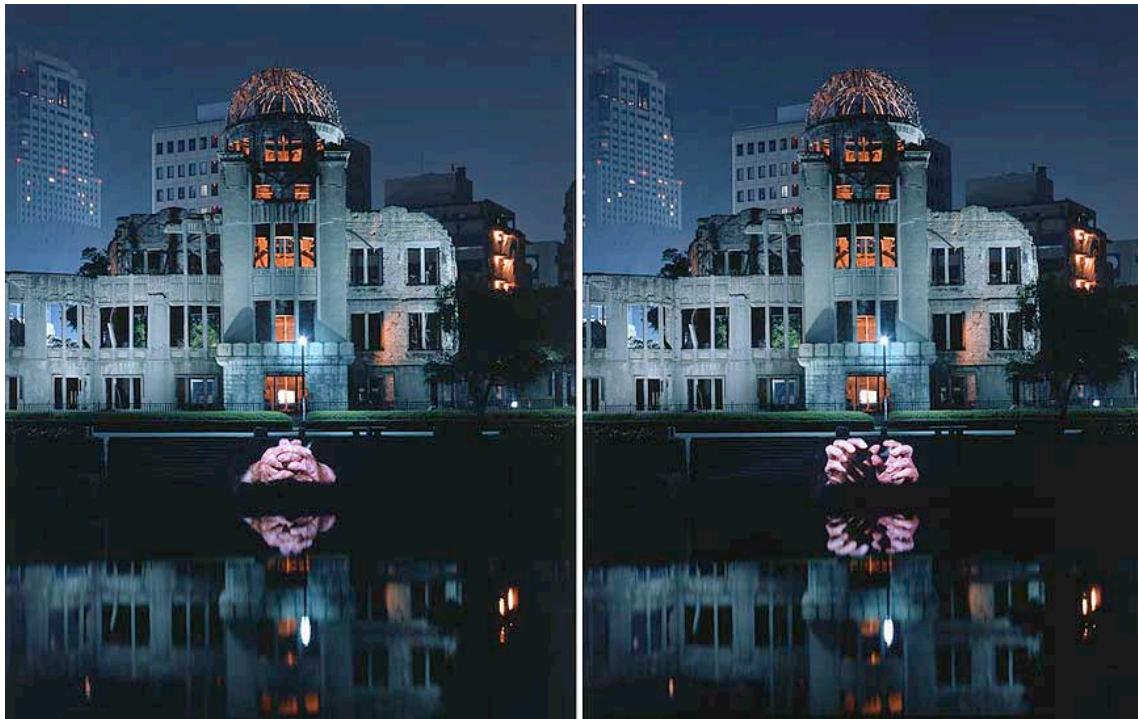


Figure 22, Krzysztof Wodiczko, *The Hiroshima Project*, 1999

position, as in who this artist is, where he comes from, what relation he bears to Hiroshima, have a place in an understanding of the 'publicness' of art and the legibility of languages that are required for the making of appearance? If we do not take positions in the field into account, meaning the relations of production that create the terms of such "ethico-political work," then Levinas' fundamental insight into alterity, namely the exteriority of the alterity of the other, risks becoming a fetishization of unrepresentability that ultimately depoliticizes the terms through which ethics and politics might be understood to bear upon practices of art. The transparency that is produced in Deutsche's discourse is both that of the artist and that of the witness-- neither of whom are assumed to occupy the realm of visibility. Neither position accounts for the dispossessed, the exiled, the decentered subjects that we were introduced to in Said and Darwish's accounts. From the site of visibility, their response to alterity is figured as the location of ethics, yet it is a transparent cipher in which the visible subject can claim alterity as an open space, one in which the response that they solicit creates possible political transformation. But, what is fundamentally missing from this analysis and that an inquiry through the politics of position brings us, is that this same desire that seeks the appearance of those who are invisible, this same gesture toward alterity that emerges out of the desire of the artist and critic to see those who are invisible, is one that abides by the terms of vision in *video*, "I see," and one that produces an interminable loop: the dominant for the dominant, the visible for the visible, the west for the west. What I mean by this is that even the "ethical" expressions of a "vision without image" are underwritten by a desire to say, "I see," for it is a vision that can only see one plane of the visual. In this uniplaner conception of vision is the infinite loop of power as it reproduces itself, even at the site of the invocation of alterity. Rather than an *opacity*, which is the potentiality of "a vision without image", what occurs in this theorization is instead, an *obscurity*, in which the multiple levels of distance from the event and the politics that have gone into the production of this spectacle are left by the wayside.

This question of the complexity of identity comes to refine what understanding we might have of the role of the artist, apart from the demands placed by the contemporary discourses on art and war and toward the positions that one occupies in a field. Walter Benjamin, in an address to the Institute for the Study of Fascism on April 17, 1934, writes "Rather than ask, "What is the *attitude* of a work to the relations of production of its time?" I should like to ask, "What is its *position* in them."¹⁴¹ By moving the question from attitude to position, Benjamin effectively relocates the question from what the author says, to where the author's work stands in relation to a field. Such a re-asking, is one that Benjamin understands to not only be about the situating the work within the relations of production, but about negotiating the form of the work, meaning that the techniques of the work and their inevitable placement of the work in a field. In so doing, he opens a space to do away with the distinction between form and content that might plague discussions. He moves us away from an *attitude* which evokes the theme, or idea, or subject, and toward *position*, which implies that the location from which one orients or situates oneself in a field. This is a very important juncture, one that opens the site of production to not only to the non-totalizing character of any set of relations but also the possible revolutionary alliances that exceed the discourses of art.

Benjamin was never willing to simply give the work of the author over as a political mouthpiece of propaganda and said "an author who teaches writers nothing, teaches no one."¹⁴² Any work that doesn't take its form as seriously as its content, that doesn't consider the two to emerge simultaneously side by side, one with the other, is doing no one any good. He reorients our understanding of the writer or the artist away from the autonomy of the art to that of the "producer" whose work, as a producer, is bound to the struggle of the proletariat and whose work, rather than approach politics thematically, should inspire others, in turn, to become producers. For Benjamin, the revolutionary struggle is one in which the producer, allied with the proletariat, enacts

a revolutionary struggle through the terms of his giving up of the autonomy of the artist and understanding of his work as simply one element of a larger struggle against capitalism.

But this struggle cannot be waged without something that is much more essential to the work of the artist, something that is not about being on the front lines of anything or of becoming the mouthpiece for a point. "It has perhaps struck you that the train of thought that is about to be concluded presents to the writer only one demand, the demand *to think*, to reflect on his position in the process production."¹⁴³ The work of reflection can be understood as the precondition for a practice of liberation. Paolo Friere wrote, "Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it."¹⁴⁴ For both Benjamin and Friere, reflection, rather than being understood as a site of passivity, is actually the condition of possibility for any producer committed to social struggle, a producer whose work rather than saying politics, is actually, made politically. It is a site of reflection that is intimately linked with writing in silence, that the demands to produce a response now might also bear the temporality of this delay, this deferral, this possibility of reflection and the development of a critical practice.

This site of reflection, we might argue, is the role of any producer, be it critic or artist, who hopes to hold a critical relation to their production. A mode of traditional criticism might be understood as one in which an object is defined and evaluated from a position that lies outside of the terms of the object's construction. Yet, the critic's culpability in the creation of an object more likely than not remains unsaid, as do the invisible assumptions the critic brings with him or herself in this evaluation. Ultimately, in this sense, what criticism produces are its objects rather a questioning concerning the very terms of its critique. Nuancing this understanding of criticism, Michel Foucault makes clear that the object that is constructed out of critique turns to define critique itself.¹⁴⁵ The object of critique is not what is being critiqued but instead the very framework of evaluation itself-- in other words, its place, as evaluation, stands itself, within a field. It is this that remains the work of the critic, as well as that of the artist, to maintain a sense of what it means to be 'critical' producer of any sort. Fundamental to this understanding of one's relation to a field, is an understanding of one's position.¹⁴⁶

If Deutsche has related the October issue on responses to the war in Iraq as an "impatient criticism" then after moving through her argument, we begin to nuance this sense of patience by expanding the frame of the ethico-political project beyond the realm of art with a different assertion. "Patience, intellectuals!" demands Mahmoud Darwish, "for the question of life and death, which is now supreme, the question of a will committing all its weapons to the battlefield, the question of an existence taking its divine and material shape-- these are more important than the ethical question about the role of poetry and the poet."¹⁴⁷ It is Hiroshima Day, 1982, during the Israeli attack on Beirut. Darwish writes, "Beirut itself is the writing, rousing and creative. Its true poets and singers are the people and its fighters, who don't need to be entertained or spurred by a lute with broken strings. They are the genuine founders of a writing that for a long, long time will have to search for a linguistic equivalent to their heroism and their amazing lives."¹⁴⁸ The writing has already been done--in the bombed out buildings, the city in ruins, the people and the struggle. The writing in silence is an attempt to allow this experience to breathe. His caution for intellectuals to have patience in such matters, and to not jump to an idea of ethical role of poetry and the poet, is also a space created for this experience to breathe-- a space of grief, mourning-- a space where the 'traditional' which is everything that existed before, might pass into a different state.

Art is not something that is made to represent this for it has already been written. The work of the artist, then, in relation to the writing that preexists their writing, is to "focus the points of light" toward an assertion: "we want to liberate ourselves, our countries, and our minds and live in the modern age with competence and pride." From the perspective of the dispossessed, the field of art and its relations of production appear vastly different. As Darwish shows us, art is not contained

by "the work" that is created, but instead, exists in all that lies exterior to this work. *Art is everything that is not Art*. Darwish makes clear that there are different positions involved in war. There are those who are in the war and those who speak about the war.¹⁴⁹ This understanding, of who is speaking and who is not, who is describing and who is being described, underscores the fundamental question of the place from which one speaks. It is this place from which one speaks that is so violently elided when alterity is conceived as an open relationship toward which one should gesture in the name of ethics, without a real engagement with the terms of what lies on the other side of these ethics.

Through Darwish, we come to understand the representational limit that Deutsche recognizes in the idea of a "vision without image" can, on some occasions, be a political limit that finds itself at the site of who is living and who is dying. Intellectuals, as Darwish says, should look at themselves, their "old concepts, their old questions, and their old ethics" rather than trying to describe the place of those who are "always dying" in a way that doesn't at the same time, take their own position into account. Without this work that negotiates the frame of one's own criticism, the intellectual is a "sniper" who, in their descriptions of the other, are also drawing boundaries upon which wars are waged. When the stakes are those of life and death, "all verse is traditional" and "traditional poetry should know how to hold its humble silence in the presence of this newborn" which is the passage of human existence from one state to another.¹⁵⁰ Rather than jump to conclusions concerning ethics and politics, what would it mean to hold open an interval of silence where the events of war and disaster determine the way forward, for the language that will come, eventually, to be an equivalent to this experience. When one bound to notions of appearance and visibility, one is also bound to notions of freedom and autonomy that occupy not only the discourses of art but of western liberalism and its claims to transparency.¹⁵¹

There are various positions that are being played out in the discourses of art and war, and everything is not the open field of alterity as either discourses of globalization or the leftist vanguard or psychoanalytic revisions of the leftist vanguard housed in rhetorics of the 'ethico-political' might have us believe. Between positions remains a divide. The artist who works from the place of the dispossessed, the dislocated, the exiled, knows that their work is not to solely to make visible because this assumes that it is only this realm of visibility toward which one should aspire. Instead, the work is to remain allied with invisibility, a struggle to keep the temporal energy in the work. It is to recognize that the art does not exist in the work but in all that surrounds the work.

Some practitioners of art, including myself, only call themselves "artists" by default. For those of us, artists who are not, we are better described by the terms offered by Maurice Blanchot, borrowing from Schlegel, and that I will borrow from them both: "you can only become *an artist*, you can never be one; no sooner are you, than you are no longer, *an artist*."¹⁵² When one takes this idea that one can never *be* an artist without sacrificing something essential about making art as a primary mode of their practice, an understanding emerges that the work of art, bears within itself, not an eternal creation but instead, a perpetual disappearance, for the true work of art does not exist in the art as it becomes "a work," completed, whole, unitary, and finalized. It exists in the process that unfolds across time, a work from the ruins in which the finished "works" are only an isolated, incomplete, fragmentary index.

For the artist who is not, whose work is based on process rather than product, "the work" is always fragmentary. In between "the works" as they are created over a life, or as they are created between many lives, rests time itself. "Fragmentation is the spacing, the separation effected by a temporalization which can only be understood-- fallaciously-- as the absence of time."¹⁵³ The temporal dimension to the work of art is not only the work as it is made or seen in the present, but it is the past and the future as they both come to bear upon "the work," which moves through history apart from the immediate engagement we can access.

In the invisible work of art lies its promise. In between fragments, is a time that is full, as it will come to also bear upon the "work" and its possibility. For the artist who is not, for the one who approaches art as a process, each work contains a temporality that exceeds her or himself in which the spacing between fragments comes to sustain an energy that radiates from the final "work" as it is presented. If "the work" can be understood as the unity of an art as it becomes "work" meaning its totality, perfection, and completion, then "the fragment" is, as Blanchot has said, the "pulling to pieces (the tearing) of that which never has preexisted (really or ideally) as a whole, nor can it ever be reassembled in any future presence whatever."¹⁵⁴

For the artist who is not, the process of the making of art, in "the sketches, studies, preparations"-- all that is not yet "the work"-- is the art in its most tenuous strains of thought, as yet, unrevealed. For in these sketches, studies, and preparation, art is not anywhere except in the world. "The ideas are stars rather than suns of revelation. They do not shine into the daylight of history; they are invisibly at work in it."¹⁵⁵ Is it possible to reconsider the potentiality of this invisible work and how it might reorient the terms of practice away from 'political art' and toward 'art done politically.' When figured as the stars of twilight rather than the sun of the day, art is a distant luminosity. How might we ask again the question of art and war, under the light of stars?

These first points of light are of a freedom that has nothing to do with the freedom that is known today. "This is the difficulty of the battle we're waging over the question of literature is to be defined, and it directly or indirectly reflects the political and intellectual attack of reaction, which is not short of reasons for taking advantage of the failure of so-called progressive regimes that are in fact reactionary. And when we write, and call upon others to write, in the name of creative freedom, we are doing nothing more than bringing into focus the points of light and first efforts scattered by dissension over an idea founded on this simple assertion: we want to liberate ourselves, our countries, and our minds and live in the modern age with competence and pride. In writing, we give expression to our faith in the potency of writing."¹⁵⁶

At the same time it is the struggle for creativity, for the time of art and it bears the possibility, not of art, but of the world and as it is allied to the assertion, and not the appearance, of our existence. As artists who work from displacement, exile, dispossession, we will not sacrifice this creative freedom, allied to liberation, for the sake of the dominant's 'ethics'. "From this perspective, we don't feel we're a minority but announce that we are the minority-majority. And we announce further that we are the children of this age, and not of the past or the future."¹⁵⁷ To be an artist is who is not, is to remain committed not to appearance, but to invisibility and to inaugurate a sense of ethics and politics torn from appearance. It is this question of invisibility the works that I will discuss in my next chapter, works that underscore the boundaries that delimit race and gendered bodies in the field of vision and the layers of history and discourse that mediate any visual relation.

Chapter 5

Video as Layer

In this chapter, I will be exploring visual relations as they write the bodies of women of color in the work of three visual artists: Tran T. Kim Trang, Yong Soon Min, and Lorna Simpson. Processes of objectification and visualization are tightly intertwined. As Rey Chow writes, "an engagement with otherness almost always involves some kind of imagistic objectification (of the other), it is difficult if not impossible to segregate considerations of otherness from visual relations (even if such relations are only implied, passed over, or suppressed)."¹⁵⁸ My decision to explore the works of these artists is not because they *are* women of color, but because there is a specific engagement with the relation between visualization and objectification that their works reveal, one that explores the layers of history that are housed in the racialized and gendered body as well as the discourses that come to write it. In these works, I will suggest, the field of vision is understood not as open domain, but as a restricted rather in which they underscore the boundaries that delimit raced and gendered bodies in the field of vision. Rather than offer the bodies themselves for view, what they present are the layers of history and discourse as they write the body, a critical reflection on representation as mediated by power as it determines the field of vision. Through their work upon the visual itself, they demonstrate a gap between visuality and alterity, one in which the very desire to see (*videre*) must pass through and within the layers of history and discourse that shape the raced and gendered body.¹⁵⁹ In the face of such layers, when one says "I see" (*video*) it is not access to a visual depth that one is offered, but instead one encounters visual layers, an opacity that locates a gap between visuality and alterity and reformulates the visual relation as one of exteriority. In this proposition of exteriority lies an opening onto resistance for it holds open a space in which vision is not one. It reformulates alterity not as 'the other', but as simply as, 'another', a shift that I will argue holds great importance for articulating visuality in and era of globalization.

The difference between 'the other' and 'another' is one that Rey Chow illuminates in her reading of the films of Zhang Yimou. She suggests that rather than offer a mythology of China as a virginal alterity, what Zhang does is present China as simply *another* place, culture, and history that is in a historical and political relationship with the West. It is not an untouched other that Zhang's work introduces, but a presentation that is, *another*. In this subtle difference between two forms of alterity, one that retains a purity and one that offers the fact of another place, lies a rethinking of the question of the visuality and the discourses that have come to describe it. Chow's argument is grounded in an attempt to rethink the fear of looking that preoccupies poststructural theory's relation to the visual. The intellectual historian, Martin Jay, has called this negative relation to the visual *iconophobia*, a negative relation to looking that is characterized by a dual practice of a critical vigilance and an inward-looking gaze.¹⁶⁰ For *iconophobics*, the relation to vision and visuality is one that constantly folds back into the self as self-reflection and internal splitting. "The result is often so many forms of mea culpa, self-analysis, self-reflexivity, and self-admonition, but the emphasis remains the self, the subject, the center, and the origin that is the West."¹⁶¹ Chow argues that the position of iconophobia often turns to ethics as the way out of the circle of self-reflection, but importantly, this recourse to ethics is one that she situates as firmly embedded in the Western cosmopolitan subject. It is the interminable loop of the west looking at itself.

Chow argues that use alterity as the site toward which one "ought" to gesture understands alterity within this circular motion, one grounded in a negative relation to the visual in which the visual is "an imagined activity." Provocatively, she suggests that when considered from the perspective of 'the other', the question alterity might look very different. "For those who are already

cast as the other, there is nothing ennobling or liberating about the notion of alterity per se or the ethics emanating therefrom."¹⁶² From a restricted position is a form of benevolent philosophizing, but "an understanding of subordination, of irresolvable social and cultural antagonisms, and of finding oneself negotiating at the limits of possibilities even as life must go on."¹⁶³ When we move from *the other* to *another*, the movement is not one from the center to the periphery, or the dominant to the marginal; instead, alterity is a limit and the shifting boundaries of marginalization, exclusion, and foreclosed possibility.¹⁶⁴ In the works that I will discuss below, the move from 'the other' to 'another' is also a move from disembodied ocularcentricity to eyes that are returned to bodies.

A link between body and eye introduces Tran T. Kim Trang's eight-part video, *The Blindness Series*. The first shot fades up from bright white and grazes across a textured surface. Urgent, dissonant violins accompany this entry into vision, an image that the spectator, after some time, recognizes as the raised bumps of Braille. In this first shot, Tran introduces an embodied relation to video, one in which the camera-eye bears a tactile register that unsettles what one sees and throws the spectator into a question of vision and its metaphors that will constellate each subsequent chapter of the series. The subject of blindness is not opposed to sight for Tran, but instead, a work we must imagine in relation to *vision* and the subjects who lies outside of it. Tran's video shuttles between optical visuality and haptic visuality and draws not only from our eyes but also from an embodied sense of vision as touch.

In some recent writing, the idea of haptic visuality, or an embodied way of seeing, is one that has been thought to propose an alternative and resistant visuality, one that counters the hegemonic optics of dominant visuality. Laura U. Marks has described "haptic visuality" as one in which the eyes function as the organ of touch.¹⁶⁵ For Marks, haptic visuality can be understood against optical visuality, with the former drawing from all of the senses and the latter drawing solely from the eye.¹⁶⁶ If optical visuality is one of identification, then haptic visuality is one of bodily relation. The caressing gaze of the haptic is one that Marks interprets against the art historical canon and in line with visual forms that have been marginalized. Moreover, she argues the haptic as a "feminist visual strategy," and one that for our purposes here, she importantly identifies with video. For Marks, there are four aspects which contribute to the haptic quality of video: first, video's constitution of image from a signal; second, video's low contrast ratio; third, its possibility for electronic and technical manipulation, and fourth, its decay.¹⁶⁷ Yet, where I would like to suggest that Marks' theory of haptic visuality could be further nuanced, is when the body is itself, the problem. What might a bodily way of seeing look like when one's body, is itself, dispossessed? Is one body different from another body and how might even a bodily vision be understood in a political field? In the works of Tran T. Kim Trang, Yong Soon Min, and Lorna Simpson, the dialectic is not solely between haptics and optics, but more accurately, a struggle to show how bodies negotiate visuality from a restricted position, which is to say that both optical and haptic visuality are social facts, and rather than imagine the bodily way of seeing as a utopic and resistant site, these artists highlight the boundaries they face, as raced and gendered women, in the field of vision.

To begin, let us return to Tran's *Blindness Series*, where from the blinding white screen and the grazing shot over Braille, the image shifts to a Caucasian woman's face being prepared for plastic surgery. The size of the shot is smaller than the size of the frame and surrounded by a black border. The voice, which has gone through some audio processing says: "I think, he tried explaining, that history being trapped in people means that history is embodied in physical characteristics such as skin colors. And do you know what part of our bodies they find so mysteriously inscrutable? It's our little eyes. They think they can't see into these little squinty eyes."¹⁶⁸ The Asian eye, as a locus for racialization, will be at issue throughout this series and its engagement with blindness.

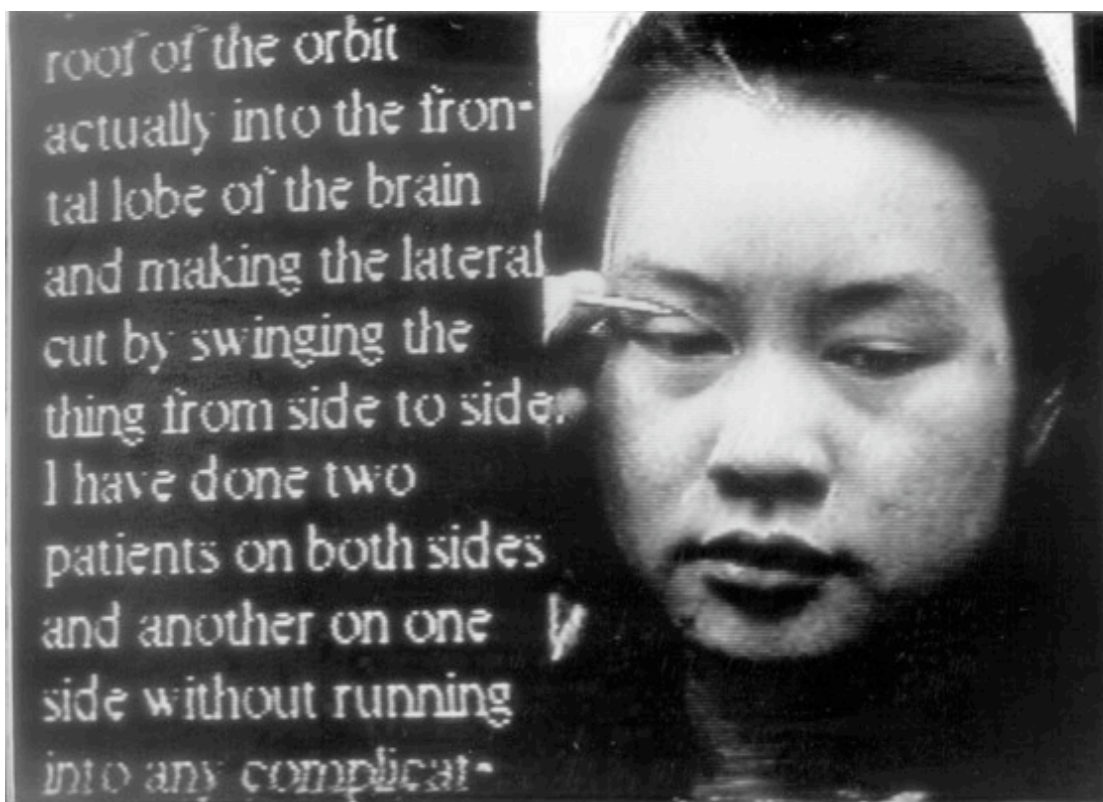


Figure 23, Tran T. Kim Trang, *Operculum*, from *The Blindness Series*, 1993

Inspired by *Memoires of the Blind*, an exhibition organized by Jacques Derrida at the Louvre, *The Blindness Series* is productively considered alongside some of the exhibition's propositions.¹⁶⁹ From the onset, Derrida asserts two hypotheses for the exhibition. The first is that even though drawing might be understood as a visual practice, one in which the world is translated onto two dimensions through the hand of the draughtsman, it is always concerned with and compelled by blindness. The second is that at the heart of all drawings of the blind is the origin of drawing itself. These two propositions are important to consider alongside *The Blindness Series* for they show how Tran carries the methods of drawing, its relation to touch and sight, into video. In light of this exhibition, video might be understood as aligned with drawing. It too takes us toward the realm of the *unbeseen*, which is not only that which is unseen or invisible, but a suggestion that the visibility of the visible cannot be seen. The draughtswoman is always aware of this unbeseen and it is this which pulls her toward drawing. By focusing on the theme of blindness and aligning it with the act of drawing, Tran dislodged herself from a work of seeing that might forward the veritability of a matter. Rather than instantiating sight, she works to describe a viscosity that find itself at the interstice of race, gender, and history.

The Asian eye, as a scene of writing, is one of the locations around which the early videos of Tran's series address this interstice.¹⁷⁰ The Asian eye is molded through its legacy in inscrutability on the one hand, and the common surgical procedure of Blepharoplasty, which removes fat and excess skin and muscle from the upper and lower eyelids, on the other. *Operculum*, the second video in *The Blindness Series*, highlights this procedure. In this video, Tran uses herself as a subject and poses as a possible client for Blepharoplasty. She consults with plastic surgeons around Los Angeles and explains that her video camera is there to document the consultation for her parents who are going to pay for the procedure. Throughout the video, the screen is split. On one side we view Tran's consultation with the doctor and on the other side we view discourses surrounding the procedure. According to one doctor, to remove the extra fat from Tran's eye is to make it more feminine. The procedure will allow for a little bit more of her eyelid to show so that she will be able to put on makeup. According to another doctor it has "been easy to make a nice improvement in Oriental people because there is a lot of fat in there and once you take away the fat it folds in pretty nicely." Over the course of her consultations, we come to understand that there are two procedures for eyelid surgery that she might undergo, one by scapel and one by laser. In either case, there is danger of temporary or permanent loss of vision from bleeding in the back of the eye. Through her account of this cosmetic procedure, Tran reflects on the way that the eye of the Asian woman is itself, a site of writing. In the tension between the desire for eyes that recall Western standards of beauty and the real risk of blindness as a result of the procedure, Tran maps the shuttling of the gendered Asian eye between two impossibilities, inscrutability and assimilation, a tension that manifests in the split-screen and the textual commentary that comes to inform the work. By producing a tension between the haptic viscosity of the eye grazing the page of Braille, and the optical viscosity of seeing the way her eye is pulled and lifted during the consultation, Tran shows a tension between the body and the eye, and the difficult negotiation of those for whom history is trapped in the body. Both the body and the eye are social facts and, in the series, the tension that arises between them might be sourced to the forms of mastery, domination, and conquest that understand vision as one.

The masterful, dominant, and violent forms of vision that are being countered in *The Blindness Series* is described in a Cheyenne tale, included as a voiceover in the first tape. The tale links the European genocide in the Americas to the politics of viscosity.¹⁷¹ The tale shows how the desire for mastery within Western viscosity is not limited to the eyes, but rather, part of a larger understanding in which the world exists only for the self. In the tale, a Cheyenne man bears the gift

of sight in that he is able to send his eyes out of his head with a simple command, "eyes hang upon a branch." When the "White man" sees him do this, he asks to be taught to do the same. The Cheyenne man teaches the White man but warns him, under no condition, should he send his eyes from his body more than four times in one day. The White man finds the tallest tree and sends his eyes from his body again and again and each time they return to him. One, two, three, four... the problem begins when the White man disregards the warning. "The fifth time his eyes remained fastened to the limb. All day he called, but the eyes began to swell and spoil, and flies gathered on them. White-man grew tired and lay down, facing his eyes, still calling for them, though they never came; and he cried."¹⁷² The tale shares that the problem is not the birds-eye view that the protagonist, "White-man," gains by sending his eyes out of his body and onto the branch of a tall tree. In fact, it is the Cheyenne who teaches the White this feat of eagle's sight. In matters of vision, the problem is not the vision itself, but its abuse. The loss of the White man's eyes originates not in the power of sight, but in a desire for visual mastery that, in turn, denies the location and limit of his own body.

Over the course of the narrative, we see his desire for mastery played out again and again, not only over what the eyes see, but also over the other creatures that the White-man encounters. When his eyes, bound to the branch of the tree, begin to swell and rot, he captures a mouse. The relation he has to the mouse is not one of dignity and respect, but instead of power and capture. When the mouse offers to retrieve White-man's eyes for him, White-man, rather than trust the word of the mouse, opts instead to exert his domination over the small creature. He tells the mouse that he will only let it go if it gives him one of its eyes. His conquest over the mouse reaps one small eye that he places in his large human socket. It rolls and rattles and turns in on itself. But despite his possession of the mouse's eye, White-man still cannot see. He continues to search for a way to make good on his lost sight. When he happens upon a buffalo, he also requests its eye. The buffalo gives one to him, but it is too large for the human socket. It protrudes far ahead of White-man's face and he can only see far into the distance. Between the eye too small and the eye too large, there is no real vision-- only the illusion of vision as seen through the skewed perspective of disembodied eyes that have been replaced through conquest.

The legend is not only one of a relation between men, the White and the Native American, but instead, its frame is much more expansive and considers the relation between the White-man and the living world. He is shown to hold a negative relation to the living world and his own sense of humanity, hinges upon this negative relation to others. The more he draws distinctions between himself and the other living things he encounters, the more he is able to consolidate his sense of vision, in spite of his primary state of blindness with the loss of his eyes. Over the course of the narrative, we find that what is lost is not only his literal vision but a relation to humanity that is not founded on domination. For what is revealed is that in this domination is a fundamental loss of himself a loss that is continually repeated with each attempt to reconcile his disembodied sight, his mastery, through violence.

This tale offers a narrativization of western visuality from the perspective of the minority subject. As the western gaze is more often than not, transcendentalized and transparent, the perspective that this tale offers is that of the minority as they see the dominant subject, seeing. The mouse eye turns in on itself, a solipcistic gaze, unable to see the relation of itself to the rest of the world. The buffalo eye protrudes from the head, a transcendental gaze that can only see far into the distance. In both cases, the eye occupies a space at a vast remove from the body. It floats, between one vision and the other, and makes every desperate attempt to reconcile the disparity. The disembodiment of White Man's vision in this Cheyenne tale might be juxtaposed against the way

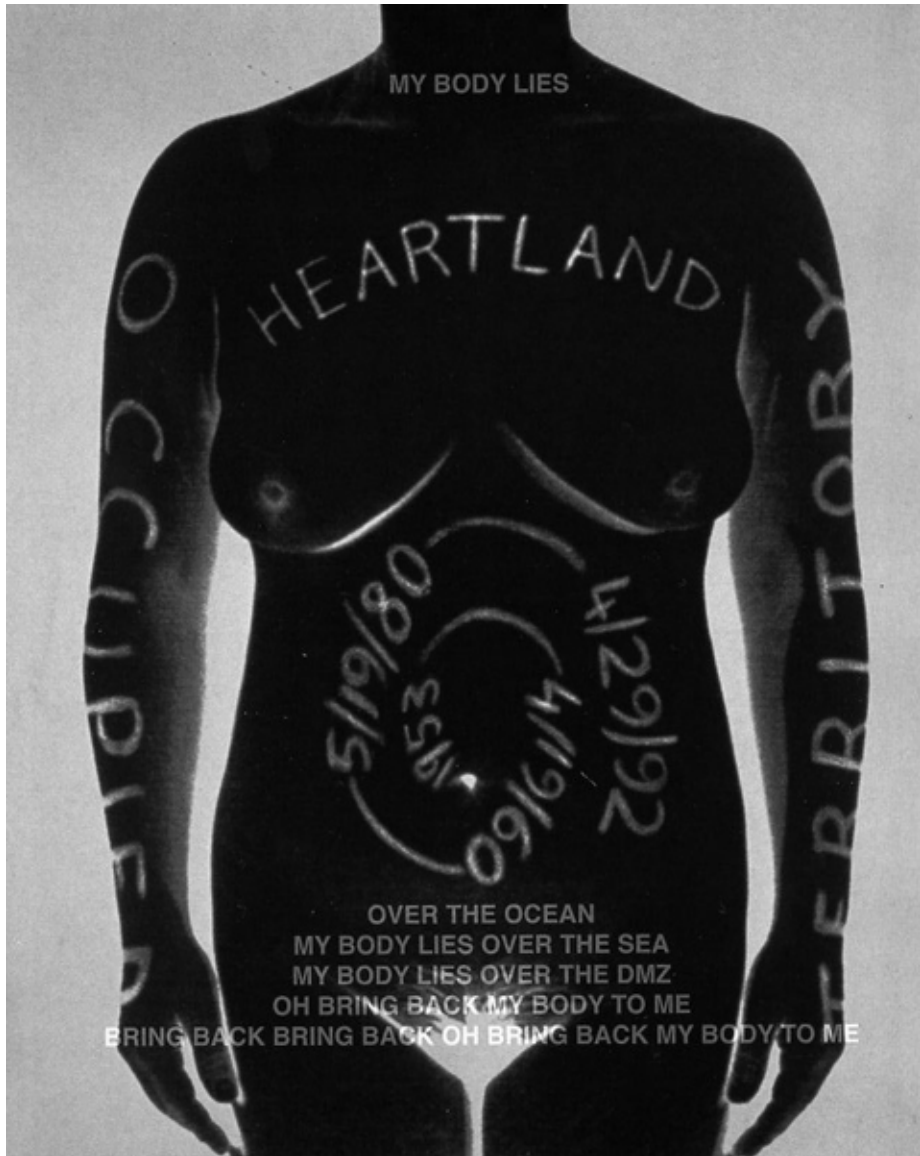


Figure 24, Yong Soon Min, *Defining Moments*, 1992

that when alternative visualities are charted, the body returns as a site where history is written and memory is stored.

Just as borders are drawn across geographical terrain, so too are they inscribed upon the body. It is this event of the *body as border* that Yong Soon Min's series of six black and white photographs entitled *The Defining Moments* (1992) brings to our attention.¹⁷³ In one of the images of this series, we see a headless photograph of a woman's naked torso. The photograph is reversed from positive to negative, and the frontality and rigidity of the pose recalls the posture one might hold while taking an x-ray or identification portrait. Words are written across the body itself. "HEARTLAND" across the chest, "OCCUPIED" on the right arm, and "TERRITORY" on the left arm. At the center of the image, across the stomach, is a spiral of dates "1953- 4/19/60- 5/19/80- 4/29/92," which documents the artist's journey across the Pacific Ocean as a part of the Korean diaspora. In 1953, Min was born as the Korean War ended. 4/19/60, is both the day that Min emigrated to the United States and when riots broke out in South Korea leading to a military overthrow; and 4/29/92 is both the day of Min's birthday and the day that the uprising in Los Angeles began.¹⁷⁴ In this spiral of dates, one is offered the "defining moments" that have given rise to Min's trajectory and their alignment with political history. The spiral of the personal and the political, the psychic and the social, the micrological and the macrological are brought together upon the torso of one figure. Min shows her body as a site where history is written and memory is enacted.

Overlain atop the image is text that forms another layer to the work. At her throat, one reads "MY BODY LIES," a proposition continued at the bottom of the image, where atop her stomach one reads, "OVER THE OCEAN, MY BODY LIES OVER THE SEA, MY BODY LIES OVER THE DMZ, OH BRING BACK MY BODY TO ME, BRING BACK BRING BACK OH BRING BACK MY BODY TO ME." This reinterpretation of the traditional Scottish folk song "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean," comes to relay the experience of diaspora and the contours of a body as it is shaped by political history. It also is a song of longing, for a body as it has been dispossessed, a song that is both tragic and humorous in its appropriation of a Western form. In the statement, "my body lies" are two points of consideration. First, the sense of lying, as *what* the body says in terms of its signification, and second, as *where* a body might be situated. By holding open the interval between two senses of the word "lie," Min shows the interrelation between this *what* and this *where*, and how both at the level of signification and geography, she is displaced.

In another image from this same series, Min draws a relation between the body and the landscape, and her body becomes the site for the layers of writing and image. She projects an image of Mt. Baektu, a mythic volcano at the border of North Korea and China, upon on her body. Text is lain over the image which directs us to Mt. Baektu's status in the narrative formation of the Korean nation. It is simultaneously the site at which South Korea's opposition movement claims to symbolize the desire for unification, as it is also the Kim Il Sung's birthplace. It is also where the Korean people and nation is said to have been born. The layers of myth that permeate Mt. Baektu are ones that Min projects upon her body, which has been inscribed with the letters "DMZ" in black text across her forehead, and "HEARTLAND" across her chest. If on the one hand, there is the mythic origin of Mt. Baektu, one of the nation that is projected upon her body as image and gives her body over as screen, then this is also met with a cut in which the politics of such mythologies serve as the political boundary inscribed between North and South Korea. Between mythic projection and border-writing, Min's body is shown to hold the politics of this contested terrain. The way the text ends, with the words, "Over my heart" shows the emotional tearing of the subject within these global politics, the border as it shapes and takes shape. In either case, as myth and as border, the body for Min, lies over the sea, lies over the DMZ, it is elsewhere and not properly hers. Working through this dispossession leads to her to build upon the surface of the

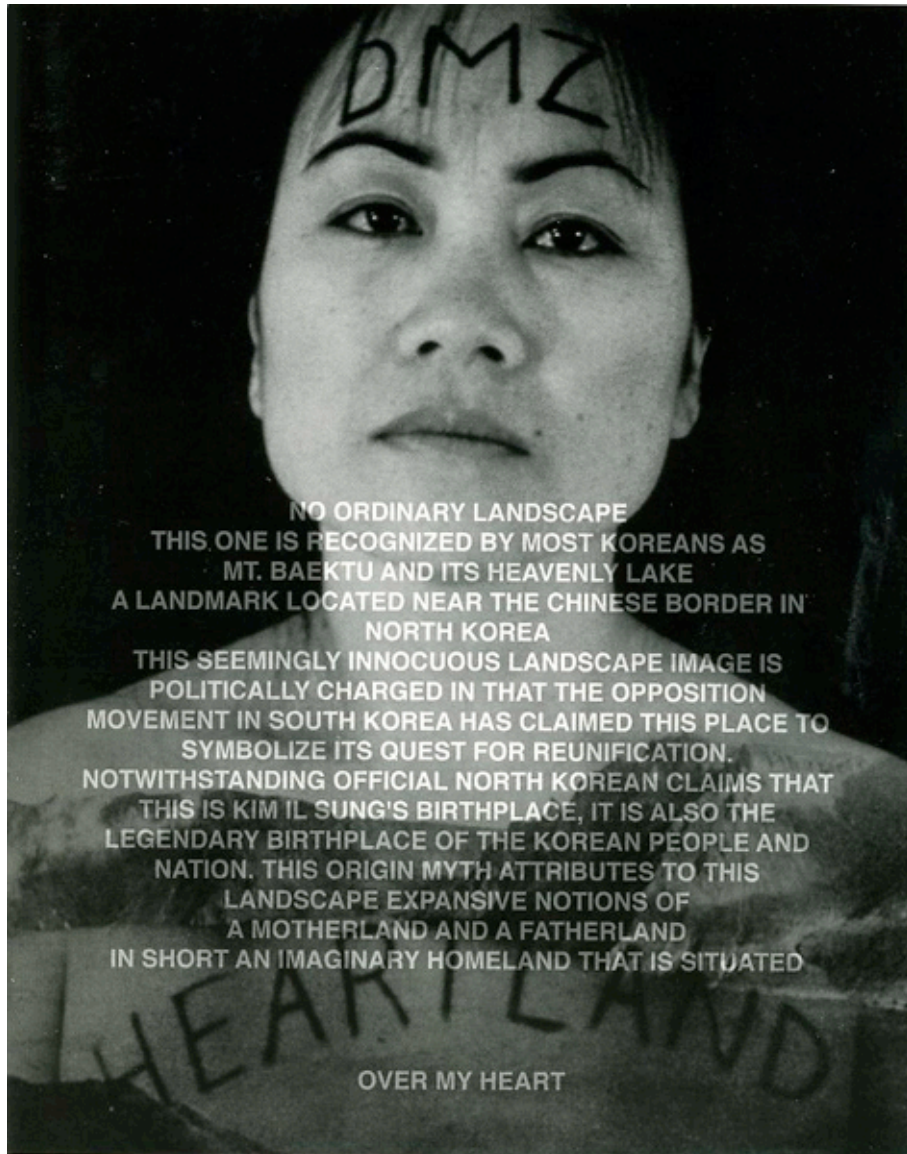


Figure 25, Yong Soon Min, *Defining Moments*, 1992

image: first there is her body, then writing upon her body, then image projected onto her body, then writing on top of the image. This visual strategy of layering the image shows that any attempt to represent the body must be a dense palimpsest. As Min's eyes address us from the other side of the image, through her deployment of imagistic and linguistic layers, one understands that there are vast historical and political terrains that rest between her eyes and the viewer's own. By making these boundaries available for view, by placing them as the very built surface of the image, Min undoes any viewing practice that might consider the field of vision as an open domain.¹⁷⁵ Visual production from a restricted rather than an open position might be understood to be this "conscious seeing" of the modalities through which any address must pass.

Visual production, from a restricted position, is further elaborated in Yong Soon Min's *Make Me* series, a project of four black and white photographs in which an Asian woman's face, Min herself, is modeled in several poses.¹⁷⁶ The significance of these poses is brought into relation with the alliterative words cut into the photograph in a shadowed sans-serif font. "EXOTIC IMMIGRANT." "ASSIMILATED ALIEN." "OBJECTIFIED OTHER." "MODEL MINORITY." In each of the images, the pose enacted by the hands and face seems to bear a correspondence to the words that are cut into the surface of the photograph across her face. In one image with the words, assimilated alien, the hands cover first her eyes then her mouth. In the image with the words, model minority, the hands cup the side of her face in a gesture of saccharine sweetness. In each of these images, we see the way that the gestures of the body, its poses, bears a correspondence to the discourses of Asian American racialization as they are cut into the image.¹⁷⁷ The hand comes to obscure and mask the face, a performative gesture that shows that it is not only the way one is cast as 'other' but the way this casting molds one's body and its lexicon of gestures.

Like Tran's *Blindness Series*, in *Objectified Other*, we see Min, approaching the interstice of race and vision as it plays out across the Asian eye. On the left side of the face, her eye is closed. On the right half of the image she pulls the corner of her eye toward her temples, exaggerating the slant of her eyes. Over the face is written the words: OBJECTIFIED OTHER. On both sides of the image is the impossibility of being anything other than these eyes that are closed or these eyes that are slanted, an impossible position of either blindness or stereotype. In this image we see how the eyes, and the question of vision that they entail, become one of the primary sites in which racialization is experienced by this figure. The eyes, pulled in an exaggerated slant, or the eyes closed, show us that in either case, the figure is not a subject who sees. There is lack of vision that affects the figure as she is bound to the way that her body is written within the terms of this dualism. Neither offers the possibility of this figure as the bearer of sight. What Min's "OBJECTIFIED OTHER" reveals is that blindness rests not in the lack of sight, but in what is unbeseen, the impossibility of either position as represented in the two halves with eyes closed and slanted. In this impossibility, she is sent to ruins and must construct the visual anew.

From this impossibility, one does not move toward vision, but shows the boundary of vision and works at the limit of what it is possible to see. Like the Cheyenne tale, she sees seeing, its structures and processes, from a restricted position, which as Chow has offered, one has learned not simply to inhabit, but to see oneself inhabiting. The image, as it is split in half, draws one's attention to the poses that construct this subject's social identity and forces one's eyes to fall into the gap between the two sides. She directs the viewer's sight to the seam where the two images meet, and as the viewer's eye tries to see (*videre*) Min's visage, it encounters a constitutive boundary, a split, a gap, a resistance in which this seeing is shown as a boundary. By bringing together two images that do not match up, Min directs our vision most forcefully to this line, a border, a fundamental splitting of vision that expresses how vision, the vision that might desire to see her is confounded by her body. What she marks in this work is a boundary, where the disembodied eye is refused the optical depth of the image. If they move toward depth, they will fall into the gap, the seam, the center where they

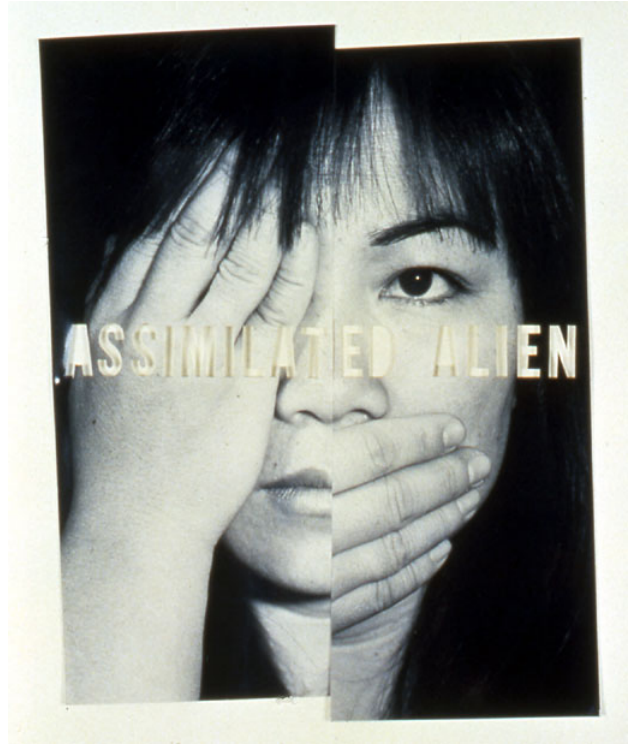
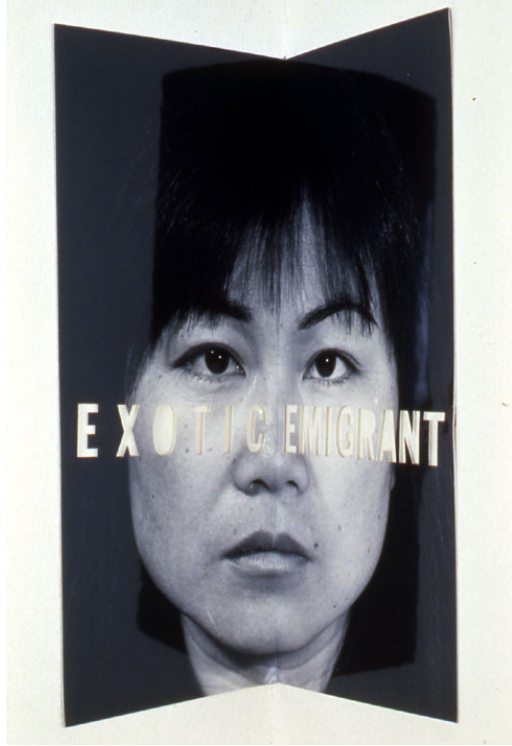


Figure 26, Yong Soon Min, Make Me, 1992

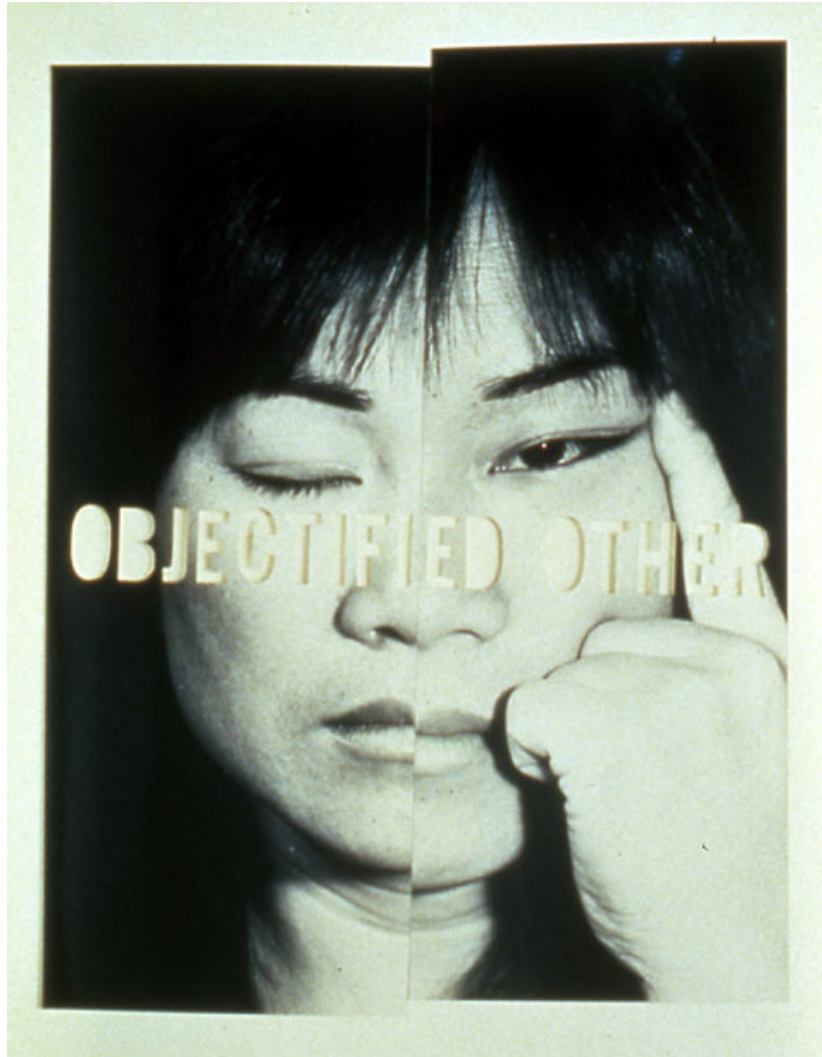


Figure 27, Yong Soon Min, Make Me, 1992

will have to negotiate the ways in which the figure's difference arises out of the very modes of looking that appear naturalized. Most provocatively, the figure, in her frontality, forces the spectator to face this desire to see, and the layers of history and discourse that cloak the racialized female body.

This desire to see is expanded with the work of Lorna Simpson. In *You're Fine, You're Hired*, Lorna Simpson portrays the body of an African American woman lying down against a sterile white floor and white backdrop.¹⁷⁸ The figure is dressed in a simple white sheath that does not cling to the body and seems like it could be a hospital gown, a nightgown, or a thin summer dress. Her pose is suspended, somewhere in between tension and relaxation, examination and sleep. Her hand drapes over the top of her head and her hair brushes the floor, in a loose display. The body is photographed in four separate and framed panels, each a unique Polaroid photograph that registers the singularity of each moment presented. The illusion of one whole body is belied by the fact that each of these photographs are Polaroids, and each section of the body is imaged at a different moment in time. Rather than the modality of the stereotype (which can be found in other works in Simpson's practice with the repetition of the same image), what we are presented with in *You're Fine, You're Hired*, is a *dissection* of the body where each part of the body is fragmented from the whole.¹⁷⁹ This photographic dissection is expounded by the text that constellates around the images. Surrounding the figure on the top and the bottom are the words rendered in white block letters that importantly seem to disappear into the white wall were they not throwing shadows because of their relief from the wall. The text reads, "YOU'RE FINE" and "YOU'RE HIRED", both of which suggest the discourses of health and labor. The affirmative terms of "you're fine" and "you're hired" also turn in on themselves to imply their opposite, which is "you're sick" and "you're fired." In both cases, whether fine or sick, hired or fired, there is a relation of power that frames the figure. This frame is further elaborated by the words that flank the right and left edges of the arrangement. Plaques, like the ones that announce names and positions at a workplace, are arranged to the left of the body with the words "PHYSICAL EXAM," "BLOOD TEST," "HEART," "REFLEXES," "CHEST X-RAY." To the right of the image are two words which descend vertically rather than horizontally and which read on separate plaques "SECRETARIAL POSITION." In this constellation of words rest the resonance of vulnerability and sexualization both of which offer an account of subjection to the discourses that surround her. In the bare and sterile white space of the image, and its extension into the bare white walls of the gallery, she is a blank slate to be written by the many discourses that surround her.

Yet, even if the vulnerability and the precarity of this existence is very clear, in its pose and the language that surrounds it, there is also a profound resistance that is present, in the back that is turned, the face that is never given, and the case for singularity as it is made by the use of the polaroid image. One of the profound insights that Simpson's work offers us is this turning away, that refuses victimization, and that makes her viewer see their own desire to see. Turned away, she is radically resistant to our gaze. Instead, one sees themselves looking and in seeing oneself looking must face looking itself and the desire for the transparency of a face, the communication of depth, or the fantasy of openness in which we might come into a relation with this figure. Instead, Simpson leads us away from such mythologies and pulls us from the transparency of a face, toward the opacity of a back, a turn that I would like to suggest bears great possibility for undoing the universality that still inheres when visual relations are understood as open domains.

In order to understand this turn from transparency to opacity, let us turn to Edouard Glissant who, arguing against the forms of universality and homogeneity that shape 'humanity' as a single, unitary image. He offers a word with a specific visual valence to the kinds of universalism that might call vision one: *transparency*. Transparency presumes that humanity is shaped in the image of Western man who gazes himself and generalizes this as 'human'. Understandings of humanity



Figure 28, Lorna Simpson, You're Fine, You're Hired, 1988

achieved through transparency presume that nothing exceeds this image of man and that all things can be known as an object of knowledge. The dissection of the figure in *You're Fine, You're Hired* shows how there is an object of knowledge that is being constructed at the site of her body. At the same time, her pose as well as nearly all of the images in Simpson's practice, turns away, a turning that is also a gesture of opacity, inappropriability, unassimilability-- it defines a different sense of alterity from a restricted position. Like the work of Tran and Min, it shows how any relation one might have to the body must pass through the layers of history and discourse. Layers open the possibility of resistance, as in the infinite fold, something will always remain exterior to the dominant eye of eurocentricism.

Enrique Dussel, the Latin American philosopher, has called eurocentricism a "super ideology."¹⁸⁰ He writes, "Modernity is not a phenomenon of Europe as an independent system, but of Europe as center. This simple hypothesis absolutely changes the concept of modernity, its origin, development, and contemporary crisis, and thus, also, the content of the belated modernity or postmodernity."¹⁸¹ Rather than the center being self-evident, Dussel argues that the center is produced through discovery, conquest, colonization, and integration. Modernity is not the cause of the advantage of Europe, rather Modernity is the effect. Modernity begins in the late 15th century with the necessary management of a system in expansion to Amerindia. Given this way of understanding modernity as one of European expansion, he writes, "In general, no debate between rationalists and postmodernism overcomes the Eurocentric horizon."¹⁸² Dussel is saying that within the knowledges of the west the Eurocentric horizon is maintained and requires more than a discussion within the academy. There are two senses that only serve to affirm Europe's centrality: the first the assumption that modernity is only in Europe and the second the way that postmodern philosophers bear a nihilistic relation to these questions in which there is no way out. The project of overcoming the world system itself holds limit: "the exteriority of the alterity of the other—a locus of resistance from whose affirmation the process of the negation of the negation of liberation begins" In this idea of a radical exteriority, Dussel holds open a site that is not subsumed by the eurocentric horizon. It is an exteriority that may be productively considered with the idea of opacity in Glissant.

We find a similar resistance and model of exteriority in Glissant, who offers the world of Relation, a mode of understanding based not on transparency, but on opacity. Relation is a way of conceptualizing humanity that takes diversity as its premise. He writes, "in the world of Relation, which takes over from the homogeneity of essence, to accept this opaqueness-- that is, the irreducible density of the other-- is truly to accomplish, through diversity, a human objective. Humanity is perhaps not the 'image of man' but today the ever growing network of opaque structures."¹⁸³ To enter into the world of relation is to "accept this opaqueness," where one's understanding of humanity shifts away from the transparent structures commonly used to describe it. By calling it "acceptance," Glissant creates a space of agency in which one moves away from the 'image of man' that has been offered as a given and toward a sense of the world imagined otherwise. The opacity upon which relation is based is tightly interconnected, if not synonymous, with alterity. *Relation* describes "the other" as inappropriable and inassimilable, thus the perspective by which one understands this position becomes key and introduces a politics of position that further describes this world of relation. The visuality of the world of relation to be built not from transparent glass, but from opaque screens that suggest, but do not reveal, the worlds behind them.

In their undoings of vision, Tran, Kim and Simpson offer a gap between visuality and alterity, one that highlights the space between seer and seen as a political and discursive space, one that I would like to suggest directs us toward a reformulation of vision in terms of relation. Their practices develop important critiques of the transparency of vision and of raced and gendered

subjects as they are shuttled between impossible positions. Between visualization and objectification, their works reveal strategies of opacity in which what is made available for vision is not access to the figure to the other side of the image, but instead, the layers of history and discourse that write the body as a social fact. In this critical vision, they show how power works in the field of vision and offer critical tools for how it might be undone. In the strategy of layering, they maintain an exteriority from behind the image, and demonstrate a gap between visibility and alterity, one in which the very desire to see (*videre*) must pass through and within the layers that shape the raced and gendered body. In the face of these works, the statement, "I see" (*video*), must negotiate a gap, thrown into relief, in which one does not see. It is this gap that shows the space between visibility and alterity and reformulates the visual relation toward one of relation-- *another* rather than *the other*.

When one accepts relation as a principle, one does not move to tear the screen or lift the veil, but instead, one works in the passage between screens wherein rests the "ever growing network of opaque structures" that for Glissant, shapes a different sense of 'humanity'. The model of the *network* opens humanity to multiple channels and lines that intersect at varying point but do not all converge at one place and at one time. By refiguring humanity as a network of opaque structures, what Glissant enables is a sense of the world that, against Eurocentric forms of imagining, might account for the forms of invisibility specific to the global south. He writes, "merely consider the hypothesis of a Christian Europe, convinced of its legitimacy, rallied together in its reconstituted universality, having once again, therefore, transformed its forces into a "universal" value-- triangulated with the technological strength of the United States and the financial sovereignty of Japan-- and you will have some notion of the silence and indifference that for the next fifty years (if it is possible thus to estimate) surround the problems, the dependencies and the chaotic sufferings of the countries of the south with nothingness." Out of the technological and financial strength of the most powerful nations is also the chaos of the global south, whose conditions fall into the realms of "silence" and "indifference."

Most provocatively, what Glissant's model of Relation suggests is not that this silence be met with speech, or this indifference be met with action for both of these responses still submit to the demand for 'content' that preoccupies the Western humanist imaginary. Instead of presupposing the terms of our response, Glissant asks us to look at the *modality* of that which is rendered and the transparency that underlies its forms. When placed in a global frame, this sense of transparency, reflecting the west to itself, becomes blurred. "Transparency no longer seems like the bottom of the mirror in which Western humanity reflected the world in its own image. There is opacity now at the bottom of the mirror, a whole alluvium deposited by populations, silt that is fertile but, in actual fact, indistinct and unexplored even today, denied or insulted more often than not, and with an insistent presence that we are incapable of not experiencing."¹⁸⁴ It is to the question of a global frame that I will turn to next, and what kind of artistic practice might be developed in light of its shifting ground.

Chapter 6

Video as Calling

Once we do away with any fiction of the artist as the possessor of freedom, we come to ask different types of questions, ones which concern how the artist, as one articulation of a notion of freedom, is intertwined with the lack of freedom as it occurs in the world. To work as an artist in this moment is to engage in a deep rethinking of the positions *within* the visual and the spaces and times that comprise it. It is to examine the work of images as they inform our sense of both history and futurity. It is to ask how visibility is not universal but positioned and differentially negotiated. It is to ask about the shape of the world and what we can offer to it. But before one can leap to the shape of the world, one must ask about the ground on which one stands. In this chapter, I hope to explore how cultural practitioners might orient themselves in relation to way that the ground has shifted in recent years, and to discuss how the residual effects of colonial processes and their legacies in liberal thought continue to shape the terms through which culture is depoliticized. While the discourses of art would like to pose it as an open space that can absorb the forms of alterity that emerge within it, what is missing from the discussion is the fundamental tension and contradiction that reveals itself once we orient art away from its liberal stage and renew its commitment to the world.

If at the turn of the twenty-first century, the diasporic art practice is one that Rasheed Araeen, editor of the pioneering journal on postcolonial visibility, *Third Text*, had posed as one of "challenging the prevailing concept of modernism and redefining it," then the ground appears to have shifted one decade later when the very challenge to modernism has been taken up by some of the more dominant discourses in art. For Araeen, the diasporic artist was involved in a struggle of resignification, apart from the legacies of western modernism and its deep roots in Eurocentricism. "It was not just a question of finding a place for oneself within modernism, but redefining the world-- through a symbolic practice-- which was free from Eurocentric structures."¹⁸⁵ The engagement of which Araeen writes is one that emerged out of the challenges that postcolonial histories, thought, and practice presented within the field of art. If in Araeen's description, this struggle for resignification offers a liberatory dimension in which the diasporic artist might realize a way of walking outside western-centered structures, then in some more recent discourses around the legacy of modernism, this interface between modernism and postcoloniality has been synthesized into a definitive form.

In "Altermodern," a 2009 exhibition curated by Nicolas Bourriaud for London's Tate Triennial for example, the organizing principle of the exhibition lay around the theme of 'altermodernism'. The altermodern is one that Bourriaud understands as a "synthesis between modernism and post-colonialism," a site in which this encounter "has allowed the historical counters to be reset to zero."¹⁸⁶ The altermodern is meant to describe a "new modernism" that develops out of the old modernism, the latter of which has historically functioned to "jolt us out of tradition," provide a "cultural exodus," or an "escape from the confines of nationalism and identity tagging."¹⁸⁷ The free-floating, zero degree of history that he claims to exist in the altermodern is one that is defined by nomadism, positive spatio-temporal disorientation, and an investment in a revival of the principle styles of twentieth-century modernism. He defines the altermodern as "that moment when it became possible for us to produce something that made sense starting from an assumed heterochrony, that is, from a vision of human history as constituted of multiple temporalities, disdaining the nostalgia of any era-- a positive vision of chaos and complexity."¹⁸⁸ Despite the

invocation of the postcolonial and the reference to heterochrony, what Bourriaud's conceptualization of the altermodern installs is a frame in which the movement beyond the modern is a dispersed network of forces, where the processes of displacement, travel, migration " have become forms" in themselves, and where there is a legible visualization of the presumed epoch.

Yet, the return to a zero degree of history and the unleashing of potentiality encouraged by this supposed "synthesis" between modernism and the postcolonial is one that is a vastly reduced and limited conception of either modernism or postcolonialism-- a empty shell of what either term might suggest. In this "will to create a new form of modernism of the twentieth-century" is the vastness of forgetting, an era set forward in mid-air, detached from the material conditions and the challenges that are posed planetarily to the way that history proceeds. Despite the grand claims that are made in the name of the altermodern and the suggestion of some synthesis between modernism and the postcolonial, what Bourriaud actually accomplishes in his conceptualization is a liberal writing of history, a territorialization of what is 'alter' in modernity.

Liberal ideology is what the political economist, Samir Amin, has described as means through which real critique is foreclosed by the types of questions that one can ask. It is a fundamentally ahistorical account that promises humanity's salvation while actually, undercutting any real humanist action. "Really-existing globalized liberalism can produce nothing other than an intensification of the inequalities between peoples (an intensification of the inequalities between (an intensified global polarization) and within populations (of the global South and North))."¹⁸⁹ In liberalism and its attendant ways of thinking, rather than reflect on the nature of the system, one instead is called upon to adapt to it. From the perspective of time, one is not asked to question the system that produces its management but is instead encouraged to manage its strains. " 'Live with your time,' 'adapt to it,' 'manage each day'-- that is, abstain from reflecting on the nature of the system, and particularly from calling into question its choices of the moment."¹⁹⁰

For Amin, modernity cannot be thought apart from capitalism. Modernity developed at the same time as the formation of capitalism, in Europe, from the rise of the Renaissance to the French Revolution. But it is double insofar as it both allows for *and* exceeds the social relations necessary for enterprise, markets, private property, and the emergence of capitalist forms of production. With modernity, economic life enters the private sphere and rather than power determining wealth as had been the case in social relations prior to modernity, wealth comes to determine power. Modernity's relation to capitalism is the one that Amir describes as fundamentally contradictory. This contradiction can be sourced to the emergence of modern political forms where religion breaks from the state with secularization. Social relations under capitalism come to form an "arbitrary separation" between the management of economy as expressed by private property, free enterprise and competition on the one hand, and the management of state power through political democracy, as expressed by the rights of citizens, and multiparty systems on the other. By marking this separation as arbitrary, Amin develops a potential in the gap. While the demands of capitalism may have contained the promise of emancipation, the contradiction is that modernity has promised more than it could offer. In this contradiction, Amin claims that there still remains an immense and untapped potential, one that political democracy still bears as the potential for progressive action.¹⁹¹

"The goal of political democracy, as limited as it is, bears witness to this possibility. It has given legitimacy to the action of dominated, exploited, and oppressed classes and enabled them progressively to wrest democratic rights from the power of dominant capital-- rights that would never have been spontaneously produced by the logic of capitalist expansion and accumulation."¹⁹² This potential as Amin describes it is two-fold, containing both a radical potential and a reduced containment. On the one hand, the contradiction opens a space for struggle (which he defines as politics and class), and on the other hand capitalism has found ways to contain the political efficacy of such democratic struggles. Liberal forms of thought have been key to limiting the political

efficacy of such spaces of struggle by locating desire within individual freedom rather than social justice. "Contemporary peoples are thus confronted with challenges formed by really-existing capitalism and modernity," a two-fold endeavor in which individual liberty cannot be thought apart from the way that the realization of such freedom is out of reach for most in the capitalist world system.

Rethought in light of Amin's proposition concerning the contradictory relation between modernity and capitalism, we find that the idea of an 'altermodern' might be much more nuanced and materially-based than the free-floating definition that Bourriaud offers.¹⁹³ Modernity, as the literary scholar and Latin Americanist Walter Mignolo has suggested, is always double-sided, constituted by colonialism, and composed not either in Europe or the colonies but in the relation of power that rest between the two.¹⁹⁴ It is this power relation that ultimately becomes eclipsed in Bourriaud's definition of the altermodern, and it is this eclipse that expresses the deep desire within the dominant discourses of art to stage themselves at the frontier of radical politics, without recognizing that those frontiers exist not outside of the discipline, but within, not in what is said but in the ways that it is said. In order to ask the question of a way of walking, cultural practitioners in the arts must orient themselves in relation to this shifting ground in which the challenge to modernity has been evacuated of its liberatory potential.

In Bourriaud's conception of the 'altermodern' is a production of liberal ideology, a blunting and obfuscation of the true challenges that remain in the discourses of art to conceptualize what the struggle against, within, and apart from Eurocentric forms might look like. It is the expression of a dominant liberalism whose underlying claim is one of individual liberty as expressed in the explosive global conjunctions that art is said to facilitate. Such individual liberty is understood from an open position that anyone anywhere may freely inhabit. It says that in art, the doors are open and all may enter into this domain of the so-called, altermodern, and find themselves carried by the way that the forms of displacement, migration, exile, refugeeism are visualized. Bourriaud's conception of the altermodern comes to paper over the possibility of any true critique that might emerge in relation to global processes and forecloses the potential that art might hold to involve itself in the practice of resignification that Rasheed Araeen describes.

When one claims that the "historical counters have been reset to zero" the conception of an art that is formed is sealed in the production and reproduction of a mythology. The global dialogues that Bourriaud claims will allow art to "re-invent" itself cannot take place apart from considering the contradictions that rest in this relation between modernity, colonialism, and capitalism, contradictions that bear heavily upon art and its relation to the struggles that occur beyond it and within it. When we consider modernity not as a temporal definition, or as the province of Europe extending to the colonies, or as a free-floating heterotopia, but as a relation of power, then the challenge for the diasporic artist might not be to provide a form for the 'altermodern', whether this form might be the visualization 'other places' or the visualization of the flows as they become grounded in forms. Instead, it might mean to work in the gap in which the *alter* and the *modern* can be visualized and to press the visualities that fall by the wayside, the lacunae in such imaginings. It might mean to ask toward the ways that such visualities are staged and the assumptions that underwrite such stagings. Bourriaud is right to suggest that 'global dialogues' are what will guide the terms through which a reimagining takes place, but who is involved in such dialogue and what the terms of such discussions might be are the questions that linger. How is this 'global' to be seen and from where do the visions emerge to describe it?

While the field of contemporary art might take place on a global stage, there remains a deep struggle, within the discourses that comprise it, to imagine this global stage as a shared contemporaneity. By "shared contemporaneity," I don't mean to reduce the time of the world to a single present, nor do I seek to propose a universal event that overrides the specificity of any

singular encounter. Rather, what I hope to ask is something somewhat more elusive, wherein the idea of a "shared contemporaneity" opens onto a postcolonial condition that makes such sharing of the contemporary a difficult task at best and an impossible task at worst. For what does it mean to ask toward a shared contemporaneity if not also to ask toward the reasons why the time and space of the "contemporary" has been so violently torn from under the feet of some, while others leisure in the infinite time of the present?

In the fields of contemporary art, the prospect of a shared contemporaneity means to ask how contemporary art became contemporary in the first place. The people who have held court on such matters are more often than not, art historians, curators, and critics, whose analysis of contemporary art seems to agree on only one thing, that it is a term that is full of slippage and crisis.¹⁹⁵ If the discipline of art history, as it emerged in the mid-nineteenth century, was written as a history of the west for the west, then the task that gets put to contemporary art history is one where this west is confronted by a world of others that it have been erased from contemporary existence and slipped quietly into the field of cultural essences often geographically determined: i.e., Asian Art, Indian Art, African Art.

Miwon Kwon, addressing the question of the contemporary from the discipline of art history, has observed, "contemporary art history, in other words, marks both a temporal bracketing and a spatial encompassing, a site of a deep tension between very different formations of knowledge and traditions, and thus a challenging pressure point for the field of art history in general."¹⁹⁶ The tension that Kwon recognizes within the approach to the contemporary of art history emerges from the entrenched eurocentricism in the history of art as it faces the transnational scope of contemporary art.¹⁹⁷ It is this transnational scope that the curator and critic, Okwei Enwezor has called the "postcolonial constellation" which can be understood as the productive challenge that this worlding of contemporary art might pose to the entrenched artistic, critical, and historical discourses of art. For Enwezor, contemporary art's relation to history is one of impermanence, "the structure of contemporary art's relationship to history is more transversal, asynchronous, and asystemic in nature, thereby revealing the multiplicity of cultural procedures and countermodels that define contemporary art today"¹⁹⁸ This multiplicity and existence of a countermodel is what Enwezor calls the "permanent transition" of contemporary art. It is the field that cannot be fixed. Critics have come to build such movement into their analysis.

Terry E. Smith grapples with the question of contemporaneity and observes that in 'the contemporary' is an idea that is asked to take on the entire weight of the present.¹⁹⁹ Rather than understand "contemporary art" as a neutral category that follows modern art in a linear historical fashion, Smith pushes the term to consider how contemporaneity "signifies multiple ways of being in and out of time, separately and at once, with others and without them."²⁰⁰ A *co-temporality* grounds his understanding of contemporaneity and is posed against the grand narratives of modernity. "Contemporaneity manifests not just in the unprecedented proliferation of art, or only in its unseemingly infinite variegation, but above all in the emergence of, and contestation between, quite different ways of making art and communicating through it to others."²⁰¹ Smith's understanding of contemporaneity is based on the idea of plurality and publicity in which art invites a contestation and difference to emerge. He concludes "contemporaneity is the most evident attribute of the current world picture, encompassing its most distinctive qualities, from the interactions between humans and the geosphere, through multitude of cultures and the ideoscape of global politics to the interiority of individual being."¹ Thus, contemporaneity become a universal sense of the 'now' one that moves between the macro and micro to reveal the 'world picture'.

Yet what this definition of contemporaneity performs is perhaps as symptomatic of the crisis of the postcolonial turn as any. Contemporary art becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, universal insofar as its doors are open to accepting all difference. And while it might be struggling with the

aftermath of the so-called "postcolonial turn," the questions that artists ask, while they might emerge from the world in which they live, according to this conception, will fold back into art, again and again, like a snake eating its tail. What this understanding of contemporaneity does is mark the end game as one that might no longer be for the West, but rather, it is for Art and the theology of its contemporaneity. It depoliticizes the concept of contemporaneity, empties it of its possibility of describing the political work that a so-called contemporary artist could be involved in.

The problem of a "shared contemporaneity" within the field of art is keenly elaborated by the artist and theorist, Olu Oguibe who writes, "despite the myriad bloody and cataclysmic copulations that have taken place across cultures, especially in the twentieth century, and the numerous geographical faults that were bridged both willingly and otherwise, the idea of a shared contemporaneity remains opaque at best in the imagination of the West. Not even its ubiquitous cultural presence throughout the rest of the world is enough to convey to the paradoxically, essentially provincial Western mind that the customary quest for cultural essences no longer retains the logic of previous epochs."²⁰² For Oguibe, Western cultural institutions and art markets, hold a relationship to artists of non-western and minority descent that reproduce a logic of primitivism in which the non-western and minority artist is reduced to a cultural essence. Rather than being excluded from the institutions of art, what this logic of irreducible difference produces is the non-western artist as cultural commodity, sought after with great zeal for precisely the difference they personify. "At the turn of the twenty-first century, the struggle that non-Western contemporary artists face on the global stage is not Western resistance to difference, as might have been the case in decades past; their most formidable obstacle is Western obsession with and insistence on difference."²⁰³ This appropriation of difference by the West is something that Oguibe calls a "global culture game" in which the stubborn logics of colonialism inhere in the West's movements toward its others. Since Oguibe first started developing some of the ideas in this volume from the early nineties, the list of international biennials and triennials has grown exponentially, as have the discourses around questions of art and globalization. Yet, I believe that his insights into the residual effects of colonial processes as they continue to shape the terms through which art and culture are produced are as pressing as ever, and as important as ever to continue to explore at a moment when the terms art and global seem to be conflated with such ease.

The field of art bears a very prominent division of labor on which it is dependent, between the critics who speak and the artists who make. The discourses of art are tightly bound to conceptions of freedom and autonomy and an excess of decipherable meaning that, rather than be an essential aspect of the aesthetic might instead and more proper be considered its ideology. By now it is old news that "the artist," as an agent of freedom and expression, is an ideological fiction. Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of the endurance of models of autonomy within the arts is still pertinent as he reads the perceived autonomy of art to arise from a site of seeming explicability, an excess of meaning that art is presumed to hold that frustrates rational understanding. Speaking to the critics, writers, and philosopher who provide the 'language' to art he writes: "why are they so eager to concede without a struggle the defeat of knowledge; and where does their irrepressible need to belittle rational understanding come from, this rage to affirm the irreducibility of the work of art, or to use a more suitable word, its transcendence."²⁰⁴ In the address to "critics, writers, and philosophers," what Bourdieu makes clear is the division of labor that exists between the artists who produce artwork, and the critics who produce the language and interpretation of the same artwork. It is a gulf, as wide as an ocean, between the practice of making and its discursive production is the primary aspect of the depoliticization of practice in the field of art.

"That art critics and not artists determine the cultural interpretation of an art product implies that there is no necessary connection between the set of contextualized experiences, emotions, associations, beliefs, and intentions the artist brings to the production of the work, and its resulting

cultural interpretation,"²⁰⁵ writes Adrian Piper in 1983, one decade before the explosion of 'multiculturalism' and nearly two decades before the explosion of the 'global' in its institutions. Piper underscores how this division of labor, between artist and critic, serves to keep the artist in a condition of bondage, always reliant upon the systems of art to take care of him or herself and to keep the self fed and cared for so that he or she might continue to create 'freely'. For the artist, it is freedom that comes at a great cost for in this *aesthetic acculturation* as Piper call it, is the artist as they become a producer of product entirely dependent upon the system which maintains his or her survival. "The result of this division of labor is, then, the essential infantilization of the artist as bare producer of art. Having divested himself of power and control over the work, he can then hardly be expected to participate in the interpretive, economic, and social processes by which the art product is assimilated into the art context-- nor, therefore, in the political and cultural life of society at large."²⁰⁶ What Piper recognizes here is that the discursive context of the work, trumps the art, and as long as artists are acculturated as bare producers, they will always remain in the relations of production that depend on their position outside of language.

One of the primary locations where the artist is trained to be a bare producer of art is the art academy, where the *aesthetic acculturation* of the artist takes place. It is where the artist, rather than be educated to develop a set of conceptual tools to articulate the terms of their practice is instead, steered headlong into a mode of production oriented toward what Piper calls, the "Euroethnic" values which traffic in terms of art's freedom in the cultural milieu. But in our contemporary moment, these Euroethnic values have taken on a different guise, one that rather than exclude artists of minority and non-western descent from the institutions of art, instead embrace them, welcome them, and insists upon difference. The minority artist finds themselves in a bind, not only one of fetishized difference, but also of a *tabula*, a mute ground in which the creators of discourse cannot see their own position in the field.²⁰⁷ A mute ground upon which conceptions of self and other are universalized rather than politicized and in which alterity can only be conceived as an open rather than a restricted site.

The "freedom" as it is supposedly expressed by the artist or in the supposed openness that art holds to notions of alterity or even to political expression, is thus caught within the terms that Theodor Adorno recognized in his theory of aesthetics where he writes, "absolute freedom in art, always limited to a particular, comes into a contradiction with the perennial unfreedom of the whole."²⁰⁸ The part and the whole are not disconnected, but intimately bonded. We must think about why there can be freedom in the sphere of art but so much unfreedom elsewhere. We must also think about how a discourse of freedom has circulated, which is to say that any conception of art that does not recognize its imbrication in the conditions of its production, i.e. the material sources of its production and dissemination, is a fetishization of art and its products. In contrast to the nomenclature of 'political art' that is wielded so liberally in discourses about art's social responsibility, we must begin to address how art is only one node of this political reality, only one location of the larger processes occurring in the world. Once we do away with any fiction of "the artist" as the possessor of freedom, we come to ask different type of questions, which concern how "the artist" is one articulation of a notion of "freedom" that is intertwined with the discourses of "freedom" as they occur in the world.

In the realm of art, that which comes to be called 'political art' is often a packaging of the conditions of the global south, one in which the visibilizing of these conditions appears to suffice. Yet such *appearances* of the global south, whether it is in the representations that are offered or in the inclusion of subequatorial artists, are often depoliticized. As the artist, Hito Steyerl has suggested, "even though political art manages to represent so-called local situations from all over the globe, and routinely packages injustice and destitution, the conditions of its own production and display remain pretty much unexplored. One could even say that the politics of art are the blind spot of much

contemporary political art."²⁰⁹ What gets called political art on the international art circuits are often sponsored by banks, arms traders, marketing, branding, social engineering, all of which is little discussed in 'political art' which is abstracted from the context of its exhibition. Political art becomes isolated from the politics of art and produces a floating world.

While the discourses of art would like to pose it as an open space that can absorb the differences and the challenges that emerge within it, what is missing from the discussion is the fundamental tension and contradiction that begins to emerge once we take the challenge of Third Cinema seriously and orient art and its commitment toward the world. The Third Cinema filmmakers, Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino provide a clear critique of the role of artists within society when they write, "one of the most effective jobs done by neocolonialism is its cutting off of intellectual sectors, especially artists, from national reality by lining them up behind 'universal art and models'. This form of universalism effectively, cuts off intellectual and artistic sectors from the struggle of national liberation. They write, "art is cut off from the concrete facts - which, from the neocolonialist standpoint, are accusatory testimonies - to turn back on itself, strutting about in a world of abstractions and phantoms, where it becomes 'timeless' and history-less. Vietnam can be mentioned, but only far from Vietnam; Latin America can be mentioned, but only far enough away from the continent to be effective, in places where it is depoliticized and where it does not lead to action." The depoliticization of this appearance of Vietnam, the depoliticization of this appearance of Latin America, show us how this form of abstraction functions to offer the very disappearance of that which is invoked. Appearance is not an object, but a modality. To recognize this modality is see that appearance is always also, disappearance, a perpetual movement that I will expand upon in my next chapter through the idea of ruin.

Rather than produce a theology the 'contemporary' as a site where all differences can be expressed, this orientation toward the world shows a fundamental contradiction within the politics of art itself. It is here that a productive challenge of working between the realms of art and human rights enters. The invocation of the global south might be one of the primary goals of the human rights image, but like the comments made by Solanas and Getino, and as my first chapter tried to demonstrate, the human rights image also invokes the global south from a distance. Vietnam is mentioned but far from Vietnam. Latin America is mentioned, but far from Latin America. The visibility of humanism rests upon the safety of this distance and a sense of vision found in *video*, or "I see."

It is in this way that the structure of feeling that are produced at the site of the image of the human rights is also the structure of feeling that is produced at the site of contemporary art. They are stages upon which we are presented with images of the world as both infinitely close and infinitely distanced, both intimate and impossible, two parallel and contradictory proximities that occur simultaneously, a structure which I have called here, a *visuality of liberalism*. The *ways* of seeing that such discourses inaugurate are ones that serves as ciphers of the north. They stage a 'global affect', a structure of feeling that reveals the terms of liberal humanism and the fields of vision that it orchestrates. One way to steer visibility away from liberalism might be to think between these two realms in which the liberal visibility is produced: art and human rights. If in the realm of art there is a developed inquiry into representation that tends to bracket its orientation toward the world, then in human rights there is a developed inquiry into the world that tends to bracket the question of representation. By thinking between these discourses, and the floating proximities that each suggest, would it be possible to imagine new ways for the images of the world, ones that might take appearance, and its modalities, into account and how would this shift the question of advocacy?

In the field of human rights, the work of advocacy takes place not only by speaking or writing but also through other modes of communication such as video. In an *advocacy video* one is understood to work with video as one would write an op-ed column-- to advance a strong position

and to support this position through facts and statistics. As a form, the advocacy video does important work in the field of human rights in that it offers a highly disseminable representation of an issue. Yet, the advocacy video also raises pressing questions around the politics of representation and its implications. In order to trace the intertwining of advocacy and representation we might look to the dawn of the European legal system wherein advocates were assumed to speak on behalf of individuals with no access to self-representation due to their social position, lack of knowledge, or ability to speak for themselves. The advocate, trained to work in the legal context, was understood to give voice to individuals who could not represent their own interests. Even as today's advocacy extends beyond the legal framework described above, its inscription as a practice of representation, as proxy and mimesis, remains. When we relate this conception of advocacy to the work that is done in video advocacy, we come to understand that in order for *a video* to assume this function of representation, it must assume a transparency in relation to its subject. It becomes a truth-teller, armed with facts and statistics, engaged in a practice of unveiling.

The position of transparency from which the advocacy video derives is not without its politics. It is related to the visibility of liberalism and its stake in appearance. Reflecting upon the politics of representation that occur in an advocacy video allows us to enter into a larger set of questions concerning the frame of human rights discourse and the assumptions around representation that pass unquestioned in the field. If the images and sounds of the advocacy video are offered as facts, they can only appear as fact by virtue of their adherence to forms of storytelling that relay a truth-function. The truth-function of video is not inherent within the apparatus. An understanding of truth in video is not *given* but *choreographed* through techniques that are well-established in the conventions of cinema. The narrative voice, the textual support of the image, the interview, the framing, the montage-- all of these elements are crafted in the video in order to communicate what is understood as fact. The facts can only be facts by virtue of their system of delivery.

A practice that views representation as both embedded in politics and involved in a production of knowledge and power, reframes the demands that inhere in the discourse of human rights. Rather than demand the forms of address that bear a transparency, a practice invested in a question of representation might ask what apparatus constitute such communicative possibility. Rather than demand a legibility to video, a practice invested in a question of representation might ask how such received meanings are bound to the hegemony of forms that already exist in the field. And rather than demand that work raise public awareness, a practice invested in a question of representation might ask toward the terms through which a public is constituted. In each case, the site from which a practice invested in a question of representation begins is that content is inextricable from form and representation is never transparent. With such reframings new interpretative possibilities emerge that contribute to the terms through which we might reimagine the work of advocacy.

Challenges to representation have been integral to considering the forms of epistemic violence that issues from colonial and patriarchal structures of power and knowledge. Postcolonial criticism has pointed to the international division of labor that situates all forms of knowledge production and the fallacy of the transparent western subject as they claim to represent what is happening in the Third World. These postcolonial critiques of representation and ideology are not separate from the biopolitics of coloniality, but importantly intimately linked with them. Such questions of representation and ideology as they are linked to biopower are important for the discourse of human rights in that they urge a question concerning the position from which representations issue and ask how these positions are, in and of themselves, enacting a politics. Out of the such awareness might emerge the possibility a different conception of advocacy, one that is not limited to the idea of a representing those who cannot speak for themselves, but instead, one

that can be traced to advocacy's etymology in the word *vocare*, "to call." Returning to this etymology, we open onto the possibility of other modes of advocacy apart from appearances based on *videre*, or "I see." In the idea of *vocare*, advocacy shifts from a practice of giving voice to a practice of *calling*. Rather than the advocate defending an argument or an advocate providing the appearance of another, the advocate might instead be one whose act is to extend an invitation, one who creates a space, one who makes possible an encounter-- that involves one in a radical engagement with the politics and ethics of representation.

Artists who engage with the terms of politics and aesthetics have something important to contribute to this understanding of advocacy. For example, in one of the works from Alfredo Jaar's Rwanda Project, he fills a slide table with thousands of the same slide, one pair of eyes. The title of the work is *The Silence of Nduwayezu* and the eyes belong to a woman, Gutete Emirita, who saw 400 Tutsi slaughtered by a Hutu death squad. In this work, the repetition of the same slide on the light table carries the meaning. As spectators, we don't see the scene of the violence. Rather, we look at the endless repetition of Gutete Emirita's eyes, a relay of gazes, from our eyes to hers that situates us not in appearance, but in a question of vision and the associated field around the site of this viewing. On the one hand, it asks what it means to witness such violence and on the other what it means for the art viewer to look upon this looking in the bourgeois space of art. If Ariella Azoulay has said that the question that one asks oneself in the face of the photograph is "why are they looking at me," then in Jaar's project, this gaze is repeated over and over as an ethical demand that has not been met. *The Silence of Nduwayezu* offers the possibility to ask a different type of question about Rwanda-- one that makes palpable, not the appearance of the Rwandan genocide but the ways of looking that are part of its violence.

An advocacy video *can* hold a rigorous engagement with the terms of the visual. When one works closely with the form of video, one pays the utmost attention to the perspective of the images, the affect of sound, the rhythm of the edits, and the way these elements are woven together. For a viewer who cares to open themselves to the experience, new interpretive possibilities emerge. In order to see this, one would need to allow themselves to become sensitive to the experience of duration, to become aware not only of the content of the images, but also their framing, the rhythm of their movement, the dissolves, the black spaces, the overwhelming sound-- all of which are working together to weave a form of questioning that can also be called, advocacy. To work as an artist in an era of globalization is to engage in a deep rethinking of the positions *within* the visual and the spaces and times that comprise it. It is to examine the work of images as they inform our sense of both history and futurity. It is to ask how visibility is not universal but positioned and differentially negotiated. It is to ask about the shape of the world and what we can offer to it.

In the visibility of liberalism, a generalized statement might be to say that what can be 'seen' is fundamentally bound with capital processes and the visible life of global flows, while what is 'unseen' is all of that which comes at the cost of such processes, the biopolitics and silent deaths borne in the production and reproduction of such processes. Such silences concern not only the precarity of human life, some so much more precarious than others, but they also an expanded understanding of life, beyond the narrowness of life centered on man and his conquests. For the Yanoyami of Brazil for example, all life is endowed with an *image-essence* and it is this *image-essence* that bears a material form as breath and as hunger that connects all living things.²¹⁰ The visible and invisible stand in a constant relation. Along with the visible aspects of this cosmology, of the humans, the animals, the forest itself, and there are also the invisible aspects of this cosmology, the spirits who accompany the shaman's journey between spirit and mortal worlds.

This wide and expansive understanding of life, as expressed in the Yanoyami's principle of *image-essence*, can be contrasted with the recent discourses around global warming as they occurred



Figure 29, Alfredo Jaar, *The Silence of Nduwayezu*, 1997

during the Cancun summit in December 2010.²¹¹ Under the REDD program, the very airspace of the world would be quantified and gross polluters who exceed their allotment of carbon emission can buy the forests of the third world in order offset their excess pollution. The dismal result of this program is not only the quantification and commodification of the air, but also the territorialization of third world forests by corporate interest and the blatant erasure of indigenous rights to this land. If we find ourselves at a moment of crisis, wherein the world can no longer sustain capital's voracious consumption, then it is imperative for us to imagine solutions that do not simply reproduce the logics of infinite expansion, but instead that we ask about the frame in which such solutions are being conceived and for whom the benefit of the solution arrives.

Programs like REDD show us how the global solutions that are being imagined to remedy the crisis of a world that can no longer sustain capital's voracious consumption, also bear an aesthetic component, a visuality that hinges upon the question of what can and what cannot be seen. The forests, which under the REDD program are available for corporate purchase, are not virgin land but inhabited by indigenous people, effectively disappeared from the scene by a discourses of global environmental policy.²¹² The terms of ownership and land rights are not ones to the indigenous community subscribe, and yet, there is an untranslatability of the indigenous world-view within discourses that supposedly represent their interest in the 'global'. In the forestland of the Yanoyami, the earth is not something that could ever be owned. It is not a setting for human activity, but a body unto itself, with an 'image-essence' born of life. The 'forest-land' is a space that lives and breathes, it feels pain, bears hunger, and is the scene that humans share with all other form of life, visible and invisible. The world, as it has been taxed to the limit of what it can offer, asks that we not discount the *image-essence* as an animist, mythological, or anthropological way of looking at the world as the legacy of Enlightenment thought, with its emphasis on humanity constructed in 'the image of man', might have us to believe. Instead, the contemporary era is posed with a deep challenge to rethink the way in which it is conceived, for such conceptions have bearing for reimagining the world apart from a liberal doxa of economic efficiency.

In 2009, following the election of Evo Morales as president, Bolivia changed its constitution with a view toward the indigenous spiritual world, in particular the philosophy of Pachamama, Mother Earth, who like the image-essence of the Yanoyami of Brazil, understand the natural world as a living being. The Law of Mother Earth, passed into Bolivian law in 2011, grants the earth equal rights as humans. The rights to mother earth include the right to life and to exist; the right to continue vital cycles and processes free from human alteration; the right to pure water and clean air; the right to balance; the right not to be polluted; and the right to not have cellular structure modified or genetically altered.²¹³ By shifting the conception of law toward indigenous thought, Bolivia has pointed to a way to rethink the relations that humans hold, both to each other and to the world that we inhabit. Written into Bolivian law is a sense that we are all a part of an interdependent system that demands the respect and recognition of all life. Bolivia's indigenous struggles are bound with the exploitation incurred through the mining industry and the environmental problems that such resource-laden places of the third world suffer. To rethink visuality away from the liberalism of appearance (which does not recognize its disappearance) and toward one of *image-essence* is to take the relation between all living beings as the basis for rethinking the global crises that exist in our contemporary moment of neoliberal orthodoxy.

The word 'seen' bears multiple senses. First the idea of the visual, as it is held by the eye or beheld by others-- the visuality of what is *seen*. But I also mean to evoke its mirror-sound, a *scene*, with the idea of a view or picture-- the image as it is written. Between the heterographs of *seen* and *scene*, visuality and writing, stands an expanse as vast as the ocean's touch to shore, where what is seen or being seen meets its writing as scene, a rendezvous of expansion and retraction and the planetary dance of tides. For here, in the ever-shifting line between water and land, is the uncertain

boundary of the 'global' as it finds itself visualized and written. The 'global' is by no means self-evident. It is troubled at each turn by its totalizing scope and the way that it is defined by discourse. But also, within this rest the stubborn differences that inhere within cultures, and the possibility of transcultural projects that might explode the terms through which the global can be imagined. A third reading emerges which is to sway that some sense of 'the global' emerges between the 'seen' and the 'scene', what is perceived and what is written. Between these two moments, of perception and writing, something important about position emerges. In the plural, *seens*, is the possibility of many perspectives, many positions, the infinite locations from which the global might be seen/scene. By reconsidering the seens of globalization, I want to move away beyond the doxa of maximum efficiency and toward the promise of ecology, beyond the economization of life for maximum profit and toward a question posed to the interrelation of all things, away from the visions assumed in *video* and toward a different practice of *vocare*-- a call to the ruins.

Chapter 7

Video as Ruins

Let us write another story of video from a site that is both central and oblique. Central, because it is the simplicity of the name itself, *video*, and the layers of meaning that it unravels. Oblique, because in the discourses of video and video art, to commence from a name rather than a technology seems a poetic leap, a detour from the recording device and its function. Yet in this name, one discovers a nexus that is specific to video, one that expands video's discussion beyond its mechanism and revives its sphere of inquiry as a nexus of subjectivity, sight, and temporality. In this expanded sense of video, a 'video work' might not take place in video at all but in the instances at which this nexus finds itself. By unraveling the idea of video from the machine, the possibility emerges that video work might not be limited to a mechanism, but instead, part of a larger philosophical and political project to reimagine the times and spaces of the world as we know it.

My understanding of video in this dissertation has not been of cameras or recording devices, but of this nexus, which might find itself in the technologies that we have come to understand as video but is not strictly limited to such mechanisms. Apart from the technological determinism of the camera and devices to which video might possibly be limited, and apart from the language of new media in which it today becomes generalized, I've sought to begin in a name and its resonance. Video is intimately bound with the words "I see." It can be traced to its Latin root *videre*, which means "to see." It is the first-person singular present tense form of *videre*, or "I see." Etymologically, video presents a nexus in which the subject, sight, and a time of the present are braided in a phrase that seems so simple and everyday and yet, sustains an echo. As evident as these words might seem in their assertion of *vision*--by which I mean this braiding of subject, sight, and a temporal proposition of the present-tense-- I want to trouble any ease that might emerge with its invocation for what is begged when one considers this statement as plainly evident are the politics of vision and the locations from which such claims to vision can or cannot emerge in a field of social relations.

When traced to Cartesian notions of the subject and rationality in philosophy and the singular eye of Quattrocento perspective, vision's hold over the Western imagination has been a well-worn road. But even as vision has been a dominant sensibility, this by no means suggests that there is only one vision or that it comes from only one place. Vision, when understood as a unitary phenomenon, fails to account for the multiplicity of perspectives or diversity of visions that exist simultaneously, at any period of time. "Our previous history is not the petrified block of a single visual space," argues Jacqueline Rose, "looked at obliquely, it can always be seen to contain its moments of unease."²¹⁴ So too is this unease present in video, whose vision is not one, but many. To understand video as a vision in ruins renews a question of vision, the ways of seeing it involves, and the instability of time as it presses upon all that appears as the present. Working in video, I have found myself here, in this obsessive presence of the past and insistent question of the absences of the present. Understood through *videre*, there is always an element of self-portraiture in video, an element in which what is seen issues from an "I" and in which what is revealed, equally if not more so than what is seen, is the desire of the "I". In the present tense, *video* means to suggest an immediacy to perception. But what happens when the subject of video, the "I" is displaced, and what happens when the conception of the present is one in which different forms of absence are mixed together. As one becomes aware of the close relation between subjectivity and temporality, and the kind of displacements that have stolen subjects from their "life worlds," then the challenge that I face is to find a language to describe a video practice that works from displacement and the refigured encounters with time and space that such displacement invites. If video suggests vision

(by which I mean this intertwining of the subject with sight expressed in “I see”), then video, when considered through displacement, is one that I would like to suggest as a *vision in ruins*.

By *vision in ruins*, I do not mean to suggest that vision rides the wave of neutral time and eventually reaches its decay or decline. Rather, in vision and the intertwining of subjectivity and temporality that it proposes, there was already an originary ruin. It is a ruin that emerges with each first gaze, which is already a memory as soon as it is seen. It is a ruin that emerges with the originary *displacement* of subjects from experience, a displacement that found itself in the Western self's negation of anything that was not itself. And it is ruin that lives-on in video and the various ways in which the apparatus is taken up to “see” in juridical, human rights, surveillance, journalistic, and artistic contexts; usually, this sight is transparent, as if there were no “I” that were present in this sight.

Since ruins started being preserved during the Renaissance, Western modernity's sense of history, and self-reflexivity was shaped by a reconciliation, through reason, that the present will one day pass.²¹⁵ As Hans-Georg Gadamer has read in Hegel's dialectic of history, within western modernity's take on the ruin, even this dissipation evinced by time itself, could be reconciled through reason. The power of reason, in Hegel, is grounded in his specific understanding of *Aufhebung* in which contradictions might be reconciled through man's power to reason. Hegel poses the dialectic against other, less comprehensive modalities, that might only adopt the stance of one side of the contradiction and thus produce only a partial rather than complete truth. In the dialectic, Hegel proposed the possibility of a mediation between the contradiction in which both thesis and antithesis might be preserved and synthesized into a reason that stands to concretize truth because it is negotiated across both sides of the contradiction. “Reason's universal power of synthesis is not only able to mediate the oppositions in thought, but also to sublimate the oppositions in the real world. It demonstrates exactly this insofar as the most inscrutable, and inimical forces of history are surmounted by reason's power of reconciliation. Reason is reconciliation with ruination.”²¹⁶ In Hegelian thought and the deep strains of its legacy, man emerges from ruin and the inevitability of decay, through reason.

In its freezing of time, the preservation of ruins might be understood as this impulse of reason to master history. Achille Mbembe, critiques conceptions of history that have foreclosed the African experience, with what he calls the “time of entanglement.” The time of entanglement unravels the Western binary between chaos and stability and understands time as a non-linear, multilayered temporality composed of disturbance, unforeseen events, and fluctuations. It is a time of the “*interlocking* of presents, pasts, and futures that retain their depths of other presents, pasts, and futures, each age bearing, altering, and maintaining the previous ones.”²¹⁷ Through “time as entanglement” the present comes to hold a very different resonance. “More philosophically, it may be supposed that the present *as experience of a time* is precisely that moment when different forms of absence become mixed together: absence of those presences that are no longer so and that one remembers (the past), and absence of those others that are yet to come and are anticipated (the future).”²¹⁸ In Mbembe's view, what we know as the present is a palimpsest of absences that issue from both past and future. A new axis emerges for time, one of depth that layers the present and come to reshape the terms through which time can be conceived. As we come to understand that what is ostensibly present is this protraction of pasts and futures, undone are the oppositions between calm and chaos, stability and rupture, past and future, now and then, which underscore Western modernity and the subjects assumed therein. In the time of entanglement (alternately called “time that is appearing,” “passing time,” and “emerging time”) Mbembe opens temporality as one which can also be reversed. He writes “time is not irreversible” for time itself is what transforms, changes, alters, reconfigures. Time is no longer understood as a current upon which one is carried but instead, as a temporality that is always in the process of being written. In the time of

entanglement, what happens is not so much in time but to time, its own writing, unfolding and becoming.

When we speak about time, our concern is not only with time but with subjects as they are constituted by time. The bearing that a time of entanglement holds for subjectivity is essential for Mbembe who writes, “in some way, one can envisage subjectivity itself as temporality.”²¹⁹ Apart from the conceptual structures like linear time that have written Africa as solely as negation, what the time of entanglement makes possible is the expression of the “life worlds” that are experienced by individuals whose experiences are denied by the logics of Western modernity. These indigenous subjects have been *displaced*, if not from the literal land on which they were born, then from the time in which the experience of their lives, their “life worlds” unfold. “Displacement is not simply intended to signify dislocation, transit, or ‘the impossibility of any centrality other than one that is provisional ad hoc and permanently being redefined.’²²⁰ Rather, displacement might be understood as the subject as they are removed from “living in the concrete world,” when the subject is denied their place as a subject of experience and when such experiences, as they live in the sensual register of the eyes, ears, mouth, and flesh are stolen, illegible, denied as valid experience. Through the installation of a politics of linear time, the African subject is removed from the “life world,” the language and discursive availability of experience. The subject is caught in a time that is stalled, a time that does not emerge, a time that is stuck or in which they are out of joint. *Displacement* is shown to trouble time and the multivalence of its experience-- the temporalization of space and the spatialization of time.

Through the lens of displacement, ruins are not only the site of western modernism’s self-reflexivity. Ruins bear another sense, one that is not of the ruin as it is preserved into a thing, but of a process that describes the movement, in time, of all things. Rather than relate it to the solid mass of an architectural structure, the ruin is like a running river which, in its constant flow, changes the surface of the earth. As rivers move through mountains, they cut rocks, deposit silt, move boulders, and carve away at the land toward the ocean. The ruin is a constant flow and ever-shifting movement of the terrain. It is not an object, but a fluid body, one whose decline need not be a literal process of weathering or destruction but the decline itself.

In this fluid sense of ruin, it can be seen in the ruin's absence, for those experiences for which there are no ruins to bear witness to the histories that have passed. These are ruins as they are erased, demolished, or as they were never meant to exist. “Such erasure is the foundation of the amnesiac landscape that is the United States,” writes Rebecca Solnit who raises the difference between an official history of ruins against all of the ruins that have fallen into forgetting. The United States is full of ruins even if they are invisible and these ruins are not only in literal boundaries of the nation-state but across the oceans that have given shape to the US as we know it.

As a country built on imperialism, genocide and slavery, the ruins are as invisible as they are oceanic. If for Solnit memory enters apart from official memory and many subsets of Americans “remember passionately,” let me suggest too that this memory is not only of ‘Americans’ but of a transnational scope and concerned all the peoples of the world *displaced* by US empire.²²¹ ‘America’ was never only of ‘Americans’ but has been staked in wars, proxy war, occupations, territories, economic policies, basing, the world over. For displaced subjects in an era of globalization, memory does not find its limit at the line of the nation-state. Nor is it limited to one’s own memory. The “I” is a site that builds upon the infinite matter and experience that has gone into and will go into the formation of this “I,” and the memories emerge not from one's own life but the many lives that have gone into one's own.

We learn much about memory from the work of Toni Morrison who calls memory the “subsoil” of her work, a grounding for the ground itself that it is the subterranean source of her practice as it comes to negotiate the amnesia of modernity. In “The Site of Memory” Toni

Morrison situates herself as a writer at the end of the twentieth century trailing the legacy of African American slave narratives. These slave narratives held two tasks: first, the narratives would represent both one's singular life and the black race, and second, that the writers were aware their audience would probably be white and so their address was directed toward convincing their white reader of the wrongs of slavery.²²² By focusing on the strategies of address, Morrison makes room for what remains unsaid. The narratives, aware of the politics of their address to a white audience, refrained from detailing the true horrors of slavery, often veiling the gruesome events with silence that would keep the white reader reading. These narratives also refrained from any expression of the writer's interior life. Situating herself as a writer at the end of the twentieth century, Morrison says that her task has become to "rip that veil drawn over proceedings too terrible to relate." She will return memory to silences and breathe life into a history that is everywhere present. "I must trust my own recollections. I must also depend on the recollections of others. Thus memory weighs heavily in what I write, in how I begin and in what I find to be significant." There is a subterranean force that swells beneath each assertion of "I see." It is through memory that she sees, the ground that precedes the ground, the writing that comes before writing. To enter into memory, one must pass through an aperture that is both of the times other than the present and people other than myself. Memory is desubjectified and migratory.

Let us write another story of video. It will be of memory, desubjectified and migratory, memory, from the ruins. The artist, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, writes this story with *Vidéoème*, a video work toward a poetics of video by crossing the words "vidéo" and "poème." In its linguistic play, *Vidéoème* shows the two terms of video and poetry to revolve around the 'o' at its center, a concentricity that turns as both full and absent, swollen and drained. The figure of 'o' as it is preceded by vidé or ème, can be translated from French to English as "emptied" or "very least," and *Vidéoème* shows the 'o' to be a center of video to be emptied out. This emptied 'o' is a form that recalls the close-up of Cha's mouth in a different video work, *Mouth of Mouth*, which pictures Cha's mouth as it opens to make the vowel sounds of the Korean language. In this piece, we see her mouth as it tries to relearn a language that is lost from her.²²³ Cha's poetics of displacement rest in this empty 'o' which is neither vision as it sees or language as it means, but the emptying and exile of each. Through *Vidéoème* we come to understand that within video, there is another video, one that emerges from an exilic relation not only to the country that one has left, or the history that is erased, but also to language itself. Within video, there is another video, one whose center has been emptied and whose handling has been shaped through the experience of displacement. The ruin is a mark, given over to a vast stretch of time and space. Cha writes:

Words cast each to each to weather
 avowed indisputably, to time.
 If it should impress, make fossil trace of word,
 residue of word, stand as a ruin stands.
 simply, as mark
 having relinquished itself to time to distance²²⁴

In 1982, the year of Cha's tragic death, she was teaching video art at the Elizabeth Seton College in New York. Two years before, Cha went to Korea for three months with her brother, James, to begin production on a film entitled *White Dust From Mongolia*. Her vision for *White Dust From Magnolia* was to address the Japanese occupation of Korea between 1909-1945. The backdrop

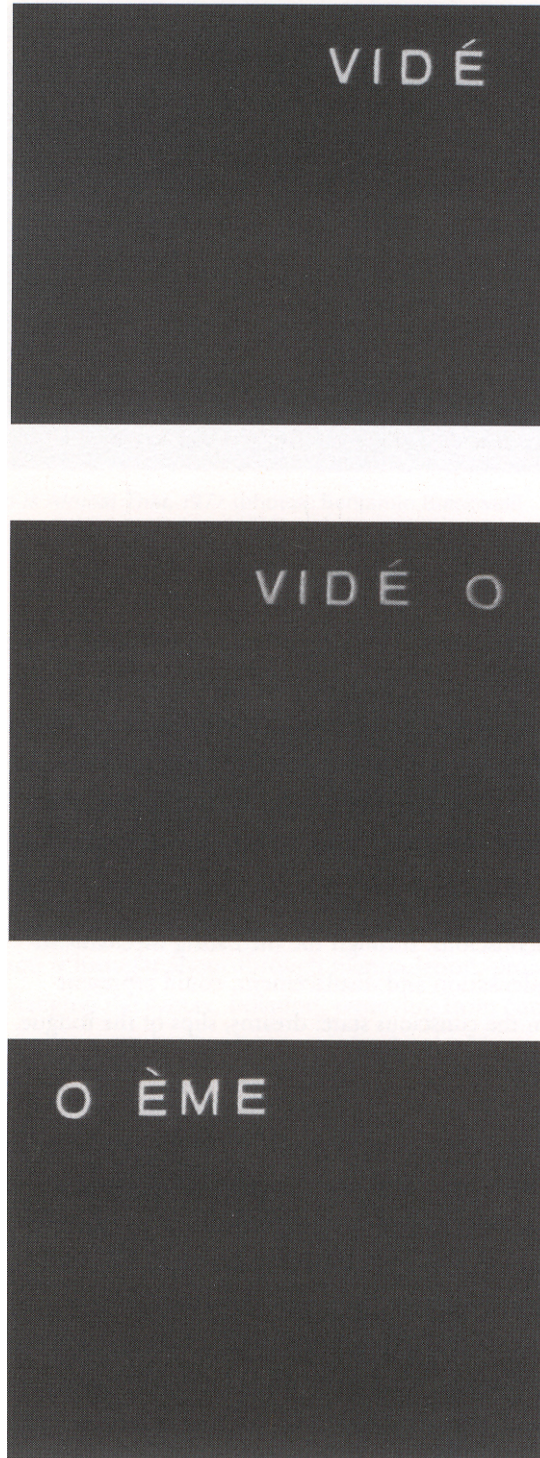


Figure 30, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Vidéoème*, 1976

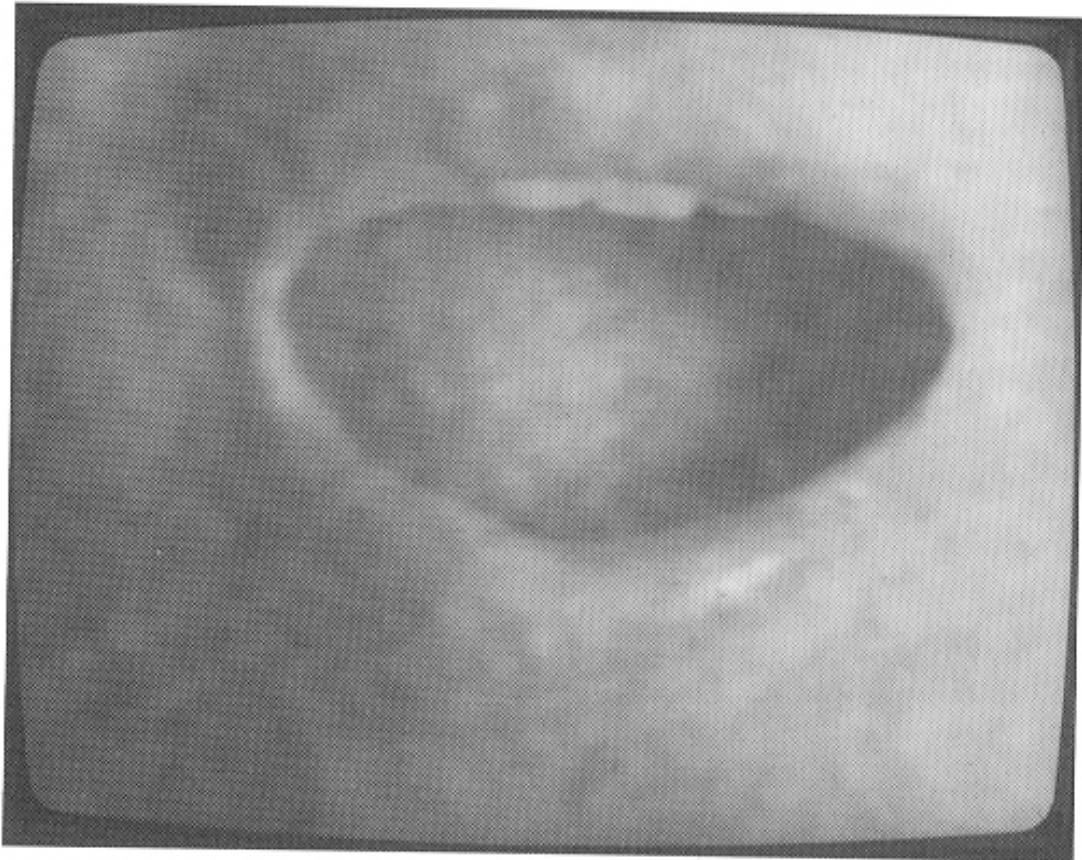


Figure 31, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Mouth to Mouth*, 1975

is the way that Korea was brokered between Japan and the United States, effectively legalizing the occupation and simultaneously, securing the Philippines for the United States. “The decision was made independently without the consent of the nations concerned.” Her film would show the plight of the Korean people who went into exile during the 36 year occupation.

The main character is the story of a young woman, Korean by birth and living in China. An unforeseen experience occurs during her young adulthood which causes her to lose all memory, and lose at the same time her capacity for speech.

Having been forced to leave her native country as an immigrant to China, where again the Japanese had, by their law, enforced their language, she is doubly displaced. She is not permitted to speak her language to begin with, then finally, she ceases to speak at all.²²⁵

Unfinished at the time of her death, the footage includes shots of Seoul, rooftops, a women's university, a train station near the University, forest, market, the Secret Palace, airplane ride in amusement park, and hotel fire. Cha's parents had lived in Manchuria during the occupation and the train shot might have been to show how northerners traveled during Japanese occupation and how her parents had left Manchuria. Even as *White Dust for Magnolias* exists in this space of what might have been, what is available of Cha's vision for the work shows that when one works out of the questions of exile, diaspora, migration, and displacement, one tries to visualize holes in time, sites where memory might be said to transmigrate.

“The film,” she writes, “is a simultaneous account of a narrative beginning at two separate points in Time.” In the simultaneity of time, Cha fractures the unity of time and space and opens onto a multiplicity of chronology. She had been doing research on memory processes including “amnesia, its relation to speech function, and verbal amnesia,” themes that form a central place in the work. The first narrative she describes as emerging from the Past, “inside memory itself.” The character of Narrative I has amnesia. In her loss of memory, she is has also lost her identity which allows her to shift into a collective metaphor of possible identities. She could be a “young girl at the cinema, a maid crouching on the ground her back tuned, a merchant woman on ferry, a market place, an orphan, a nation, a historical condition, Mother, Memory.” This character is not the keeper of these identities. Instead, in her amnesia, she becomes both nothing and everything. In her amnesia, she enters into the “hole” of what Cha has elsewhere called, “Dead Time.” This “hole” is one that is returned to by Narrative II, where time is that of the present, and speaks of a return in this tense. The character of this narrative is what Cha understands as “the moment of return.” The second narrative documents the site of migration, and what she calls the “trans-migration” of memory, of imagery, of language, of identity. In this transmigration, these two characters, the “amnesiac” as Past and the “returnee” as present will eventually meet, converging at the end of the film in a time hole when the women find themselves in the same sparse room. A light bulb hangs in the center. Two chairs face one another but the figures are only rendered as silhouettes. A black line separates one chair from the other. The scene cuts to the same shot, the same room, only the black line has been removed and the figures are gone. The last words that appear on the screen are “MEMORY RETRIEVAL.”

In the process that is available for *White Dusk From Magnolia*, we see that this “retrieval” of memory is not something that one can stand from the present and return to. Instead, to retrieve memory necessitates a work upon chronology, two separate points in time, both past and present, in which an encounter with memory is only witnessed in shadows and silhouettes. The two characters,

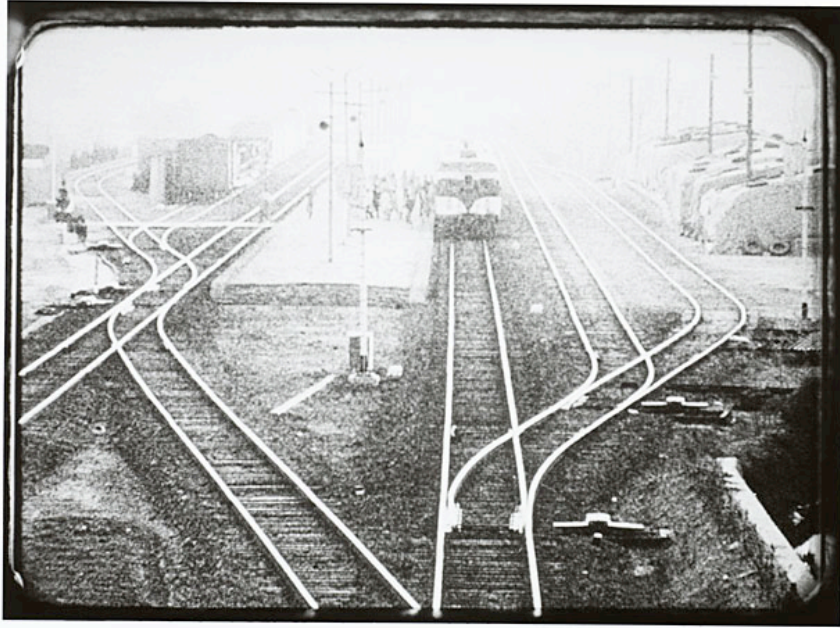


Figure 32, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, stills from *White Dust for Magnolia* (unfinished film), 1980



Figure 33, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, stills for *White Dust From Magnolia* (unfinished film), 1980

from two points in time, meet in a “hole” evoked by the stark white room with the black line running down the center. The black line that bars one character from the other, one point in time from the next, is also the line that bars the amnesiac from the returnee, displacement from return. And yet, what facilitates the possibility of this meeting is this entry into a “hole” which is also the aperture onto a multiple space and time that Cha’s work upon questions of chronology facilitates. In her practice, Cha is writing time and it is always a time that is multiple.

In order to visualize this multiplicity within time, Cha’s cinematic emphasis lies in the transitions. Each shot through the storyboard for the film is transitioned with fades to white. We see a barren road as it framed and reframed, reversed and turned, and between each shot, we fade to white. Her interest in the fade is one that we can trace to her description of an earlier work entitled *Pause Still* where she was concerned with “the specific, isolated time and space between two images when the dissolve occurs.” The fade is what Cha understands “as demarcation, punctuation, a series of syntax” and the visual work that one does when one works with chronology is one that is both upon the image and upon the seam.²²⁶ The “hole” into which one must enter in order to approach the questions of video as it is filled with how geopolitical realities enter into our most intimate spaces, and the process of reencountering that which has been lost.

One sees this work in *Chronology*, Cha evokes the question of time and history as it passes between generations. In what we might call the progression of images from mother and father on separate panels, to their literal juxtaposition, to their marriage photo, to the repetition of the image of five children, we see time as it unfolds across the instance of one family. And yet, as the image of the children is repeated across eleven panels, we find is that there is something that is stuck in this narrative. There is something about a story that cannot be told. On the tenth panel for example, the image of the parents’ wedding photo in traditional Korean dress is juxtaposed over the children’s image. This reappearance of the image from the past inspires a set of questions. The axis of this chronology is not one of cause and effect or linear time. Instead, we have a spatialization of time and a temporal depth that is offered to the panels through the layering. What we also have is the infinite gap between the generations. In their layering is a sense of these times never meeting and the words that appear across the panels of the children communicate a sense of silence, negation, parting, and negation. What she inherits is this distance, this ruin.

Where one sees a ruin might depend one where what stands and what one can see from where they stand. Rather than understand the ruin as that which has lost its function or meaning in the present, my understanding of ruin is one that draws upon the absences that compose the present and to produce a semantic instability. To call the present into question is to assert that the present that we know is not and never was, identical to itself. The emptied ‘o’ at the center of video is an opening onto a landscape of time. Édouard Glissant explains that the exploration of history for non-western subjects is related neither to a schematic chronology nor to a nostalgic lament. “It leads to the identification of a painful notion of time and its full projection forward into the future, without the help of those plateaus in time from which the West has benefited, without the help of that collective density that is the primary value of an ancestral cultural heartland. This is what I call *a prophetic vision of the past*.”²²⁷ In Glissant’s view, colonialism has produced a situation of discontinuous history, a non-history. And while all that has been violently disrupted, upended, destroyed, by colonialism can never be returned, the trace revives this painful experience of time from the smooth and polished flow of the present.

Expanding upon Glissant’s *prophetic vision of the past* and showing the other side of his project, I’d like to suggest that the *prophetic vision of the past* is coupled with *a ruinous vision of the future*-- an approach to the propositions for the future, occurring in the present across vast interlocking absences across the global landscape. From the underside of modernity, the ruins could never be



Figure 34, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Chronology*, 1977

that which declares itself as ruins. To see ruins, we must look to the glossy new metro, the third world global city, the cultural museum, we must look to all that is built by the incessant logic of development—the victory of reason over ruination. We must create a history of this tomorrow that we find in glimpses today. In an *experience of ruin* one understands that ruin might not be a hollowed out building at all, but the ever-shifting expanse of ocean. The transatlantic and transpacific journeys of slaves, migrants, and refugees for which there are no ruins other than the water's perpetual movement to mimic their own.

Landlocked, a ruin halts the implication of its demise. The ruin is 'reconciled' through reason and exists only in the skeletal structures preserved for official history. *Oceanic*, the ruin is an aperture onto a time of entanglement, the multilayered and intertwining temporalities that also form the possibility for the articulation of subjectivities for whom the condition of exile, from language and history, are intimate experiences. The distinction between the two, landlocked and oceanic, arises out of an imperceptible and yet omnipresent pressure of displacement—the pressure evinced by time itself. We are pressed to exist in what is known as the 'present'. If for African American descendents of the transatlantic slave trade the experience of history has been described as one of a deep void of non-history-- breaks, fissures, gaps, silences—then the experience of history for the wave of migration from which I am descended, a transpacific journey spurred by Spanish and US colonialism and a US-backed dictatorship that left the Philippines in state of economic and political devastation-- is one that I would describe as a ruin.²²⁸

The ruins one finds on both sides of the Pacific. On one side of the Pacific, Manila's colonial rebuilding at the end of the 19th century spurred a massive redevelopment of the city replete with white neocolonial columns, art deco theaters, a colonial mirror designed by Daniel Burnham and the Chicago School.²²⁹ While these structures have fallen into literal ruins today, disappearing beneath the Post WWII development of massive poured concrete across the city's expanses, these relics of the colonial imaginary are not the only ruins in the neocolonial Philippine landscape. One might also look to the remains of the former US bases, now Special Economic Zones with reduced tariffs to encourage foreign investment, where the skeletons of military structures still stand amidst the redevelopment of the area know as the "Global Gateway"—a transnational hub to service the transportation of goods across the Asia Pacific. The Global Gateway is reason's reconciliation with ruination. Even the logic of global development needs its ruins. Some of the former US military structures are still there, as if to suggest that this new trade hub is built on the ruins of the old occupation. There is no recognition that there is a continuity between the former US bases and the neoliberal economic policy of the Global Gateway, or the continuity of the military presence in nuclear submarines offshore. While the mask may have changed, the occupying and exploitative relation that the US holds with the Philippines has not. A prophetic vision of the past sees these ruins of colonial architecture and former basing structures as they haunt the future, just as a ruinous vision of the future sees these logics of global development as a ruin, haunted by the past.

On the other side of the Pacific, for the descendents of the diaspora, those born and/or raised in the imperial center, the ruins are both temporal and spatial. It is the country in which one has arrived, not the place from which one has left. It is the language that one speaks now, not the language that was spoken then. It is the life to be led here, not the life as it had been led there. For the generation of individuals who are born or spend their childhood 'here' as opposed to 'there', there is no there there.²³⁰ The Philippines of my world was where calls were made, boxes were sent, people came and went—but it was locked away, sent to the past by the *present*. I am speaking of the deep intimacy of the politics of time as it shapes experience. When 'here' is sealed from 'there' and when the 'present' is sealed from the 'past' this is a ruin in the first sense, *landlocked*, closed tight, a ruin. As the frame shifts from land to ocean, the ruin turns from solid to fluid. A body of water emerges to link the reasons that brought us here to the renewed senses of 'return' that become

possible once the ruin turns to water, as the experience of decline itself. One moves to the *oceanic* sense of ruin from the frayed edge of the present, the distended threads in which a unitary sense of the present falls apart. Out of the fray, memory returns not as the province of oneself and oneself alone, but as a subterranean force that swells where memory climbs shore.

Endnotes

- ¹ The campaign can be found at the following website:
http://www.unicef.org/photography/photo_seeme.php#UNI100363
- ² Samir Amin, *Eurocentricism*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1989.
- ³ While critiques of the center/periphery model argue that its distinction is not sustainable in an era of globalization, from the standpoint of this study, and the question of the site of enunciation, I believe that it is still an important framework to consider. For a discussion of the center-periphery framework in terms of enunciation, see Walter D. Mignolo, "Human Understanding and Latin American Interests- The Politics and Sensibilities of Geohistorical Locations," in *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, edited by Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray, London: Blackwell, 2005, pp. 180-202.
- ⁴ Amin, *Eurocentricism*, p.11.
- ⁵ Amin's critique of Hardt and Negri's conception of Empire is worth mentioning here. He argues that is that their view is nostalgic, one that lives in a past that believes that capitalism itself creates the conditions for liberatory transformation. He suggests that this forecloses the extent of the true struggle which is to develop political praxis. "Something else is needed: the development of political praxis, granting its full significance, and the advancement of social and citizen democracy, giving to peoples and to nations great latitude for action in globalization" (*The Liberal Virus*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 2004, p. 27).
- ⁶ Amin, *Eurocentricism*, p.11.
- ⁷ For a discussion of the networking in the age of globalization, please see Armand Mantellart, *Networking the World*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000. Mantellart's argument is of particular interest as he argues that there exists a consciousness of totality within the elite, one that finds its ground within a 'world-integrated capitalism' which is also a reproduction of class relations. What occurs is what he calls an "exile of politics" where cultural producers become confused and rather than seize the phenomena are left to manage it.
- ⁸ I use the terms North and South to refer to a hemispheric division between the super-industrialized countries of the north and the rest of the world. While it is certainly the case the unequal relations between north and south are more nuanced than this line would suggest, with equal relations within the north itself an elites within the south whose economic interests are bound with the north, I use these terms here because within the representations of human rights, the appeal is usually made to cross this hemispheric divide and thus still remains a useful way to describe how the field is shaped.
- ⁹ See Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable*, London: Verso, 2009.
- ¹⁰ Hal Foster, *Vision and Visuality*, New York: The New Press, 1988.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, London: Verso, 2006, pp.232-233.
- ¹³ Raul Fornet- Bentacourt, "An Alternative to Globalization: Theses for the Development of an Intercultural Philosophy, " in *Latin American Perspectives on Globalization: Ethics, Politics, and Alternative Visions*, Oxford, UK: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2002, p.235.

¹⁴ See Fernet-Bentacourt, p.231. If for Fernet-Bentacourt 'culture' is posed against globalization as a reserve from below, then a different take on culture is one which in which culture is framed as resource as George Yudicé does in *The Expediency of Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

¹⁵ Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, p.317. It is the method of rationalizing government with the aim being to maximize effect while reducing costs. In Foucault's analysis of liberalism, he finds that what liberalism accomplishes is a naturalized distinction between the state and civil society, one that limits the terms through which political processes are understood in terms of excessive governmentality, and not about the logic government's maximum efficiency. In liberal thought, one does not ask: "how can one govern as much as possible at the least possible cost?" Instead, liberal thought asks "why must one govern?" and thus comes to determine the types of questions that can be asked.

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 318. Also see *The History of Sexuality, Part 1*, trans. Robert Hurley, New York: Vintage, 1976.

¹⁷ As Foucault describes in "The Subject and Power," (*Critical Inquiry*, Summer, 1982 p.781) "There are two meanings of the word "subject." Subject to someone else by control and dependence and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge."

¹⁸ Samir Amin, *The Liberal Virus: Permanent War and the Americanization of the World*, translated by James M. Membrez, New York: Monthly Review Press, p. 29.

¹⁹ Samir Amin, p.20.

²⁰ The relation between Eurocentricism and Orientalism might be described as two sides of the same coin. If Eurocentricism is the consciousness of a world that revolves around Europe, then Orientalism is the material and ideological production and reproduction of this ideology until it becomes an unquestionable and universalized truth. As Edward Said has argued, Orientalism tries not to accurately represent the Orient but rather to "characterize the Orient as alien and to incorporate it schematically on a theatrical stage whose audience, manager, and actors are *for* Europe, and only for Europe." Orientalism fixes the orient in time and history and assumes that all non-western cultural, political, and social history are responses to the West. In Orientalism, we find representations of the Orient, by the West, that bear no relation to the actual world of the Orient but instead, reproduce a set of knowledges that continue to construct a division between 'us' and 'them', occident and orient, west and non-west. "Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, "us") and the strange (the Orient, the East, "them"). This vision in a sense created and then served the two worlds thus conceived."

²¹ "Vives Critiques contre des publicités de l'Unicef jugées racistes" par Habibou Bangré, Lunci, 27 Août 2007, <http://www.afrik.com/article12345.html>

²² Letter from Press Officer Rudy Tarneden to Mr. Talzine, German Committee for UNICEF, <http://blackwomenineurope.blogspot.com>. The discourse of 'different but equal' take on a strange turn in this sentence and while it is meant to suggest the good intentions of the campaign, at the same time, it resonates with critiques made against UNICEF's ethnocentric conceptualizations of the family which mark the standards for a child's well-being against the cultural norms of the west. As the question of culture enters the discourse of human rights, so too do the challenges to western modernity and its constitution of the discourse of human rights. For examples, see Siobham E. Laird, "International Child Welfare: Deconstructing UNICEF's Country Programmes" in *Social Policy and Society* (2005), 4: 457-466. See also Susan Moller

Okin, "Feminism, Women's Human Rights, and Cultural Differences" in *Hypatia*, Vol. 13, No. 2, *Border Crossing: Multicultural and Postcolonial Feminist Challenges to Philosophy*, Spring 1998, p. 32-52.

²³ Siobham E. Laird, "International Child Welfare: Deconstructing UNICEF's Country Programmes" in *Social Policy and Society* (2005), 4: 457-466. See also Susan Moller Okin, "Feminism, Women's Human Rights, and Cultural Differences" in *Hypatia*, Vol. 13, No. 2, *Border Crossing: Multicultural and Postcolonial Feminist Challenges to Philosophy*, Spring 1998, p. 32-52.

²⁴ William Korey. *NGO's and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998, p. 477.

²⁵ Micheline R. Ishay. *The Human Rights Reader: Major Political Essays, Speeches, and Documents from the Bible to the Present*. New York: Routledge, 1997, p. 268.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.36. See also Pheng Cheah, *Inhuman Conditions: On Cosmopolitanism and Human Rights*, Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.

²⁷ Rey Chow, *Age of the World Target: Self-Referentiality in War, Theory, and Contemporary Work*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006.

²⁸ Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: the Powers of Mourning and Violence*, London and New York: Verso, 2004.

²⁹ Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*, New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1995, p.6.

³⁰ More recently, Mikko Tuhkanen (*The American Optic: Psychoanalysis, Critical Race Theory, and Richard Wright*, New York: State University of New York Press, 2010) has argued that blackface minstrelsy is "a creolized form of culture that has produced a cross-bred species of resistance and negotiation." p.34.

³¹ Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-making in Nineteenth-Century America*, New York: Oxford, 1997, p.29.

³² Also see Michael Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988.

³³ See, for example, Jean-Germain Gros, *State Failure, Underdevelopment, and Foreign Intervention in Haiti* (New York and London: Routledge, 2011) where he argues that the current conditions of poverty and underdevelopment in Haiti can be traced to the failure of the state to develop a viable political strategy. Yet this failure of the state, as the title might suggest, is spread across many political circumstances including natural constraints, including class, lack of elite cohesion, geography, population growth, the social origins of the Haitian polity, imperialism, and technology. Also see, Erica James' *Democratic Insecurities: Violence, Trauma, and Intervention in Haiti* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010) which looks at interventions by military and humanitarian campaigns in Haiti after 1992.

³⁴ Ariella Azoulay. *The Civil Contract of Photography*, New York: Zone Books, 2008.

³⁵ Ariella Azoulay, p.18.

³⁶ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Who Claims Alterity," in *Remaking History: Discussions in Contemporary Culture*, Edited by Barbara Kruger and Phil Mariani, Seattle, WA: Bay Press, 1989, pp. 269-89.

³⁷ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1991, p.76.

³⁸ Jameson, p. 76-77.

³⁹ Jameson, p.71.

⁴⁰ Jameson, p.63.

⁴¹ Maureen Turim, "The Cultural Logic of Video," in *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art*, edited by Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer, New York: Aperture and BAVC, 1990, p. 339.

⁴² For a discussion of the myth of video and its establishment as history see Martha Rosler, "Video: Shedding the Utopian Moment," pp. 31-51, and Marita Sturken, "Paradox in the Evolution of an Art Form: Great Expectations and the Making of History," pp. 101-24. Both in *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art*. Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer Eds, New York: Aperture and BAVC, 1990.

⁴³Dara Greenwald of Video Databank curated a program of early activist video in 2004. Also see Parry D. Teasdale, *Videofreex: America's First Pirate TV Station*, Black Dome Press, 1999; Michael Shamberg, *Guerilla Television*, University of Michigan Press, Holt, Reinhardt, and Winston, 1971; Deidre Boyle, *Subject to Change: guerilla television revisited*, Oxford University Press, 1997; *The Paper Tiger Guide to Media Activism*, Ohio State University Press, 1991.

⁴⁴ Rosalind Krauss, "Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism," in *October*, Volume 1, Spring 1976, pp. 50-64.

⁴⁵ Krauss, p.52.

⁴⁶ Krauss, p.50. For further discussion of the status of 'medium', see Krauss' "Two moments from the Post-Medium Condition" (*October 116*, Spring 2006, pp. 55-62) where Krauss will go nuance her argument concerning the status of 'medium' with her idea of "technical support" in light of the obsolescence of a physical substrate in contemporary art.

⁴⁷ Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting" (1960), in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism vol. 4*, edited by John O'Brian, 1993, pp.85-93.

⁴⁸ Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, MIT Press, 1985.

⁴⁹ Krauss, "Video: the Aesthetics of Narcissism," p.57.

⁵⁰ Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood" in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, p.151.

⁵¹ Krauss, p. 52.

- ⁵² Rosalind Krauss, "The Im/Pulse to See," in *Vision and Visuality*, edited by Hal Foster, Seattle: Washington: Bay Press, 1988, p. 52.
- ⁵³ David Joselit, "Tale of the Tape: Radical Software," *Artforum* Vol. 40, No. 9 (May 2002), p. 155.
- ⁵⁴ David Joselit, "Video Public Sphere," in *Art Journal*, Volume 59, No.2, Summer 2000, pp.46-5.
- ⁵⁵ David Joselit, "Video Public Sphere," p. 51. Like Joselit, Amelia Jones also engages with the idea of "televisuality" to open the relation between the seer and the seen, the bodies that are viewing and the bodies that are viewed. In order to demonstrate this televisuality she begins her analysis with a different work of Acconci's, *Command Performance* (1974) where the viewer sits on the floor and in front of a monitor. Acconci directly addresses the viewer as a "you," but as the viewer is hailed to occupy this position in front of the first monitor, her image is then fed to a second monitor behind her and out of her field of vision. The seer is also seen in a relay of gazes. For Joselit and Jones, the "televisual" or the real-time relation between what stands on either side of the screen, is understood to undo Krauss' completely inward-looking diagnosis of video as narcissism.
- ⁵⁶ Anne Wagner, "Performance, Video, and the Rhetoric of Presence," *October*, Vol. 91, Winter 2000, pp. 59-80, p.75.
- ⁵⁷ Adrian Piper, *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, Volume I, Selected Writings in Meta Art 1968-1992, Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1996, p. 261.
- ⁵⁸ Krauss, p.53.
- ⁵⁹ Krauss, p.53.
- ⁶⁰ Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Mask*, p.110.
- ⁶¹ Franz Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks*, New York: Grove Press, p.116.
- ⁶² Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands: the New Mestiza=La Frontera*, Aunt Lute Books, p.101.
- ⁶³ Anzaldua, p.100.
- ⁶⁴ Shigeko Kubota, "Video Poem (1968-76)" in Ira Schneider and Beryl Korot, eds. *Video Art: An Anthology* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976); reprinted in Mary Jame Jacob, ed. *Shigeko Kubota: Video Sculpture* (New York: American Museum of the Moving Image, 1991), p.18.
- ⁶⁵ Shigeko Kubota, "Notes for *Three Mountains* (1976-79), in Mary Jame Jacob, ed. *Shigeko Kubota: Video Sculpture* (New York: American Museum of the Moving Image, 1991), p.35-6.
- ⁶⁶ Kubota, p. 36.
- ⁶⁷ Kubota. p. 35.
- ⁶⁸ Kubota, p. 35.
- ⁶⁹ Kubota, p. 36.

⁷⁰ Bela Balázs, the Hungarian film critic, was among the first to ask the question "what is cinema?" Interestingly, while he was interested in cinema's movement, and shifted the production of meaning within cinema from the image to the montage, he was still very invested in what the lens could accomplish, and the specific physiognomic expression that cinema animated. The interest in movement is clear when he writes, "the meaning is not in the image, it is in the shadow of the image projected by montage onto the field of consciousness of the spectator." By shifting the production of meaning from the image to its shadow, Balázs introduces the rhythm, interval, and the spacing between shots that produces the work of montage-- the space and movement between images. Like those who would follow in thinking the ontology of cinema, Balázs coupled this question of how cinema produces meaning through movement with a sense of the possible affect that rests in the image itself. Film, Balázs believed, was the first medium to capture the physiognomic quality of the animate and the inanimate. It made things acquire a *face* and expressed subjectivity far more intensely than speech. "The facial expression on a fact is complete and comprehensible in itself and therefore we need not think of it as existing in space and time."⁷⁰ The cinema would return a culture of movement and gesture in place of words. The depths of human emotion, heretofore unimaginable, would spring forth, and the communication of such emotion would depend on rhythm as it develops between images. Also see *OCTOBER 116, Winter 2006*, for new translations of Balázs' texts.

⁷¹ For a discussion of paradox of cinematic time in succession of still frames against the stop frame, see Mary Ann Doane's *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002. Also see Siegfried Zielinski, *Deep Time of the Media*, translated by Gloria Custance, Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2006, and Garrett Stewart, *Framed Time: Toward a Postfilmic Cinema*, University of Chicago Press, 2007.

⁷² Deleuze, *Cinema II: The Time-Image*, New York: Continuum Books, 2005, p.38.

⁷³ Eisenstein's theory of montage develops from the difficult character of the filmic image. He describes shots as cells or molecules. The emotional weight begins only with the cutting together of these different fragments. Importantly, Eisenstein did not feel that the control of emotions was the only realm in which film was adept. It also had the opportunity to foster complexes of thought, in part produced by the sense of rhythm that develops in the work. With rhythm, Eisenstein shifts from a spatial to a temporal sphere. Rhythm is not the way shots are lined up next to each other, but the way shots are placed one on top of the other with a certain degree of incongruence. It is this incongruence that in turn determines the intensity of the impression and supports the tension that is the sphere of rhythm. Eisenstein's cinema, is both a thinking and feeling cinema, a cinema in which one might make the leap into the unknown. See Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, Translated by Jay Leyda, New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1979 [1949].

⁷⁴ Deleuze, *Cinema II: The Time-Image*, p.xxii.

⁷⁵ Jacques Ranciere, *The Future of the Image*, London: Verso, 2009.

⁷⁶ Akira Lippit, *Atomic Light (Shadow Optics)*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.

⁷⁷ Lippit., *Atomic Light*, p.32.

⁷⁸ Lippit, *Atomic Light*, p.32.

⁷⁹ John Watkins and René Denizot, *On Kawara*, New York: Phaidon Press, 2002.

⁸⁰ Lucy Lippard, *On Kawara 1967*, Los Angeles, CA: Otis Art Institute Gallery, 1967.

⁸¹ Pamela Lee, *Chronophobia: On Time in the Art of the 1960's*, MIT Press, 2006, pp. 258-308. Pamela Lee argues that art of the 1960's held an anxious and phobic relation to time, and grounds her argument in the postwar and new technologies of the postwar era, when artists such as Robert Smithson, John Cage, and Andy Warhol were grappling with technology in the face of an unclear horizon and historical unknowing.

⁸² Jung-Ah Woo, "On Kawara's Date Paintings: Series of Horror and Boredom," in *Art Journal*, Fall 2010, pp. 62-72.

⁸³ Frank Gautherot ed., *On Kawara: Consciousness, Meditation, Watcher of the Hills, Vol. 1*, Dijon, France: Les Presses du Real, Dijon, France, 2007.

⁸⁴ See David Anderson, "The Vietnam War and its Enduring Historical Relevance," in *The Columbia History of the Vietnam War*, edited David Anderson, New York: Columbia University Press, 2010, pp. 1-93.

⁸⁵ Rey Chow, *The Age of the World Target: Self-referentiality in War, Theory, and Comparative Work*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006 p.31.

⁸⁶ Chow, *The Age of the World Target*, p.31. Also see Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, New York: Harper Torchbooks, p.130 Writing in 1938, during the Second World War, Martin Heidegger had diagnosed the state of the modern age as one of the "world picture". By "world picture" Heidegger offered that the relation that men held to the world and the terms through which the world might be conceived as one in which the world exists only for man. He sets it up, he represents it, and he is the engine for its continuity. "Whenever we have the world picture, an essential decision takes place regarding what is, in its entirety. The Being of whatever is, is sought and found in the representedness of the latter." The world picture determines what exists, and by exclusion, what does not, in the world. This determination conceives of the operative verb, 'is', as an entirety, a totalizing logic that develops in tandem with the technological processes of modernity and the attendant modes of scientificity and knowledge production that it entails.

⁸⁷ Paul Virilio, *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception*, New York and London: Verso Press, 2009.

⁸⁸ Rey Chow, *The Age of the World Target*, p. 35.

⁸⁹ Andrey Tarkovsky's work might be considered here, with his understanding that the director's job is to sculpt the time that the audience experiences, because one goes to the cinema to experience time. See Andrey Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time: The Great Russian Filmmaker Discusses His Art*, translated by Kitty Hunter-Blair, University of Texas Press, 1989.

⁹⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London and New York: Verso, 1991 and Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History, in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, Translated by Harry Zohn, New York: Schocken Books, 1968, pp. 253-264.

⁹¹ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Techniques du Present: Essai sur On Kawara*, translated by Alisa Hartz, Paris, France: Institut du Art, 1999, Translation available on <http://www.usc.edu/dept/comp-lit/tympanum/4/nancy.html>

⁹² Jean-Luc Nancy, *Techniques du Present.*, p.2.

⁹³ See Doreen Massey, "A Global Sense of Place" in *Space, Place, and Gender*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1994, p. 149. As Massey has argued, in time and space is a "power geometry" where different social groups and different individuals have different relations to flows and interconnection. On one side, there are the people who occupy a privileged place in relation to the purported time-space compression so often described in globalization. These are "the jet-setters, the ones sending and receiving the faxes and the e-mail, holding the international conference calls, the ones distributing films, controlling the news, organizing the investments and the international currency transactions."

⁹⁴ For a discussion of verticality, see Hito Steyerl, "In Free Fall: A Thought Experiment," in *On Horizons: A Critical Reader in Contemporary Art*, eds. Maria Hlavajova, Simon Sheikh, and Jill Winder, Utrecht, BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, 2011, pp. 168-191.

⁹⁵ Jean-Louis Baudry, "The Apparatus" in *Narrative, Apparatus, Technology*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, pp. 299-318.

⁹⁶ Godard has incorporated video since *Numéro deux* in 1975. Since that time his work has engaged its possibilities. *Eloge de l'amour* (1999) contrasts the aesthetic of black and white film with that of highly saturated digital video.

⁹⁷ Jean-Luc Godard and Youssef Ishaghpour, *Cinema: the archaeology of film and the memory of a century*, Oxford and New York: Berg, 2000, p.7.

⁹⁸ Godard and Ishaghpour, *Cinema: the archaeology of film and the memory of a century*. p.14-15.

⁹⁹ D.N. Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.

¹⁰⁰ For some recent discussions see *New Digital Cinema: Reinventing the Moving Image*, Wallflower Press, 2005, David Thornburn and Harry Jenkins, eds. *Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition*, London and Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003, Christiane Paul ed., *New Media in the White Cube and Beyond*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008.

¹⁰¹ Lev Manovich "What is Digital Cinema," <http://www.manovich.net/TEXT/digital-cinema.html>, and *The Language of New Media*, Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

¹⁰² In "Did Someone Say New Media?" (*New Media, Old Media: A history and theory reader*, eds. Wendy Hui Kyong Chun and Thomas Keenan, New York and London: Routledge, 2006, p. 3) Wendy Chun has made the important point that any attempt to think about the history of media must grapple with the discontinuities and ruptures within an understanding of media that might seek to draw a continuity between its instantiation in the Renaissance and its present forms. Her take calls into question the kind of lineage that Manovich draws between forms of mediatic representation and the way that it does not register this difference within itself.

¹⁰³ Roland Barthes, "Death of the Author" in *Image, Music, Text*, translated by Stephen Heath, New York: Noonday Press, 1977, pp. 142-147, and Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" in *The Foucault Reader*, edited by Paul Rabinow, New York: Pantheon Books, 1984, pp. 101-120.

¹⁰⁴ Alexandre Astruc, "The Birth of the New Avant-Garde," in *The French New Wave: Critical Landmarks*, edited by Peter Graham, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

¹⁰⁵ Astruc, "The Birth of the New Avant-Garde," p.18.

¹⁰⁶ See Pier Paolo Pasolini, "The Cinema of Poetry," in *Heretical Empiricism*, Washington D.C.: New Academia Publishing LLC, 2005. Pasolini looks for a grammar and suggests that if there is a grammar to cinema it is one that is based on the irrationality and sensuousness of the image, its excess in relation to language and capacity for affect. Visual communication remains crude and primal compared to the already developed systems of poetic and philosophic communication. Unlike literature, whose form is legitimized by sheer fact that its instrument is language, cinematography seems arbitrary and aberrant by sheer virtue of the fact that it occurs through images. The cinema, he believes, is allied with dreams which stand as the realms of the prehuman, the pregrammatical, and the premorphological. Developing a grammar for the cinema, Pasolini proposes 'im-signs' or image-signs as the film equivalent of a lin-sign or language sign. Im-signs are not contained in a dictionary, they still belong to what he terms a "common patrimony." Working through images rather than language, the filmmaker thus engages in a double activity: she must pull im-sign from chaos, order them as if they existed in a dictionary, and then place them in a structure in which they might mean something. After this, she must fulfill a writer's function meaning that she must give what was otherwise a purely morphological sign an expressive quality. Because of these two activities, Pasolini concludes that "while the activity of the writer is an aesthetic invention, that of the filmmaker is first linguistic and then aesthetic."

¹⁰⁷ Raymond Bellour, "Video Writing," in *Illuminating Video: an Essential Guide to Video Art*, Aperture/BAVC, 2005, p. 421. The comments that Bellour makes concerning video and writing are interesting to revisit as it, like much theorization around video, pinpoints the specific temporality of video as being primary to its possibilities.

¹⁰⁸ Mary Lucier, "Light and Death" ," in *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art*, edited by Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer, New York: Aperture and BAVC, 1990, p. 458

¹⁰⁹¹⁰⁹ Douglas Davis, Manifesto (1974), in *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: a sourcebook of artists' writings*, p.437

¹¹⁰ Lucier, "Light and Death," p. 458.

¹¹¹ Lucier, "Light and Death," p. 457

¹¹² Trinh T. Minh-ha, *The Digital Film Event*, New York: Routledge, 2005, p.7. Also see Laura Marks, *The Skin of Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000 and Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual, Movement, Affect, Sensation*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002

¹¹³ Trinh, *The Digital Film Event*, p.7.

¹¹⁴ Rosalyn Krauss, "The Im/Pulse to See" in *Vision and Visuality*, ed. Hal Foster, Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1998, pp. 51-75. We might also relate this idea of cinematic rhythm to Sergei Eisenstein's theory of montage and the sense of rhythm that develops in a work in *Film Form*. With rhythm, Eisenstein shifts from a spatial to a temporal sphere. Rhythm is not the way shots are lined up next to each other, but the way shots are placed one on top of the other with a certain degree of incongruence. It is this incongruence that in turn determines the intensity of the impression and supports the tension that is the sphere of rhythm.

¹¹⁵ For Trinh's discussion of "the interval" see "All-Owning Spectatorship," in *When the Moon Waxes Red*, London and New York: Routledge, 1991, pp. 81-106.

¹¹⁶ Trinh, *The Digital Film Event*, p.28.

¹¹⁷ Trinh, *The Digital Film Event*, p.28.

¹¹⁸ Mahmoud Darwish, *Memory for Forgetfulness*, translated from the Arabic by Ibrahim Muhawi, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1995, p.148

¹¹⁹ Darwish, p.64

¹²⁰ Darwish, pp.47-9

¹²¹ Darwish, p.46

¹²² Edward Said and Jean Mohr, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1985, p.6.

¹²³ Michel Foucault, "What is Critique?" in *The Politics of Truth*, eds. Sylvère Lotringer and Lysa Hochroth, New York: Semiotext(e), 1997, translated by Lysa Hochroth. See also Judith Butler's "What is Critique: An Essay on Foucault's Virtue," in David Ingram, ed., *The Political: Readings in Continental Philosophy*, London: Basil Blackwell, 2002.

¹²⁴ Walter Benjamin, *Briefe*, ed. Gershom Sholem and Theodor Adorno (Frankfurt: 1978), p.322. See also *Walter Benjamin and Art*, edited by Andrew Benjamin, New York: Continuum Books, 2005, Kirsten Mey, *Art in the Making: Aesthetics, Historicity, and Practice*, Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang AG, 2005, Krzysztof Ziarek, *The Historicity of Experience: Modernity, the Avant-Garde, and the Event*, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001, Howard Caygill, *Walter Benjamin: The Color of Experience*, New York and London: Routledge, 1998.

¹²⁵ The italicization of this statement works upon the visual aspect of this statement throughout this chapter.

¹²⁶ Darwish, p.63

¹²⁷ Darwish, p.62

¹²⁸ *October*, MIT Press, Issue 123, Winter 2008.

¹²⁹ Rosalyn Deutsche, *Hiroshima After Iraq*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2010, p.2

¹³⁰ Deutsche, p.5

¹³¹ Deutsche, p.5

¹³² For further discussion of art and the public sphere see Rosalyn Deutche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998.

¹³³ Deutsche, p.64

¹³⁴ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958

¹³⁵ Arendt, pp.198-9

¹³⁶ For an example please see Loic Wacquant, "French Working Class Banlieue and Black American Ghetto: From Conflation to Comparison, in *Qui Parle*, Vol. 16, No. 2 Spring 2007. Alternately, Etienne Balibar, offers

a much more politically complex account in "Uprising in the Banlieues," in *Constellations*, Volume 14, No. 1, 2007.

¹³⁷ Deutsche, p.66.

¹³⁸ Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen, New York: Zone Books, 1999.

¹³⁹ Deutsche, p.64.

¹⁴⁰ Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, New York: Vintage International, 1989.

¹⁴¹ Walter Benjamin, "The Artist as Producer," in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, Translated by Edmund Japhcott, New York: Harcourt Brace Janovich, 1978 p.222.

¹⁴² Benjamin, p. 233.

¹⁴³ Benjamin, p.236.

¹⁴⁴ Paolo Friere, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New York: Continuum Books, 1993.

¹⁴⁵ Michel Foucault, "What is Critique?" in *The Politics of Truth*, eds. Sylvère Lotringer and Lysa Hochroth, New York: Semiotext(e), 1997, translated by Lysa Hochroth. See also Judith Butler's "What is Critique: An Essay on Foucault's Virtue," in David Ingram, ed., *The Political: Readings in Continental Philosophy*, London: Basil Blackwell, 2002.

¹⁴⁶ The idea of position may be thought against what Michel Foucault has called a *tabula* in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (translated by Alan Sheridan, London: Tavistock, 1970, pp.xvi-xvii). It is upon such seemingly innocuous ground-- solid, stable, assumed-- that knowledges are made in the world. Foucault described this with Borges who pulled the ground away to reveal the condition upon which the production of knowledge is possible. Borges reveals "... a *tabula*, that enables thought to operate upon the entities of our world, to put them in order, to divide them into classes, to group them according to names that designate their similarities and their differences-- the table upon which, since the beginning of time, language has intersected space."

¹⁴⁷ Darwish, p.64.

¹⁴⁸ Darwish, p.64.

¹⁴⁹ Darwish, p.65, He writes, "and if it becomes necessary for intellectuals to turn into snipers, then let them snipe at their old concepts, their old questions, and their old ethics. We are not now to describe, as much as we are to be described. We're being born totally, or else dying totally."

¹⁵⁰ Darwish, p.65.

¹⁵¹ In contrast to the nomenclature of 'political art' that is wielded so liberally in discourses about art's social responsibility, we must begin to address how art is only one node of this political reality, only one location of the larger processes occurring in the world. Once we do away with any fiction of "the artist" as the possessor

of freedom, we come to ask different type of questions, which concern how "the artist" is one articulation of a notion of "freedom" that is intertwined with the discourses of "freedom" as they occur in the world.

¹⁵²Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995 [1980], p.61.

¹⁵³ Blanchot, p.60.

¹⁵⁴ Blanchot, p.60.

¹⁵⁵ Blanchot, p.60.

¹⁵⁶ Mahmoud Darwish, editorial for *Al Karmel*, no.5, 1982.

¹⁵⁷Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Rey Chow, "Toward an Ethics of Postvisuality: Some Thoughts on Recent Work of Zhang Yimou." In *Poetics Today*, Vol.25, Number 4, Winter 2004, pp.673-688, p. 686. Also see Chow's *Primitive Passions : Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography, and Contemporary Chinese Cinema. Film and Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, and *Ethics after Idealism : Theory, Culture, Ethnicity, Reading. Theories of Contemporary Culture*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998.

¹⁵⁹ The understanding of alterity, not only philosophically as a radical otherness, but politically through how it is mobilized in contemporary discourses is developed by Rey Chow in *Ethics after Idealism : Theory, Culture, Ethnicity, Reading. Theories of Contemporary Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998) when she writes of the way western forms of knowledge such as critical theory continue to center on the west despite claims made to radical alterity and heterogeneity. Thus, in critical theory a radical sense of otherness, one that we might trace to the writings of Emmanuel Levinas in *Otherwise than Being: Or Beyond Essence* (Duchesne University Press, 1998) actually becomes evacuated of its exteriority as it loops back to the west looking itself through the other.

¹⁶⁰ Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994.

¹⁶¹ Chow, p.685.

¹⁶² Chow, p.686.

¹⁶³ Chow, p.676.

¹⁶⁴ According to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minneapolis Press, 1986 [1975]) in Kafka there a minor literature is a simultaneous action of deterritorialization and territorialization, one that is deeply political because it is a literature of the people. Importantly for Deleuze and Guattari, minor literature has no subject, what they call "collective assemblages of enunciation" (18).

¹⁶⁵ Laura U. Marks, *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002, p.2. Also see Jennifer M. Barker, *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience*, Los Angeles and Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009, Vivian Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*, Los Angeles and Berkeley, University of California Press, 2004.

¹⁶⁶ See also Francesca Bacci and David Melcher, *Art and the Senses*, London: Oxford University Press, 2011.

¹⁶⁷ Marks, p.9.

¹⁶⁸ With the processing of the voice, one might only guess as to its source. As the voice continues to speak about women changing their eyes in order to become more attractive for white men, we get the sense that this might be an Asian American man criticizing Asian American women for wanting to be desirable for white men. The irony, says the voice, is that the white men don't actually care if these women have a one lid or two. The question of race and sexuality in the field of vision, is not only of the woman's desire but of this voice's emasculation. Thus, the sexual positions of both femininity and masculinity are being played out here.

¹⁶⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Memoires of the Blind: The Self Portrait and Other Ruins*, translated by Pascale Anne Brault and Michael Nass, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993. The exhibition, which took place between October 26, 1990 to January 21, 1991, inaugurated a new series at the Louvre which was to be called Taking Sides (Parti Pris). The task of this series, founded by Françoise Viatte and Régis Michel was to match drawings from the Louvre's collection with critical thinkers who might open the collection beyond the domain of the art experts. In other words, to open the art museum to discourses outside that of art alone.

¹⁷⁰ For more on Asian American film and video work see Glen Mimura, *Ghostlife of Third Cinema: Asian American film and video*, University of Minnesota, 2009, *Envisioning Diaspora: Asian American Visual Arts Collectives from Godzilla, Godzookie to the Barnstormers*.

¹⁷¹ "Cheyenne Tales." In *Journal of American Folklore*, Volume 13, American Folklore Society, Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1900. Included as voiceover in *The Blindness Series* by Tran T. Kim Trang, available through Video Data Bank, New York.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ella Shohat, in *Talking Visions: Multicultural Feminism in a Transnational Age* (Cambridge, MA, 2001,p.46), writes of Yong Soon Min as "the entanglement of national territories and interior cartographies." Her text seeks to address the continued role of the US in the lives of postcolonial immigrants and the struggle of postcolonial feminism between both the here and the there.

¹⁷⁴ See Margo Machida, *Unsettled Visions: Contemporary Asian American: Contemporary Asian American Artists and the Social Imaginary*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009.

¹⁷⁵ I discuss this in my first chapter, "Video as Vision," and relate the open domain to neoliberal thought.

¹⁷⁶ "'Bad Woman': Asian American Visual Artists Hanh Thi Pham, Hung Liu, and Yong SoonMin." In *Making More Waves: New Writing by Asian American Women*, ed. Elaine H. Kim et al. Boston: Beacon Press, 1997, Elaine H. Kim, "On Yong Soon Min's Bride of No Return" in *Yong Soon Min*, exhibition catalog, Krannert Art Museum and Kinkead Pavillion University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois, 1997.

¹⁷⁷ For a discussion of the Asian American racial form see Colleen Lye, *America's Asia: Racial Form and American Literature, 1893-1945* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005). She argues that the Japanese American internment was not a historical event of exclusion, but rather assimilation.

¹⁷⁸ Thelma Golden, Kellie Jones, and Chrissie Iles. *Lorna Simpson*. Contemporary Artists Series. London: Phaidon, 2002; *Lorna Simpson, Sandy Skoglund, Starn Twins, Carrie Mae Weems*. 1. ed. Milano: Federico Motta Editore, 1993, Lorna Simpson, et al. *Lorna Simpson*. New York: Abrams, in association with the American Federation of Arts, 2006.

¹⁷⁹ In "The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination, and the Discourse of Colonialism," Homi Bhabha has described stereotype as a "form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always 'in place,' already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated." See *Location of Culture*, London and New York, Routledge, 1994, p.66.

¹⁸⁰ Enrique Dussel, "Beyond Eurocentricism: The World System and the Limits of Modernity" in *The Cultures of Globalization*, edited by Fredric Jameson, Masao Miyoshi Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993, pp. 3-32.

¹⁸¹ Enrique Dussel, p.4.

¹⁸² Enrique Dussel, p.17.

¹⁸³ Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1999.

¹⁸⁴ Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, Translated by Betsy Wing, University of Michigan Press, p.111

¹⁸⁵ Rasheed Araeen, "A New Beginning: Beyond Postcolonial Cultural Theory," in *Third Text Reader: on Art, Culture, and Theory*, New York: Continuum Books, 2002, p. 336

¹⁸⁶ Nicolas Bourriaud, "Altermodern," in *Altermodern: Tate Triennial*, London: Tate Publishing, 2009, p. 12

¹⁸⁷ Bourriaud, p.12, The frame around which Bourriaud describes the "us" of modernism is readily apparent in this statement, for the only 'us' who could be shocked out of 'tradition' is the western subject (the others of 'us' were occupied).

¹⁸⁸ Bourriaud, p.13.

¹⁸⁹ Samir Amin, *The Liberal Virus: Permanent War and the Americanization of the World*, translated by James M. Membrez, New York: Monthly Review Press, p. 29.

¹⁹⁰ Amin, p.20.

¹⁹¹ In *Commonwealth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009, p.65) Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have critique positions that align Marxism with a progressivist notion of modernity as rather than understanding Marxist struggle in terms of anti-modernity.

¹⁹² Amin, p.55.

¹⁹³ Bourriaud goes so far to suggest that since 1973, capitalism has "disconnected from natural resources reorienting itself with technological innovation"(17), a claim that effectively erases the resource-driven multinational territorializations in the global South.

¹⁹⁴ See Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011, and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009, pp. 67-118.

¹⁹⁵ Hal Foster, "Contemporary Extracts," *October* 130, Fall 2009.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ *Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity, Postmodernity, and Contemporaneity*, Edited by Terry Smith, Okwui Enwezor, Nancy Condee, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008.

¹⁹⁸ Okwui Enwezor, "The Postcolonial Constellation: Contemporary Art in a State of Permanent Transition," In *Research in African Literatures*, Volume 34, Number 4, Winter 2003, pp.57-82, p.70.

¹⁹⁹ Terry E. Smith, *What is Contemporary Art?*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009.

²⁰⁰ Ibid. p.6.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Olu Oguibe, *The Culture Game*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2004, p.xiv.

²⁰³ Ibid, pp. xiv-xv.

²⁰⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996, p. xiv.

²⁰⁵ Adrian Piper. "Power Relations within Existing Art Institutions." In *Out of Order, Out of Sight Volume II: Selected Writings in Art Criticism 1967-1992*, Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1996, p.72.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., p.73.

²⁰⁷ In *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (translated by Alan Sheridan, London: Tavistock, 1970, xvi-xvii) Michel Foucault suggests that it is upon such seemingly innocuous ground-- solid, stable, assumed-- that knowledges are made in the world. Foucault described this with Borges who pulled the ground away to reveal the condition upon which the production of knowledge is possible. Borges reveals "... a *tabula*, that enables thought to operate upon the entities of our world, to put them in order, to divide them into classes, to group them according to names that designate their similarities and their differences-- the table upon which, since the beginning of time, language has intersected space."²⁰⁷ In considerations of art and war, the *tabula* of art, meaning the various discourses and institutions and positions that comprise it, is assumed as self-evident.

²⁰⁸ Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (Theory and History of Literature), Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

²⁰⁹ Hito Steyerl, "Politics of Art," E-Flux, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/view/181>

²¹⁰ Bruce Albert. "Native Land: Perspectives from Other Places," *Native Land: Stop Eject*, Paris: Actes Sud, Fondation Cartier pour l'arte contemporain, 2009, p. 43, Dennison Berwick, *Savages, the Life and Killing of the*

Yanomami, Create Space, 2011, Pierre Clastres, *Archaeology of Violence*, translated by Jeanine Herman and Ashley Lebnor, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2010, originally published by Editions du Seuil, 1980.

²¹¹ See UN-REDD Program: Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degredation. Available at http://www.unredd.net/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=4598&Itemid=53

²¹² REDD, Cancun Global Warming Summit, 2010.

²¹³ "Bolivia enshrines natural world's rights with equal status for Mother Earth: Law of Mother Earth expected to prompt radical new conservation and social measures in South American nation" by John Vidal, in *The Guardian*, 10 April 2011, Main section.

²¹⁴ Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, London and New York: Verso, 2006, pp.232-233.

²¹⁵ Andreas Huysmann, "Authentic Ruins: Products of Modernity," in *Ruins of Modernity*, edited by Julia Hell and Andreas Schonle, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, p. 17-28.

²¹⁶ Hans Georg Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies*, Hartford, CT: Yale University Press, 1982, p.105.

²¹⁷ Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001, p.16.

²¹⁸ Mbembe, p.17.

²¹⁹ Mbembe, p.15.

²²⁰ Mbembe, p.15.

²²¹ Rebecca Solnit, *Storming the Gates of Paradise: landscapes for politics*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007, p.35.

²²² Toni Morrison, "The Site of Memory", in *Inventing the Truth*, edited by William Zinsser, Houghton Mifflin company: New York, 1995, p.183-200.

²²³ Born in 1951 during the Korean War, Cha migrated to the United States at the age of eleven.

²²⁴ Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictee*, Berkeley, CA: Third Woman Press, 1995.

²²⁵ Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, "Statement of Plans," in the Cha Archive at the Berkeley Art Museum, 1992,4.1-1. Also see *Exilee and Temps Morts: Selected Works*. Los Angeles and Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009.

²²⁶ Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, "Pause Still, performance," March 24, 1979, Cha Archive, Berkeley Art Museum, 1992.4.182.

²²⁷ Edouard Glissant, *Carribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, University of Virginia Press, 1999, p.64.

²²⁸ Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*, New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2007.

²²⁹ Gerard Lico, *Edifice Complex: Power, Myth, and Marcos State Architecture*, Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2003.

²³⁰ In *Everybody's Biography* (Exact Change, 2004), Gertrude Stein makes this comment referring to her return to Oakland in search of her family home.

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[1980], p.61
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