

Cinema on the Web and Newer Psychology

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“... il finit par entrer en résonance avec le monde de future...”

Chris Marker, *La Jetée*

Watching films on the Internet, one of the most popular ways to experience cinema today, has changed many aspects of how cinema is perceived. Looking at it in terms of power structures, it has changed the *dispositif*, the availability and perception of images, the way in which the apparatus disposes of the subject, body and mind, skin and bone and of the ways of seeing. In trying to grasp the effects of online cinema, the problem remains in using anachronistic terminology to describe new experiences. Much has been written on how the notion and practices of the archive have been changed by online cinema; or the notion of time in cinema, or the notion of the public and private, as well as on the perception of images in different formats. These formats range from tiny handheld monitors to large home movie projections, all of which modify the impact of a picture to which, as we know, there is no original. I will instead focus on another aspect of online cinema, its psycho-physical impact and the way it organizes behavior towards the world. In order to challenge the ready-at-hand

notion of participatory cultures and underline the concept of behavior as a transmission between human beings and apparatus, I will return to an earlier text that found corresponding elements between cinema's logics and models of human perception. It was conceived of in March 1945, in a moment of political hope and confidence based on filmic realism and enlightenment: Maurice Merleau-Ponty's lecture to film students at the *Institut des Hautes Études Cinématographiques* in Paris.¹ The notions of behavior and being in the age of cinema, which mediates between apparatus and humans, changed radically. In the same way, I will argue, the special habits attributed to audiences or rather *users* of online cinema might also be regarded as virtues, as a new form of perception albeit of old films. In examining the relation between the Internet and cinema's mind, this essay sketches out the framework for an audiovisual unconscious 2.0.

The aesthetics of cinema on the Internet cannot simply be compared with or adapted to the models and terminology of traditional cinema perception. Old cinematic forms of optical deception differ fundamentally from the intricacies of virtual perception on the web. This is expressed by the fact that the classic cinematic *dispositif* has not only been characterized as a

motionless gaze at projected light in the dark of a movie theater, but much rather as a way time is construed in transforming stroboscopic light flashes into duration and producing an impression of movement that leaves our perception unaware of this synthesis.² The old form of cinema, when it burst into the minds of modernity, was described as a technical organization of mental operations, such as attention or memory through filmic technologies,³ and thus as a “dynamization of space” and “spatialization of time.”⁴ It has been described as a way of dynamiting, fragmenting space and time and thus paving the way towards recognizing an optical unconscious in our “prison worlds,” as Walter Benjamin put it.⁵ And cinema was conceived of as a new form of collective perception.⁶ Considering the fact that the Internet is definitely the most advanced form of a collective mind, the temporal and spatial effects of online cinema might be even more complex. Historical cinema has been understood as a form of externalized perception relating to a network of gazes, glances, visions and points of view. In comparison, the network of view-

points in new cinema is even more intricate. In order to determine differences between old and new forms of cinema, it might be wise to ignore questions of cinema's essence, and to begin with examining the different kinds of behavior that are provoked by cinematic forms.

BEHAVIOR ON THE MARGINS OF IMAGINATION

Rather than simply conceiving of online cinema as a virtual film-and-video store, it could be regarded as a new and unprecedented miscellany of forms of perception; creating new and unprecedented social formations. It seems impossible to narrow the notion of online cinema down to digitized forms of feature films. Instead, all of the remakes, remixes, replays, data mash-ups and moshings, that are more or less inspired by classic cinema, have to be taken into account since they are part of what would be understood online as cinema. Online cinema continues to emerge as people are uploading, broadcasting, tagging, searching for, rating, watching, downloading, observing and reloading films and clips; in other words, users can participate, in intended or unintended ways. Online cinema is an activity

- 1) Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “The Film and The New Psychology,” in *Sense and Non-Sense* (Trans. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), pp. 48–59. The first German translation and interpretation of the text by Frieda Grafe (*Filmkritik* 11/1969, pp. 695–702) had a decisive influence on German film theory and criticism in the 1970s.
- 2) See Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time. Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).
- 3) Hugo Münsterberg, *The Film: A Psychological Study. The Silent Photoplay in 1916* (New York: Dover, 1970).

- 4) Erwin Panofsky, “Style and Medium in the Moving Pictures,” in *Transition*, no. 26 (1937), pp. 121–133.
- 5) Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version,” in *Selected Writings, Vol. 3, 1935–1938* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 101–133.
- 6) Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility: Third Version,” in *Selected Writings Vol. 4, 1938–1940* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 264: “[...] an object of simultaneous collective experience, as architecture has always been able to do, as the epic poem could do at one time, and as film is able to do today.”

rather than a passive state of perceiving. Simultaneously, these activities alter and transform the material they visualize and the perception of its viewers as users. Feedback relations established between virtual imaging and imagination best describe the aesthetics of online cinema. Cinematic time on the Internet is constructed and condensed through imaging activities. Times of observation are warped and looped. With online cinema, time does not simply progress, but rather expands like the universe, in all directions, differentiating its structures while its meshes are set. In March 2010, *YouTube* announced, "24 hours of video uploaded every minute."⁷ Through repetition and combining on the web, each one of these images resonates in the other. Online cinema exceeds individual control, or at least requires surfing those superior forces and incalculable waves of information. As a familiar time-structure passes and passes out, being on the Internet and watching films changes our behavior; its social component remains subliminal for the time being.

From the perspective of analog media, Internet aesthetics are coined through a perception of iterations, recursions and reprises. This is especially true of online cinema—its surfaces and montages, practices and procedures, its distribution. There is always something being repeated and reenacted, and more often than not what we see is just a different version of the same thing. The more we focus on the emergence of new forms—spaces, audiences or new forms of reception—the more we have the old ones staring back at us. Online cinema repeats the structures of early cinema, and has done so

from the very beginning: montage of attractions, very short formats, and an open, variable programming.⁸ But online cinema also reprises early television structures and programming, it is reminiscent of the structure of home movies, the project of Do-It-Yourself, as well as restaging the videotape and the structure of waves and vibrations inherent to it.⁹ Online cinema resumes all of the experimental and amateur film movements, and their plans for politicizing art; it produces avant-gardes everywhere, since there is no first or last, no beginning or end on noded screens. Digital cinema can simulate, mix and blur material traces of all kinds of film formats, forge scratches and overexposures, imitate video dropouts or tape defects. Any reference to the source material is unreliable, because indexicality remains a second order relation between algorithms. While its political gestures are grossly aestheticized, Internet art remains to be politicized, perceived as a social way of seeing; beyond the individual, beyond the self-assured subject.

Since our own behavior and that of others is intertwined, we can no longer insist on a centered subjective viewpoint, but have to look at phenomena from the corner of the eye, as Hans-Jörg Rheinberger insists, from the margins of attentiveness, from where "the place of absorption" is located.¹⁰ Only by moving along the verge of vigilance can we trap cinematic attention as our own. The commercial Internet confuses attention with ranking. It distinguishes center from periphery, what is important from insignificance, and it does this by quantitatively measuring attentiveness. Internet values are cre-

ated through logics of the hit parade and the stock exchange. Instead, by being methodically inattentive, by working with "moderate dishevelment,"¹¹ we might discover a medium beneath a message—and, as Jean-Luc Godard put it, a medium beneath the desires.¹² Thus we may find a popular road to film's unconscious 2.0.

OLD CINEMA AND NEW PSYCHOLOGY

In 1945 Maurice Merleau-Ponty in his lecture "The Film and the New Psychology" explained how, from a phenomenological perspective, the world and desires are closely entangled when watching film.¹³ In his neuropsychological investigations on the structure of behavior during the 1920s and 30s,¹⁴ which he connects to the laws of *gestalt* psychology, Merleau-Ponty assumes that a new psychology has to deal with effects of a visual field, drawing audiences into it as if under a spell. This action of the visible could simply be called *image*, but it is an image that emerges from forms of behavior and relationships. The act of perceiving basically creates homogeneity of this field, according to the

gestalt rules of figure and ground, of proximity, similarity, simplicity, closure, repetition. There is no longer a simple view of the world as the subject is automatically drawn into this entanglement of intention, sight and sound, but rather a way of interlacing things with the dynamics of affective structures. "When I perceive something, I do not think the world; it organizes itself in front of me,"¹⁵ writes Merleau-Ponty, referring to a joint procedure in apparatus and mind. Relating cinema experience to the laboratory work of *gestalt* psychology of his time, Merleau-Ponty shows that cinema refutes the Cartesian division between *res cogitans*, as mind,¹⁶ and *res extensa*, as the physical, and he shows that human beings—simultaneously perceivers and those being perceived in the drama of the world—do not think or decode this world, but rather behave within it in direct relation to other people and things. Watching a film also means presenting consciousness as "thrown into the world, subject to the gaze of others and learning from them what it is."¹⁶ The relationship to others is not

7) www.youtube.com/t/press_timeline.

8) See Joost Broeren, "Digital Attractions: Reloading Early Cinema in Online Video Collections," in Pelle Snickars, Patrick Vonderau (eds.), *The YouTube Reader* (Stockholm: National Library, 2009), pp. 154–165.

9) See Maurizio Lazzarato, *Videophilosophie. Zeitwahrnehmung im Postfordismus* (Trans. Stephan Geene and Erik Stein, Berlin: b_books, 2002). Lazzarato explicates the vibrational model he describes for video formats through a modulation of time in duration, according to Bergson and Deleuze. "The video image derives its movement from the vibrations of the material; it is this vibration proper. Video technology is a modulation of currents and the video-image is the relationship between these currents." (p. 66, translated from German.)

10) Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, *Iterationen* (Berlin: Merve, 2005), p. 67 (translated from German).

11) Max Delbrück, in a letter to his friend, Salvador Luria, dated 1948, quoted in Rheinberger, *op. cit.*, p. 66, as "gemäßigte Schlampigkeit."

12) Jean-Luc Godard, *Histoire(s) du Cinéma*, F/CH 1988–98.

13) See Merleau-Ponty, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

14) See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *La Structure du comportement* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1942); published in English as *The Structure of Behavior* (Trans. Alden Fisher, Boston: Beacon Press, 1963).

15) Merleau-Ponty, 1964, "New Psychology," p. 51.

16) *Ibid.*, p. 58.

regulated by introspection and empathy, but by a common bond of views, visual fields and behavior, which cinema produces and simultaneously renders visible—in a close-up, for instance, or in a long-focus lens.¹⁷ Cinema theorists after Merleau-Ponty were also interested in the idea of external constellations as emotional issues.¹⁸ What is interesting about cinema in terms of the Internet and a newer psychology is not its ability to store or distribute images, but rather its way of generating fields of perception as socially linked spheres.

In his lecture to future filmmakers, Merleau-Ponty did not mention that phenomenological as well as cinema perception, which “make us see the bond between subject and world, between the subject and others, rather than to explain it,”¹⁹ do not simply stage a peaceful coexistence on a visual plane, but instead create relationships of difference. On the field of vision, the subject is, as Lacanian film theorists have repeatedly shown, subjugated to the gaze of the other.²⁰ Unlike Jean-Paul Sartre, though, Merleau-Ponty did not regard these encounters of two gazes as fatal battles on common ground, but as a fissure in the fabric of the world, something that generates instability between seeing and being seen, between visible and invisible fields, and hence creates new relationships. The chiasmus of sight and image in the age of technical media is a blind spot at the intersection of subject and *dispositif*: if this blind spot comes into view, it disturbs the stability of the subject.²¹ For online cinema, the film’s single fissure turns out to be an endless series of relays. Bonds between “subject and world,”

“subject and other” prove to be manifold and oscillating relationships.

During the 1920s and 30s, new psychology and the perception of cinema went hand in hand; psychologists could be filmmakers, and filmmakers, psychologists.²² At the end of his lecture, Merleau-Ponty himself is taken aback by the coincidence of perception theories and cinematic *dispositif*, asking, “why it is that precisely in the film era this philosophy [i.e. phenomenology] has developed,”²³ detecting in it a world view shared by philosophers, psychologists and cineastes. Cinema and perception, or the self and the world, constitute each other in a reciprocal manner, forming loops of feedback.

In the 1940s, the idea of processing sensory data and feedback behavior in holistic fields of perception was not just a matter of cinema theory, but also an issue of experimental science. In a cybernetic experiment conducted in the same year that Merleau-Ponty gave his paper, a kinesthetic animal was implemented with sensomotoric loops that simulated nervous action. It was named “Palomilla” and it could behave either as a moth or as a bedbug. Its photosensitive chip could perceive an amount of light from a lamp in its environment and transform it into voltage, setting a tiller in motion that would steer a motor. Depending on how the tiller was programmed, the electrical animal would either move towards the light, or away from it. In a field of more or less light, Palomilla seemed to behave according to her perception, in a sophisticated way beyond simple patterns of reaction. Here, behavior turns out to be a notion assumed by the observer of the system. In a sec-

ond experiment, Palomilla’s steering movements could be exaggerated, over steered, and then appear as over- or hyperactive. This dysfunctional behavior flabbergasted neurologists because it exactly simulated forms of neurological pathology, purpose tremor or Parkinsonian aberrations—as notions of the observers.²⁴

In cinema, motor movements are reduced while reactions, even physical ones, are part of the perception.²⁵ The feedback behavior between sensory organs and reactions is, in the old cinema *dispositif*, turned inward, toward the internal circuits, into emotions, shivering, overheating, sweat, and tears, which are monitored in the laboratory of a cinema of humors and fluids. Film rhythms as rhythms of light and

sound, of energy, as we know them from the old forms of cinema, are, in new cinema, recombined with motor activity to create completely different dramaturgies. While old cinema, in its plush seats and surroundings, tries to reduce noise and disturbances in order to focus the audience’s attention on the screen, online cinema is notoriously perceived in passing, over the shoulder, on trains and tubes, in motion, blending many different distractions into its visuals and environment. *YouTube* videos precisely blur the boundaries between image and frame, motion and background, levels and meta-levels, inside and outside, so that the site of perception becomes ambiguous.²⁶ In the images of online cinema, space is nothing but a

17) According to Merleau-Ponty, this is also true for the organization of sounds in cinema, which he discusses in terms of the radio montage—not the inscribing gramophone—, although, unlike his contemporaries Cage or Schaeffer, he explicitly excludes noise from his considerations.

18) This includes not only phenomenological film criticism, prominently represented by such writers as Don Ihde and Vivian Sobchak, or film theory based on Lacan’s model of organizing optics, which also goes back to Merleau-Ponty, but also the practice of filmmaking itself: in his self-observational film, *JLG/JLG*, Godard has (blind) actors reciting long passages from Merleau-Ponty’s *The Visible and the Invisible*.

19) Merleau-Ponty, 1964, “New Psychology,” p. 58.

20) See e.g., Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 194–236 and Judith Mayne, *The Woman at the Keyhole. Feminism and Women’s Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

21) For more on this, see Hans Dieter Huber, “Überkreuzte Blicke. Merleau-Ponty, Lacan, Beckett, Spencer-Brown,” in Antje Kapust, Bernhard Waldenfels (eds.), *Kunst. Bild. Wahrnehmung. Blick. Merleau-Ponty zum Hundertsten* (Munich: Fink, 2010), pp. 135–156. Also, the groundbreaking, brilliant study by Andreas Cremonini, *Die*

Durchquerung des Cogito. Lacan contra Sartre (Munich: Fink, 2003).

22) See Kurt Lewin’s wonderful home movie as experimental film for the 1929 psychology congress at Yale, *Field Forces as Impediments to a Performance*, on *YouTube*: www.youtube.com/watch?v=BeS9R4wLcgY, uploaded by the Virtual Laboratory at MPI Berlin <http://vlp.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de>, one of the treasure troves of Internet cinema.

23) Merleau-Ponty, 1964, “New Psychology,” p. 59.

24) See Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics: Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1948), p. 7 and the following pages.

25) See Vivian Sobchak, “What My Fingers Knew,” in *Carnal Thoughts. Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), pp. 53–84.

26) See Albert Figurt, “The Thin Red Line Between On and Off: A (Re-)Cyclothymic Exploration,” in Geert Lovink, Rachel Somers Miles (eds.), *Video Vortex Reader II. Moving Images Beyond YouTube* (Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2011). Online version here: www.networkcultures.org/_uploads/%236reader_VideoVortex2PDF.pdf.

constantly changing topology through which we have to move, like meandering moths or bedbugs. This topology establishes perceived spaces as much as social ones.

In the light of Merleau-Ponty's ideas on older cinema, the question of a philosophical model of perception for new online cinema arises; not to verify one or the other, but in order to understand forms of behavior as they appear, in different historical times, simultaneously in neurophysiological and media-technological models.

DIGITAL PERCEPTION

After having interviewed Jacques Derrida for a television program, Bernard Stiegler subsumed the issue of digital imagery and subsequent technical externalization of perception's logics under the trope of a *Grammaticalization of the Visible*, referring to the procedure of crushing down images to single data that can be recombined.²⁷ He raised this as a political problem in 1993, just as technical images had caused severe doubts about their relation to reality. Television channels had broadcast the experience of extremely unreliable pictures: images that were supposed to show targeted bombing of Baghdad in real time could not really provide any analog-based authentication. "Something has intervened—treatment as binary calculation—which renders transmission uncertain."²⁸

For online cinema, which appeared much later, this kind of grammaticalization of the visible was again criticized as political deprivation. Fundamental scruples are expressed: films are not watched on the Internet, but simply read,

and they are not even read as films, but as sets of digital data. "We no longer watch films or TV; we watch databases," writes Geert Lovink in his introduction to one of the first (electronic) books to deal extensively with watching films in an electronic space.²⁹ Stiegler again projects grammaticalization onto problems of spatiotemporal identification and archiving—and discovers Internet images to be basically organized by the surveillance principle, by providing "the development of an algorithm for automated discretization of spatial [...] and temporal [...] and spatiotemporal continuities [...] and the automated comparison of such isolated discrete elements allowing for signatures of images and searches in a body of diverse occurrences of the same type of iconic or sound information (an object, a voice, a face)."³⁰ While the observation is basically correct, his conclusion is strange: in this procedure, he fears "psychosocial individuation."³¹ Like Merleau-Ponty 60 years earlier, both authors, Stiegler and Lovink, relate the state of media, electronic grammaticalization of the visible, to a neurological phenomenon. But when Merleau-Ponty related cinema perception to neurophysiology in his speech, this was not intended to diagnose pathological behavior—which, as a child psychologist, he would have been familiar with. While Merleau-Ponty cherished his discovery as a fortunate coincidence of human faculty and *dispositif*, the latter diagnosed a syndrome, defective behavior: *attention deficit hyperactivity disorder*. In the inability to concentrate, the fidgeter returns, in the realm of the alphanumeric. Much earlier, in Jean-Martin Charcot's Parisian

clinic and in the first phase of technical media practices of the 1870s, the relationship between media and psychiatric behavior was made evident through the first series of chronophotography. These created symptoms of maladies without matter, "sine materia," which suggested a relation of imitation and mimicry between the symptom and the publicly perceived: "The idiosyncratic affectation *sine materia*, the imitation of organic illness, has been described as neuromimesis."³² The imaginary bond between media and frangible experiences of the body, as well as between media-theorists and neurologists is as old as technical media. Neuromimesis is a viable term to describe acting under the influence of an apparatus.

In the digital age, images, texts, numbers and sounds are computed at speeds that exceed those humanly perceptible, to then be transmitted onto our motor-sensory system by suitable interface technology. Every piece of digitally processed information has to take its detour via analogous, physical and, that is, ma-

terial channels, before human eyes can see it, human ears can hear it and human skin feel or sense it, etc.³³ To be meticulously precise, we never watch, see or hear sets of data, but rather their physiologically perceivable effects. Still, the question of the figurativeness of digital film or television transmissions definitely contains the political aspect Geert Lovink addresses: on the Internet and on the screen we are confronted with effects of metadata, not with qualities of light and sound as they impose their force on photochemical or magnetic material; moreover, because of the speed of digital procedures, we do not have full control over these data-generating algorithms, which create images and sounds. Therefore, the political criticism Stiegler puts forward remains: "the production of metadata, whose digital concept was formulated in 1994, but whose practice goes back to Mesopotamia, had always been executed in a *top-down* fashion, by the official institutions of various forms of symbolic power."³⁴ Metadata limit access to cultural technologies

27) Bernard Stiegler, "The Discrete Image," in Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, *Echographies of Television. Filmed Interviews* (Trans. Jennifer Bajorek, Cambridge/UK: Polity Press, 2002), p. 149. As an addition to the transcripts of the television discussions Derrida and Stiegler conducted, this text was reconstructed out of two later lectures of Stiegler's. In this text, Stiegler emphasizes the destructive consequences of digital grammaticalization, while Derrida in his answers proves vividly interested in the deconstructive and differentiating process of discrete imageries.

28) *Ibid.*, p. 153.

29) Geert Lovink, "The Art of Watching Databases: Introduction to the Video Vortex Reader," in Geert Lovink, Sabine Niederer, *Video Vortex Reader: Responses to YouTube* (Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures,

2008), p. 9. Meanwhile, a second volume has made its electronic appearance. See note 26.

30) Bernard Stiegler, "The Carnival of the New Screen. From Hegemony to Isonomy," in Snickars/Vonderau, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

31) *Ibid.*, p. 54.

32) Jean-Martin Charcot, *Poliklinische Vorträge*. Bd. 1: Schuljahre 1887/88 (Trans. Sigmund Freud, Leipzig/Wien: Deuticke, 1893), p. 13 (translated from German).

33) See Wolfgang Hagen, "Die Entropie der Fotografie. Skizzen zu einer Genealogie der digital-elektronischen Bildaufzeichnung," in Herta Wolf (ed.), *Paradigma Fotografie. Fotokritik am Ende des fotografischen Zeitalters* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2002), pp. 195–235.

34) Stiegler, 2009, "Carnival of the New Screen," p. 52.

that are intellectual poison to the masses. But even if applied top-down, the function of metadata and its relation to the according channels has been recognized, and can be seen today from the regions neighboring Mesopotamia where it is used to oppose the current just as well.³⁵

Bernard Stiegler's objection relates to two issues: the technical and the institutional side of digital programming. Due to its slowness, the human brain and sensory equipment cannot follow operations conducted by electronic relays, and therefore cannot intervene in the programs, as long as a series of commands are running—a warning that has already been put forward by Norbert Wiener for the automated control of computed processes—a threat that might be more dangerous in the context of weapons systems and atomic power plants, if we still want to make a difference here, than it is in programming films.³⁶

Jacques Derrida, in his conversation with Stiegler, reminded the latter that time and space, in technological media transmissions, has always been an artifact. Whatever medium processes and transmits an image, it will always transform the perception of all who are linked to it, and allow for new differences and differentiations to emerge. For instance, audiences watching Internet television are no longer defined by their nationality, they can watch *sans frontières*, limited only by commercial broadcasting rights; an argument that reminds us of Bertolt Brecht's radio theory, distinguishing between the possibilities of the apparatus and restrictions implemented due to political or com-

mercial interest. Here, the virtual space of the Internet has initiated a deterritorialization of media subjectivization, as Derrida observed: "What the accelerated development of teletechnologies, of cyberspace, of the new topology of 'the virtual' produces is a practical *deconstruction* of the traditional and dominant concepts of the state and the citizen (and thus of 'the political'), as they are linked to the actuality of a territory."³⁷ Thus, Derrida discovered new and unforeseen possibilities for political experiences in digitized visual spaces,³⁸ for the alphabetization of visual illiterates as well as for political education that could counteract the laws of orthography, of imaging and the state.³⁹ But other frontiers remained to be crossed: that of the finite image, its frames and surfaces, and the frontier between Internet and the mind, between new cinema and new psychology.

The year 1993 marked a fundamental reterritorialization of the Internet as a whole. The president and vice-president of the United States, as part of a techno-political program, claimed the historically open architecture of the worldwide electronic information network for state politics and economic interests, making way for its commercialization. Images and Internet videos were hardly important at that time—except for diagrammatics or comics of communication theorists—but in principle, the option for commercial digital cinema opened up and marked the beginning of an accelerated flow of images.

For many years, the consequences of digital imaging did not really affect cinema or its perception. Only on surfaces and user interfaces of

monitors and TV-screens did electronic images and aesthetics create unexpected effects. Old-style cinema reacted reluctantly to this. One of the first few directors to do this was Lars von Trier in his films *The Kingdom* (1994) and *Breaking the Waves* (1996). Trier programmatically broke the old logic of light waves by digitizing painting, film and video images and layering the digital surfaces through various processes of copying and converting. He was already a master of discriminating, composing, pasting and editing in discrete seriality. Rather than follow dramaturgy and acting in the old sense, the behavior of his protagonists, for instance in *Breaking the Waves*, was organized according to these new mixed media surfaces and their visibility. Just as the director went along with the surprises of unforeseen effects of landscapes composed of digital layering of film, video and painting, his protagonists had to accept their unforeseeable reactions in a synthetic world computed in technical parameters.⁴⁰ The female heroines in Trier's films, mostly victims of a joint venture of apparatus, environment and the visual pleasures of northern myths, could

well be compared to the unconscious or trance-like behavior of Charcot's hysterics. The aesthetics of his films could well be called neuromimesis. After all, the strange behavior that was eventually classified as "hysteria" began to emerge in a similar constellation of new media—a new psychology emerged from the chronophotographic series in Charcot's days, based on new orders of the visible. Although we learned from Palomilla that behavior is always in the eye of the beholder: the psychiatrist, the philosopher or the cinema audience.

For digital cinema, the problem or lack of materiality remains a predominant issue. Stiegler remarks that the basics of photographic ontology involving the impression of reality onto the materiality of the image—as André Bazin observed—have been lost in digital photography. Regarding a loss of memory, Stiegler states that a break in the "chain of memorial light,"⁴¹ once based on photographic inscriptions of light onto plates, would eventually create mental images. In the digital world, indexicality no longer refers to a universal reality, but to more sets of data. Therefore, a reorganiza-

35) The first draft of this article was written in March 2011. We keep a "moderately disheveled eye" on Mesopotamian political landscapes.

36) Wiener, *op. cit.*, p. ix and p. 27.

37) Derrida and Stiegler, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

38) Derrida's *Spectres de Marx* (Specters of Marx) was published in Paris in 1993.

39) "Just as literacy and mastery of language, of spoken or of written discourse have never been universally shared, (it goes almost without saying that there have always been, not only people who can read and people who can't, but among those who can, a great diversity of competencies, abilities, etc.) so today, with respect to

what is happening with the image, we might say, by analogy, that the vast majority of consumers are in a state analogous to these diverse modalities of relative illiteracy. [...] There is also, if not an alphabet, then at least a discrete seriality of the image or of images. We must learn, precisely, how to discriminate, compose, paste, edit." Derrida in Derrida and Stiegler, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

40) See also Ute Holl, "Mazzen, Fazen, Augenjazzen," in Martin Warnke et al. (eds.), *HyperKult II, Zur Ortsbestimmung analoger und digitaler Medien* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2005), pp. 287–296.

41) Stiegler, 2002, "Discrete Image," p. 154.

tion of traces is necessary to permit automatic navigation through the “flow” or flood of images. Instead of reconstructing history in diachronics, there will be an orientation in synchronical pathways: “In the future, digital technology is going to go very far in spotting [discontinuities in a film]: in addition to planes, it will recognize *automatically* different camera movements, identical objects present in a film, recurrent characters, voices, sets, etc. It will be possible to make indices of these things, to inscribe them in temporal scales. This will allow us to navigate through the flow of images in a nonlinear fashion towards ever finer and more iterative elements, in the same way that we’ve been able to in books.”⁴² As in the dreams of the Russian avant-gardes, a technical eye substitutes the subject of cinema. However, automated seeing creates its own topologies and tropes and ultimately infects social ways of seeing.

What Maurice Merleau-Ponty, referring to *gestalt* psychology, described as the automatic organization of the world before our minds, corresponds to an automatic organization of the visible on the Internet, which follows the rules of data and algorithms. Only twenty years after Stiegler’s statement, algorithms on the Internet seem to actually be able to address single sequences, images and close-ups—as well as detect faces in close-ups and other singularities quite quickly. Algorithms transform images into information, and connect pieces of information to the imaginary. Although this is an experience completely different from the old form of watching film, there are filmic aspects to this: the increasing supply of film-images on the

web, even if in fragmented formats and subverted versions, allows us to finally read books on cinema: we no longer have to remember or imagine shots, montages or framings, instead we can watch, repeat, analyze them, and even edit, project and compare them automatically with the help of mechanical eyes. We are operating with sets of data of course; we are dealing with digitally organized forms of memory and a digitally tracked unconscious. This is not a cinematic experience in the old sense, but we are operating with images regardless.

There is a hitch, though, to this broad notion of an image. As opposed to the old analog media, which raised the ontological question of what an image is, images on the Internet provoke the operational question of what an image does. Images, still or moving, as well as written works on cinema connect through different traces on the web and are fed back into a new experience of cinema. The audience on the web does not actually see or watch, but becomes entangled in algorithmically formed visible worlds. It is, itself, observed, traced and led into their meshes through the paths of other gazing users of films and film clips. For old cinema models, especially the Russian avant-garde, the entanglement of the human eye and cinema apparatus produced an impassionate political eye, which does not get hung up on narratives or celebrities, when it is simply supposed to decipher images. The entanglement of the human eye and digitized sight seems to produce an equally intelligent way of seeing: even the historical eyes of old-school film scholars are seduced by the logics of the web and instead of

thinking in shots, cuts and montages, they begin to write in terms of accumulations, transitions, series, and clusters.⁴³ Yet, while the phantasm that machines can read and reproduce images without limitations is far from reality,⁴⁴ an imaginary thing, which works and gives feedback on the basis of algorithms, has arrived.

All common practices of online cinema occur within the parameters of coding and decoding, reading and rewriting data, but the procedures of transforming them into images, its aesthetics, have yet to be discussed. Users and hackers employ the organization of these sets of data as material for painting, in turn creating new visuals out of aleatoric interventions into data structures and compression codes. Thus, these visuals raise questions about the structure of the imaginary and figurativeness, just like Cézanne once raised the issue in the era of old new media.⁴⁵ Hacker aesthetics, such as data-moshing, form images from the logics of digital processes and compressions. Those pictures appear as transformations between bits of information, between the lines, between the digital data set and its analog effects. To be perceived, these images require a form of “moderate dishevelment,” watching on the verge of vigi-

lance, a form of systematically distracted attention or sloppy observation. Seeing from the corner of the eye, seeing algorithmically produced, data-moshed images requires a certain amount of fidgeting, trembling and headshaking. They require perception in between familiar forms, in between two levels, since, as Tom Levin put it, in those videos “one image is haunting the other.”⁴⁶ The perception of time in data-moshed videos is completely different from cinematographically synthesized time in that it evokes something visible out of ambiguities and intervals; it is a form of technically implemented, intentional inattention, which takes what is seen from the corner of the eye and then spreads it across the entire field of vision. Images like these take inattentiveness into account. The diagnosis of *attention deficit disorder* is an inappropriate verdict, since attention deficit is required here in order to see the order.

BEHAVIOR ON THE INTERNET

Digital imaging practices on the Internet are considered, somewhat justifiably, the end of a certain visual culture and the beginning of a new kind of training to adjust to behaviors in indeterminate topologies. Just like the old cin-

42) *Ibid.*, p. 157.

43) See Thomas Elsaesser, “Constructive Instability, or: The Life of Things as the Cinema’s Afterlife?” in Lovink/Niederer, *op. cit.*, pp. 13–31 and Elsaesser, “Tales of Epiphany and Entropy: Around the Worlds in Eighty Clicks,” in Snickars/Vonderau, *op. cit.*, pp. 166–186.

44) See Friedrich Kittler, “Computergraphik, eine halbt Technische Einführung,” in Sabine Flach and Georg Christoph Tholen (eds.), *Intervalle 5. Schriften zur Kulturforschung* (Kassel: Kassel University Press, 2002),

pp. 221–240, and, investigating computer-aided means of searching for similarities among images Wolfgang Ernst, Stefan Heidenreich, Ute Holl (eds.), *Suchbilder. Visuelle Kultur zwischen Algorithmus und Archiven* (Berlin: Kadmos, 2001).

45) On the practice of data-moshing, see, for instance, Ute Holl, “Vom Kino-Eye zur You-Tube,” in *Cargo*, no. 3 (September 2009), pp. 72–74, and more recently, Tom Y. Levin in a paper at the SHIFT Festival, Basel, 2010.

46) Levin in his paper at the SHIFT Festival.

ema, online cinema has to fulfill a social function to “establish equilibrium between human beings and the apparatus,” as Walter Benjamin put it.⁴⁷ Watching films in the days of Vertov and Benjamin taught modern city dwellers, through the means of time loops, close-ups, pans, and montage, to move in environments much too fast to consciously grasp every detail, and to discover in their own behavior an optical unconscious in the perception of everyday life. Watching digitized cinema today might provide the same training and mediating effects: the web allows users—while they select, reiterate, recombine, transmit and thus produce protocols of all of those actions—to observe and record this topology and their own movements on it as symptoms of their own unconscious topology. This second order observation of one’s own behavior is self-reflective and self-producing. The histories of those chains of actions and decisions on the web provide a protocol for the digital unconscious of their users and, at the same time, constitute pathways and nodes of the Internet as it emerges from the users’ operations. Lovink asks, “What does it mean that our attention is being guided by database systems?”⁴⁸ alluding to the fact that, on the Internet, attention is the means to navigate and at the same time to organize the realm of images for all others. Attention, individually and collectively, uses and prioritizes pathways in the structure of the Internet. Lovink rightfully inquires into the relationship between the topological survey of electronic and that of psychological pathways, which correspond in their structure, in order to understand the impact of

the web on the formation of subjectivity.⁴⁹ Films in online archives and collections are not just series of images, but attention traps, which entangle the users’ desire in a network of economy. This is not just one of desires and dreams, as Jean-Luc Godard insisted, but also of simple capitalist utilization. The old logic of the “dream factory” returns in online mode: “Allowing oneself to be led by an endlessly branching database is the cultural constant of the early 21st century. [...] Time is the Message: what we are consuming with online video is our own lack of time.”⁵⁰ But the Self 2.0 is no longer just a victim of an industrial merchandizing of imaginary commodities; it is engaged.

At this point, critical theory meets Jean-Luc Godard’s psychoanalysis of cinema. Right at the beginning of Godard’s *Histoire(s) du Cinéma*, a work that, in retrospect, proves to be a great dry run for watching *YouTube*, long before its existence, he comments on a scene from Freud, quoting the title sequence from his own *Le Mépris* (1963): “Cinema substitutes for our gaze a world that corresponds to our desires.—*Le cinéma substitue à notre regard un monde qui s’accorde à nos desirs.*” The idea that the world would *correspond to our desirs*—and of course Godard will quote Merleau-Ponty later—or in plainer English, that the world would “tune into” our desires describes the uncanny alliance between media and mind, one which we have already observed as the blind spot of subjectivization. There is a fundamental distinction between Godard’s laboratory and various online cinema experiments: Godard can still play his films forward and in reverse on videotape

and therefore their effects are in accordance with cinematic time. Godard’s process, like old analog media, especially the gramophone, is in contact with reality, not because there is some scratch in the wax surface, but because the impression of reality in analog media is produced in proportion to time, and in firm connection with it. In the beginning of the film, when Godard cites from Freud’s *Interpretation of Dreams* and his account of the burning child, rolling the videotape forward and backward, he is very aware of cinematography and repeating his own memory structure as cinematic memory, as difference, desire, and repetition, “the reappearance of the perception constitutes the wish-fulfillment.”⁵¹ In the aesthetics of the *Histoire(s)* he makes clear there is no other way of investigating one’s own perceptive structure than by recovering it in an outside world of images, on an external recording device, as Freud modeled it in the magic writing pad. Here, too, it is the time structure of perception that resists any sort of ontology of the image. Godard in his *Histoire(s) du Cinéma* is sitting in front of his many monitors, all of them reflecting his own face in the dark passages of the films. The users of the Internet are seemingly not interested in their simple reflection in cinematic images, but would rather have it refracted and modified by the multitude of viewers that also see and mod-

ify: in online cinema, reflection is substituted by feedback. While Godard’s behavior is desire-based and self-reflective, the Internet cinema-goer’s behavior has to take into account the multitude of others, even if they try to remember which film sequences were their favorites: they would not have been visible at that point, had it not been for other viewers. On the Internet the viewer cannot roll a film backwards, instead, they can copy and operate on the databases that others have produced. Instead of rolling images back and forth, faster and slower—as in the case of Godard’s *Histoire(s)*—Internet cinema posits “a logic of selection and expression, competition and attention,”⁵² as Jens Schröter critically notes. However, these concepts, i.e., “selection and expression, competition and attention,” are not necessarily a behavioral reduction. Understood in the context of cybernetic communication or informational aesthetics, they actually proliferate the possibilities of behavior. In terms of media aesthetics, Max Bense, for example, included the concept of selection—no matter how precarious the word remains in German—in schemes of augmenting calculable possibilities, as a “selection from a repertoire,” which provides references to existing operational processes. Aesthetics for Bense is a mathematical case of calculation and probability of occurrence or even—as a special

47) Benjamin, 2002, “The Work of Art: Second Version,” p. 117 (italics in the original).

48) Lovink, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

49) *Ibid.*: “Why has searchability become such an essential organizing principle? Why is our personal relationship to the relational database being pushed?”

50) *Ibid.*, p. 12.

51) Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Third Edition (Trans. A. A. Brill, New York: Macmillan, 1913), p. 446.

52) Jens Schröter, “On the Logic of the Digital Archive,” in Snickers/Vonderau, *op. cit.*, p. 343.

problem of the Internet—reoccurrence: “Aesthetic states are actually material states of specially classifiable distributions of frequencies. Aesthetic processes are statistical-stochastic processes. Each and every statistical-stochastic process is, in principle, an aesthetic process.”⁵³ This kind of re-materialization of algorithms corresponds to hacker-practices of intervening in databases, compression codes, algorithms, practices of remixing and replaying, and reiteration. Clearly, a part of media usage is limited to the habits of the super- or the media-market. This kind of usage alone, however, hardly describes the possible forms of visual and acoustic behavior that is possible on the Internet. Instead of lamenting a reoccurring surveillance principle, we should also consider the fact that in digital cinema on the web, psychology and cinema once again join in a common model of social perception.

Behavior on the Internet of images need not be fundamentally new. Lev Manovich, for instance, who discusses social media statistically from the viewpoint of information aesthetics, tunes his post-punk attitude back to dandyism when he proposes to waste time in the *YouTube* Arcades, when he recommends to stroll around at a tortoise’s pace in front of its images, to watch a lot of boring videos in the calculable hope of eventually coming across something exciting—to practice, at any slow rate, a strategic method of hanging out on the Internet. According to Manovich, this could lead from blind user tactics to intelligent strategic behavior,⁵⁴ where behavior can be regarded as connecting a set of data to other sets of data, including those of identity proper in

psychomotoric activities. This kind of behavior definitely includes the active critique of power structures, yet it does not begin by assuming a subject structured by lack and desire.

FINIR PAR ENTRER EN RÉSONANCE AVEC LE MONDE DE FUTURE (ANTÉRIEUR)

From a phenomenological point of view, two aspects of Internet cinema are important: firstly, the reorganization and changing of image-structures through duration—even if ultra short—of viewing, and secondly, the social aspect of cinema, of establishing and transforming relationships to others—who on the Internet become a plurality, one of many, but not masses as their actions count individually. The simple relationship Maurice Merleau-Ponty assumed in his cinematic experience turns into a multifaceted resonance elsewhere.⁵⁵ Duration as well as the many-others no longer relate to a homogenous visible field, or field of vision, instead there is a topology of interconnected data and databases that combine perception into a site-less, virtual image. This topology produces a socialized field of vision somewhere in between materiality and immateriality.

Within this topology of the Internet, a new kind of film audience has emerged. It seems to believe that the old form of cinema, which, according to the Russian avant-garde, the Weimar cinema, Italian realists or Hollywood films, promised to provide a resonating worldly and public space, is in fact a strangely closed-off and socially dead space. For this new audience, images only connect to the world if computers who produce them are online and networking,

producing meshes and moshes of endless afternoons. Still we find the same dynamics here that Merleau-Ponty described, only more complex. Subjectivization under the gaze of the other on the Internet turns into an attempt to capture the attention of many users through the reiteration of actions and images. Online cinema practices and their theory hardly ever discuss single images to describe cinematic qualities. Instead, an image on the web is always considered the result of connected behavior. Cinema on the web, as opposed to old forms of cinema, is a resonating space, and not just metaphorically: Wolfgang Ernst, following McLuhan, has shown that, technically all electronic images are oscillating processes in a frequency field.⁵⁶ On the web, those frequencies organize themselves as a calculable interference. This corresponds to a new model of the mind and of communication in neuropsychology. Newer neurophysiological theories of perception do not assume that “the world organizes itself in front of me,” as Mer-

leau-Ponty put it, but that it reorganizes all relationships we have with the world through minute calculations. Perceptual models of cortical activity conceptualized in psychology today seem to correspond with the perception of images on the web.

The Max Planck Institute for Brain Research in Frankfurt, returning to the laws of *gestalt* theory as previously described by Merleau-Ponty,⁵⁷ has for some years been conducting tests to explore the blurring boundaries of *gestalts* in images. New schools of psychology and neuropsychology alike, as well as media studies, by the way, which need to calculate effects of computer graphics,⁵⁸ are addressing *gestalt* questions in order to trace so-called “binding problems” in visual structures. They are examining visual areas where contradictory and complex formations do not allow for any clear decision regarding the organization of the field of vision and *gestalt*—making it impossible in those cases to decide what elements or re-

53) Max Bense, *Programmierung des Schönen. Allgemeine Texttheorie und Textästhetik* (Krefeld/Baden-Baden: Agis, 1960), p. 125 (translated from German).

54) Lev Manovich, “The Practice of Everyday (Media) Life,” in Lovink/Niederer, *op. cit.*, p. 33. “In the case of social media, the unprecedented growth of numbers of people who upload and view each other’s media led to lots of innovation. While the typical diary video or anime on *YouTube* may not be particularly special, enough are. In fact, in all media where the technologies of productions were democratized (video, music, animation, graphic design, etc.), I have come across many projects which not only rival those produced by most well-known commercial companies and most well-known artists, but often explore the new areas not yet touched by those who are endowed with large amounts of symbolic capital.” Manovich refers to Michel de Certeau and his thesis on the functional interplay between strategy and tactics

of procedures: as institutions become tactical, users become increasingly strategic in their procedures.

55) See Bernhard Waldenfels, *Topographie des Fremden, Studien zur Phänomenologie des Fremden 1* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997).

56) Wolfgang Ernst, “Takt und Taktilität—Akustik als privilegierter Kanal zeitkrischer Medienprozesse,” in Derrick de Kerckhove et al. (eds.), *McLuhan neu lesen: Kritische Analysen zu Medien und Kultur im 21. Jahrhundert* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2008), pp. 170–180.

57) See Wolf Singer, “Neocortical Rhythms: An Overview,” in Christoph von Marlsburg et al. (eds.), *Dynamic Coordination in the Brain: From Neurons to Mind* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010), p. 164. “Synchronization correlates well with elementary Gestalt rules such as continuity, co-linearity, and common fate.”

58) See Kittler, *op. cit.*

gions are part of the figure and which are part of a background. This questions the coherence of a field as an image or visual field, because the information coming from the sensory organs allows equally plausible interpretations. Perception cannot make a decision; it cannot make up its mind, so to speak, and therefore oscillates for a long time between several visual states. Only slowly, after some time, will the perceiving mind decide on a specific way to structure the organization of an image or the world, and "this process of segmentation requires a considerable amount of processing time."⁵⁹

The complex procedures of Internet perception show an ongoing and indecisive back-and-forth between visual data, frame and image, layers and levels of information before an image and a homogeneous field of vision appear. Much fluctuation, testing, and oscillating happens between data-sets, which should by no means be regarded as a loss of responsible and self-dependent thought, as Bernard Stiegler put it.⁶⁰ Instead, this kind of oscillating attention is a perceptive process that will constantly change frames, levels and parameters of approach until finally an image emerges that makes sense—or changes the mind. Perception becomes ever more complex over a longer period of time. Ambiguity is, to a certain degree, necessary. "On all processing levels the neurons react to more than just one single characteristic. They are sensitive to changes in the parameters of various dimensions of characteristics. Thus, individual cells respond with ambiguity."⁶¹

The ripple of leaves stirred by the wind, as it marked early cinema's perception⁶² has be-

come, as it were, the ripple of brain waves stirred by electronic images. The idea that electric pulses of nerve activity produce waves that can be analyzed according to harmonics was indeed the basis for Norbert Wiener's studies on cybernetics in human beings and machines likewise.⁶³ In order to find out how the brain processes the impression of a face out of large quantities of data, Wolf Singer's research group in Frankfurt might as well have played a data-mashed film to their lab cats and monkeys. The researchers observed that coherencies similar to those entities perceived according to *gestalt* logics are constituted when the brain rhythmically coordinates vibrations of various areas. "Neurons responding to the components of faces (e.g., eyes, nose, mouth) synchronized their responses when the arrangement of these components was such that the animals recognized a face; however they did not synchronize when the components were scrambled or presented in a way the animal deemed incompatible with the appearance of a normal face."⁶⁴ As the old *gestalt* theory in Frankfurt had shown approximately a century before, it is easier for shapes to emerge from fields if we who perceive the world move in relation to these fields. Constant movement is a precondition for perceiving complex *gestalt* figures, as today's supposedly fidgety children seem to know well. While Bernard Stiegler sees them as nervous wrecks in front of manipulated monitors, their behavior perfectly complies with newer psychology, which advises us to repeatedly change frames and levels of viewing through constant movements in order to make sense of the

world. Observers can assume that they are not just nervous, but actually training to see out of the corners of their eyes. Norbert Wiener once suggested shaking a machine in case it did not work—and with Wiener it is justified to include animals and probably adults and children.⁶⁵ The children diagnosed with ADHD by Stiegler and Lovink might just be shaking themselves in order to distill perceivable objects out of the masses of data that make up images on the Internet. Whether this reaction is pleasant or unpleasant can hardly be determined. Getting used to new media cultures always seems to imply a lot of nausea and vertigo, as pre-cinematic experiences indicate, like those of the Hale's Tours, but also laboratory experiments with Wilhelm Wundt or Hugo Münsterberg in the service of perception theory.

Newer psychology argues that seeing and hearing are dependent on constantly changing one's situation in space. If the images of the world change, then the brain—and ultimately the mind—will alter its attitude towards the field of vision. "A cell in the primary visual cortex that

is sensitive to orientational information changes the amplitude of its response not only when the orientation of a contour changes, but also when there is variation in its position, contrast or extension."⁶⁶ In a way, Merleau-Ponty's observation that a "certain philosophy" emerges "particularly in the age of cinema," could also be applied to the new psychological model and the corresponding practices of cinematic perception on the Internet. A common aesthesis between media and psychology emerges simultaneously. While neuropsychologists study irritating amounts of processed data in order to describe corresponding perceptive patterns and behavior, film perception deals with the same kind of data organization as information within online cinema, that could be considered either as images-to-be or as fragmented meta-data. The digitized brain has to make up its mind, taking its time, switching levels, before it decides which *gestalt*, background or movement can be coherently distinguished. In both historical cases, behavior is not limited to a defined space, but rather it describes the problem of an attitude within an os-

59) Wolf Singer, "Der Beobachter im Gehirn," in *Der Beobachter im Gehirn. Essays zur Hirnforschung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2002), p. 150 (translated from German).

60) See Stiegler, *Die Logik der Sorge. Verlust der Aufklärung durch Technik und Medien* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2008), pp. 118–123.

61) Singer, 2002, "Beobachter im Gehirn", pp. 156–157 (translated from German).

62) See Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film. The Redemption of Physical Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 31.

63) See Wiener, *op. cit.*, pp. 181–203.

64) Singer, 2010, "Neocortical Rhythms," p. 164.

65) Norbert Wiener, "Kybernetik (1948)," in Bernhard Dotzler (ed.), *Futurum Exactum. Ausgewählte Schriften zur Kybernetik und Kommunikationstheorie* (Vienna and New York: Springer, 2002), pp. 13–29. "What do we do with a machine when this kind of an accident [oscillation between two states, U.H.] occurs? First, we try to delete all of the information in the hope that the problems will not appear again with other data when the computer is rebooted. If this does not work and the error cannot be fixed, then we shake the machine..." (p. 22, translated from German).

66) Singer, 2002, "Beobachter," p. 157 (translated from German).

cillating topology in a field of vision. The difference between old and new cinema is that in a projection hall the number of others watching is known and their reactions—except in comedies—are mostly muffled, while on the web audiences consist of countless reactions, albeit deferred, shared with anonymous other users using the same programs. Only after choosing to look at, to stop, to repeat while watching films on the Internet, does the audience realize that they are an active part of a structure. The procedures involving our own subjectivization have become far more complicated in new cinema and probably require “a considerable amount of time” to process.⁶⁷

Neurophysiology as well as media theory will have to search for solutions to describe the complexity and disparity of this new form of inattentive and distraught perception, beyond simply dismissing it as ADHD. The researchers in Frankfurt propose that localities of the brain's cortex are not simply affected by stimuli coming from the environment, but that transmissions of forms, figures, images and sounds stimulate a set of different areas in the cortex that will, depending on rhythmic resonance, form unities and coherence. Areas responding to common vibrations and their harmonics constitute or activate a coherent impression of the world.⁶⁸ It is not through localization and association, as was assumed around 1900, but through resonance in topologies, through corresponding frequencies, that a relation of mind and matter is established. This allows for perceptual worlds to be interlaced, looped and connected in feedback processes, in complex phase relations, in phase-

locking loops.⁶⁹ In hypothesizing a new model of brain functions, Wolf Singer writes, “This concatenation of rhythms offers the attractive option of establishing graded correlations between neuronal assemblies of different size, thereby encoding nested relations. Such encoding is required for the representation of both composite perceptual objects and composite movement trajectories.”⁷⁰

Images, in this sense, are relational states in an oscillating space. Rhythmic and vibrational processes establish a perceptual structure, which lasts over a period of time until perception makes up its mind to find another vibrating or vibrant correspondence that is more probable. The same can be said for grasping film-like images between the logic of the web and older film formats that rely on reflected light, a defined surface, camera movements and montage. In the perception of films online, we resonate with a cinema of the future, trying to catch its vibrations beyond coherent and material images. Or, as an Australian translator of *La Jetée*, probably a surfer himself, put it for the protagonist between the times: “... he eventually caught some waves of the world to come.” In this spirit of surfing, the forces and forms of film production and perception on the Internet should be observed.

Translated by Allison Plath-Moseley

67) *Ibid.*, p. 150.

68) “Precise synchronization of discharges is often associated with an oscillatory patterning of the neuronal responses.” Singer, 2010, “Neocortical Rhythms,” p. 162.

69) *Ibid.*

70) *Ibid.*

Movable Images on Portable De

“I, too, used to be a fanatic about such things. But... not anymore, no.”¹

Pedro Costa

WATCHING MOVIES ONLINE

I will be writing about a simple thing only: the new online culture (and emerging market) of what we traditionally call movies, including the discourse around them. I do not want to define this term here; let me just say that I refer to a certain configuration of social, technical and aesthetic practices that came to be at the center of what might be called a cinephilic age; the movies with a capital M, The Movies. This is not about contemporary forms of digital image production such as cat content memes, datamoshing experiments and all the other contributions to a new Do-It-Yourself video culture on platforms from *Vimeo* to *YouTube*. Instead,

my question is (Movies) in the such is becoming in almost all f producing a film v

be considered an ancient and rather quaint practice. The fact that both the film image and its projection are going digital in their everyday use is and has to be implied in everything that follows.

Film museums will soon be the only places where old devices for projecting light through analog filmstrips still exist. At the same time, many film archives have already entered into a process of transferring parts of their collection to digital media. Movies have always been migrant, of course: physical copies had to be struck and sent and transported and projected and returned. This process will die out as movies, by dint of their digitization, are turned into a more fundamentally migrant art. They are no longer located and locatable in a single place. Large parts of what is considered the core of movie history have been copied into their own digital versions, on DVD, on Blu-ray and more frequently in all kinds of files that are available on purely digital online sources. These sources include commercial sites like *Hulu* and *Netflix* to file-sharing communities and streaming link ag-

1) That's what Pedro Costa said when confronted with a horrendous projection of one of his short films at the *Rencontres Internationales* festival in Berlin in July 2011. David Hudson reports, and continues: “He added that just the night before he'd downloaded an early Renoir and, even for all its splotchy pixels and the tininess of the window on his computer screen, it was a better viewing experience than many a film he'd seen at Cannes projected under the most ideal conditions.” (<http://davidhudson.tumblr.com/post/7196410286/im-retired-pedro-costa-repeated-last-night>).