Mapping moving media: film and video

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Violent Features

Supervision and Subversion' – so could one, in a Foucauldian manner, formulate the tensions between these media interests regarding vision by means of modern technology.
Siegfried Zielinski, Interview by D. Senior, 2006

Introduction

In David Cronenberg's film *Videodrome* (1983), video is a very dangerous medium. It causes brain tumors, hallucinations, and murderous intent in its viewers. Malicious videotapes send out invisible signals, which slowly manipulate the people who watch the video images. When Max, the film's protagonist, falls under the spell of such a hazardous videotape, he is no longer safe in front of a television screen. Because ever since video infected his mind, he can be touched and hurt physically by the videos he watches. Max seems, for instance, to be eaten alive by a video image when his head disappears momentarily into a large mouth which appears on a television screen. In a later scene, Max is again watching a videotape when the form of a hand suddenly emerges from the flat and grainy surface of the screen. The hand is holding a gun. The male protagonist is shot by a video image.

In *Videodrome,* video's malignant powers may seem extraordinary and highly imaginary; yet the film doesn't depict the medium in an entirely unheard of way. Cronenberg's film fits in with a widespread tendency to portray video as a violent medium. Although the victims of the medium are mostly shown to be the filmed instead of the viewing subjects, harmful characteristics of video are regularly pointed out by both theoretical texts and visual objects. When the medium is theorized in relation to the surveillance practices it serves, it is frequently considered to be a tool of oppression and control, with the camcorder functioning as a "source […] through which the power

exercised by the surveilling gaze circulates" (Renov and Suderberg 1996: xv). That filming someone with a video camera can be an aggressive act is also exposed by many videos posted on Internet sites such as YouTube. In amateurish cell-phone shot videos that show fights and beatings, the act of recording can violate the victims as much as the blows, punches and terms of abuse which are unleashed. The short clip *Bully gets beat up* (2008), for example, shows how a young man tries to fend off his attackers by defending himself against their provocative insults, shoves and hits, as well as their video camera which is filming him up close.

Video is not the only lens-based medium the aggressive or harmful traits of which are often brought to the fore. It has two allegedly violent ancestors: photography and film. The lethal effects of video in *Videodrome* can, for instance, be traced back to Susan Sontag's comparison of photography with murder in *On Photography* (1979). Although Sontag asserts in her book that – unlike video in Cronenberg's film – photography doesn't really kill, shoot, or rape, the act of taking a picture should certainly not be understood as an innocent deed: "To photograph people is to violate them" (Sontag 14). The metaphors of murder, hunting and rape, so often used to indicate the violent character of photography, are also frequently applied in discussions of film. Especially the filmed female subject is often said to be assaulted or shot by the film camera (Weinstock 41). In some instances, figuratively-used terms such as murder and rape are shown to apply to the act of filming in a more literal sense. Women are for example stabbed to death with a film camera in Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* (1960). As in *Videodrome*, a lens-based medium has lethal consequences in Powell's film.

The capacity to act violently is ascribed to lens-based media by a large body of works, of which the abovementioned films, videos and texts form only a small part. These specifications stand in stark contrast to some of the more utopian, positive specifications of film and video discussed in the previous chapter. The negative evaluations of film and video that will be the subject of this chapter suggest that the two media are "Janus-headed": on the one hand, they create, help, and relate subjects, but on the other hand they are involved in hurting, oppressing, and harming their users – sometimes simply by enabling users to hurt or oppress each other. I contend that the negative specifications of film and video dominate the more positive views of the two media. Even objects which do not explicitly confirm or expose the violent sides of film and video can nevertheless respond to the more negative side of the lens-based media by trying discard or work against it. Near the end of this chapter I will, for instance, discuss how feminist films (e.g. Potter 1979, Akerman 1975) as well as videos (by, among others, Johanna Householder and b.h. Yael) aim to overcome misogynist film conventions in different ways.

While film and video frequently (self-)reflexively work against, expose or confirm the harmful characteristics of each other's or their own medium, the aggressive features of one specific other, third medium need to be taken into account if the violent effects of film and video are to be fully understood. In previous chapters, media such as literature, painting, sculpture, and television functioned as interlocutors of film and video, as their

similarities and differences with the two lens-based media shaped the specification of film and video. In this chapter, photography will play a pivotal role in outlining the differential specificity of film and video. However, the photographic medium is more than a related, specifying interlocutor; it is the ancestor of the two lens-based media. What is more, as my previous reference to Sontag's *On Photography* already suggested, the fact that photography is of such a decisive influence on film and video becomes most of all visible within specifications of the three lens-based media dealing with the violent effects of photography, film, and video. Although the harmful features of the photographic apparatus as well as photography's stilled images differ in many ways from the moving images and mobile cameras of film and video, the two last-mentioned media generally relate in one way or another to the violent heritage of their progenitor.

As I will show in this chapter, this relationship between film and video, and their joint ancestor takes many forms. Some videos and films that will be discussed in this chapter (e.g. Mark Romanek's *One Hour Photo,* Paul Schrader's *The Comfort of Strangers*) expose and specify photography as a violent, objectifying medium which stimulates aggression. Other films and videos under analysis (e.g. Fiona Tan's *Facing Forward* and *Countenance,* Michael Haneke's *Caché*) show how the two younger lens-based media form a continuat ion of photography's harmful abilities, and aim to overcome this violent legacy by way of video-specific or cinematic features such as editing techniques, the movement of their images, or a medium-related *dispositif*. In these instances, films and videos specify film and video as media that are able to unravel and possibly overcome the aggressive impact of their predecessor. On the other hand, whether self-critical or not, many films and videos – from anonymous juvenile YouTube clips to self-reflexive art films such as Samuel Beckett's *Film* – lay bare the specific, typical harmful capabilities of their own medium. These specific capabilities become all the more noticeable when the two media are contrasted with photography. Although the violent effects of film and video often resemble photography's objectifying tendencies, comparisons of photographic practices and abilities with the media of film and video in this chapter will demonstrate that many medium-specific conventional as well as technological differences can be detected between the modes in which each of the three media violate or hurt human subjects. Mapping the similarities and differences between photography's aggressive sides and the distinct, medium-specific violent features of its lens-based "offspring" will complete the portrayal of film's and video's respective Janus heads which already started in the previous chapter.

4.1 Objective Representation

In many respects, this chapter hinges on the idea of "soft determination" I discussed in the previous chapter. Without overlooking the reciprocity between a medium's physical base and the human subjects who apply and shape this base, I will focus on the (violent)

effects which the material, technological structures and apparatuses of the three lens-based media have on their users; their viewers, the subjects represented in their images, as well as the producers of photographs, films, and videos. For the question of how film, video, as well as photography are able to hurt their users cannot be answered without addressing the effects of the media's technological abilities and material forms. How does being turned into a still or moving visual object affect the subject? Does this literal objectification affect one's subjectivity? Does it matter if this image is made of paper or consists of projected light? Is one's subjectivity violated when one's images are taken (away) or broadcast instantaneously without permission? Can we possess another person in the form of a photograph, or a video? Why is the pointed camera understood as aggressive or oppressive? Can camera movements intimidate, touch, or violate the filmed subject?

However, this attention to the material and technological abilities of the media in question goes hand in hand with a concept that will redirect attention to the conventional layers of medium specificity and medium specification, namely, the concept of *discourse*. As will become clear in the following chapter, many of the violent features of film and are tied to specific discourses; scientific, medical, colonial, racist, orientalist, ethnographic, disciplinary, and misogynist discourses. My understanding of the concept of discourse is based on the work of Michel Foucault, who has defined discourse as a group of statements; "an entity of sequences of signs in that they are enouncements (*enoncés*)" (Foucault 1972: 141). For this philosopher, a group of statements is a discourse insofar as they belong to the same discursive formation (117). A discursive formation is a group of statements in which "one can define a regularity (an order, correlations, positions and functionings, transformations)" (117).

As Stuart Hall puts it in his discussion of the Foucauldian term, as a group of statements, a discourse "provides a language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular historical moment […] Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language" (Hall 1997: 44). By producing specific forms of knowledge, discourses work to govern and empower certain understandings of the subject, while ruling out or delegitimizing others (Procter 60). For Foucault, discourse is therefore inseparable from power. Discourse defines as well as produces the objects of our knowledge. It reinforces certain identities already established and creates subject positions. Moreover, the rules and regularities which define a discursive formation display and perform hierarchical relations. Discourse determines what it is possible to say and what cannot be said, what criteria of "truth" are and what is false, who is allowed to speak with authority and who is not, where such speech can be spoken and where it cannot be uttered.

Hall rightly emphasizes that is important to note that the concept of discourse is not a purely linguistic concept. It doesn't only involve language in the narrow sense, but can also indicate thematic choices, types of statements, concepts, (visual) objects, and architectural, spatial forms. The notion of statements which together form of a discourse

can therefore be understood in a very wide sense. In an interpretation of Foucault's concept, Hall moreover argues that since all social practices entail meaning, and meanings shape and influence our conduct, all practices have a discursive aspect. "Discourse is about language *and* practice" (44).

Media and discourses are interrelated in a number of ways. Put briefly: a medium *is* discourse, a medium *produces* discourse, and a medium *is part* of discourse. Firstly, as I pointed out in Chapter Three with the help of ideas by Moran and Green, a medium's specificity is in itself a largely discursive object. It is produced by the discourses which define it. The large body of representations that depict film and video as violent media – including (self-)reflexive films and videos themselves – can therefore be understood as a discursive formation which produces film and video as dangerous objects by representing them as such. However, next to being discursive objects or discursive formations, media are applied in the production of discourse. Film, video and photography produce discursive representations (statements, if you like); films, videos, photographs. The technological possibilities and limitations of specific media, as well as their specific sets of representational conventions, have a decisive influence on the representations they bring forth. The specific structure of media thus influences what can and what cannot be said, and as such, it influences discourse.

What is more, media can become part of certain discursive formations as technological objects. Previously, I stated that the concept of discourse directs attention to the conventional layers of a medium's specificity. However, the concept also brings to light that the technological set-up of a medium's apparatus is in itself inseparable from its discourse. The spatial organizations or material characteristics of media's technologies can be understood as meaningful statements or practices that, like architectural forms, assign specific places and functions to subjects.[112] Lens-based media, for example, create subject positions in front and behind the device of the camera. Such mechanical ordering of looking and looked-at subjects can and has become part of larger discourses involved with the production of knowledge on others, or more accurately, with the production of others. In addition, certain specific discursive specifications of lens-based media have sustained wider discursive formations: they have been posited as technological tools by which we can objectively see, represent and get to know the world. In these instances, discourses on media sustain specific empirical discourses.
Having said this, I will start a more detailed exploration of the relationship between the three lens-based media and discourse by discussing a seminal work on the meaning and impact of some of the first optical, lens-based technologies: Jonathan Crary's *Techniques of the Observer* (1992).

[112] In this respect, the concept of discourse is not incompatible with Williams' opinion that there is no such thing as a pristine, meaningless medium technology outside of social structures. Foucault's concept, however, helps to theorize and analyze the power relations involved in these social structures, as well as the way in which knowledge is produced within social structures through and on media technologies.

Camera Junctions

In *Techniques of the Observer*, Crary states that optical devices such as the stereoscope and the camera obscura should be understood as "points of intersection where philosophical, scientific, and aesthetic discourses overlap with mechanical techniques, institutional requirements and socioeconomic forces" (8). Instead of regarding optical media as technologies which impose themselves on social fields or disciplines, transforming them from the outside, Crary suggests that interplay exists between optical devices and the discursive fields in which they are embedded. On the one hand, the devices determine how the people who use them are able to perceive the world, which in turn influences how they think and act. On the other hand, optical technologies are envisaged, applied and shaped in certain ways by the discursive contexts into which they enter.

This interplay between optical medium and discourse can be noted in the position of the camera obscura in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Crary writes that from the late 1500s onwards, the apparatus of the camera obscura was highly influential on discursive explanations of human vision, as well as on representations of the relationship between an observing, knowing subject and an external world. Through the model of the camera obscura, the observer was defined as an isolated and autonomous subject. Hidden in the dark confines of the camera, the spectator was withdrawn and cut off from the outside world. This world could, however, be viewed by the observer inside the camera obscura's black box, for the camera was considered to be a device that created a perfect representation of the exterior reality. The observer didn't have any influence on this representation and therefore remained invisible to the camera's projection. The monocular, mechanical and disembodied apparatus of the camera obscura was believed to offer an entirely undistorted, objective image of the world. Human vision was modeled on the camera obscura's infallible, disembodied way of representing the world. The act of seeing was sundered from the physical body of the observer, vision was decorporealized.

Although the camera obscura was an influential force in the crystallization of philosophical and scientific discourses on human perception, the camera was not necessarily the origin or instigator of these ideas. Rather, the camera obscura can be understood as concomitant or even subordinate to the discourses it seems to have enforced. The fact that the camera obscura was glorified as the perfect form of objective perception in the seventeenth and eighteenth century depended in part on surrounding discourses concerning perception and knowledge. Important seventeenth-century thinkers such as René Descartes considered the bodily senses as deceptive and therefore inadequate in gathering veritable knowledge about the world. Hence, a more disembodied, objective view of reality was pursued. What is more, many philosophers of the enlightenment, for instance David Hume and John Locke, insisted on distance and division between interiorized subject and exterior world as a pre-condition for knowledge about the latter. The camera obscura, with its disembodied lens and dark

interior, was used as a model by which these particular modes of thought could be further refined, explained, authenticated, and legitimized. Hence, this optical device was not so much an origin of ideas, but indeed a point of intersection at which discourses and technological aspects overlapped and interacted.

Crary's idea of interplay between medium and discourse, as well as his description of the camera obscura paradigm, are important with regard to the first violent capacity of photography, film, and video which I will discuss in this chapter: the capacity of objective registration. Before explaining why objective registration is a violent capacity, let's consider why objective registration is understood as a capacity of the three lens-based media at all. For these media do register the world in front of the lens in a fairly automatic way, the images produced are by no means transparent or neutral representations of reality on which the photographer or camera operator has had no influence. The quality of objective representation is thus not intrinsic to the technology of photography, film, and video. Yet, the quality is frequently attributed to, or recognized in the media by those who use and view them (Mack 1991). How can this be explained?

First of all, many photographs, films and videos give the impression that they represent reality "as it really is" because formal devices that create a reality effect are applied in their images. As discussed in Chapter One, these formal devices are medium-specific and they change over time. For instance, video nowadays creates a reality effect when its images look grainy and wobbly, but these devices were once more specific to film. However, even apart from these reality-effect producing devices, images produced by the three lens-based media are by convention frequently understood as perfectly transparent registrations of reality as it appeared in front of the lens. Moreover, the person looking through the lens of the camera is now often defined as a detached onlooker, at a distance from the world on view, invisible in the produced images. What becomes noticeable here are some striking similarities with ideas on the camera obscura, which was also believed to transparently represent the world and to create an isolated, invisible observer.

On the one hand, it is not surprising that the media of photography, film and video are thought of in ways resembling seventeenth and eighteenth century thought on the camera obscura, as the old and new cameras are alike in many technical respects. One of the most prominent similarities between their apparatuses is that they all consist of a single lens that projects an image inside the camera's dark interior. On the other hand, it *is* remarkable that the paradigm of the camera obscura can still be recognized in many ideas about the capabilities of photography, film and video. For the most important idea in which the camera obscura was embedded – the idea that the world can be perceived and represented in an entirely objective and detached manner – was already questioned in the same century in which photography was invented, and it has been repeatedly undermined in the century that followed. However, in spite of the fact that thoughts on vision and representation have changed, the paradigm of the camera obscura still seems to influence the way photography, as well as the media of film and video, are

viewed. Viewed, that is, from the distinct moments the three media were introduced, until today.

The fact that the capacity of objective registration is not intrinsic to the three lens-based media, but is attributed to them by those using and viewing the media, doesn't mean it is of no influence. In fact, their presumed to capture reality objectively has done much harm. Especially the alleged objectivity of photography and film has caused damage when it was used within oppressive, harmful practices. The previous phrase already indicates that the supposedly objective representation by the media is not violent in itself; it only functions aggressively when it is applied in particular ways within specific practices, discourses, or disciplines. Crary's idea of the interplay between the optical medium and the discursive fields in which it is embedded is of use here, because the violent effect of photography and film's presumed objectivity arises precisely from the interplay between the media and the specific fields in which they operate.

Two fields in which photography and film have played an important part ever since their arrival are medicine and science. In some historically and socially specific scientific and medical discursive practices, moreover, the two media were used as tools for objective representation. While this use sustained and confirmed specifications of photography and film as infallible reality-reproducing media, their presumed objectivity in turn confirmed and sustained the objectivity of those medical and scientific practices, as well as the truthfulness of their findings, and the superiority of their ideas. These findings and ideas, underpinned by photography and film, were not innocent or neutral; they often considered negative notions of other human beings who were turned into an object of scientific or medical investigation.

One of the medical practices in which photography was used as an objective tool that sustained the objectivity of the practice itself is the neurological study of hysterical women in the nineteenth century. As Ulrich Baer argues, the spatial relationship photography creates between photographer and photographed contributed to the apparent objectivity of this strand of medicine: "When the camera's *objective* (its lens) is positioned between doctor and patients, the photographic set-up offers the illusion of objectivity – the empirical existence of an objective distance between observer and observed that the medical establishment had long sought" (33). Nineteenth-century medical treatment of hysterical females was highly misogynist; the women were regarded as sexually deviant, manipulative freaks who could best be withdrawn from society and placed in mental hospitals. A famous head doctor of such a mental hospital in Paris – Jean-Marie Charcot of the Salpêtrière hospital – used to expose his hysterical patients to the world in his well-known lecture series, where everyone could come and gape at the incredible antics of the hysterics. The same doctor – together with many of his contemporary colleagues – sought to establish the positivist and objective quality of his work by linking it to the "guarantees of inherent veracity" he found in photographic images (Baer 33).

That the interplay between the presumed objectivity of photography or film and certain discourses in which they are embedded can result in the harmful objectification of human subjects can also be noted in the images produced by nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Western ethnography, with the colonized other as the object of representation. In order to provide a more detailed example of the abovementioned process of interplay, I will look more closely at this ethnographic use of photography and film in the following sections. Although the two media have both served the similar objectifying scientific discourse that once dominated the discipline of ethnography, the manner in which they are able to do so differ in important respects.

Picturing the Other

> *What we have been missing is this: that the photographic machine should unite itself definitively with the hypsometer, with thermometer, with the sextant, in this ideal conquest of the Dark Continent; that the reproduction of the panorama, of the figure, of live nature and of still life, […] should accompany the determination of climate, of relief, of situation*. (Cordeiro, in Moraes 1885: vii)

The above sentences from an introduction to a nineteenth-century book of ethnographical photographs convey some historical scientific ideas on photography. First of all, the medium is considered to be a tool by which knowledge of reality can be obtained. Whereas instruments of measurement such as the hypsometer and thermometer collect numerical data concerning landscape and climate, the photo camera collects visual data on the area by reproducing the objects appearing in front of the lens. Later in his introduction, Luciano Cordeiro underlines the definition of photography as an objective means of recording and researching by arguing that "the positive finality" is vaunted over "the eyes, the brain, the word" which have a fatal flaw in that "they impose themselves on the reproduction […] and forcibly modify the reproduced objects." By contrast, the camera reproduced something "not as it is seen, but as it is" (vii).[113] [114]

A second nineteenth-century view of photography expressed in Cordeiro's text is that the medium is of use in the "conquest of the Dark Continent." According to Cordeiro and many of his contemporaries, the "ideal conquest" of Africa would take place through the knowledge of the continent as gathered by, amongst other scientific devices, the photo camera (Hartmann *et al.* 10). The idea that photography would help in conquering Africa by European countries clearly indicates the relationship between ethnographic

[113] Luciano Cordeiro was a cartographer who founded of the Lisbon Geographical Society in 1875. The aim of this foundation was to map the world according to Portugal's centrality. The knowledge gathered by the society was not strictly cartographic; anthropological knowledge was also highly valued. The society can be regarded as an important instigator of Portuguese anthropology and ethnography because it encouraged and supported these disciplines in many ways.

[114] Also quoted in, and translated by Hartmann *et al.* 1998: 10.

photography and colonialism. Photographing the other was used in the process of taking possession of the other. However, in contrast to what Coreiro believed, the conquest wasn't enabled by photography's production of veritable knowledge through transparent, objective images of the world and its inhabitants. It was supported and justified by specific, highly constructed, Eurocentric images of the other that ethnographic photographs produced. The harmful effect of these images did not lie solely in their biased and racist representation of African human subjects, but was also caused by the fact that they were nevertheless understood as true and real by the public because they were delivered by the trustworthy medium of photography.

As Hartmann (1998:17) notes, one of the most important acts carried out by Western ethnographic photography in colonized Africa is the "typicalization" of African human subjects. Diversity within African cultures, as well as differences between African individuals, were smoothed over by reducing one and all to a surveyable, categorized number of tribal types, fostering a distinction between the homogenous tribal other and the individualized West (Hartmann 16). Many ethnographic photographs repress the diversity of others by representing Africans in large groups. For example, a conventional form of nineteenth and early twentieth-century ethnographic photography was the panoramic image in which a long horizontal row of indigenous people was lined up, often in half a circle so that as many people as possible could be shown by the photograph. Although some differences can be discerned between the small human figures standing side by side facing the camera, the composition of such photographs mainly stresses that these people are one group. It is their sameness – not their diversity – that is stressed by the images.

The artificiality of these group portraits can be further explained with the help of a photograph from *The Native Tribes of South West Africa* (1915), a key ethnographic publication which combined text with photography to represent Namibia's black populations. The panoramic photograph in question shows a long row of people from Ovamboland, a large region in Namibia. In the photograph, a variety of groups and tribes from the region stand side by side, carrying with them and on them signs of this diversity, such as costumes and crafts. Yet, they are displayed and photographed as one putative tribe (Hartmann 17). What is more, notes by Cocky Hahn, the photographer, reveal that he had had quite a hand in the staging of this image, as well as in other ethnographic photographs of this group. In fact, Hahn had gathered the various people in the photograph in order to organize an ethnographic show. Many academics were invited to do scientific field research at this arranged fair-like spectacle.

> I *am taking down* about 120 Ovambos (all the tribes being represented), men and women in full tribal dress. A typical Ukwanyama kraal is to be erected, and efundula dance is due *to be staged* and a Ukwanyama war dance with tom-toms. There will also be *sideshows*, blacksmiths, coppersmiths, basketworkers, [...] woodcarvers, etc etc, also a big *display* of curios (Hahn 29, emphasis added).

The photographer's intention to stage a "dance with tom-toms" and to show "blacksmiths, coppersmiths" and the like, points at a second conventional form of ethnographic photography around 1900. In contrast to the static panoramic group portraits, these kinds of photographs show indigenous people in their allegedly natural surroundings, while performing typical rituals or carrying out their daily business without overtly posing for the camera. The photographer's presence is entirely invisible in these pictures. However, the apparent naturalness of the images is, of course, a construction. The long exposure times demanded that the subjects of the photographs remained entirely still while, for instance, mending baskets or carving wood. Moreover, as Hahn's text proves, such typical activities were often staged.

Like the group portraits, the images of other people in their so-called natural condition contribute to what I have called the typicalization of colonized human subjects. One particular type that is most often created by this form of ethnographic photography is the savage, whether noble or not (Harris 21). By convention, clothes, cities, and mechanics are absent from most of these photographs. The cultural other is photographed naked, preferably while performing simple, unskilled manual labor with primitive tools. The unclothed body of the other is furthermore presented as a part of nature. Harris explains how this trope of the naked body in nature defined colonized subjects as savage:

> In the interaction between [ethnographic] photographic images and colonial discourse, it was the colonized subject's body rather than speech law or history that was the essential defining characteristic of "primitive" peoples. They live, in this view, in their bodies and in natural space, but not in a body politic nor in meaningful historical time. The body, particularly when depicted as part of nature, is opposed to culture and civilization. Thus "black" became natural, unclothed and savage, while "white" was cultured, clothed and civilized. (21)

Besides in photographs with a natural backdrop, the body was also presented as the essential defining characteristic of "primitive" peoples in so-called anthropometric photographs. Those pictures show parts of the colonized other's body, focusing particularly often on the genitalia, as well as face and skull structure. The photos were used as allegedly scientific support for racist evolutionary theories; they were believed to demonstrate European physical superiority in a human hierarchy of development (Harris 22).[115]

The subjugation, categorization and objectification of the photographed subjects becomes especially clear when anthropometric images are viewed in a series. A set of

[115] Anthropometric "racial science" measurement also played an important role during the Nazi regime in early twentieth-century Europe. Besides photographs and film, many plaster casts (masks) where taken of the people under examination. See for instance "The Nazi Period Collection of Physical Anthropology in the Museum of Natural History, Vienna" by Margrit Berner (2009).

different photographs of one and the same human being shows how the body of the subject on view was, as it were, dissected with the camera; the head, the face, the mouth, the torso, the legs, and the genitals are all framed in different images. Moreover, many body parts are photographed multiple times, each time showing a different side of, say, the head or torso. Paradoxically, the large number of photographs needed to properly map one body undermines the understanding of photography on which the anthropometric project was based. The photographs of all the different body parts reveal that the medium fails as tool of objective representation, and is inadequate in showing reality "as it really is." For that reality is flattened, halted, fragmented and framed when photographed.

Importantly, the victims of ethnographic and anthropometric representations are not merely the photographed subjects. For the photographs of one or more "natives" were used to function as objective proof of the inferiority of black people or Africans at large, and thus negatively affected more people than just the photographed ones. The act of violation cannot be attributed to a single agency either. Of course the ethnographic photographer counts as a perpetrator, but then again the tool he used, his photo camera, is equally guilty, for it enabled him to objectify the people he shot. Moreover, the photographer and his "extension" were both shaped by harmful ruling discourses. The colonial ethnographic discourse and the accompanying representational conventions were probably so normal to most contemporary photographers that they saw no harm in the pictures they took. In addition, the violent impact of photography's assumed objectivity arises from the medium's interplay with the scientific and highly discursive field of ethnology in which the medium was used. As will repeatedly become clear throughout this chapter, photographer/camera operator, medium and discourse together form what is best described as a knot. Although the three aspects should be discerned as different threads (or threats), their harmful strength arises from the fact that they are closely tied up with each other.

Ethnographic Film, in Video

Although movement is not frozen by film images, film shares the shortcomings of photography when it comes to capturing the three-dimensional objects and boundless space in front of its lens. Yet, like photography, film was frequently applied by ethnographers in order to capture the "Dark Continent." What is more, the three conventional forms in ethnographic photography – the group portrait, the "natural" image, and the anthropometric picture – can also be discerned in ethnographic film material. Because film can record movement, it even has some advantages over photography in this respect. Film can, for example, portray much larger groups of people than photography can, because the film camera can pan across a group, and that way show lined up bodies one after another, but still as a whole.

Moreover, unlike photography, film can record the movement of indigenous people while they perform their daily businesses within their natural surroundings. When it

comes to anthropometric mapping, film doesn't have to represent all sides and pieces of the other's body in different still images. Bodies can be captured on film when they are scanned by the camera, or move around in front of the lens so that all sides come within view. Filming bodies may therefore seem less aggressive than photographing them because, unlike photography, film doesn't "dissect" the other's body into fragmented still parts. However, filmic anthropometric mapping is just as degrading and painful to the human subject under examination as the photographic "dissection" of the body.

This degrading impact of ethnographic film is clearly visible in artist Fiona Tan's video *Facing Forward* (1999), a skillfully composed assemblage of a disparate range of colonial film material recorded all over the globe. Most of the archival footage in *Facing Forward* is ethnographic, with anthropometric recordings as ethnography's most extreme and racist form. In Tan's video, these recordings show a couple of naked natives rotating in front of the camera. First, they are filmed *en face* from the waist upwards. After holding a still pose for a while, they all make a quarter of a turn to the left. The simultaneous poses and movements show that the filmed people are clearly subject to the camera and the camera operator, who invisibly and inaudibly orders the subjects in front of the lens to hold still or turn around at his will.

Although the ethnographic film material Tan has sampled in her video piece is in itself visibly degrading to the filmed subjects, the manner in which the artist has selected and edited the archived films brings out the aggressive character of this type of film all the more. It is telling that the medium of *Facing Forward* is video, not film. The former medium is often used to expose, rewrite, or criticize ethnographic film practices. Tan mainly deconstructs the violent discourse of ethnographic film by bringing several moments to light in which ethnographic films themselves undermine the objectification they mostly produce and sustain. Thus, in the footage that Tan has selected and edited, small slippages occur in the anthropometric process of capturing and controlling the bodies in view by way of film. Slippages that, moreover, tend to remain invisible in comparable photographic material.

For example, one thing that seems to slip out of the camera operator's control is eye movement. While the filmed subjects in the anthropometric film sequences in *Facing Forward* are forced to stand still in front of the lens, their eyes turn in many directions. Sometimes, when looks are turned downwards, the eyes express feelings of humiliation. At other times, glances of the filmed subjects at each other, or straight into the camera, function as questions: "What are we doing? And what are we supposed to do now? Why?" Mostly, the agile eyes of the subjects in view seem to indicate agitation and fear, *not* the docile, indifferent acceptation of their objectification which is expected of them by the filmmakers. Another dent in the camera operator's mastery is made by a man in a row of three people who doesn't turn in the right direction when the group is ordered to show yet another side of their bodies. Although this wrong turn may not have been a conscious act of resistance, but rather the result of a misunderstanding or a small

human mistake, it does undermine the authority of the filmmaker. For it shows that the filmed bodies belong to human beings who cannot be fully subjected to the objectifying rules and demands of scientific research.

Besides showing these slippages, *Facing Forward* disturbs and counteracts the objectification and typicalization in a few more ways. Firstly, the convention of portraying the other as a body in nature is thwarted in Tan's video by fragments of tourist-like film.[116] These images of Indonesian city life lack the focus on specific subjects and their typical activities, as is characteristic of ethnographical film. More importantly, they miss the rural setting common in that genre. Whereas the type of the "savage" can be recognized in many of the ethnographical film clips in *Facing Forward,* the tourist film fragments provide a different view of reality: the "others" wear clothes, drive cars, and live in cities, too.

Another important counteractive type of film fragment in Tan's video is the counter-shot. Halfway through the video, ethnographical recordings of "savage" men in nature are interrupted twice by a counter-shot of a cameraman who is cheerfully operating a film camera. On his head, he has stuck some of the feathers the other men were shown to be wearing too. The cameraman's attempt to look like the other that fascinates him is a rather comical infantile gesture – he is playing Indian – as well as a form of hostile appropriation. It can be understood as an allegory for the act of filming; like taking the feathers, taking images is a way of taking possession of the other. This ethnographical visual appropriation of the other moreover sustained the colonial appropriation of other people.

The counter-shot is, however, not only meaningful because of the playful feathers on the camera operator's head. It is also meaningful because – in conventional ethnographic discourse as well as in other discourses which apply the media of photography and film as tools of objective representation – the camera operator usually remains invisible.[117] When *Facing Forward* reveals that the film camera is operated by a white, Western, male human subject, the recorded images of "savage" men can hardly be understood as objective representations of reality. For they are shown to be recorded from a culturally specific, gendered and interested point of view.

A final disturbance of colonial ethnographic conventions occurs in Tan's video when a few white men are inserted in a large group portrait of native people. *Facing Forward* starts with images in which a row of indigenous people is panned by a camera from left to right. Before the end of the row is reached, the film switches to footage of a new group of people which is scanned by the camera in a similar fashion. This process is repeated, until after a couple of minutes, the right end of a row is reached. By editing all these

[116] See also Ernst van Alphen's analysis of *Facing Forward* in his *Art in Mind* (2005: 56-61). Whereas I mainly discuss *Facing Forward* in light of colonial ethnographical discourse, van Alphen explains, amongst other things, how Tan's video can be read as a contribution to the idea of migrant identity as an imaginary, identificatory relation to an originating place.

[117] A convention that can be traced back to the paradigm of the camera obscura.

fragments of filmed groups together; Tan has created one very large group out of different filmed ethnographic group portraits. One of the fragments of which the group portrait is composed, however, is not ethnographic; it is a colonial portrait that shows approximately ten white men, surrounded by their indigenous servants. Within the flow of images, these Western colonizers stand out because some of them wear light-colored military uniforms, whereas the other people wear more plain clothes, or no clothes at all. Yet, although they do catch the eye for a moment, in the end the Western men are caught up in the effect large panoramic group portraits have: they homogenize, make everyone the same. Therefore, in *Facing Forward,* the colonizers don't benefit from the homogenizing othering effect of ethnographic group portraits. Absorbed within the form that usually backed them up, colonizers are now represented as being similar to their others: the colonized.

Video Looks: Self-reflexive and Involved

Facing Forward is not the only video in which representational conventions of ethnographic photography and film are breached, as the medium is quite often used to respond critically to the scientific practices of visual ethnography and anthropology. In the case of *Facing Forward,* the choice of the medium of video was not inevitable. Although editing video footage is easier than the montage of analogue film, Tan's piece could have been made with film as well. When it comes to rewriting objectifying conventions of ethnographic photography and film, the benefits of video mostly lie in medium-specific traits, which are largely conventional. One of these traits is the video convention of artists pointing the camera at themselves, and act which has – as we have seen in the previous chapter – a long tradition within the field of video art. Fiona Tan has applied this convention in her video installation *Countenance* (2002) in order to break the illusion of objective anthropological representation. The installation consists of three large black-and-white video projections (initially shot by the artist on 35mm film stock) in which film portraits of individuals or small groups of people are shown in steady succession. For the duration of about one minute, the subjects in question are shown posing patiently for the camera, until their image is replaced with the next portrait. Although the subjects remain as still as possible, small movements are visible in the images.

All portraits, moreover, are preceded by titles which categorize the people on view. Main headings such as "SOCIAL CONSTELLATIONS" or "WORKING PEOPLE" point out in which broad category the portrayed people should be seen, while many subtitles (e.g. newly-weds, flat mates, geriatric home residents, butcher, baker, student, beggar, pensioner) indicate which sub-category they represent. By extensively categorizing social and cultural categories, Tan's project clearly draws on August Sander's photographic portraiture project *Citizens of the Twentieth Century* (1910-1964). Like Tan, Sander portrayed a large number of (paired or grouped) human subjects, each of which stood for a whole type, be it a profession or a social group. With his project, the German

photographer aimed to provide an accurate document of twentieth-century German society.[118]

The most important difference between *Citizens of the Twentieth Century* and *Countenance* lies not so much in the fact that Sander's medium is photography while Tan filmed her images (although this difference between stillness and movement is not without consequences – more on this later on). The most influential difference between the two projects is rather produced by a videomatic convention. Before entering the room in which the projected portraits are screened, the visitor of the installation passes through a room in which a small filmed self-portrait of Tan is shown. While looking into the camera, Tan talks, albeit implicitly, about the project which the viewer is about to see in the next room. The artist tells how her "hungry eye" observes people's faces in the underground and at the market of the foreign city she has moved to, Berlin. In the monologue, Tan reveals her propensity for categorization:

> Almost automatically I try to guess someone's background and origin. I don't stop to wonder what determines which details I notice and which I let slip by. [...] I gather together impressions and snapshots like an amateur biologist in the nineteenth century would collect butterflies. Type, archetype, stereotype. An irrational desire for order; or at least for the illusion thereof. However I am constantly reminded that all my attempts at systematical order must be arbitrary, idiosyncratic and – quite simply – doomed to fail. [...] Could I possibly collect, collate a time in history? Whose history?

Unlike Sander's positivist attitude, Tan's self-portrait attests to a self-reflexive awareness of the shortcomings and impossibilities of systematical ordering. Tan compares herself to a nineteenth-century biologist, but not a professional one. She calls herself an amateur, an enthusiast, "hungry," yet imprecise and unscientific collector of types. The artist knows that there are details she lets slip by, but she doesn't stop to wonder what determines the limitations of her personal observations. For the artist realizes that in the end, the objective registration or collection of a society's historical moment is impossible. Her systematic ordering, Tan concedes, fails as an objective positive fact. For her exposition of types is arbitrary and, most importantly, idiosyncratic.

By way of her self-reflexive monologue, Tan distances herself from older scientific ethnographic, anthropological, and sociological discourses in which lens-based media were applied as tools for objective registration and collection. However, the self-reflexive content of Tan's words is underpinned, or perhaps even enabled, by a

[118] See Mark Godfrey's "Fiona Tan's *Countenance*" (2005) for a more detailed description of Sander's project, as well as an interesting comparison of *Countenance* with other portraiture works of art, for instance by Andy Warhol, Rineke Dijkstra and Thomas Struth.

conventional video set-up; that set-up in which the artist sits in front of her own camera. In addition, the videomatic *dispositif* of the multi-screen installation sustains Tan's self-reflexivity. Showing the monologue in a room adjoining the larger hall in which the Berlin types are projected doesn't merely serve as a prologue to the larger three projections of portraits. For when the visitor moves from the first room to the next, Tan's looped portrait video doesn't disappear. The portrait of the artist, her confessions and doubts, remain present in the room nearby. Although she is no longer visible to the viewer, her voice remains audible. Therefore, the installation will never seduce its viewer to take the represented types as objective slices of social or historical reality; they are Fiona Tan's types.

Video pieces frequently offer alternatives. Tan's *Countenance* is closely related to an important field in which video is used to create such alternatives to the ways in which the "other" is represented by conventional ethnographic photographs and films, namely the field of so-called domestic ethnography. However, whereas Tan categorizes a foreign city which is simultaneously her home, domestic ethnography maps an even smaller personal domain. Michael Renov, who coined the term, explains that domestic ethnography is:

> […] a mode of autobiographical practice that couples self-interrogation with ethnography's concern for the documentation of the lives of others. But the Other in this instance is a family member who serves less as a source of disinterested social scientific research than as a mirror or foil for the self. Due to kinship ties, subject and object are embroiled in each other. The result is a self-portraiture refracted through a familial other. (216)

What Renov fails to mention here is that social scientific research is hardly ever disinterested, and that subject and object are always embroiled in one another, with or without kinship ties. But his definition of domestic ethnography is useful because it indicates the self-reflexivity of these video practices. Like Tan's *Countenance,* domestic ethnographical videos replace the myth that the other is represented objectively and transparently, with the idea that an interested self is always visible or audible in the images she produces of others. Unlike photography and film, video is not used as a tool which offers a transparent view of reality, but as a means by which the observer produces colored images of her personal relations with the world around her.

Mindy Faber's *Delirium* (1993) is a good example of domestic ethnography. In this video, the artist examines her relationship with her mother, who had various mental breakdowns when Faber was a little girl. The artist investigates the illness of her mother by interviewing her, and by, more broadly, looking into the history of women and madness. It is very clear that the tape doesn't serve disinterested scientific or artistic research. Faber states that she is frightened by the pattern of female madness in her family history; her grandmother was mentally ill as well. Especially now that she has

recently become a mother herself, it has become important for Faber to find out if she can break the cycle of family horrors. The object of her investigation is not spared from the reasons for which her daughter films her: “You used to tear up my room. I used to come home from school and you would throw pots and pans at my head. You used to chase me around the house hitting me.” While her mother denies having done any of those things, Faber persists: “You did mum, it’s true. That’s why I’m making tapes about you.”

It is important that these accusations are not made off-screen by an invisible Mindy Faber. She is not making them while filming her mother; she is making them while her mother is filming *her*. As Renov has noted, such an exchange of the camera is a recurrent trope in domestic ethnographic videos. Like the counter-shot of the camera operator in *Facing Forward*, the exchanged camera renders the conventionally invisible ethnographic observer visible. The difference with Tan’s counter-shot in *Facing Forward* or with her self-portrait in *Countenance,* however, is that with an exchange of the camera “the object of the gaze is temporarily allowed to become its subject” (Renov 216). In other words: the filmed other is allowed to temporarily become the camera operator. That the camera swop between filmed and filming subject is more common in video than in film practices can in part be explained by the fact that video cameras can be easily held and operated by almost anyone, while film cameras are heavier, more complicated devices.

In *Delirium,* it is vital that Faber’s mother points the camera back at her daughter. Without this reversal, the video would not have differed from the representations it condemns, that is: (melodramatic) films and (medical) photographs which portray rebellious women as hysterical, thereby keeping them in their passive place, “at a distance” and “imprisoned on the edge,” as Faber says. Her video does run the risk of doing precisely this when it places emphasis, sometimes accusingly, on the mother’s abnormal behavior, such as dancing in the street, running away from her family with a gun, and throwing pans at her children. Mainly because she gets to hold the camera, Faber’s mother is not merely a passive, distanced object of her daughter’s representation, but a subject involved in the act of representing both mother and daughter.

In addition to this application of video as a medium that breaches the barrier between the invisible, detached camera operator and the object of representation, video has also been praised as a medium which gives rise to an involved, intimate and embodied mode of looking through its haptic image qualities (as discussed in Chapters Two and Three). These haptic qualities not so much shape the relationship between camera operator and filmed object; they most of all have an effect on the way in which the viewer of the representation relates to the represented others. In *Delirium,* the grainy quality of Faber’s video footage aggrandizes the hapticity of speckled old black-and-white film images of hysterical women Faber has incorporated into her piece. Through video keying and layering, old film footage of “crazy” women is frequently overlaid with low quality video close-ups of female bodies. The haptic qualities of the video images force the viewer to relate to the peculiar medical “objects” on view in an involved, embodied way. In addition to the fact that the layered yet opaque surface of the scenes emphasizes that

the images on view are not a transparent window, it also stimulates the spectator to look at the suffering, collapsing, or jolting naked bodies of the hysterical women on screen with their own body. Hence, in *Delirium*, the hapticity of the video images precludes a disembodied, distant mode of looking.

The Other Video Look: Detached

In stark contrast with the above specifications of video as a medium that rewrites the history of detached, objective observation to which lens-based media are tied, video is just as often specified as a medium that keeps the detached observer in place. In many discourses, video is pictured as an "ice cold eye" which objectively registers reality, and gives rise to an uninvolved mode of looking at the world.

This view of video can be recognized in two films by Michael Haneke; in *Benny's Video* (1992), and *Caché* (2005). As discussed in Chapter One, the adolescent protagonist of *Benny's Video* watches video all day. He is either looking through the lens of his video camera, or watching videotapes on his TV. Although Benny uses his video camera to see and record reality as it really is, the device has also distanced him from the world in which he lives. The young boy has adopted an unempathetic, detached way of looking similar to the cool and mechanical way in which his video camera registers the world. The extreme result of Benny's unemotional outlook is that he kills a friend without remorse. To Benny, the young girl he murders is not a human subject he relates to, but an object of investigation. First he shoots her with his video camera, than with a cattle gun, "just to see what it's like."

Although not a cold-blooded murderer, the male protagonist of *Caché* is just as much a detached observer as Benny is. This does not become immediately apparent in the film. Middle-aged Georges Laurent is a loving husband and father, who presents a book show on television with an intellectual touch. His life goes by calmly and pleasantly until he receives videotapes on his doorstep on which his house is being surveilled. After a while, he also starts to receive scary childlike drawings together with the videos, which bring Georges to suspect who has sent the tapes. When Georges was six years old, an Algerian boy named Majid came to live with Georges and his parents at their farm. Georges' parents wanted to adopt the young boy, but because Georges told an incriminating lie about Majid, the child was taken to an orphanage. When Georges meets Majid decades later in order to confront him with the video recordings, a stark contrast becomes visible between Georges' bourgeois life and Majid's residence in a poor Parisian suburb. Although Georges is in part responsible for Majid's poverty, Majid denies having sent the tapes. George refuses to believe this, and angrily visits Majid once more. Then, an unexpected event takes place. Without warning or explanation, the Algerian man slits his own throat with a knife.

Majid's puzzling suicide in the presence of Georges, as well as the tapes he has presumably sent him, can both be interpreted as attempts to breach Georges' uninvolved disposition. The vile drama and threatening videos should be able to instill some shock

or fear in this cool onlooker. That Georges is in fact a cool observer is made clear by the film through video, in a flash back (Verstraten 2008: 58). A short while after Majid's suicide, Georges decides to go to bed early after a nasty confrontation with Majid's son. The scene in which Georges goes to sleep is followed by a shot of the farmyard of his parental home. A car arrives, and someone enters the house that is seen from a distance. Seconds later, when a few people walk out the door, a little boy tries to escape from the small group, screaming that he doesn't want to go. It is plausible to assume that these images are Georges' recollection or dream of Majid's removal from the family. It is surprising, however, that the images are bright, whereas earlier on in the film, Georges' childhood memories were shown in pale colors. What is more, the images look like the video recordings of Georges' home: recorded from a distant viewpoint, they steadily frame whatever moves by. The dreamed or memorized images of the farm which are in all probability focalized by the six-year-old George are thus formally similar to the surveillance video images of his house.

Peter Verstraten has convincingly argued that this similarity can indicate two things. Either Georges has internalized the procedure of the threatening surveillance videos he received on his doorstep, and now looks at the past as if it is mediated by video, with a cool eye. Or, Georges has always been an aloof observer. In that case, the outlook of a registering video is a suitable imitation for Georges' way of looking. Either way, in the flashback at the end, the medium of video is used to illustrate Georges' lack of compassion. He is a man with the cool outlook of a registering video, who can perceive things from an appropriate distance and can wallow in the safe enclave of his intellectual class (Verstraten 2008: 58-59).

Together with Georges, the viewer of the film is confronted with her own (dis) engagement. Especially the last shot of the film forces the spectator to wonder if she is perhaps looking at the world in the same manner as the film's protagonist. The long continuous shot shows students hanging around a flight of stairs in front of a school. As the young people are shown from a distance, it is impossible to learn more about them. Their facial expressions or conversations cannot be discerned, and nothing special seems to be going on between the students. The static shot does not seem to be related to the film's story in any way. What is more, because the video-like images of the ordinary everyday scene cannot be attributed to an identifiable internal focalizor, it is the spectator who is put in the position of a frighteningly cold video eye (Verstraten 2008: 59). As the film's credit titles start rolling, the (intellectual art-house) viewer is left with the question of whether she looks at the world in an overly detached manner. Moreover, as the relationship between Georges and Majid is set within a framework of postcolonial issues, the previous question can subsequently be narrowed down by replacing "the world" with "the colonial past." Do I look at the European colonial past with compassion and sense of responsibility? Or do I, like Georges, regard the suffering of the previously colonized other from a distance, without getting involved?

The fact that the film prompts the above questions in the viewer with the help of video

shows that the medium of video does not always create or encourage a detached observer. Although Haneke's films represent video as a medium that registers reality in a detached mechanical manner, it is applied in such a way that the detached observer is encouraged to get involved. The video camera might look with a cold mechanical eye; but this is not a mode of looking that should be adopted by human beings. In *Caché,* film and video together undercut a long tradition in which photography and film were applied as tools of objective representation that allowed the spectator to look at the cultural, colonized other as an object. *Caché* shows how inhumane and violent such a mode of looking really is.

4.2 The Production of Portable Objects

In contrast to objective registration, the capability which will be discussed in this section is not attributed to photography, film, and video by convention. The three media are technically able to produce portable objects, with the word portable indicating that those objects can be held or carried and can be transported through space. As I will explain below, the fact that photographs, films and videos are usually material objects which can be taken in one's hands, and the fact that they are transportable, can have violent consequences, but in different ways.

Before starting with a discussion of the abovementioned violent consequences, it is necessary to point out some differences between the objecthood of photographs, films, and videos. Of the three, photographs are the only objects which can be viewed and held at the same time. Videotapes can be carried, and film reels can be held, but they cannot be viewed at the same time. When their images are shown, videos and films are no longer objects easily handled, as their projection mostly depends on multiple elements such as a cathode-ray tube for video and a screen and a projector for film. Moreover, the projections are not material; they consist of light, which cannot be held as an object in the way photographs on printed on paper can be.[119] As will become clear later on, the objecthood of images can have violent consequences when two conditions are met: that they can easily be carried and that they consist of a material that can be touched and damaged. In light of this, it will come as no surprise that the main focus lies with photography in what follows. Once the violent consequences of photography's objecthood have been discussed, differences and similarities between the objecthood of photographs, films, and videos will outline the specificity of the latter two media in this regard. I am concerned with the manner in which films have specified photography as a medium which stimulates violence through the objecthood of its images

The violent impact of photography's ability to produce objects has been widely men-

[119] Although some theorists insist on the materiality of light, I have decided to call it non-material here because when compared to the paper on which photographs are printed, a stark difference is noticeable between the palpability of the two.

tioned and demonstrated. Thus, Susan Sontag has remarked that photographing people is a violent act because it turns them into objects (1979: 14). This objectification, then, should be understood quite literally; when photographed, a human subject is turned into a disembodied piece of paper which can be held, put in a pocket, pasted in an album or thrown in a bin. A similar idea is visualized by Maurice Benayoun in his digital video installation *World Skin* (1997). Making use of VR technology, the installation gives the static viewer the impression that she is moving through a three-dimensional landscape in which groups of people are engaged in wartime activities. The viewer is handed a special photo camera with which she can photograph these scenes. When the act of photographing is carried out, however, the photographed scene – including the fighting or wounded soldiers – disappears from the world on view, leaving an empty white space. The image which has, as it were, been stolen or cut out from reality by the photographer, is immediately printed on a sheet of paper. Turned into a photographic object, the visitor of the installation can take home a piece of *World Skin*'s wartime reality.

However, although both Sontag and Benayoun point out that the objectification by photography is damaging to the photographed subject(s) and the world in which they reside, it is still necessary to precisely locate and trace the violent impact of this objectification. Who is hurt, how, and why? For one thing, the harm done cannot be understood as literally as Benayoun depicts it, as people do not really metamorphose into a piece of paper when their picture is taken. The violence Sontag attributes to the literal objectification of the photographed subject can also be questioned, because the subject isn't hurt in a physical way when her picture is taken. A person's feelings can be hurt, though, for it can be degrading to appear as an image on a flat, disembodied object because this inanimate object which is supposed to represent a person does not do justice to the relatively large, three-dimensional, moving, living, embodied being that every human is. Photographs cannot grasp these aspects, because they are generally small, flat, static, inanimate, disembodied objects. The limitations of photographic representations, predominantly caused by the fact that they are material objects, are then experienced as confinements of the represented subject, as insulting misrepresentations even.

Yet, it does not necessarily harm a person emotionally or psychologically to be turned into a photograph. Instead of expecting a perfect duplication of reality – an expectation from which the experience of insult largely arises – the limitations of the photographs as objects can be accepted. Then, the objecthood of one's representation can have its upside; it can be quite a pleasant idea to be carried around as an object in a mother's purse or in the arms of a faraway lover. More importantly, in light of mortality, it can be a reassuring idea to be outlived for quite some time by one's photographic images. Although in some cultures photography is feared because it is believed to take something away from the photographed subject, the general idea is that photography leaves both the body and the soul of the subject intact.

Nevertheless, the piece of photographic paper on which a person's image appears is

closely linked to the depicted subject. According to Susan Sontag, photographs function as symbolic images. They are frequently read as signs which stand for those they depict, even if this depiction is recognized as limited or confining. Roland Barthes, however, would disagree with Sontag, as he doesn't primarily think of the photograph as a signifier. For him, a photograph is never immediately distinguished from its referent. As mentioned in Chapter One, Barthes notes that photographs seem to carry their referent with themselves (2000: 5).[120]

Although Barthes' understanding of photography represents the more dominant view of photography, both Sontag's and Barthes' perceptions of the medium explain why photographed people can be said to have been turned into a piece of paper. When photographs stand, as symbols, for the person they depict, the objecthood and disembodiment of the photographs can be read as if they are or were done to the person on view, as acts of objectification and disembodiment inflicted on the real person who lives or lived outside of the frame. When the referent is believed to be part of the photograph itself, the objectification and disembodiment are more literal; the photographed subject is turned into an disembodied object because she is present in this object as its referent. In both possible senses, however, the body of the photographed subject is not really hurt; it remains intact when photographed, even if it becomes part of the picture as a trace. Yet, the objectification of the photographed subject through the objecthood of photographs is often used as a metaphor for forms of objectification that do not leave the body of the subject unharmed, such as rape or murder.

While photography's objecthood is often regarded as a harmful capacity of the medium because it seems to, or is believed to, objectify the represented subject, the ephemerality and fleetingness of video and film images can equally be understood as a violation of the represented subject's body. Consider for instance the following passage on the experience of the (silent) film actor in Luigi Pirandello's novel *Si Gira* (1915):

> With a vague sense of discomfort he feels inexplicable emptiness: his body loses its corporeality, it evaporates, it is deprived of reality, life, voice, and the noises caused by his moving about, in order to be changed into a mute image, flickering an instant on the screen, then vanishing into silence.[121]

The passage hints at the limitations of the cinematic representation, for the sounds

[120] That a photograph is regarded as an object which is intertwined with its referent is for a large part decided by convention; it is how photographs are understood by their viewer. However, Barthes' remark can also be explained by the indexical nature of the medium. Photographs are traces of the object (or subject) from the past by which they were caused, and therefore they seem to carry their referent, their cause, with or within them. This indexicality is not absent from film and video images, yet, as demonstrated in Chapter One, the projected form of these images is more ephemeral than printed photographs. Especially in the case of video, the identity of the medium as physical trace is not self-evident. The indexicality of video images is therefore often pointed out within video images by way of conventional formal devices.

[121] Pirandello, cited in Pierre-Quint (1927: 14-15).

made by the actor are not recorded by silent film. However, the emotions of the actor cannot be explained as feelings of indignation over the inadequacies of his representation. He experiences emptiness and has the feeling that his body evaporates, is killed even, deprived of life. This experience appears to stem from the fact that the film images are so fleeting; the narrator mentions how they flicker for only an instant on screen before they vanish. It seems as if, in the experience of the actor, the transitory character of the film is inflicted on his body. And in a way, of course, his body has become a fleeting film image, because it is caught on celluloid in the same way it would have made a photographic image. Because of their similar technical and chemical support, analogue film and photography have their indexical nature in common. As a result, film images are also often regarded as co-natural with their referent. This is noticeable in the passage from Pirandello's story in which the difference between the actor's real body and its representation isn't marked: the narrator doesn't say "his represented body," but "his body" when he describes how it evaporates through film.

Because of the close relationship, or even intertwinement, between photographic representations and their referents, photographic images are often regarded and treated as if they are real people. When photographs of deceased family members are put in a frame, which is then regularly polished with care, and surrounded with fresh flowers now and then, these acts are not necessarily aimed at the preservation of the image, or at honoring the memory of the person on view. The acts can be intended and experienced by the owner of the picture as if they concern the photographed person itself; they are acts of love and care directed at this person, who liked flowers, and is hence surrounded by them as if he can see and smell them from behind the glass plate of the picture frame. And when the glass plate is kissed goodnight every evening, the kisses are not meant for the object, but for the person it represents or is even believed to *be*. Either way, when a photograph is treated as if it is the real living person of whom it is a depiction, the fact that the photograph is a disembodied object is not regarded as a (violent) disembodiment of the represented subject; it is ignored.

However, ignoring the objecthood of pictures, and hence the objectification of the subject they represent, may have violent effects that are more harmful to the represented subject than being turned into a piece of paper. Before turning to these harmful results, though, it is necessary to consider some ways of handling photographs which are less friendly than the manner I described above. Pictures which stand for those they depict can be used as a way of appropriating someone. When Sontag remarked that photographing people turns them into objects, she continued with "objects that can be symbolically possessed" (1979: 14). Symbolically possessed, that is, because photographed human beings can be "owned" by way of the photographic objects which symbolize them or carry them within. In addition, photographed subjects can be hurt through a violation of their photograph, that is, in the eyes of the beholder who is also the violator. The example of lovingly caressing a photograph as if it were a living human being has a violent equivalent in aggressively touching or damaging a photo which

stands for the person it depicts.

The fact that photographs are usually material objects that can easily be held, touched, damaged and viewed at the same time enables these acts, both the loving and the aggressive ones. Moreover, it also explains why films, videotapes as well as unprinted photographs (such as digital ones on a computer) are less suitable as objects to caress or hurt as if they are human beings. Although those images – consisting of electricity and light – can have haptic qualities which inspire an embodied mode of looking, and sometimes have indexical qualities which physically relate them to their referent, they cannot be held in one's hands. This simple fact is very influential when it comes to the way viewers can relate to these visual representations.

In spite of the fact that the abovementioned ways of taking possession and hurting are aggressive acts, the appropriated photographed subject is not necessarily hurt by it. To be appropriated in the form of photographs by an ill-natured person is a disturbing idea, yet it is not truly damaging to be unknowingly possessed and cut into pieces by, for instance, an obsessed maniac – as long as it is only symbolically, through pictures. Acts of appropriation and violation by way of photographic objects can have violent results though, because they can trigger aggression towards people outside the photographic frame.

Previously, I explained how photographs can be used and treated as if they are the real living people they depict. The representational status and objecthood of the photographs are ignored in such cases; the boundary between photographed subjects and their representations, between referent and image, is blurred. This blurred boundary can have harmful consequences because the terms can become reversed; the act of treating photographs as real people can have as its flip side that real living people be(come) regarded as if they are like their photographic representations; that is, like objects which can easily be possessed and damaged. Things that can be done with or to photographs are then believed to apply to the photographed people in the flesh too. Cutting up a photograph can stand for cutting the photographed person in reality, but it can also give rise to the impression that the living photographed subject can be damaged with the same ease as the photographic object. Or, the less brutal act of owning someone's photograph can come to mean owning the depicted one in person. Such impressions are dangerous when they are acted upon; when violent tendencies do not remain directed towards the pictures but are extended to persons who exist apart from their representations. Such violence can be said to arise from a combination of the fact that the objecthood of photographs is ignored, and of the fact that this objecthood nevertheless shapes the way in which the photographed persons are regarded and related to.

Before turning to cinematic stories that can further illuminate the preceding remarks on photographs as objects, it is important to note that, over the last couple of years, a change in the objecthood of video has taken place. Today, video recordings no longer depend on a bulky apparatus in order to be shown; clips can also be viewed on cellphones. As such, video images can easily be carried and viewed at the same time. Played on a

cellphone, the video images are still composed of light and they still disappear without electricity. Yet, this impalpability and ephemerality become less noticeable because the screen on which the images appear is so small. Thus, the impression arises that the videos can be held and touched as material objects, like photographs. Videos played on a cellphone can therefore function in the same ways as photographs. They can be understood as a symbol or a trace of their referent, and as objects displayed on the small screen of a GSM device, they can easily be carried, held, and touched.

Yet, an important discrepancy lies in the fact that the videos cannot be damaged in the same way as printed photographs can. Apart from erasing them all together, or destroying the telephone which displays them, videos cannot easily be "injured." In contrast to photographic prints, they cannot so easily be cut up or torn apart by hand. A similar kind of untouchability goes for images of videos on tape, films and photographs which are not printed on paper, but which exist only in digital form. The material differences between a sheet of paper and an (electronic) projection on a screen are important in light of the argument that the way that images can be touched or injured may determine the way in which the represented subjects are regarded and treated.

Picturing a Family, Shooting the Father

Within many cinematic stories, the appropriation and violation of photographic objects has non-symbolic connotations that harm the photographed subject. These film stories can be regarded as discourses which produce insight into photography; they specify the photographic medium as a technology the material forms of which lead to or stimulate violent outbursts. In these films, taking pictures is often the precursor to other forms of violence. Disturbed characters first capture their victims in photographic images before they actually capture them physically. Taking possession of them by way of their disembodied representations is followed by taking possession of their bodies through imprisonment, rape or murder. The violence inflicted on the victims is moreover often preceded by the injuring of their photographic representations, which function as a stand-ins for the bodies that will be hurt later on.

An important film in which appropriation through photography is a forerunner of violent escalation is *One Hour Photo* (2002) by Mark Romanek. The film's middle-aged, solitary protagonist, Seymour "Sy" Parish, is a clerk at the one-hour photo service of a department store. Although he carries out his work with great meticulousness, Sy is an imperfect employee in one respect: for over nine years, he has made an extra set of prints of all the rolls he has developed for one particular family. Ever since their son Jakob was born, Nina and Will Yorkin are regular costumers of the photo service. They are however not aware of the fact that Sy, who has no family of his own, collects all their family pictures. Every evening when the department store closes, Sy goes home to his apartment, where no one awaits him. Yet, he is not entirely alone. His place is filled with photographs of the Yorkins. Some of them are placed in frames. Most of them, though, are pinned to the wall of Sy's living room, on which a vast number of pictures together

form an impressive overview of the Yorkins' family life. When he sits in front of this wall at night, while watching television, Sy seems rather content. He is not lonely, he is surrounded by his family.

Sy has appropriated Nina, Will, and Jakob as his family by appropriating their photographs. When he is at home, their pictures function as family members. For Sy, they are what they show, and therefore, they make him feel less lonely, or so it seems. Still, although the department store clerk often does the Yorkins a favor when they visit the photo service, he realizes that he has to remain at a distance because he is not really related to them. However, when he is fired, his obsession with the Yorkins heightens. Sy's idea that they actually are his family becomes stronger. The fact that he owns them in the form of photographs leads to the impression that he possesses the real family living outside of his photo wall as well. Sy no longer merely appropriates them by stealing their photographs, he tries to appropriate them for real by invading their lives. First Sy starts to spy on them, and after a while he approaches them during their weekly routines. He visits a football training session of his "nephew" Jakob, and during a pseudo-coincidental encounter in a coffee corner, he tries to connect with Nina by reading a book she is interested in.

Sy's careful advances turn into dangerous interventions when he discovers that Will is having an affair. "Uncle" Sy is furious about this betrayal. The perfect family he wishes to be part of is falling apart due to the infidelity of the head of the family – a position Sy himself seems to long for in the film. As a retribution, Sy first makes sure Nina discovers her husband's infidelity. Then, he scratches Will's face out of the family pictures on the living room photo wall. This violation of the photographic form is a violation of Will, because in the eyes of Sy, the photograph contains its referent.[122] However, the aggression against Will in the photograph transforms into an act of aggression against the body of the real Will and his mistress. Armed with a large knife and a photo camera, Sy manages to catch the adulterous couple in the act, in a hotel room. He forces them to adopt sexual positions while he takes pictures and threatens them with the knife.

What is interesting about *One Hour Photo* in comparison to more conventional films in which photographs are damaged by obsessive characters is that in Romanek's film,

[122] The manual damage Sy inflicts on the printed photographs stands in contrast to the film's reference to digital image manipulation. The last shot of the film shows how Sy has projected himself into the picture of "his" happy looking family. The status of the image is not entirely clear; it can be an image which Sy has merely imagined. Yet, in the digital age, it can just as well be a digitally manipulated photograph which the protagonist has actually manufactured on a computer. In spite of the uncertain status of the image, the last shot of *One Hour Photo* brings to light that while digital photographs cannot as easily be scratched or damaged in an aggressive physical, manual way as printed analogue images, the fact that things can be added to digital photographs can be pretty ominous too. What is more, as Garrett Stewart argues in his *Framed Time* (2007: 117-118), the final generated image of Romanek's film is telling with respect to Sy's former role as a laboratory technician. Although he loses his job for other reasons in the story, Sy's profession is shadowed by the encroachments of the new technological medium of digital photography. As Stewart points out, the name of the protagonist – Seymour Parrish – can only be understood as a pun that refers to the process of photography's digitalization.

the violation of the photographs isn't followed by physical injury of the photographed subjects. After a short period of suspense in which the viewer is left uncertain as to the outcome of the hotel scene, it turns out that the outraged Sy has applied the knife only as a means of frightening. So, although Sy does physically capture and threaten his victims, he doesn't touch them in the end. When he is arrested for taking the couple hostage in their hotel room, Sy states that all he did was take pictures. Moreover, the viewer learns that the photographs he took do not even clearly show the terrified naked couple. Only meaningless objects such as a light switch or the underside of a sink can be discerned in the images, which proves that Sy has shot the photographs at random.

Although the hostage-taking thus seems rather innocent in retrospect, the act of taking pictures was a very violent deed according to Sy. The protagonist reveals to a police officer how he himself was treated "as an animal" when he was a child, because he was forced to pose for the camera in sexual ways. Moreover, earlier on in the film, Sy has explained that the term snapshot was originally a hunting term, which indicated that animals were killed by random, unaimed shots. Taking pictures of the naked couple posing was thus not a harmless act to Sy; it was a way of turning them into animals, of robbing them of their subjectivity, by way of snapshots. Therefore, in *One Hour Photo,* objectification through photography takes place in two ways. First, the members of the Yorkin family are objectified because they are turned into photographic objects which are appropriated by Sy. This objectification at first sight does not seem to harm them. They willfully turn themselves into objects when they take pictures of their life. The violent effect of this objectification arises from the fact that it allows Sy to appropriate them. This leads to the second, more violent objectification of Will Yorkin. He is objectified by Sy because his picture is taken while he is forced into vulnerable, humiliating positions. In fact, Will is objectified in two ways in the hotel room. Firstly, he is robbed of his subjectivity because he has to do things with his body against his will. Secondly, he is turned into an object of representation by the photo camera. The first objectification aggravates the violent impact of the second, as it is all the more degrading to be captured by the camera when one is naked, ashamed, vulnerable, exposed, and disempowered.

In contrast to *One Hour Photo,* appropriation through photographs is a precursor to lethal, physical violence in *The Comfort of Strangers* (1981), a novel by Ian Mc Ewan made into a film of the same name by Paul Schrader in 1990. *The Comfort of Strangers* tells the story of an English couple, Colin and Mary, who are on a holiday in an Italian city that can be recognized as Venice. One evening, when they are wandering through the city, Colin and Mary meet the Italian bar owner Robert, and later on that night, his disabled wife Caroline. The English couple is invited to spent the night at the palazzo of Robert and Caroline, and is urged the next morning to pay them another visit later on.

Over the next few days, Colin and Mary retreat into their hotel room, which they only leave for a few brief trips. Finally, they again end up at the palazzo. While Robert takes Colin to his bar, Caroline shows Mary the bedroom. Mary is shocked when she sees that

the walls of the room are covered with photographs of Colin, which Robert must have taken when the couple was strolling through the city. She can however not react or warn Colin when he arrives at the house, for Caroline has drugged her tea. Caroline starts to caress Colin, to which he responds by punching her. Robert kisses Colin on the mouth and cuts his throat. Still paralyzed by the drugs, Mary is forced to watch Colin die while Robert and Mary make love in front of his bleeding body.

As in *One Hour Photo,* photographs are taken in *The Comfort of Strangers* as a way of taking possession. And again, the conflation of represented subject and photographic representation plays and important part, albeit in a different way. The protagonist in Romanek's film was blind to the representational quality of the photographs he stole; he regarded the pictures of the Yorkins as real people, not as representations. In *The Comfort of Strangers,* Robert similarly disregards the representational quality of his image of Colin. However, the image in this case is not a photographic image, it is the mental image Robert has formed of Colin. To Robert, Colin is an ideal model of masculinity, the man he would like to be. When Colin is focalized by Mary, it becomes clear that he is not conventionally masculine. When perceived through Mary's eyes, he is depicted as a slender men with fine features, features Mary terms childlike and womanly. Moreover, Colin's ironic response to Robert's misogynist ideas proves that he is hardly the representative of the patriarchal order Robert takes him for. Yet, in the latter's eyes, the tall Briton represents a high position within the hierarchical system that constitutes male identity (Van Alphen 2005: 113), a position Robert himself would like to acquire.

When Robert takes Colin's picture, he thus photographs a figure that already functions as a representation for him. Taking the pictures is an act of appropriation, but not the appropriation of Colin the character, a real person in the novel. Rather, it is an appropriation of an image through images, because what Robert wants to appropriate is the position that Colin-as-image represents according to Robert. In the words of van Alphen:

> Whereas he [Robert] wants to appropriate the position of Colin-as-image – what he stands for – the act of appropriation consists of disembodying the representation: he begins with *taking* pictures of Colin, and ultimately he kills Colin. Destroying the representation of Colin, Robert tries to capture its content. (113)

It is important that, in *The Comfort of Strangers*, photography is used as a way of disembodying. This is relevant in comparison to *One Hour Photo*, in which the objecthood, the disembodiedness of the photographs is rather denied than applied in the process of appropriation. That the photographs are in fact objects which can be stolen and pinned on a wall enables Sy's appropriation of the depicted subjects, but the pictures *are* who they show instead of inanimate pieces of paper in the eyes of the film's protagonist. For Robert, by contrast, the objecthood of photographs *is* important,

because it stands for the actual objectification and disembodiment of Colin in the flesh. Without knowing it, Colin is therefore already metaphorically killed by Robert through photography, before he is truly murdered. As for Robert, he may be blind to the representational status of his own image of Colin, but he doesn't seem to disregard the fact that photographs are representational objects.

While photography is used by Robert to acquire a higher position in the patriarchal order, the medium can also be said to stand for this order in McEwan's novel. Van Alphen has argued that, in *The Comfort of Strangers*, the camera and the taking of photographs are related to a particular mode of looking; the gaze. Van Alphen follows Norman Bryson's definition of the term, that is, as a mode of looking that objectifies or takes hold of the contemplated object; which is of course precisely what the medium of photography does in the hands of Robert. The logic of the gaze can, however, also be recognized in the organization of the patriarchal order, for in this hierarchical order, women are possessed by and subordinated to men. Robert and Caroline are clearly part of this order; their sadomasochistic relationship is based on the violent subjugation of Caroline.

Whereas Robert constantly takes along a photo camera, together with "two-thirds of the adult males" (49) in Venice, Mary and Colin do not do so. This is remarkable, given the fact that they are tourists. It is, however, consistent with the idea that photography stands for the patriarchal order in the novel. The relationship between the British couple is not hierarchical, nor is it based on appropriation. It follows the logic of the glance; an involved mode of looking which does not appropriate but interacts with what it beholds. In the novel, this mode of looking is signified by the motif of the mirror as opposed to the camera and the gaze. With a relationship based on equality and similarity, Colin and Mary embody an alternative order, or rather, a negation of the patriarchal order (van Alphen 2005: 108). Colin and Mary hence do not take pictures, because in *The Comfort of Strangers* their relationship negates the order which photography stands for.

Relocating Violence, Violent Relocations

Whereas the transportability of photographs and videos was touched upon in the previous paragraphs, the focus was mostly on the objecthood of the images. When locating the violent consequences which spring from the ability of the three lens-based media to produce portable objects, more emphasis can be put on the violent effects of portability as in transportability. The fact that photos, films and video images can be moved to another place and spread around can harm the photographed or filmed subject. The objecthood of the image is less important in this line of approach; the harm arises more from the fact that a person's image can be taken away from her and be can viewed when she is not around, than from the fact that she is turned into a material object when photographed, filmed or videotaped. When it comes to transportability, electronic and digital images are the main concern. Precisely because they lack material objecthood, these images are transportable par excellence. Through the digital highway,

they can travel to the other side of the world in less than a second.

Walter Benjamin pointed out the possibly violent effect of the transportability of images in a discussion of film in the pre-digital era. A person's subjectivity is in danger when her representation can be shown at one or more places apart from the subject's own location. In "the Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Benjamin mentions this loss of subjectivity in relation to the film actor. The actor before the camera is overcome by feelings of strangeness, oppression, anxiety, and fear of the apparatus of film. The feeling of strangeness is basically the same kind of estrangement as is felt before one's image in the mirror, according to Benjamin. The difference between the mirror and film, however, is that with film, the reflected image has become separable, transportable. The filmic apparatus will take the actor's shadow, her mirror image, away from her – and expose it in the absence of the performer.

This "abduction" of the actor's image by the apparatus of film instills feelings of anxiety in the actor. But why should it be frightening that one's image is taken to another place? Benjamin provides two answers to this question. Firstly, the subject is robbed of her aura when she is reproduced in the form of film images, because this aura is connected to the here and now of the single and unique living person. In the case of the actor, both the aura of himself and of the character he plays are lost when he is filmed. In the words of Benjamin:

> For the first time – and that is the effect of film – man has to operate with his whole living person, yet foregoing his aura. For aura is tied to his presence; there can be no replica of it. The aura which, on stage, emanates from Macbeth, cannot be separated for the spectators from that of the actor. However, the singularity of the shot in the studio is that the camera is substituted for the public. Consequently, the aura that envelops the actor vanishes, and with it the aura of the person he portrays. (1999: 223)

A second reason why the actor fears the film apparatus is that it transports his image to the public. As consumers, the public represents the market, and this market is frightening. Through his film image, the actor will become absorbed by the market, to which he offers "not only his labor, but also his whole self, his heart and soul" (1999: 225). Besides being reduced to a commodity, the actor is robbed of his self-determination. He cannot grasp or control the market, and therefore he cannot control his position within it. Instead, the market determines him. Capital decides what he does, where and when his shadow performs for the public, and who he is. It can turn the actor into a star, a constructed personality, or a nobody.

Compared to video and photography, the effect of turning subjects into well-known commodities is more common to film images because of the star system which is so typical of the movie industry. However, photography and video have their own share of handing over subjects to the market. Especially within the music industry, video clips

and, to a lesser degree, photographs, have become indispensable factors in gaining fame – and losing self-determination in the process. What is more, not only movie actors or musicians become a part of the market via their images. Practically everyone can become a bankable celebrity when their portrait or home video is picked up by the media or "goes viral" because it was taken in the right way, at the right time, and at the right place. Everyone's image, moreover, can serve as a commodity. A good example is Steve McCurry's now famous picture of a poor Afghan girl, who was photographed when she lived as a refugee displaced by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The well-composed image shows the girl (Sharbat Gula) looking slightly over her shoulder, straight into the camera with piercing green eyes, the color contrasting with the red shawl loosely wrapped around the girl's head.

In "Cover to Cover: The Life Cycle of an Image in Contemporary Visual Culture" (2006), Holly Edwards describes the life cycle of both Sharbat Gula and her image. After the photograph's first appearance on the cover of *National Geographic*, the image of Gula was reprinted over and over again in magazines and books, on calendars, posters, postcards, and so on. While her image became a commodity, and her face became famous, Sharbat Gula did not immediately become a celebrity. She lived an anonymous life until, in 1996, *National Geographic* mounted a campaign to find the Afghan girl. After a difficult search, she was found, interviewed, photographed, and filmed. These new documents and representations of Sharbat Gula's life were either published in *National Geographic* or made available for sale at the magazine's online store. Again, a lot of money was made through the Afghan girl, now a woman.

Images of unknown or ordinary individuals do not necessarily have to become as exceptionally famous as Gula's image in order to function as a commodities. Not every portrait becomes an icon, yet every picture or video sold by a journalist to a newspaper or television station is a commodity. The commodification of one's image can be harmful because, as Benjamin notes, the market in which a commodity functions cannot be controlled. Once a picture enters the market, the represented subject can no longer control what happens to it; where and when it will be shown, and to whom. When the image becomes a popular object, the circulation and exposure can often hardly be stopped.

The subject's loss of control over the circulation and exposure of her photographed, filmed, or videotaped image is not only caused by the domination of the market. It is also inherent to the transportability of photographs, film, and videos. Although films are the least transportable object of the three, either because of the weight and sensitivity of film reels, or the relatively large size of digital film files, the three media have the transportability of their objects in common. Especially with the arrival of high-speed Internet access in the digital era, differences between the transportability of photographs, films, and videos have become negligible: each of the three media objects can be reproduced and sent to the other side of the globe with the click of a mouse.

Once your image is somewhere you are not, you can hardly control what happens to

or with it. This control diminishes even further when your image is at more than one place at the same time. Together with their reproducibility, the mobility of photos, films, and videos enables a rapid spread which cannot be commanded by a single person. Digitalization and the Internet have further contributed to the lightning dissemination of images.[123]

The measure of harm done to a subject by her limited control over the circulation of her representation depends on a number of factors. To be exposed in the form of an image is especially damaging when you haven't given permission for it, or when you are exposed against your will. Moreover, the situation or position in which a person is depicted can determine the gravity of the exposure. When tabloids print photographs of a couple's wedding without their permission, their privacy is violated. But when the same tabloid later on posts a compromising video of the husband having an affair, their privacy is probably violated even more. The intensity of the violation depends on the extent to which what is exposed usually remains hidden, or is supposed to remain uncovered according those depicted. In many cultures, nudity is for instance a precarious object of representation, because the naked body is usually covered. The same goes for grief, which is considered to be a highly private emotion in many societies. In addition, as Mieke Bal notes, showing or circulating images of people without their endorsement is all the more a theft of their subjectivity when they do not get paid, or are not paid in proportion to their exposure (2006: 95). Without compensation, showing images of others is a form of exploitation, especially in light of the fact that "their exposure is someone else's merchandise" (Bal 2006: 95). Video has a dominant role in uncovering things that are supposed to remain hidden, and in secretly stealing subjectivity without compensation. For, we will see that the practice of (secret) surveillance is most dominant within video's field of application.

The harmful effects of the exposure and circulation of a person's image should, moreover, not be understood in emotional or psychological terms only. Next to feelings such as shame, embarrassment or anger, the exposure of pictures can have material consequences. The unfaithful husband, for instance, will probably have to deal with his angry wife, who may file for a divorce because of the video. Even Sharbat Gula, the Afghan girl who only turned her face to the camera when she was photographed, could have been damaged by the photographic representation and consequential circulation

[123] However, it should be noted here that, although photographs, films and videos are all transportable, the images do not spread themselves. Someone is responsible for their exposure and distribution. The power over the images starts with their producer; the person who handles the camera. The photographer or camera operator gets to decide whether the images are made public, and whether the represented subject – who may or may not have given permission to be photographed or filmed in the first place – is given a say in the matter. In addition, the many possible channels through which images are made exert power over the exposure of images, and like the producers, can decide to share this power with the represented subject by giving them the chance to endorse the circulation of their image. Although this circulation can never entirely be controlled by anyone, the represented subject can be granted or denied influence on it by the maker and the institutions she deals with.

of this act. The exposure of her face could have had grave results for her, as she lived in a segregated society in which most women are veiled. She wasn't punished or repudiated only because the famous picture of her face never circulated in her own community.

In addition to the violent effect of exposing pictures that show things or parts of people they themselves would like to keep out of sight, the beauty of the images can sometimes aggravate the violation of the photographed, filmed, or photographed subjects. The beauty of images is especially damaging when those images show death or suffering – pain, poverty, disease, injury and deprivation. Beauty distracts, and threatens to neutralize acts of violence (Bal 2006: 103). What is more, when dying and suffering people are shown in beautiful photographs, films or videos, their suffering can be witnessed in combination with aesthetic pleasure – a sensation that is hardly appropriate in the context of the pain of others. It is important to note this violent effect of beautiful images in relation to photography, film, and video, because all three media are applied both in journalistic and aesthetic ways; applications which do not automatically rule each other out. The combination of aesthetic pleasure and journalistic value is most prevalent as well as accepted within the field of photography, as it is common for documentary news photos to be exhibited in art galleries. Such exposition in art institutions is less common when it comes to video or film footage of, for instance, war atrocities.[124,125]

Finally, a represented subject can be hurt through the transportability of her representation, because together with the subject's lack of control over the circulation of her image, control over the image's meaning is also lacking. This meaning depends largely on the context in which the representation is viewed, and without control over the circulation, the context of the image cannot be decided in any way either.[126] To come back the Steve McCurry's portrait of Sharbat Gula, after having been published in *National Geographic,* the photograph of the beautiful Afghan girl was repeatedly used in various humanitarian campaigns. Serving as a visual lynchpin for philanthropic efforts to raise money for causes ranging from the education of Afghan girls to repressed people all over the globe, Gula's image came to stand for, among other things, repressed and poor women to be rescued, poor and suffering people in general, Afghanistan as a whole, and Afghan girls and women in particular.

[124] Yet, the beautification (and with that, the artistic valuation) of suffering cannot be condemned as an immoral act per se. Beauty stimulates circulation, exposure, and commodification of images, as people like to look at, and are willing to pay for, beautiful images. On the one hand, this stimulation induces the exploitation of suffering. For when pain is pictured beautifully, the traffic in beauty goes hand in hand with the traffic in pain. On the other hand, in specific instances it can be desirable that the circulation of images showing suffering is stimulated, even if it is through beauty, because the exposure of suffering can spark off relief activities. For many victims, it is better to be seen suffering beautifully, than not to be seen at all.

[125] For more detailed discussions of the many complicated matters encompassing the representation of suffering, see Susan Sontag's *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003) and *Beautiful Suffering* (2006), edited by Mark Reinhart *et al.*

[126] The context and meaning of a representation can never be fully controlled, but in spite of the fact that it is always partial, the amount of control can differ.

Although using the image for humanitarian causes may seem harmless and laudable, there is irony and ethical tension in the situation as well (Edwards 90). First of all, it is questionable whether Sharbat Gula would approve of being appropriated as a *pars pro toto* of these causes. Does she consider herself a representative of people living under dictatorial regimes? Does she think of herself as a representative of repressed Islamic women who should be saved by the West? Is that a meaning she would like to have? What is more, humanitarian causes are often closely intertwined with political interests. When a humanitarian campaign convinces the public of the neediness of a particular group, this may serve the justification of military intervention in areas such as Afghanistan. Again, it is necessary to wonder whether Sharbat Gula would agree to the political agenda her image is made to serve. Besides the fact that particular political forces may contradict her own ideals, they can ultimately disempower her and influence her environment against her will. When a person's image is appropriated within a certain context, its resulting meaning can thus violate the represented subject.

4.3 Freezing

With straightened backs and deadpan expressions, about 40 police officers pose together in what seems to be a conventional group portrait. Some of them are seated, and some of them stand upright, yet all of the officers, both men and women, are dressed in dark blue uniforms, which contrast with the empty white background. Because of the static poses held by the portrayed figures, the large image projected on the wall of a gallery seems to be a photograph. Only after close and lasting inspection, it becomes clear that this is not the case. Very small movements can be detected within the image. An eyelid flutters rapidly, a foot is slightly repositioned, a chest is lifted, or a head slightly tilted. They are the kinds of movements a person cannot avoid making when holding a pose for a long time, which is precisely what these officers are doing. For 60 minutes, they remain as silent and as still as possible.

Although the video work *60 Minutes Silence* (1996) by the British artist Gillian Wearing is not a photograph, it does expose a few important things about the specification of photography. The video shows that in general, photography is defined as a medium that produces immobile images. As soon as photographic images start to move, they are rather recognized as film or video images, no matter how many associations with photography are evoked by the representation in other respects. The stasis of its images is one of the ways by which photography is able to freeze the represented subject. When a person's photograph is taken, his movement in space and time are stopped, frozen within the immobile image. In this section, I will discuss the violence inherent in this and many other kinds of freezing performed through photography. Film and video will be discussed in relation to photography's ability to freeze its subjects. In addition to the fact that moving film and video projections such as

Wearing's often – paradoxically – provide insight into the aggressive character of photography's freezing effects, photography's stasis and the movement of film images also gain meaning in relation, or in opposition, to each other. However, after an investigation of the ways in which photography is specified in relation to film's movement and vice versa by theoretical texts as well as films and video projections, I will point out that film's movement should not merely be understood as the antithesis of photography's stilled images; moving film and video images can violently freeze their subject, too.

The movement of film images is generally associated with life.[127] In the following fragment from an interview, Hungarian artist Péter Forgács for instance states that movement *is* life when he discusses the effect of film's moving images:

> If we make here and now a black-and-white photograph of ourselves, we can observe this event already as being from the past: history. […] But when we have moving images from the past, we always have the fluxus of life, the contrapuntal notion between Barthes's photo thesis and the movement (=life) on film, which proves that we are alive. So my viewers – and you – know that they (the amateur film actors, my heroes) are physically dead, yet, they are still moving. They are reanimated again and again by film.[128]

Roland Barthes made a similar claim by when he said that "the cinema has a power which at first glance the photograph does not have: the screen (as Bazin has remarked) is not a frame but a hideout; the man or woman who emerges from it continues living […]" (1980: 55-56). However, for Barthes, represented people do not live on in film because the film shows their movements, as Forgács has it. Rather, they live on because *film moves on*. Even when looking at a single stilled film frame, there is always what Barthes calls "a blind field"; something we cannot see but which is there: (the possibility of) a next frame. Film images thus always carry future continuation in them, and because of that, the represented people can live on, even if they do not move at all.

Besides the fact that Forgács as well as Barthes think of film as a medium which (re) animates the human beings it shows, both theorists contrast this effect of film's movement with the effect of the statis of photography. According to Barthes, the motionlessness of a photographic image not only means that the figures it represents do not move. Unlike the continuation of life in moving film images, the people appearing on photographs "do not emerge, do not leave, they are anesthetized and fastened down, like butterflies" (57). In addition to this, photographs do not reanimate their referent in the present, as films do, but have the effect that a photographed person immediately belongs to the past. For as Barthes has argued, and Forgács endorses,

[127] But not always; the movement of film images is sometimes associated with death instead of life, see the excerpt from Pirandello's *Si Gira* in this chapter.
[128] www.artmargins.com/content/interview/forgacs.html, accessed August 2006.

photographs claim the "that-has-been." Because of photography's technique, people shown in a photograph have irrefutably been there, in the past, in front of the lens when the photograph was taken. And because of photograph's immobility, they remain frozen in that past moment forever. They do not continue, leave, live on. Instead, they are anesthetized, fastened down, or worse: dead.

Theorists or filmmakers like Forgács, who are of the opinion that film reanimates people because it shows their movements, are likely to subscribe to the widespread viewpoint that photography "kills" the subjects it depicts because it cannot capture their movements, and therefore pictures them as static (=dead). According to Barthes and other thinkers who relate the animating effect of film to the progressive movement of the images rather than to the depicted mobility of the shown bodies, the death of the photographed subject is not so much caused by the immobility of the single photographic image. Rather, it is the result of another kind of movement the photographic medium lacks; movement beyond or outside the single frame in order to show what is next, both in a spatial and a temporal sense. Whereas something depicted in a single film frame possibly has a future in the next frame on the film reel, "every thing which happens within the [photographic] frame," writes Barthes, "dies absolutely once the frame is passed beyond" (57). And because we know nothing comes next, the depicted subject not only dies when the frame is passed beyond, but is in a way already dead within the frame itself.[129]

The question which now arises is how literally this killing or death of the photographed subject should be understood. At first sight, it seems obvious not to read it in a literal sense at all. For although some of the metaphors which surround photography (shooting, aiming, reloading) suggest that the camera is a lethal gun, people usually do continue, leave, and live on after their picture has been taken. It may seem as if they are dead in their static photographic image, but they aren't killed for real. This doesn't mean that it cannot be a violating, hurtful experience to look at your own picture, though. To see yourself as if dead on a photograph comes very close to being dead when you consider yourself to be (in the) photograph as its referent. This could explain why Barthes states that "Whether or not the subject is already dead, every photograph *is* this catastrophe" (96, emphasis added).

What is more, to see yourself as if dead, or to experience yourself as being dead in the picture when looking at your picture, is always a confrontation with your own, actual death in the future. The paradox here is that precisely because photographs only show static things that have been, things without a future, without continuation in time like film images, they do point to the future after all. Together with and because of the "that-has-been," a "this-will-be" is announced by photographs. What they announce is death

[129] Barthes' general ideas on photography which I have described here are by no means put as absolute truths in *Camera Lucida*. Rules are shown to have exceptions and different perspectives are adopted. For instance, Barthes believes that some photographs – the rare ones which have *punctum* – are in fact able to reanimate their represented subjects in the same way that film does.

in the future, according to Barthes (1980: 96). For him, the death of the viewer is not only announced when she watches her own photograph; every photograph announces this future death, and therefore "each one […] challenges each of us, one by one, outside of any generality" (1980: 97). This means that photography's stasis has two victims. Not only are the photographed subjects touched by the catastrophe of death; the viewing subjects of photographs are without exception confronted by it as well.

Struck by the Pose

> *The Photograph's noeme deteriorates when this photograph is animated and becomes cinema: in the Photograph, something has posed in front of the tiny hole and has remained there for ever (that is my feeling); but in the cinema, something has passed in front of this tiny hole, the pose is swept away and denied by the continuous series of images.* (Barthes 78)

From death, we move to a less grave catastrophe the photographed subject has to endure: the pose. Wearing's *60 Minutes Silence* makes it clear that this second way in which photography freezes its subject of representation is specific (but not unique) to the medium. Although it becomes noticeable that the video in not a photograph because of the small movements, the only imaginable reason for the police officers to pose in this way is that they are being, or are expecting to be photographed. That they are not posing for a painting, which would be more likely with regard to the long duration of their pose, is shown by the fact that they are positioned in front of an empty white background, which is typical of photo studios. What is more, in the 1990s, the medium of photography is more likely to be employed than the medium of painting for portraying of a large group of ordinary police officers. In addition, the balanced, artificial lighting, as well as the conventional formation of the group, point out that this group is posing for the camera, not for the brush.

Through the posing of the officers, photography remains present in Wearing's video, even when the absolute stasis of their pose is swept away by movement, and the work can be recognized as video. Although the group is recorded with a video camera, a photo camera can be imagined right next to it. Although invisible to the viewer of the video, at the time of recording it could have been in sight of the police officers who now face the spectator. Such an invisible photo camera can be expected to force the police officers into a static pose, because posing – holding still in a certain position – is what we have learned to do in front of a photo camera. This social convention has technical grounds. Taking a photograph is easier when the objects on view do not move. Such stasis is however not an absolute necessity, for when certain preliminaries – such as sufficient light and adequate equipment – are met, photo cameras are able to take focused pictures of moving objects without showing them as blurred figures.

A second reason for the social convention of freezing in front of a photo camera is

another kind of freezing: the previously discussed freezing of the photographed subject within immobile images. Because photography can capture only one brief instant, people in front of the lens tend to adopt static postures, positions, and facial expressions in anticipation of the moment when the camera clicks, in order to make sure that their pose is right, exactly as should be captured in a photograph, when the photographer decides to operate the shutter. Which pose is precisely right, moreover, is often decided by convention. Many photographic genres, such as the family picture or the ceremonial group portrait, are related to conventions concerning posing. Smiling faces and intimate gestures such as embraces are common in family pictures, but not in formal group portraits such as that of the police officers. Because people tend to copy conventional poses when they strike one, poses are already representations before they are visible on a photograph.

So, when people feel the urge to pose, this is caused by the presence of a camera in relation to conventions which dictate that and how a person is supposed to pose in front of the camera. Yet, there is another agency which contributes to the ineluctability of posing. This agency becomes noticeable in *60 Minutes Silence* through its absence. When wondering why the represented police officers keep their pose for such a long the time, the previous answer that they are probably seated in front of a photo camera is not entirely sufficient. For, the presence of a camera alone probably wouldn't be sufficient to keep the officers static until after the portrait has been taken. Besides the device of the camera, someone must be present at the studio, someone urging the police officers to hold their pose, someone asking them either calmly and politely or forcefully and aggressively to keep still. This someone is the photographer, who is invisible in Wearing's video.

As a viewer, you don't expect to see him or her though, for photographers generally remain positioned behind the camera. Yet, as video is a medium which (unlike film) records images and sounds at the same time on the same track, one could expect to hear a photographer, saying things like "Hold on, just one more second. That's it, now don't move!" That the absence of such sounds is the most striking and meaningful fact of the video work is also stressed by its title, which doesn't emphasize the stasis, but the silence of the representation. Because of this silence, the video points to an unidentifiable authority outside of the frame. For without the noticeable presence of a photographer, the question remains what or who has the power to control this group of police officers – who are after all authority figures and representatives of power themselves.[130] The question of authority caused by the apparent absence of a photographer in *60 Minutes Silence*, does, moreover, point out that the photographer usually is a figure who, together with the photo camera and conventions concerning photography, has the power to enforce the pose.

[130] A valid answer to this question has been formulated in an analysis of Wearing's work by Dominic Molon in *Mass Observation* (2002). He relates *60 Minutes Silence* to Foucault's and Lacan's ideas on power and the gaze. In doing so, he convincingly claims that it is mainly the viewer of the video who seems to hold the power. Frozen in their pose, the police officers are subject to the spectator's gaze. And possibly it is also this gaze which freezes them.

Now that the three agents that force posing upon the subject to-be-photographed have been identified, it is necessary to explain why a subject can be victimized when she has to pose. First, posing can be an unpleasant experience because it requires the ability to control one's body and face, without any help of a mirror to show if this body and face are doing what is envisaged when posing. Posed bright smiles can for example turn out to have been slightly too bright and look grotesque and rather scary in the resulting photograph. A seductive look into the camera can come out as a sleepy gaze when the photographer takes the picture at the exact moment of a blink. In light of the fact that unintended awful, ugly or awkward positions are fixed forever on a photographic image, limited control over one's body and face can be unpleasant.

Secondly, posing can be victimizing because it points out that a subject cannot construct a perfect image of herself, but is rather created by and subject to the photograph that is made of her. This is why posing is already a way of making a representation; one often copies already existing, conventional poses. Posing can also be understood as act by which a person tries to transform into an image of herself even before the image is taken. By adopting certain poses, people often try to make themselves look beautiful, noble, or intelligent.[131] The realization that photography generally doesn't meet one's wish to look more pretty or noble on a picture can strike the subject in front of the lens while posing. Posing can then become a constant endeavor by which we want to make ourselves look good, but in vain. In *Camera Lucida,* Barthes describes how he wishes – but doesn't know how – to work upon his skin from within when he realizes that what he wants capture is "delicate moral texture" and not the mimicry photography will provide. Posing in a beautiful way is of no help in this.

The gestures and expressions we nevertheless choose to express our fine disposition with, function as signifiers. They are supposed to represent who we are, or want to be, and refer to the unique identity we have, or think we have. However, the attempt to construct an image of oneself through poses is doomed to fail, because the meaning of signifiers cannot be controlled. The meanings of both the adopted poses and the resulting photograph change or vary. Furrowed brows may for example have been intended as a signifier meaning seriousness, but they can be understood as indications of anger or irony by the viewers of the picture.

Posing can also be understood as a violation of the subject because it restricts a person's freedom of movement. The pose forms physical restraint of the subject waiting to be photographed. This restraint is not always experienced as a violation, as it is often merely short-lived, and is in addition frequently part of social processes and events in which we willingly partake. However, the longer a static position needs to be held, the more difficult it becomes to remain still, and the more a posing person is oppressed by the confinement of the pose. The difficulty and discomfort of holding a pose for a long

[131] When it comes to beauty, the contemporary possibilities of beautifying digital photographs in post-production are of course legion. Such practices can be defined as "digital painting."

time becomes clearly noticeable in *60 Minutes Silence,* in which the police officers cannot help but make slight movements.

Wearing's video, moreover, refers to the history of photography because of the lengthy posing it shows, which video, unlike photography, can show because it is a time-based medium. When photography was invented in the nineteenth century, exposure times were very long; generally over 15 minutes. Therefore, the subject had to remain immobile for an extended period of time, often in bright sunlight under a glass roof. Because of the physical impossibility of holding still for such a long time, devices were invented which kept the body in place with clamps, pins and rods. To become a photographic object "made one suffer as much as a surgical operation," according to Barthes (13). And, I would add, already turned one into an object before the picture had been fully developed.

In sum, movement in film and video footage often has, gains, or is attributed with the meaning of "liveliness" and "freedom" in relation to the stillness of photography, which is understood as restricting and murderous in moving images. In Fiona Tan's previously discussed *Countenance*, the movement of the installation's projected images not only provides the portrayed people with more presence and liveliness than they have in Sander's comparable photographic project, but the movement within the images, as well as the movement of their succession on the projection screens, also affects the status of the types both Tan and Sander create. Whereas the bakers, butchers, beggars, and farmers in Sander's project seems to be stuck in their category forever, Tan's looped moving images indicate that the presented ordering of types is an ongoing, unending process. In comparison to Sander's photographs, the types in Tan's moving video projections look less fixed. The small movements within the video images, such as waving hair or twitches of an eye, not only suggest that these people are alive, but also that they will live on, and subsequently change. Butchers will become pensioners, newly-weds will turn into residents of geriatric homes, teachers may turn into politicians, and so forth.

In addition, the movement of images in *Countenance* also structures the relationship between the viewing subjects and the portrayed ones. While standing in front of the projected portraits, museum visitors resemble the subjects on screen. Both the size, the pose and the nearly stilled position of the viewing and the viewed subject are approximately alike. Whereas people in Sander's photographs have the form of small, frozen figures on a piece of paper, the people in Tan's video piece are broadly the viewer's mirror image. The resemblance between the viewer and the portrayed subjects stimulates a form of self-reflexivity in the beholder that Tan herself exposed in the self-portrait preceding the large projection in an adjacent room. For the resemblance summons questions: "We are alike, but how alike precisely? Do I belong to this type? Or to this one as well? What is my social position? With which social group do I identify most?" Such questions obliterate the possibility of looking at the portrayed others in a distant, neutrally observing way. Instead the viewer is stimulated to categorize *herself*

by way of the large number of portraits passing by on the projection screens. Therefore, in *Countenance,* the movement of images not only forms a response to the aggressive freezing effects of photography's stasis. It also counteracts the detached, objectifying mode of looking which the photographic medium sustains.

Frozen by the Flash

The flash of the photo camera always takes you by surprise, no matter how far in advance you have been warned of it. It cuts into a scene with the violence of a lightning bolt, momentarily blinds the photographed subject by an excess of artificial light, and thereby produces temporary physical disorientation. What is more, because of the blindness it immediately creates, the flash cannot be integrated into the sensory experience but only be registered, belatedly, incompletely, possibly as a shock (Baer 34). The flash often has the same effect on the photographed subject as a car's headlights on a deer: disoriented by the light which suddenly blinds you, the most natural reaction is not to move until you have regained your composure.

Unlike the deer, the photographed subject usually rapidly recovers from her short moment of paralysis with no harm having been done. Yet, as Baer explains, the recovery can be understood as partial: "The resurfacing of cognition that follows [the flash], may achieve only partial recovery, the flash disorients you, and the subsequent cognitive effort may not fully integrate the moment of disorientation into memory" (34). However, in spite of the fact that being flashed may be called a traumatic experience – as it cannot be fully integrated into memory – it isn't usually understood or applied as a form of violation of the flashed person. In general, it is accepted as a harmless but necessary nuisance which accompanies photography.

In the following, though, I will discuss an application of the flash which did have a violent impact on the photographed subjects. This application concerns the use of flash photography by psychiatrist Jean-Marie Charcot of the Parisian Salpêtrière hospital. His study of hysterical women in the late nineteenth century has already been briefly discussed in part 4.1 on objective registration, as Charcot used the medium as a way to prove that the symptoms of hysteria he had diagnosed were real, and that they indeed followed the predictable patterns the doctor had recognized in them. In addition, Charcot applied photography as a epistemological tool through which he could learn more about hysteria. His presumption was that, because of their ability to capture the moment, photographs could make things visible that usually remain hidden from the human eye because of their brevity.

The flash formed a perfect supplement to photography's exposure of reality by freezing it, because through the abundance of light "the flash promises instant revelation of the truth" (Baer 34). In addition, the flash was of use to Charcot because of its surprise factor. At the time, hysterics were regarded as manipulative women who deceived and imitated. Their behavior was believed to be a performance, a rehearsed act. In order to sidestep the deceptive behavior of his patients, and to prove that their

disease was nevertheless not a complete sham, an important part of Charcot's strategy was to diagnose symptoms that could not be rehearsed. Symptoms revealed by the flash couldn't be understood as play-acted behavior, because the hysterics couldn't anticipate the flood of light. Yet, as Ulrich Baer has argued, the flash not only made visible; it also *modified* the women Charcot photographed.

When photographing his hysterical patients, the French psychiatrist would lead them into a pitch black room. Then, the light of the flash would suddenly flood the dungeonlike darkness of the "*cabinet noir*" (Baer 39). The effect on the women in front of the camera was that they fell into a state of catalepsy. Their bodies froze in the position in which they had been flashed. Unable to move, they were entirely subjected to the hands and gaze of the doctor. He would photograph their rigid bodies and place them in spectacular positions, for instance by bending them backwards into the form of an arch. After having been photographed, the light would be extinguished, until the resulting darkness was again illuminated by a flash. This usually triggered lethargy; the shocked female bodies would slump and collapse onto the floor or into the hands of an attendant.

The procedure of turning a body cataleptic or lethargic by means of the flash created the impression that hysterical symptoms could be provoked and made visible at the doctor's command. This way, Baer explains, the technical medium of photography promised the desired mastery over the unpredictable disease of hysteria. What Charcot didn't see, though, was that he didn't trigger an already existing symptom, or expose an invisible one. Instead, he *produced* a symptom of hysteria. Hence, the doctor partially created instead of diagnosed the disease with help of the photo camera. What is more, the flashes he used in order to reveal hysterical symptoms not only produced a symptom, but a traumatic experience as well. In this respect, it is important to note that the disease of hysteria has been defined as a disorder that arises from "conditions that prevent subjects from articulating, or even having memories of, past bodily experiences" (Baer 27). Because the flash produces a bodily experience that cannot be fully integrated into memory, it can be understood as a cause rather than an exposure of hysteria.

Captured by Video

Like photography, film and video are able to freeze the represented subject. Not merely because both media are, like photography, able to show still images, but also through a characteristic regarded typical of them: movement. Although the movement of cinematic and videomatic images is often understood as a positive, resuscitating or liberating abrogation of photography's aggressive stillness, this movement can violently capture the represented subject just as well. How such freezing by way of movement can proceed is shown by Hester Scheurwater's video *Heal Me* (2000). This piece starts with a shot of a woman who is standing bare-foot on the tiled floor of an empty room. She is standing in the middle, while the camera is positioned somewhere in a corner, showing her from a distance, from the back. Although the shot only takes a few seconds, it lasts long

enough to show the viewer that the women is average-sized and dark-haired. A black dress covers the upper part of her bare legs, and a large part of her lower back.

After this quick first overall shot, the camera approaches the woman, and starts circling her body at close range. Starting with a view of her back, the camera zooms in on her buttocks. From there it descends to the woman's lower legs, showing her ankles and calves. After having paid considerable attention to the woman's lower legs, the camera slightly tilts upwards. It tries to peer between her thighs, but moves on when only darkness can be seen under the dress. Slowly circling upward, the camera moves to her side, where one of her arms hangs down by her body. A hand with polished fingernails comes into view. After that, the camera turns to her chest. Although the woman is wearing a dress, it does not cover her breasts. The camera films the bare chest from a very close range, especially nearing the nipples. In addition, the movement of the camera seems to decelerate a little when the breasts are brought into view, although it quickly resumes its slow yet continuous pace. After swerving further upwards around the body, the camera finally moves around the woman's head and shoulders. Although her overall posture is straight, her head is hanging down a little and her shoulders stoop slightly forward. The woman's face is invisible, as it is covered by her hair. After tilting up and downwards again, the camera circles back down to the buttocks, and zooms out in order to give a final overall shot of the woman before the video ends.

During the four minutes the video takes, the represented woman does not move at all. It seems as if she is frozen by the circling camera, which captures her within its spiraling movement. The fact that she is filmed at close range suggests the near physical presence of the someone or something that is looking at her, a physical presence that retains her body without actually touching it. In addition, the woman is held in place by the look of the camera that surrounds her because it scans her body in an aggressive way. By focusing for a long time on her buttocks, peering between her legs, zooming in on the long red finger nails, and taking a close look at her bare breasts, the camera turns the female body into an object of sexual desire. Her objectification is emphasized all the more by the fact that her face is covered: she cannot look back in order to become a viewing subject. However, the objectifying and freezing power of the camera's gaze in *Heal Me* relies for the most part on its ability to move. Especially because of the particular movements it makes (circling, decelerating, tilting and zooming) when filming the woman it has a forceful, violating strength. Its intimidating and objectifying mode of looking requires mobility.

Although the relatively small circumscribing movements in *Heal Me* are made with a light-weight video camera, Scheurwater's video could technically have been recorded with a film camera as well. That the work can be recognized as video is more due to the fact that it doesn't follow an important narrative film convention: the so-called 180-degree rule, which dictates that the camera cannot cross an invisible line running through a film set. The circling movement in Scheurwater's video clearly doesn't follow this convention. The video does refer to another strong film convention though: to

represent women as the object of the male look, as well as his desire. In section 4.6 I will further discuss this convention, of which *Heal Me* can be understood as a subversive exaggeration.

As in Scheurwater's *Heal Me,* a woman is the object of the camera's attention in another important video by the Dutch artist: *I Wanted You* (2001). The woman who is filmed in that video work is lying on the floor at full length. She is clearly trying to move forward and get up. Her arms and legs make swirling and crawling movements. The woman manages to drag her body forward a little, while the front side of her body scrapes over the floor. Yet despite her seemingly desperate attempts she isn't able to move forward or upwards very much. The struggle of the woman seems to indicate that she is somehow restricted in her movements by something. Is her body too heavy for her to lift? Or is the air surrounding so thick that it works as tar? What is holding her down? Upon closer inspection, it becomes visible that the oppressive, suffocating effect of the video is caused by the manipulation of the video footage. The movements of the women are shown in slow-motion, which creates the impression that she is countered, captured, and smothered by an invisible force. This force does not lie in the weight of her own body, or in the atmospheric pressure, but in the medium that depicts her.

The female subject in *I Wanted You* is not frozen. She isn't killed by the stillness of the images; the images do show movement. Yet, because of the deceleration of the video material, the life seems to be drained out of her. She isn't frozen (dead) yet, but she is slowed down (dying). As mentioned previously, Forgács and others have argued that the movement of images brings filmed subjects back to life. According to Forgács, the manipulation of film time, such as stilling, slowing down, or speeding up the footage, only emphasizes the movement of the images, and hence the liveliness of the depicted people. *I Wanted You* demonstrates that this is not always the case. For, in this video, the manipulated movement of the images doesn't reanimate the represented subject. Rather, it seems to be in the process of murdering her.

4.4 Touching

As mentioned previously, photography, film, and video are often specified as media that give rise to a detached mode of looking. A mode of looking, that is, with possibly violent consequences, because it presumes a distinction between observer and observed which objectifies the represented subject. In part, the assumption that the three lens-based media enable detached observation can be explained by the fact that a literal distance is required between the camera and its object in order for the lens-based media to record images at all. If the camera's lens were to touch the object when photographing or recording, the resulting images would turn out black. For the light necessary for the production of photographs, videos, and films can only enter the camera if there is some distance between objective and object.

When the distance between camera and represented object is reduced to a minimum, the detached mode of looking is not necessarily hindered or diminished. In fact, close-ups often give rise to the impression that the object or subject on view is appropriated, because it is scrutinized and exposed in greater detail. This appropriation can be a sexual one; think for instance about the close-up of the woman's bare breasts in *Heal Me*. Because the camera approached them, it seemed to take hold of them. Moreover, when human bodies are represented in close-up, an objectifying effect can be caused by the association with scientific and medical examination. This association quickly arises in relation to close-ups, as they are often used to document and represent objects of research.

The distance between the camera and its object of representation can be more convincingly minimized by video than by photography and film, through a procedure that requires a medium which can record movement, and whose apparatus can moreover easily be moved itself. The movements made with a handheld, so-called kinetic video camera can mimic, follow, or resemble movements which are made by the human body. Movements, that is, which are made by one body when it touches another. A stroking movement made with one's hand when caressing another, can for instance be mimicked by a tracking movement of the camera when it films a person. This can successfully create the impression that the camera touches what it records, as is shown by Celio Braga's *Dalice* (2006). In this video installation, a camera slowly pans over the face of a sad-looking woman. Its slight movements seem to touch the woman's skin, to caress and console her with gentle strokes. Because the movements clearly indicate that the camera is hand held, and moreover moves in precisely the way a stroking hand would, the technical device seems to function as an extension or prosthesis of the human body holding it. An extension, that is, which reaches up to the face of the sad woman.

The camera in *Dalice* seems to touch the subject in the most loving way possible with video. The possibility of gently touching with the camera does, however, have its downside in that the camera can be used to seemingly touch the filmed subject in a violent or aggressive way too. Then, the movements of the camera do not resemble soft strokes, but for instance the slaps a person can give with the hand. This aggressive application of the video camera is widespread and dominant in video's field of application. A gentle use of the video camera such as in *Dalice* is an exception to the rule; the possibility to touch lovingly is a rarely applied possibility of the video medium. The dominant, violent mode of touching with the video camera can be identified in many amateur video clips posted on Internet sites such as YouTube. Very often, the clips are recorded with cellphones. These small and lightweight devices are, of course, suitable for the hand-held effects by which violent movements of the body are copied with the camera.

Unlike many videos of violent crimes, the clip *Mobile Phone Cam Reveals Murder* was not posted on the Internet by those recording the clip with a cellphone. The crime the video exposes is too grave for that, and the perpetrators' faces are too identifiable. Before it was uploaded on YouTube, the clip appeared in a television news program, in

which the newscaster explained that the video was discovered by the police in the GSM device of one of the perpetrators. Thanks to the clip, the unsolved murder of a homeless person in a Moscow park was no longer a mystery, as the video reveals how a group of young men bludgeoned the man to death at night. The video is clearly recorded by a member of the group, as the filmed boys communicate with the person who is filming. In addition, they signal the camera operator to come closer, in order to bring the crime properly into view. Moreover, the perpetrators repeatedly look into the camera, and sometimes make cheerful gestures of victory into the camera after having kicked the homeless man, who is lying helplessly on the ground. One of the boys even climbs on top of the man's body, and while looking into the camera, he raises his arms with clenched fists so as to indicate his domination of the victim. The gestures into the camera clearly show that the violators draw the camera in while murdering the man. It is involved by the young men in the crime because they want their "funny" deed to be recorded.

The involvement of the camera in the killing is furthermore exposed by the fact that the camera mimics the blows, punches and kicks the youngsters inflict on the vagrant. One shot shows how one of the boys runs up to the man, and in the same flowing movement smashes a glass bottle against the man's head. Immediately the camera, which filmed the scene from a distance, rapidly zooms in on the injured head until the image becomes a blur. This could be interpreted as an attempt to show what spectacular injuries the smashed bottle has caused. However, the zooming moves at such a speed that the camera has no time to automatically focus the image of the man's head. Before this can be done, the zooming-in has already continued up until a point where nothing can be clearly discerned within the images anymore.

Instead of an attempt to show, the zooming movement seems to be an attempt at hitting the man once more. The speed of the zoom movement, as well as its point of impact, resemble the previous movement of the filmed blow. In another instance, the camera rapidly zooms in and out a few times while filming the victim; a movement that resembles a number of kicks in the stomach the man has to endure. What is more, at the beginning of the beating, when the man still tries to get to his feet a few times, the boys one by one run into him, in order to push him over with the weight of their entire bodies. The swerving camera slightly follows the sideways and downward movements of the falling bodies that press the victim against the ground.

By mimicking the violent gestures acted out by the body, the video camera can be seen as an accomplice to the violence it shows. The blows and kicks of the camera do not, of course, injure the victim physically. Yet the resemblance between the camera movements and physical acts of violence draw attention to the violent effect of filming violence. By following the same trajectory of punches or slaps, with the same speed, the camera reveals that the act of filming can be an aggressive act that contributes to the violence it records.

The anonymously uploaded YouTube video *Bully gets beat up* (2008) shows that its

violent impact on victims of violence is, although not physical, certainly not virtual. In the introduction I already mentioned how, in this amateur online video clip, a young man tries to fend off his attackers. He is abused, pushed, and shoved. However, while defending himself both verbally and physically, he is mostly occupied with attempts to evade the camera that keeps approaching him in order to film him in close-up. This act seems to provoke the assaulted man the most, as he either looks angrily into the camera while saying "don't," or evasively turns away from the lens while making averting gestures towards the camera with his hands. To the young man, the act of being filmed is clearly just as violating as the physical and verbal attacks.

Being filmed while being physically attacked or threatened is often experienced as an act of aggression because it is, as demonstrated before with regards to *One Hour Photo*, a double objectification of the subject under attack. The first objectification aggravates the violent impact of the second one. The first form of objectifying acts concerns the physical hindrance and disempowerment of the victim, possibly accompanied by verbal degradation. Secondly, the violated subject becomes an object of representation because of the recording video camera. This second objectification, then, is especially aggressive because it means that the victim's desubjectification through violence is recorded, captured on tape. This visual preservation and appropriation of one's degradation is itself degrading. What is more, in the current digital age, being recorded with a video camera implies that the undignified "spectacle" can be put on show on the Internet afterwards, to be viewed by anyone, anywhere, without the victim's approval.

In *Mobile Phone Cam Reveals Murder*, the idea that the video could be viewed later on seemed to occupy the men. This idea didn't frighten them, though. The presence of the camera clearly added to the "fun" of the beating for the aggressive young men. They did not merely hit the man just for the pleasure of hurting him, or to have a good time together, they also performed for the camera. The performing quality of their behavior is shown by the fact that they often look into the lens before handing out another blow ("Is this being filmed? Watch this!"), and because they adopt aggressive positions while turning to the camera, such as the expression of victory. Such gestures make the camera a part of their crime, yet they also seem to anticipate future viewings. Why show off and put oneself out for the "dead eye" of the video camera, if it isn't for the expectation that what the video lens sees will be witnessed by an audience later on too? Even if this audience consists only of oneself, the expectation of future viewing can be a stimulation to put on a violent show in front of the camera.

However, the audience aimed at with most video recordings of violent crimes is usually larger than one person – although in some cases a video can function as a trophy kept by the violator alone. Often, the videos, which are mostly produced by young people, are used as a way of showing the acts of aggression to others, in order to show off the committed crime. The others can be an intimate circle of friends who can be trusted. But when digital video is concerned, it can also be everyone around the globe

who has access to the Internet. Either way, the idea that violent acts can be shown later on to an audience can be a stimulation during the violent act, as well as a reason to act violently at all. Some of the violence that can be viewed in cellphone video clips online was inflicted on the victims because of the fact that it could be videotaped, and consequently be spread amongst peers by email or globally on the Internet.

Around 2008, a specific aggressive act was even repeated all over the globe, because of the fact that video clips of this violence could be circulated worldwide. The craze, which still has its aftermath today, was called *happy slapping*. The many adolescents who participated in the craze would slap other people in the face out of the blue. The videos of the surprise attacks would then be posted on the Internet so as to share them with other "happy slappers." The possibility of sharing was a prerequisite for the success of the game. Without it, fewer videos of happy slaps would have been made, and victims would have remained untouched. The *happy slapping* craze demonstrates that, sometimes, video is more than an accomplice to the violence it depicts. It can also be its instigator, or its cause.

Invading the Body

Whereas metaphors such as shooting, stabbing, and penetrating abound when the acts of photographing and filming are discussed, it is the video camera that nowadays seems to be best able to enter the body. Jerry Bruckheimer's television series *Crime Scene Investigation* (2000) is one of the most popular programs in which video is used to provide a view inside a body. In the series, a group of forensic experts solves murder cases with help of state-of-the-art techniques. After a thorough inspection of the crime scene, the corpse of the victim is taken to a lab to be meticulously examined by a pathologist. Once he has established the cause of death, he informs the members of the team of his findings while they stand near the dead body. The briefing starts with a short introduction by the pathologist on the method he has used, and on the blemishes and injuries he has discovered on the victim's skin. These are pointed out by him to the team, and to the viewer. Then, when the naked body of the victim is in view, the pathologist reveals the cause of death. When he does so, the images illustrate his words, by showing what has killed the victim.

Neither the murderer nor the murder weapon are shown in a flashback of the event, however, but the production of the internal injuries that caused the death of the murdered person is depicted. If a victim was, for example, hit over the head, with a shattered skull and damaged brain tissue as a result, the camera swiftly zooms in on the victim's head, pierces through hair and skin, and then shows how the skull cracks into pieces and cuts through grey matter. Similarly, the camera sometimes follows the trajectory of a bullet, again by penetrating the skin, and subsequently showing how the bullet hits the victim's internal organs or bones. Chemical murders such as poisonings are visualized too. In such cases, the camera shows the effects of the poison. For instance, it enters the body to show how the lethal toxicant is digested, or how it travels

to vital organs through blood vessels.

CSI forms and interesting parallel with the previously discussed YouTube video *Mobile Phone Cam Reveals Murder*. In both cases, the camera approaches the body in a manner copying the trajectory and speed of a violent act inflicted on it by somebody else. In *CSI*, however, the camera doesn't stop at the skin. It pierces through it, and enters the body. The camera does not so much mimic the aggressive act of a perpetrator, as in *Mobile Phone Cam Reveals Murder*. The camera in *CSI* seems to coincide with the murder weapon, because the video images of the inside of a victim's body seem to be focalized by the murder weapon. Video functions as the eyes of the murder weapon, so to speak.

The visual effect of the camera as murder weapon, or of a murder weapon with video eyes, is created with the help of animation. Digital video recordings have been adapted and modeled so as to create the illusion that the camera can break through skin and bones with force, while retaining its ability to record clear images of messy insides. In a TV series covering medical or forensic topics such as *CSI*, these insides are represented in a fairly realistic way. The images show a stylized, beautified and rather clean version of the body's inside, but they show what most people expect underneath the skin; blood, tissue and bones.

In many art videos, animation techniques have been used as a way to suggest the penetration of the skin by the camera. However, as for instance in *Blood in Blossom* (Merel Mirage 1995), the world exposed beneath the skin by such videos does not always consist of blood and bones. Unlike any suggestion made by the title, Mirage's video depicts a dreamlike reality once the camera has slowly breached the skin of a girl's folded hands. Bright colored, transparent figures appear, only to quickly dissolve into the background again. In contrast to the images in *CSI*, the images of *Blood in Blossom* are out of focus, blurred. Sometimes the passing forms can be discerned as people, sometimes the images are abstract. They are in no way reminiscent of the physical insides of the human body. Instead, they could be interpreted as representations of memories, thoughts, feelings, or dreams. It seems as though the camera has not so much entered the girl's body, as her mind or soul when it pierced through her skin. The penetrating act of the camera may seem less violent in Mirage's art video than in *CSI,* as it doesn't involve murder. Yet, the suggestion that the camera is able to enter the mind or the soul as a "peeping Tom" is perhaps more frightening than that it can enter one's internal organs.

Whereas, fortunately, the former option can only be visualized by way of video animation, the latter can actually be realized. Microscopically small video cameras are used nowadays by scientists and medical examiners in order to look at the body from the inside. The difference with *CSI's* (virtual) camera is that these medical cameras do not violently break through the skin of the subject under investigation. They are inserted into orifices of the body, which may be painful but leaves the body intact. On the one hand, such visual invasion of the body happens for the benefit of the violated patient,

as it is applied as a means of detecting diseases and disorders. On the other hand, these internal viewings of the body through video can nevertheless be understood as a violation of the subject, whose body is hurt and penetrated, and who is moreover turned into an object of medical or scientific investigation.

That the viewer of medical videos can, to some extent, be a victim of what she sees, is emphasized by Mona Hatoum's video installation *Corps étranger* (1994). In this installation, the viewer gets to watch medical video recordings of Hatoum's own body. In order to create the piece, the artist had a camera travel through her entire body, entering all orifices. The images are shown on a circular screen installed into the floor of a cylindrical white chamber that can only be entered through a slender aperture. There is only a small gap between the wall of the chamber and the screen. Hence, for the viewer, there is not much room to move around when watching the video. In order to see the images, one has to stand erect, but with a bent head and lowered eyes; a pose that can be associated with subordination and punishment. At the same time, the low position of the images could instill a feeling of domination instead of subordination in the spectator. That is unlikely, however, because through the translucency of the images on the circular screen, the projection looks like a well. A well at the edge of which the viewer is very close, and into which she could disappear if gravity had its way. Disappear, that is, into the frightening, repulsing, moist, pulsating tunnels of the body shown below. For, enlarged on the big round screen, the representations of the inner body will not be experienced as comforting. Although they may fascinate, they are not pleasing aesthetically.

What is more, Hatoum's installation can be disconcerting to the spectator because on its prolonged journey through the body, the camera doesn't discover anything. As the entire body is scanned, the video lacks the specific goal of a medical examination, which is in general aimed at detecting for instance a tumor or inflammation in a particular area of the body. The lack of such a medical goal raises the question of what it is the camera in *Corps étranger* is looking for or trying to show other than a defect. Is it perhaps trying to reveal, as Chloe Scott (2010) wonders, "a glimpse of something spiritually significant within the living body (traditionally the house of the soul), or metaphysical truths divined from the body as a microcosmic representation of the cosmos?" But no matter for how long one follows the camera's journey, no such things become noticeable. With her video, Hatoum represents a body that is "if anything, dispossessed: no agency, no mind, no soul, no centre" (Scott 2010). Previously, I stated that Mirage's suggestion of a camera entering the mind or the soul may be more frightening than the possibility of a video camera intruding the body. Hatoum's *Corps étranger* demonstrates, however, that it can be equally unsettling to see, by way of video, that neither soul nor mind can be found anywhere inside of the living human body.

4.5 Surveillance

> PERROT: *And there's no point for the prisoners to take over the central tower?*
> FOUCAULT: *Oh yes, provided that isn't the final purpose of the operation. Do you think it would be much better to have prisoners operating the panoptic apparatus and sitting in the central tower, instead of the guards?* (Foucault 2002: 101)

When comparing photography, film, and video, the ability of surveillance is most specific to video. Before video was invented, photography and film were sometimes used in surveillance practices. Especially photography has served as visual documentation of the actual surveillance which took place in real time, by one person watching or spying on one or more others on the spot. As soon as video arrived, however, this medium largely became the most dominant mode and medium for guarding and monitoring. It became the most widely used tool in the field of surveillance, and surveillance became – next to artistic and domestic usages – one of the dominant applications of the video medium.

Video's ability for surveillance is often regarded as violent or as harmful. The harmful impact attributed to video surveillance, however, is intertwined with the negative aspects ascribed to surveillance in general. Therefore, only when it is clear which discourses and connotations surround the issue of surveillance in general, is it possible to define which surveillance practices are specific, and specifically violent, of video.

Some of the most negative aspects associated with surveillance are the controlling and repressive discourses of punishment and discipline. They produce paranoia and suspicion. The subject of surveillance is harmed by surveillance because she is watched without consent and robbed of her privacy – often against her will, or without consent. According to Foucault, however, everyone who is engaged in the structure of surveillance – both those carrying it out and those subjected to it – can be understood as victims of that structure. For, in his opinion, it is an apparatus of total and circulating mistrust that spares no one. Not everyone, however, experiences surveillance as victimizing; it is often carried out and defended with conviction. The positive evaluations of surveillance include terms such as order, regulation, crime prevention, and again, control. We all benefit from surveillance, is a frequently heard argument, because it keeps us safe – "we" and "us" indicating both the surveilling and the surveilled people. Both perspectives on the matter, however, underline the idea that surveillance is a way to exercise power by way of looking. Merely through being watched by a controlling gaze, people under surveillance are subjected to the power the gaze represents and acts out.[132]

The power exercised by the gaze cannot easily be attributed to the people who do

[132] It should be noted that surveillance can also imply eavesdropping. I restrict myself to surveillance as a visual practice here because this is the most dominant meaning of the term, as well as the most widely adopted manner of the practice.

the watching alone. Security guards who watch the footage of surveillance cameras, for instance, have some power, but they are also representatives of, and subjected to higher authorities in whose name they do the actual looking. Although the highest power can often be identified in the pyramidal form which systems of power often take, the summit doesn't necessarily form the "source" or "principle" from which all power derives (Foucault 100). It is dispersed over different levels, as is the origin and the object of the gaze itself.

A famous structure of surveillance which is often used to illustrate the power of the gaze, and which moreover explains most of the abovementioned associations, is the Panopticon. The idea of this circular prison was coined by the British philosopher Jeremy Bentham in 1789, and became especially well known because of the attention Michel Foucault paid to the concept in *Discipline and Punish* (1975). In the Panopticon, the prisoners are kept in place because they can be watched constantly from the guards' tower, which is placed in the middle of the building and provides a view over all the cells in the building. By being ceaselessly under the control of an inspector, Bentham explained, the inmates will lose power and even the idea of wrong-doing will be almost cleared from their minds.

Both the negative and positive aspects ascribed to surveillance have a bearing on the Panopticon. Whereas in the eyes of many, it is a cruel concept that oppresses the prisoners, the inventor himself considered his idea to be the solution to the problems of discipline posed by a great number of persons in the hands of a very few. Pleased as he was with his invention, the invasion of privacy and repressive observation of the inmates were not downsides for Bentham, but the perfect means to a desirable end: order and safety through the prevention of wrong-doing. The final evaluation of a surveillance practice does however not entirely coincide with the importance one attaches to, for instance, freedom, punishment, mistrust, or control. It is not merely the outcome of a personal assessment of the pros and cons of surveillance; of weighing, for instance, the greater good of privacy against the significance of safety. The goodness or badness of surveillance is more complicated than that. An important question is: Who should or may be put in the tower? In other words: to whom is power to be entrusted, even though it can never be located in one single individual? [133] In whose hands is power believed to be a good thing?

An equally important question is: who should be imprisoned? Who is the criminal, who deserves to be mistrusted, who should be controlled and dissuaded by the gaze? Even when power is considered to be in tolerable hands, this doesn't necessarily exclude the conviction that the wrong people are put under surveillance by those in power. An often-heard complaint about video surveillance in public spaces is that people feel unjustly mistrusted by it, for they themselves are after all good civilians who always

[133] Perrot in Foucault (2002: 100). Michelle Perrot furthermore points out that the British philosopher never addressed the question of who should hold the position of guard in the Panopticon.

obey the law and answer to the authorities. So why should they – innocent people who never did wrong and will never do wrong – be "imprisoned" by surveillance? A bank manager would probably reply to such argument, however, that it is better for his customers to be imprisoned by the bank's surveillance cameras, than to be held hostage by a group of bank robbers. One's opinion on who should be in the tower and who can be put in the prison cells, so to speak, will determine whether the surveillance and hence the power exercised by a particular authority over a specific group of people is considered desirable or despicable.

As the good or evil of both surveillance in general and specific surveillance practices in particular is a matter of opinion, it is impossible to declare surveillance by video as a violent act per se. It is however possible and important to examine how video shapes surveillance, and with that, the exertion of power. The possibilities of surveillance enabled by video are simultaneously possibilities of empowerment through looking. One of the most important contributions of video to surveillance is that it has significantly expanded the field that can be observed by one person. The range of observation possible in Bentham's Panopticon pales in comparison to contemporary video surveillance circuits. In such circuits, the tower of the guards can be said to consist of different parts.

First of all, it consists of a large number of cameras. The views which these cameras provide on the surveilled space are linked up, so that together, they form a closed circuit that can show an entire area, without so-called blind spots. The footage is sent without delay to the second part of "the tower": a control room, where a security guard can watch it in real time on different monitors, which all show a part of the surveilled area.[134] From the control room, the guard can operate the cameras. If necessary, he can tilt, pan, or zoom the devices in order to gain a better view of the surveilled people in the area. The video cameras can be understood as an extension of human vision into space, as well as a multiplication of a single person's sight. For they enable one person to look at a space in which he is not present, from multiple points of view at the same time. The size of the area that can be monitored by way of video is, however, limited by human vision, for it cannot be extended infinitely: the number of monitors that can be properly watched by one person has its limit.

Because the size of video cameras can vary from undisguisably big to imperceptibly small, the apparatus can be used for two kinds of surveillance: manifest surveillance or secret surveillance. The Panopticon's system of surveillance is an overt form; the prisoners behave well because they know they are under inspection. They can not only

[134] Video surveillance by multiple cameras is often referred to as CCTV: closed-circuit television. The term "closed circuit" refers to both space and time. First, the view of the cameras on the surveilled space together form one closed view. Secondly, the cameras not only form a closed circuit with each other in a spatial sense, but with the monitoring room in a temporal sense, because there is no time delay between the recording of the images and their appearance on the monitors. The word television is used, in this case, as another word for video images transmitted through cables and broadcast live on television screens.

be watched from the tower, they can also see the tower from their cells. Like the tower of the Panopticon, video cameras are often positioned so that they can be seen by the people under surveillance. The exposure of the camera has a preventive function; people will refrain from misbehaving if they realize that they are being watched. The visible video surveillance camera shares another important characteristic with the Panopticon's tower. The prisoners of the Panopticon can never really know for sure if they are being watched. Similarly, it is not always possible to see if a security camera is operative, and moreover, if anyone is viewing the footage it records. Therefore, both the Panopticon's tower and the video camera even function as the eye of power in the absence of surveilling human eyes.

Rather than being preventive, *hidden* video cameras mostly have a corrective function.[135] Such cameras are used to control people without their knowledge, in order to correct them when wrong-doings are discovered. This correction can be an intervention at the moment the crime is carried out, e.g. by security guards when hidden cameras detect a hold-up. The crime is then not entirely prevented, but it can be interrupted. The correction can also be carried out after the fact, for instance when raiders are arrested later because they were videotaped. The corrective function which is more specific to hidden surveillance cameras is not entirely absent from overt video surveillance, though. In spite of their preventive function, these cameras can show wrong-doings as well. In addition, the recorded footage of both hidden and exposed cameras can serve as a means of solving and proving crimes after they have been committed. Hence, as video not only shows but also records what is in front of the lens, it not only exercises power through its controlling gaze at the spot, but, as evidence of a past event, it can also sustain other exercises of power, such as arrest, trial, conviction, and punishment. This adds to the power of the surveillance gaze of video. It is a gaze that not only looks, but also captures what it sees.

Hidden cameras, moreover, not only have a corrective function; they can have a preventive effect as well. That is, the idea of hidden cameras, the mere possibility of their presence, can prevent crime. Foucault is of the opinion that each individual under surveillance will ultimately interiorize the gaze "to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising his surveillance over, and against, himself" (98). Today, video surveillance has become such a widely applied method that most people are familiar with it and have been under its gaze. The result is that many people have interiorized this gaze, the video gaze of power. They are aware of the fact that video cameras can be hidden anywhere, everywhere; that the gaze is potentially omnipresent. It is not so much unclear if the guards are watching, it is unclear whether there is a tower,

[135] Another possible function – or better: by-product of the main function – of hidden surveillance cameras is the creation of voyeuristic pleasure. This can arise when viewing surveillance images of exposed cameras too, yet there is a difference between looking at images of people who know they are being watched, and of people who don't. As the matter of voyeurism will be further discussed in the following paragraph, I will not further elaborate on it here.

and if so, where. Because of that uncertainty, it is presupposed to be everywhere; people who have internalized the video gaze can feel as though they are being watched by video cameras at every step. Even if they are not watched at all, they see themselves as being watched, and therefore constantly watch themselves through the eyes of a virtual, imagined video gaze. This may prevent them from wrong-doing, but it also can be understood as a form of suffering.

Suffering from paranoia, one might add to the previous phrase. But is it paranoia? How can justified suspicion be differentiated from excessive suspicion when it comes to hidden video cameras? A film in which this question plays an important part is Francis Ford Coppola's *The Conversation* (1974). In the film's last scene, protagonist Harry Gaul is playing his saxophone at home. As a master snoop, he has been engaged in surveillance practices. But the controlling gaze he has always performed now turns on himself. This illustrates Foucault's idea that there is no absolute point in perfected forms of surveillance; the watchers are watched, too. Because Harry knows the many possibilities of hiding cameras and bugs, he becomes aware of the fact that his own apartment could be bugged as well. He feels spied on, and finds it unbearable. The man dismantles his apartment piece by piece – he even rips of the wallpaper and takes out all the floorboards.

Yet, Harry doesn't find the hidden device he is looking for. As the thorough search has a negative result, the viewer is inclined to regard the protagonist as paranoid. He envisages – and therefore experiences – a controlling gaze that isn't there, so it seems. But then, suddenly, the trashed room is shown from a high angle. Beginning in an empty corner, the camera pans slowly and methodically to the left. The broken saxophonist comes into view, but the camera continues its movement until it hits another corner. At that moment, it jerkily reverses itself and pans back, and then back again. This formal structure of the mechanical back-and-forth pan reveals that the view of the scene is provided by the surveillance camera Harry was trying so desperately to uncover (Levin 582). The video gaze he has interiorized by presuming its presence is really there in his apartment. This is shown by the film because it has, in a different way, interiorized the video gaze as well; the video surveillance camera has become an internal narrator in the film.

In sum, video has enlarged the possibilities of surveillance, and because of its ubiquity in contemporary society, it is often experienced as an omnipresent gaze of power. It is not always clear, though, who is in power, who is in charge of the video eye. And this indicates precisely the most important way in which video as a medium shapes the exercise of power through looking. For although, on the one hand, video has facilitated the exercise of power through surveillance, on the other hand the medium has dispersed the power to surveil. Because video cameras can easily be acquired and operated, video surveillance can be exercised by almost anyone. It is not reserved for specialists or to those who already are in power. Foucault's question of whether it would be better to have the prisoners sitting in the Panopticon's central tower instead of the

guards, cannot easily be answered absolutely in the affirmative or negative. With video, however, it has become pretty easy for the prisoners to take over the tower, or to place their own camera right across from the guards' tower.

Seizing Video Power

In the evening of 17 June 1994, O.J. Simpson was pursued by the police on American freeways. The caravan of police vehicles that followed Simpson's car was tailed in the air by a battalion of news helicopters. From this high angle, the video cameras pointing out of the helicopters provided an excellent view on the thrilling event. The recorded video images were broadcast live on television, and were watched by a large part of the American population. As Renov and Suderberg (xv) explain, the unfettered media access to the chase fueled widespread second-guessing of LAPD's handling of the case. Whereas the police usually surveil the public, they themselves were now the subjects of public surveillance. This example illustrates how video can disperse the power to surveil. According to Renov and Suderberg, the medium plays a particularly important part in the division of power within the state:

> […] the means of surveillance representation – an inexpensive video camera or a TV chopper prowling for the news – is so widely available, indeed pervasive, as to dissolve a meaningful state monopoly. Video has begun to play a significant role in the balance of power effected among state, corporation, and citizen even as pure potentiality. (xv)

The possibility to seize power through the surveilling gaze of the video camera has been widely utilized by artists, not to come into power themselves but to criticize video surveillance practices as such. Video art on video surveillance hardly ever welcomes the latter application of the medium; it rather tries to counteract or question the surveillance applications. By aiming their cameras at surveillance cameras, many artists have acted out what I have described as prisoners building a tower across from the guards' tower. The various forms, places, and situations in which they designed their "towers" undermined the distinction between "prisoners" and "guards" in different ways.

The title of Peter Weibel's early video installation *The Guard as Bandit* (1978) indicates that the piece is concerned with the identity of the guard. The work was temporarily installed in the main branch of the Savings Bank in Vienna. It consisted of a monitor and a video camera, the latter being directed at the surveillance camera of the bank. The Saving Bank's surveillance camera was thus filmed and surveilled by Weibel's camera. The image of the bank's surveillance camera could, moreover, be watched on a monitor covered in a mesh stocking, similar to those used by gangsters during bank robberies to hide their identity. Therefore, the monitor showed the Savings Bank camera wearing a mesh stocking, the "guard as bandit," so to speak (Levin *et al.* 76). The artist himself aptly explains how the covering stocking also reveals something:

> What also becomes evident is that this video system [the bank's], which is supposed to warn against violence, itself has inherent aspects of violence. [...] By providing the monitor itself with a symbol of violence, namely, the anonymity provided by the mesh stocking, the anonymity of the violence of control is removed. The covert surveillance, the concealed threatening element of surveillance, becomes apparent. (Weibel in Levin *et al*. 76)

Like Weibel, Steve Mann has filmed video surveillance cameras in public places with a video camera, yet unlike Weibel, he never did this with the approval of the bank or store manager. This is an essential difference. Weibel's camera is the camera of an artist, an artist who uses it to expose his view on surveillance cameras – which he is allowed to do by the bank only because he is an artist.[136] Mann's camera rather functions as a camera of the public. His work circles around the reactions of authorities to civilians who point a video camera at surveillance cameras, and the possibly subversive effect this act of "shooting back" can have when it doesn't use its artistic ground as a cover-up. The artist has designed several devices with built-in video cameras, devices which can be worn on the body when entering a place under surveillance. Mann himself has made many reports of his experiences while wearing his devices. But in principle, he presents them as equipment that could, and should, be worn by anyone.

Mann's "shooting back" practices mainly undermine surveillance practices because they mirror them. One of his most famous pieces is a device called *WearCam* (1995). It consists of a small camera that can be worn as a prosthesis on the head, looking somewhat like headgear from a science-fiction movie because all kinds of wires and two antennas stick out of the helmet. The camera, which is not immediately visible, can be operated leaving both hands free. In this way, filming with a video camera during daily activities is made just as easy as being filmed by surveillance cameras while carrying out those activities. The possibility of filming at random while doing some shopping is important because, then, the act of filming doesn't have the appearance of intentionality or selectivity. As such, it resembles the non-selective and slightly covert way in which surveillance cameras operate. What is more, the *WearCam* doesn't reveal whether it is actually recording or not, just as it is impossible to see whether a surveillance camera is capturing images. In addition, Mann's device resembles conventional surveillance systems in that it makes an offsite back up of the recorded pictures. As the artist puts it: "Just as an individual cannot rob a bank and then destroy the video record [...] my apparatus of détournement puts the images beyond the destructive reach of members of the establishment" (Mann 535). The *WearCam* can store the images because it includes a computer with a wireless connection to the Internet. Through that, all the recorded video images are backed up and shown at various Internet sites around the world.

[136] Indicating that artists have power, even without video cameras.

The subversive effect of *WearCam's* resemblance to the surveillance system it records arises when representatives of this system, such as security guards or store managers, approach Mann (or anyone else wearing the apparatus) in order to find out if the weird-looking headgear poses a threat. Their interrogation of the person wearing the device will soon lead to a reversal of roles; they will be interrogated by the person wearing the device, or simply by the device. When the guards learn the characteristics of the *WearCam,* which must be revealed by its carrier, their first reaction tends to be that filming is prohibited in the establishment. That remark can easily be parried with the reaction that the establishment is filming too, with their surveillance cameras. In addition, the reply can be that although *WearCam* is a camera, it doesn't necessarily record. Such remarks mostly create confusion in the interrogators, who are moreover uncertain about the action they should take because their behavior is possibly recorded and stored out of their reach. Any slip or misstep could later backfire on them. Suddenly, the guards become aware of the repressive power and violent impact of the video surveillance they carry out. Although the power measurement set up by *WearCam* mostly affects the lowest representatives of the surveillance system, their possible discomfort might affect higher authorities too. These are dependent on the blind obedience and resolve of the guards on site, qualities that may be disrupted by the mirror-like structure of the *WearCam*.

4.6 Voyeurism

The practice of cinema, wrote Christian Metz, is only possible through the desire to see. "The desire to see" is the short definition Metz provides for voyeurism. At the same time, the concept of voyeurism has over the years dominated definitions of cinema. According to many film theorists, characteristic aspects of cinema's conventional *dispositif*, such as the set-up of the film projection and the conventions of cinematic storytelling, put the film viewer in the position of voyeur. In order to clarify the layered meaning of the concept of voyeurism, the definition by the French film theorist can be rephrased as "to see with desire." Desire, that is, for the object on view. Because of this desire for the object, voyeurism is often associated with eroticism, with sexual desire that is evoked by looking at people who are engaged in intimate behavior. Eroticism can also be removed from the definition, though; looking at people who are engaged in intimate behavior can also give rise to voyeuristic pleasure when this behavior concerns simple matters in the private lives of others, which explains the success of so-called real life soaps. Another meaning which voyeurism has is *secret* looking; watching with desire without being noticed by the object of desire in view.

It is in the last meaning of voyeurism that the possible violent impact of "the desire to see" is exposed. To be looked at with desire by a voyeur, possibly when engaged in intimate behavior, is not damaging to the subject when she assents to the gaze that

rests upon her. The voyeur can be in perfect harmony with the exhibitionist; the one who wants to see and the one who wants to show can fulfill each other's wishes. However, when voyeurism is a form of spying, peeping or looking without permission of the viewed subject, it is a violating act. The secretly watched subject is turned into an object of desire without consent, her self-determination is infringed on and her privacy is violated.

In his influential discussion of the relation between film and voyeurism, Metz has argued that film specifically gives rise to the violent mode of voyeurism, the mode without the consent of the watched subject. The French theorist supposed a strong interconnection between the cinematic medium and voyeurism. As mentioned Metz was of the opinion that the desire to see is what enables the existence of cinema. But voyeurism makes cinema possible precisely because the cinema meets the desire of the voyeur in many ways. The voyeuristic pleasure to which cinema gives rise is what fills cinema seats with viewers. A starting point in Metz' explanation of how film meets voyeurism is the assertion that in order to obtain voyeuristic pleasure, the voyeur needs to maintain a gulf, an empty space, between the object and the eye, between the object and his own body. The object has to be at the right distance from the voyeur; both far from it but close enough to see it. Although the voyeur desires the object he looks at, his pleasure depends on the act of looking. Because of this, the object of desire has to be kept at a distance. If the distance between looking subject and his object disappears, the voyeur would be overwhelmed, and more importantly the object would no longer be visible, and hence the voyeuristic pleasure would also disappear – although other pleasures and drives do replace voyeurism if the object is "consumed" according to Metz.

Film first of all offers this necessary distance because of the conventional viewing position that is part of the medium's specific, dominant *dispositif*. When entering a movie theater, the rows of seats are placed at a proper distance from the screen, so that the objects on view can be watched adequately. At the same time, conventions stipulate that the empty space between the spectator and the screen is not filled in. Unlike the viewer of paintings or certain forms of cabaret, the film spectator is supposed to remain seated and not to approach the shown images. The gulf between viewer and filmed objects is all the more secure by the fact that the screen forms an impenetrable barrier between the two. Interaction between the world of the viewer and the represented space on screen is practically impossible.[137] Not only does the film show a physically inaccessible *elsewhere*, it also represents an *elsewhen*. As time has necessarily passed between the time of recording and the time of showing, and the illusionistic space shown on screen is not the same space the viewer resides in, the subjects and objects represented by film are, according to Metz, absent in time and space from the location of the film viewer.

Metz compares the absence of the film actor to the presence of the performer in the

[137] That is, when interaction is understood in a literal sense; see my discussion of the concept in Chapter 2

theater. As with film, a distance is to be kept between the audience and the performance in a theater show. In theater, the footlights mark the division between viewers and actors. Although the viewers and actors do occupy the same space, distance between the two is guaranteed by the (dominant but not absolute) convention that the play is not interrupted by the audience. The spectators, as well as the actors on stage, pretend that the play-acted world on stage is momentarily cut-off from the here and now of the viewers.[138] Yet, in light of voyeurism, it is important that in spite of this possibility to pretend that they are elsewhere and elsewhen, the actors on stage are nevertheless physically present during their show.

For Metz, looking at theater performances, as well as at stripteases and peepshows, is less scandalous that looking at film because of the presence of the actors on stage. The presence of the actor can be read as a form of consent to being watched: "In the theater, [...] the actor (the one seen), simply because he is bodily present, because he does not go away, is presumed to consent, to cooperate deliberately" (1981: 62). In other words, because he is there, he must like it (62). This presumption is often hypocritical or deluded, because performers can be forced to act on stage, if only by economic factors – Metz mentioned the example of the impoverished stripper. Still, voyeurism that is not too sadistic, rests on the fiction that the viewed subject agrees, that it is therefore exhibitionist. Video is able to accommodate the desires of the non-sadistic voyeur well. Today, exhibitionist amateur videomakers can show their most intimate (often sexual) acts to the world by posting clips online or by performing in front of a webcam. Exhibitionist video clips do not necessarily please the voyeuristic onlooker alone; viewers can gain pleasure from identifying with the exhibitionist subjects on the (computer) screen who willfully offer themselves to the gazes of a potentially infinite number of online video viewers. [139]

However, although video is in many respects the opposite of film when it comes to the voyeuristic structure of the latter medium, it is important to realize that the exhibitionism enabled and stimulated by video technology is by no means a beneficial cure for, or a compensation for, cinema's violent voyeurism. The online exhibitionism that has boomed since the arrival of the webcam has its own violent side. One of the most harmful offshoots of the webcam is probably the fact that ignorant, poor and/or underage subjects are frequently seduced or threatened online into exposing themselves in front of webcams.

In addition to these sexually oriented criminal activities, the exhibitionism which webcams spur on has fundamentally altered – or rather, invaded – contemporary society. Today, online exhibitionism is an obligatory rather than a liberating option. In order to be

[138] In many forms of theater, the division between stage and audience is not honored at all. Interaction between actors and viewers is possible in the theater. For my argument, it is mainly important that the division can be upheld by convention and pretense, but is never a physical barrier.

[139] See also Ernst van Alphen's "Explosions of Information, Implosions of Meaning, and the Release of Affect" (2013).

a part of social networks, one must "share" private information. This private information hardly ever includes bedroom scenes; the most tedious, boring little facts of everyday life will do when it comes to escaping social isolation. With a comprehensiveness bordering on compulsiveness, pictures and videos of the most ordinary things – meals, pets, Christmas trees, traffic jams, new shoes – are widely shared via online social media platforms such as Facebook. Although the images in question are willingly uploaded by the users of those platforms, the voluntariness of this exhibitionism is something of a chimera. Under the influence of the webcam, the imperative in the age of social media has become: exhibit yourself to your friends, or have no friends at all.

Films, on the other hand, usually do not offer (a fiction of) exhibitionist agreement to their spectators. When representations such as films are taken away from the represented subject, she is no longer able to give direct permission to be exposed in the form of an image. The distance in time and space between the actor's performance in front of the camera and the subsequent film show in the cinema, moreover, makes an indirect permission in the form of bodily presence impossible.[140] Not being authorized by the looked-at subject in any way, film voyeurism can be called aggressive and sadistic.

The film viewer's act of looking is turned into a secret, offensive deed all the more by the conventional darkness in the cinema. Not only is the viewer unauthorized to watch, she is also put in the darkness, hidden and anonymous, like a peeping Tom who spies on other people through the keyhole of a dark closet. In addition, some important narrative film conventions reinforce the film viewer's hidden position. The overarching convention which puts the viewer in her "closet" is the custom that narrative films represent a closed diegesis. This closeness is first of all achieved by the obliteration of all traces of enunciation: film stories seem to tell themselves. Unlike a narrator, actors are always present in films. They are, like a narrator, able to address the spectator. This possibility is however rarely employed in narrative films. In classical cinema the film diegesis remains closed, and the film viewer remains an unacknowledged and unauthorized voyeur.

All this suggests that, although film meets the demands of the voyeur, it also creates the voyeur. The viewing position which films produce for the spectator leave her no choice but to adopt the position of an unauthorized voyeur. The film viewer is not necessarily a beneficiary of the voyeuristic structure of looking which films set up; the viewer can also be its victim. The role of sadistic, aggressive voyeur can be an unwanted and uncomfortable one – and it can only be rejected by not being a film viewer at all. Most spectators, however, adopt this role willingly because it gives them pleasure. Guilty pleasure, maybe, but an accepted form of guilty pleasure. Because, as Metz has argued, the non-authorized film voyeurism is authorized in one important respect: by

[140] Even if film actors join the audience in the cinema (which often happens at premières), they still aren't physically present on (or in) the screen where their performance is shown. Hidden in the dark, invisible to the spectators who face the screen, their presence in the cinema does not function as strongly as the consent suggested by the bodily presence of actors on stage.

the mere fact of its institutionalization. Watching a movie is a very normal thing to do. That it nevertheless has the connotation of a slightly prohibited activity too, may be its strength:

> For the vast majority of the audience, the cinema [...] represents a kind of enclosure or "reserve" which escapes the fully social aspect of life although it is accepted and prescribed by it: going to the cinema is one lawful activity among others with its place in the admissible pastimes of the day or the week, and yet that place is a "hole" in the social cloth, a *loophole* opening to something slightly more crazy, slightly less approved than what one does the rest of the time. (Metz 1982: 66)

According to Metz, the viewer thus likes to escape from "the fully social aspect of life" through the loophole that is cinema. But what about those he sees through this loophole? How are the represented subjects on screen negatively affected by the fact that they are looked at in a voyeuristic way? Previously, I mentioned Benjamin's opinion that actors in front of the camera fear the fact that their image will be transported away from them, because the audience it is transported to represents the market, which turns them into merchantable objects. The actor's fear of the future audience can also be presupposed, though, because this audience turns him into an object of voyeuristic pleasure.

However, although it is certainly violating to be turned into an object of sadistic and aggressive voyeuristic desire, film actors *act* as if they are not aware of the camera. The fact that they generally do not look into the lens doesn't mean they really don't know it is there at the time of filming, or that the audience will be there to watch them in the future. The sadistic voyeuristic structure of film is thus created with the help and knowledge of the people who form the objects of this structure, which is why film voyeurism is less sadistic and violating to the viewed subjects than the voyeuristic viewing of people who really do not know they are secretly being watched with desire. Both actors and film spectators are aware of the fact that film creates the *illusion* that the filmed subjects are viewed without permission. Most voyeuristic viewers know that the actors realize that they will be watched by an audience in future at the moment the camera is recording, and yet the actors do not go away. "Because he *was* there, he must like it" is not as convincing as the previously mentioned "Because he *is* there, he must like it," but the fact that the actor did not hide from the camera can be understood as some form of consent.

Yet, even if the actor is indeed an exhibitionist who agrees to being watched – and thus not an innocent unknowing victim of the voyeuristic look – she still can somehow be considered a dupe of the cinematic structure. Metz has stated that, in the cinema, the exhibitionist and the voyeur always fail to meet. In spite of this, the voyeuristic film viewer still gets to watch – albeit in a slightly sadistic, unauthorized way. The

exhibitionist actor, on the other hand, can never see herself being watched while exposing herself. Except for the eye of the camera (operator), she is never entirely assured of a public. She always misses her audience. What the cinema offers her though, is multiplication and circulation of her image, so that the audience she always misses is at least, hopefully, a large one.

Other Loopholes

In *Rear Window* (Hitchcock 1954), a disabled man in a wheelchair spies on his neighbors through the telephoto lens of his photo camera. As viewers, we join his perspective. In *Sliver* (Noyce 1993) an evil yuppie programmer has wired an entire high-class Manhattan high-rise with invisible video surveillance, through which he secretly spies on various women who live in the building. The protagonist of *La mort en direct* (Tavernier 1979) has a video camera installed in his brain, with the lens hidden in one of his eyes. He is hired by a television producer to secretly record the death of a terminally ill woman, in order to provide footage for a television show called "Death Watch." *Gigante* (Biniez 2009) tells the story of a security guard at a large supermarket, who falls in love with one of the cleaning ladies who appears on the monitors he has to watch at night. Instead of approaching her in person, he tracks all her moves throughout the store via remote PTZ (pan-tilt and zoom) video surveillance. Films in which voyeurism is an important theme are often interpreted as re-enactments of the voyeuristic structure of film (Verstraten 2008: 145). However, when the voyeuristic viewing in the film is carried out with the help of media such as photography and video, as is the case in the examples just mentioned, the films can also be understood as reflections on the voyeuristic applications of these *other* media. *Rear Window, Sliver, La mort en direct* and *Gigante*, among many other films, reveal that photography and video, like film, serve the needs of the voyeur.

In fact, the harmful aspect of film voyeurism, namely its non-authorized character, can be found in certain photography and video applications in a stronger way. Whereas the film actor only *pretends* not to notice the camera, photographs and videos can truly be shot without the knowledge of the represented subject. A photograph can easily be taken without permission because it only takes a second to aim and shoot. What is more, photographs can easily be taken without permission because photographing usually isn't seen as a noteworthy act, it is a common thing to do in many situations. The aim of the camera, moreover, cannot easily be established by onlookers when snapshots are taken, which is why it isn't always noticeable that a camera is aimed at a person who did not accept to have her picture taken. In addition, photo cameras, as opposed to film cameras, can easily be kept from sight when they are operated as they can be very small. For the same reason, video cameras can easily be hidden in order to record in secret. In fact, video cameras are often positioned without the knowledge or approval of the subjects on view, as in the previously discussed surveillance systems. As *Gigante* shows, hidden video surveillance can produce voyeuristic pleasure for those who watch the footage. The gaze of control is then combined with a gaze of desire.

Because of their technical properties, as well as their conventional applications, both photography and video are more suited than film to what Metz calls the sadistic voyeur; the voyeur who spies on his object of desire without their approval.

The gulf between eye and viewed object necessary to the voyeur is maintained by photographs too, in that the represented space on a photograph is not accessible to the viewer, and no interaction is possible between the subjects who are depicted on printed photographs and their viewers. As with film, the photographed subjects are removed from the spectator in time and space in that the moment and place shown on a photograph are not the time and place the viewer resides in. Therefore, Metz' argument that the filmed subject's willingness to be looked at cannot be guaranteed by bodily presence also goes for the photographed subject.

This is different as far as video is concerned. Video can easily bridge the division between viewer and viewed subject. First of all, the viewer and her object of vision can reside in the same moment in time, which is impossible with film and photography. This temporal proximity is established by live video broadcastings, such as video surveillance systems or the closed-circuit set-up discussed in the previous chapter. What is more, video can be used interactively. Because of its electronic foundation, it is open to the influence of both the viewer and the filmed subject, for instance by sensors or switch panels. Webcams and the Internet, in addition, have enlarged the possibilities of interaction between viewing and viewed subjects to the point that the distinction between them can no longer be made. People interacting through webcams can both be looking at each other and watched by each other at the same time. The spatial distance between viewing subject and viewed object which is not canceled out in these instances is completely obliterated in video-based Virtual Reality (VR) environments. The viewer of VR is enveloped by this world, and the distances between herself and the virtual objects on view can be bridged. There is no longer a screen which forms a physical boundary between the two.

Thus, while video is technically more capable than film of offering images of secretly spied-on subjects to a voyeuristic viewer, the medium is at the same time more capable than film of obliterating the distance between viewing and represented subject, a distance which is a prerequisite for voyeurism. When this distance or gap is indeed bridged by video, for instance through interactive set-ups, the represented subject is usually no passive victim of voyeurism but a person who can influence and control her own representation and exposition. Moreover, unlike the film viewer, the viewer of interactive video images is not forcefully put into a voyeuristic position. Instead of remaining at a secret distance, the spectator can make contact with the subject shown.

In the case of VR and computer games based on video, moreover, the viewer can often switch between several different perspectives on the represented world. In computer games, one of these perspectives is the invisible voyeuristic look, a look which is unnoticed by the virtual characters. The other perspectives are usually the viewpoints of characters within the diegesis. In VR representations, the spectator often

views from internal viewpoints alone, as the virtual worlds often cannot be perceived from an external, imperceptible viewpoint at all. Such external and internal viewpoints are not specific to VR computer games, because films mostly provide their viewer with external focalized viewpoints as well as points of view through the eyes of characters. The difference with VR and computer games, however, is that in these forms, the spectator can frequently *choose* to alternate between the perspectives of different (external and) internal focalizors at will. Such freedom of choice can technically not be provided to the viewer by film. A consequence of this freedom is that the voyeuristic perspective is one choice among many, or not even an option at all (in VR), and the positions of looking subject and object of the look are interchangeable.

Previously, I mentioned how the darkness in which films are presented, as well as the conventional seating position of the viewer, contribute to secret voyeuristic looking. When viewing photographs or videos, darkness and a seated position are not dominant characteristics of the viewing situation. Videos can be watched in the dark, but it is by convention not the dominant situation in which videos are presented. Printed photographs even require a lit space in order to be visible at all. The viewer's (and thus the voyeur's) anonymity provided by the dark cinema, however, can be offered by photography and video as well. Unlike film, both media can easily be watched in private. Furthermore, by convention, photographs, "except for an embarrassing ceremonial of a few boring evenings, are looked at when one is alone" (Barthes 97). When it comes to the conventional cinematic distance between cinema seat and screen, however, video and photography are less accommodating to the voyeur. Unlike film, video and photography are not dominated by a *dispositif* that dictates distance between viewer and image. Although videos and photographs can be watched from a distance, it is not uncommon to approach a video projection in a museum. Photographs, moreover, often have to be touched or held close in order to be seen. Such approximations threaten the distance between the body of the onlooker and the object in view which is a necessity for the voyeur.

The secret voyeur is furthermore thwarted by photography and video because these media do not share another important convention with film, namely the cinematic convention which forbids actors from looking into the camera. Unless they are truly photographed or filmed without their knowledge or permission, the represented subjects of photography and video often do look into the lens. It is by convention appropriate and desirable to look into the photo or video lens when one agrees to being captured by the camera. As a result, the viewers of the images are looked at too; they are addressed by the look, and hence acknowledged as onlookers. For this important reason, the viewer of photographs and videos is – if a voyeur at all –not a well-hidden voyeur: often, the object of her desire looks back at her.

When watching Samuel Beckett's *Film* (1965), it becomes clear that the convention not to look into the camera is very dominant within the field of film's specificity, while represented subjects looking into the camera are regarded as common to video. The unnamed protagonist of Beckett's short movie is afraid; afraid of all the things around

him that look at him or seem to look at him: other people, animals, a mirror, an image of a mask, holes in a chair.[141] In addition to all these looking subjects and objects which frighten the man, he is terrified by one other looking instance: the film camera and the film viewer. When hurriedly running up a flight of stairs as if chased by something, the scared figure suddenly turns around, and looks fearfully into the camera. This image of the man's scared look is not sutured; the film doesn't show what the man was looking at in a next shot. Because of that, his fear seems to be directed at the camera and the viewer, who, after all, like all the other eyes in the film, are looking at him, too.

When *Film's* protagonist looks into the camera, the viewer is no longer an unacknowledged, hidden voyeur. The violating impact of voyeuristic looking isn't entirely canceled out by *Film,* however. For although the frightened man has shown that he is aware of the camera's presence, he certainly doesn't give permission to be filmed or looked at. Instead he tries to run and escape from the gaze, and attempts to hide his face from view. In spite of this, the camera keeps looking at him. By retreating into his apartment, the man can escape from the looks of other people. The animals can be thrown out of his living room. His own reflection doesn't look back at him anymore when the mirror is covered with a sheet. Images of looking faces are torn apart. Yet the piercing spying eye of the film camera cannot be avoided. *Film* ends with a close-up shot of the man's left eye, which is blind. Framed in this way, the film's object can be looked at by the viewer from an invisible position again. For although it looks back, it cannot see.

On the one hand, it is remarkable that *Film* is titled after its medium, because it violates one of the most dominant film conventions; the ban on looking into the camera. On the other hand, the title of *Film* appropriate because it is very much a film about film. Precisely by violating the convention that forbids actors to look into the camera, the movie is able to reveal the aggressive voyeurism of film which is for the most part produced by this convention. By looking fearfully into the camera, and by trying to escape from it, the protagonist shows what the film camera usually does; it spies on filmed subjects without their permission. It is indeed a device to be feared. *Film* can be understood as a critical exposition of the persistent voyeurism specific to film, and therefore as an attempt to adjust the medium's specificity.

When *Film* is looked at from a contemporary perspective, however, it is impossible not to recognize another medium in the movie, or rather, to recognize the movie *as* another medium. *Film* is a film about film which looks like video today. When a represented person in a sequence of moving images looks into the lens, most present-day viewers will associate the representation with video instead of with film, because such a look is common in video while it is not in film. In 1965, the year in which *Film* was produced, video already existed as a technology, but not quite yet as a medium, for the technology still had to be inscribed with medium-specific conventions, such as the one

141 In light of the seriousness of the role, it is remarkable (yet not without success) that the protagonist of the film is played by Buster Keaton.

which stipulates that it is common for subjects in front of a video camera to look into the lens. It is remarkable that *Film* was produced precisely at the moment video was about to arrive as a medium. For it opposes a film convention with film, while a new time-based medium was in the making in which this cinematic convention was done away with, too. Because of the absence of the voyeurism-sustaining convention in video, the voyeuristic structure of film became all the more apparent. It is no coincidence that this structure was critically discussed in film theory at the height of video's popularity, during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Although the voyeuristic structure is still specific to film today, these critical reflections – of which *Film* is remarkable forerunner – had its effect on the medium's specificity. Film could no longer produce a secret voyeur in secret.[142] *Film,* in conclusion, is a film about film, but also a video before video, as well as a film about film-before-video.

Feminist Perspectives

The abovementioned critical theoretical discussions of film voyeurism were in a large part conducted by feminist film theorists who, like Metz, analyzed film from a psychoanalytic perspective. These feminist film theorists exposed the voyeuristic structure of traditional film as being a *gendered* one. The division between looking subjects and looked-at objects in voyeuristic cinematic patterns is simultaneously a division between men (who look) and women (who are looked at).

One of the first critics who pointed out this intertwinement of cinema's voyeuristic conventions with patriarchal gender conventions is Laura Mulvey.[143] In her influential essay "Narrative Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975), she discerns three looks associated with narrative cinema: first, that of the camera as it records the pro-filmic event; second, that of the audience as it watches the final product; and third, that of the characters looking at each other within the screen illusion. The conventions of narrative film deny the first two looks, and as a result, the film viewer is turned into a voyeuristic

[142] Unlike Beckett's *Film,* later critical reflections on the voyeuristic structure of the cinematic medium are characterized by a feminist perspective; they emphasize that women specifically are the victims of film's voyeurism. This shift to feminism is well illustrated by Yoko Ono's *Rape* (1969), a film that can be understood as *Film's* feminist successor. Like *Film, Rape* depicts a person who is frightened and harassed by the camera's incessant gaze. In Ono's piece, however, the protagonist is a young woman instead of a man. What is more, in *Rape,* the camera approaches the victim more closely through aggressive close-ups from which the woman constantly tries to hide. Especially near the end of the film, the woman seems to be touched by the camera in a manner not unlike the kinetic camera strokes distributed by the bullies in the YouTube videos. Hence, the cinematic gaze is eventually presented as a physical form of harassment in *Rape.* It goes without saying that the film's title stresses the sexual nature of this harassment. Like Beckett's film, moreover, Ono's *Rape* responds to voyeuristic film conventions by way of features (e.g. the filmed subject looking into the lens, kinetic camera used a tool to "touch" the filmed subject) that would be recognized as videomatic characteristics today.

[143] Feminist film theorists who criticized mainstream films before Mulvey published her ideas in 1975, did not address the gendered voyeuristic structure in films because they did not work within a psychoanalytical framework. Early feminist film critics such as Molly Haskell, Marjorie Rosen, and Claire Johnston rather focused on female stereotypes in mainstream films, which they analyzed from structuralist or semiotic points of view.

spectator. The conventional application of the third look within narrative cinema, in addition, turns the film viewer in a male, heterosexual voyeur. This is caused by the fact that the look of characters within the film diegesis is generally attached to male characters in conventional Hollywood films. In those films, men are the ones who look, at each other and at women. Female protagonists, on the other hand, hardly ever function as internal focalizors in narrative fiction films. They are on display as passive objects, not active bearers, of the look.

The internal focalization of male characters forcefully invites the film viewer to identify with these characters. Because the spectator gains access to the film world by looking, as it were, through the eyes of these male protagonists, it is hardly possible for the viewer disassociate from the male perspective on the film's diegesis. As Mulvey explains, the enforced act of identification is not necessarily uncomfortable or harmful to the film viewer. In fact, identification with characters in fiction films is one of two aspects that produces pleasure for the spectator. For identification with the object on screen satisfies the viewer's narcissistic fascination with likeness. The second aspect which makes looking at film pleasurable derives from the previously discussed voyeurism cinema gives rise to. As Mulvey points out, the two structures of voyeurism and narcissism are highly contradictory, because "one implies a separation of the erotic identity of the subject from the object on the screen, the other demands identification with and recognition of his like" (18). Yet, cinema beautifully solves this contradiction. It offers the viewer the possibility to look desirously and voyeuristically at one category of objects on screen (women), while identifying narcissistically with another category (men).

For the female viewer, however, pleasure in looking is highly problematic when it is produced by the conventional film structure that compels voyeuristic desire for women and narcissistic identification with men. For, when the female spectator accepts the position this structure imposes on her, she has to "become" a male spectator and identify, as it were, against her own gendered self. When she does what the film incites her to do, and looks at the women on screen as objects of male sexual desire, the female spectator turns into a transvestite masochist. [144,145]

According to Mulvey, the only option for female spectators, besides experiencing films masochistically, is to reject the many traditional films that impose a male perspective on their viewers. Some later film theorists who elaborated on Mulvey's ideas, however, have

[144] Although Mulvey states that the female spectator is uncomfortable and "restless in her transvestite clothes" (1981: 37), she claims that transsexual identification with a male character *can* be pleasant to women when it signifies a rediscovery of a lost aspect of their sexual identity. This argument is based on the idea that in the pre-oedipal phase, the phallic fantasy of omnipotence is equally active for girls as for boys. Girls, however, have to shed this aspect of their early sexuality in order to acquire conventional femininity. In films which offer the possibility to identify with the perspective of omnipotent men, they can recover their lost sense of power and competence. Yet, the downside remains that they have to 'become' a man in order to do so.

[145] For a more thorough discussion of the relationship between female spectatorship and masochism, see "Film and the Masquerade: Theorising the Female Spectator" (1982) by Mary Ann Doane.

investigated whether traditional films in which the power to focalize is exclusive to male characters can nevertheless leave some room for the desire and power *of,* and not merely *for* and *over,* women. Tania Modleski has, for instance, scrutinized some of Hitchcock's films in order to find out if these films are as utterly misogynistic as feminist critics such as Mulvey have argued. On the one hand, Modleski sides with these feminist film theorists, as she agrees with their conclusion that women are treated with considerable violence in the work of Hitchcock. On the other hand, Modleski wishes to "save" the brilliant director from the critics who see only the darkest misogynist vision in his films.

In her deconstructionist readings of films such as *Rear Window* (1954) and *Vertigo* (1958), Modleski points out that Hitchcock's films are resistant to patriarchal assimilation because they are characterized by thorough ambivalence about femininity (1989: 3). In Hitchcock's *Vertigo,* for instance, women and their femininity at first sight seem to be fully controlled by men. The male protagonist, Scotty, focalizes all the female characters, who appear to function as the passive objects of his look. What is more, Scotty turns one of them, Judy, into his ideal image of femininity, for instance by picking out specific clothes for her.

However, when taking a closer look at the film, it becomes noticeable that Scotty's power over the female characters is undercut in many instances in the film. For example, in a scene in which Scotty's gaze rests on Judy – his object of desire – the camera shows us a side of her face Scotty cannot see. From this angle, her expression reveals disdain for the male protagonist. In addition to this hidden disdain, Scotty is mocked openly by his friend Midge, who scornfully calls him "big boy." Most importantly, Scotty's masculinity is undermined by his strong fascination for women. It leads to hallucinations and blind obsession which disable Scotty from functioning as a stable, all-seeing and omnipotent man. According to Modleski, such impediment to masculinity by a fascination for femininity characterizes the work of the famous director: "[…] time and time again in Hitchcock films, the strong fascination and identification with femininity revealed in them subverts the claims to mastery and authority not only of the male characters but of the director himself" (3).

Counter-cinema and Counter-video

In addition to rejecting existing misogynist films (Mulvey), or the strategy of reading them deconstructively (Modleski), a third reaction feminist film theorists have summoned in opposition to traditional films is the transformation of cinematic conventions by cinematic practices. Some of the early feminist film critics declared that a counter-cinema had to be developed in which traditional narrative and cinematic techniques should be shunned (Smelik 1999: 355). Mulvey, who was one of the critics who advocated the creation of such counter-cinema, placed her hopes in radical, experimental, avant-garde filmmakers who knew how to strike blows against "the monolithic accumulation of traditional film conventions" (26).[146]

[146] In addition to this, Mulvey created a 'counter-movie' herself: *Riddles of the Sphinx* (1977), in cooperation with Peter Wollen.

However, as Teresa de Lauretis has pointed out, the transformation of traditional narrative film forms, for which Mulvey and others argued in the early and mid-1970s, is a harsh and slow journey. In her *Alice Doesn't* (1984), de Lauretis argues that whenever films expose female perspectives and desires, these are often still colored negatively or canceled out by the plot of the films:

> [...] when a film accidentally or unwisely puts in play the terms of a divided or double desire [...], it must display that desire as impossible or duplicitous [...], finally contradictory [...], and then proceed to resolve the contradiction much in the same way as myths and the mythologist do: by either the massive destruction or the territorialization of women. (115)

In this respect, de Lauretis adopts a different position than Modleski. Whereas Modleski finds instances and moments of female desire or power in narrative films meaningful and important as resistance against patriarchy, de Lauretis argues that such instances lose their importance when they are negated by the narrative closure of a film. The fact that the women whose desire is displayed usually die or "surrender" to the opposite sex in many old, new, mainstream, or alternative narrative films, demonstrates that a feminist transformation of cinema is a tough job, according to de Lauretis.

Yet, it is not a lost cause. In her book, written approximately a decade after Mulvey's seminal essay, de Lauretis states that she sees it very possible for women's cinema to respond to the plea for a "new language of desire" expressed in Mulvey's text. In fact, many feminist narrative films which "tell the story differently" have been produced from the 1970s onwards.[147] Most feminist films that intervene in patriarchal mainstream cinema are characterized by two aspects. First, they critically thematize the oppression of women, and secondly, they create new narrative forms which express instead of suppress female perspectives and desires. The short feminist film *Thriller* (1979) by Sally Potter, for instance, splits its female character in two: Mimi I and Mimi II. The first Mimi is placed outside of the melodramatic story in which she is a character. From this outside position, she investigates how she is constructed as an object in and by the narrative. She asks many questions on her tragic fate in the story: "Was I murdered? Who killed me and why? What does it mean? Would I have preferred to be the hero? What if I had been the subject of this scenario, instead of its object?" In Potter's film, the

[147] For Mulvey, "telling the story differently" means telling a cinematic story without taking recourse to patriarchal, Oedipal structures and forms. This implies that cinematic visual pleasure has to be destroyed, as it derives only from these structures and forms. When de Lauretis refers to films which tell the story differently, however, the sentence can be rephrased as "tell the *Oedipal* story differently." For according to de Lauretis, neither Oedipal structures nor the pleasure they incite have to be obliterated entirely in order to produce feminist films. She holds that the most exciting work in feminist cinema is "narrative and Oedipal *with a vengeance*, for it seeks to stress the duplicity of that scenario and the specific contradiction of the female subject in it, the contradiction by which historical women must work with and against Oedipus" (157, emphasis added).

narrative strategy of a split character in a divided diegesis enables the expression of a female perspective on the oppression of women by means of narrative film conventions.

In Chantal Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975), the subordinate position of women in a patriarchal society is addressed by the oppressive life of its female protagonist called Jeanne, who is shown to serve men all day during her regimented daily routine of cleaning and cooking for her son, and prostituting herself to male clients who visit her at her home. In contrast to many patriarchal films, the oppression of the female character is not aggravated or confirmed by the formal structure of Akerman's film. One of the most important reasons for this is that the look of the camera is not sutured to the looks of characters in the film. The view on Jeanne is a voyeuristic one, because she doesn't acknowledge the presence of the camera. Yet, as it is not attached to characters in the film's diegesis, it is not a masculine, desirous, objectifying view. Rather, the view has been called "objective," "neutral," and "realistic" by many of the film's critics. Because of the long and static shots of Jeanne's repetitive daily business, the film creates a reality effect. It gives rise to the impression that it shows the stifling slowness and dullness of real life; real women's domestic life.

Another reason why the structure of the film doesn't aggravate the oppression of Jeanne is that the uneventful narrative ends with sudden pleasure and revenge for the female protagonist. Jeanne unexpectedly has an orgasm with her day's client, and then stabs him to death with a pair of scissors. Whereas many films "correct" or "punish" instances of female emancipation when the story ends (de Lauretis), the narrative closure of *Jeanne Dielman* instead forms a sudden correction or punishment of patriarchal oppression.

In addition to the considerable field of feminist counter-cinema in which the medium of film was used against conventional aspects of film, the medium of *video* has been applied even more widely to counter the traditional patriarchal cinematic conventions. As explained previously, video is cheaper and easier to work with than film, and except for its lower image quality, video can imitate film rather well. Because of these qualities and abilities, the video medium offered feminists the opportunity to make counter-movies without having to become highly skilled and funded filmmakers.

Feminist videos which form a reaction to traditional cinema can roughly be divided into two categories. First of all, feminist videos have been produced which copy or imitate fragments of mainstream films. Those videos offer a critical perspective on the films they copy through slight or overt differences between the video works and the original films. Before discussing this type of video practices, however, I will first turn to a second category of feminist video, namely, videos which create new forms of telling stories. Telling stories, that is, with moving images, from a female point of view. The aim to create a new visual language which characterizes this second category very much resembles a dominant aspect of feminist counter-cinema: the replacement of old film forms with new ones.

A Spy in the House that Ruth Built (1989) by Vanalyne Green is of one of the most

poignant videos in the area of what I will term "counter-video." Green's tape is well known as a feminist video which creates a new, feminine, visual language of desire, and is often cited as a work that reverses the regime of the male gaze. When compared to traditional patriarchal cinema, *A Spy in the House that Ruth Built* can be said to turn the tables. In the video, men are the objects of female desire, and they are spied on by a female voyeur. This female voyeur is Green, who is the protagonist as well as the narrator of the story. She tells in the first person about her relation to the male world of baseball. For a three-year period, Green's fascination with baseball dominated her life. She would read all about the game in the newspapers, and visit as many games as possible.

Her main interest, however, is not so much in the game itself, but in the players. Green has strong sexual fantasies about the men on the field, and explicitly states how she "wants them," how she feels the need to possess them. When she acquires a press pass, she is granted the privilege of entering the baseball field, and looking at the baseball players at close range. What is more, from this position, she is allowed to film them with her video camera. The video images of the male baseball players are incorporated in *A Spy in the House that Ruth Built* in such a way that they are sutured to Green's look of desire. That they do indeed represent her desirous way of looking becomes visible all the more by the way the camera has been operated while filming the playing men. The images do not so much bring the game in view, they rather put the bodies of the baseball players on display. Often, the camera zooms in on the bodies of the men, showing their bulging crotches and round posteriors, or roving up and down pairs of muscular thighs packed in tight white baseball outfits. Green shows awareness of the objectifying, voyeuristic manner with which she operates the camera when she wonders: "Could they tell where I was angling the lens of my camera, or the passion with which I took aim?" In addition, her desire for the men is made all the more explicit through video keying: on top of the close-up of a player's groin the artist has inserted a video clip in which a faceless woman takes off her panties.

Green's awareness of the fact that she objectifies and appropriates with her camera results in feelings of guilt in the artist. On the one hand, the aggressive act of filming the players is pleasurable, but on the other hand, she feels sorry for the players when she pins them with her viewfinder. They have no idea that they are being pictured as objects of lust, and willingly let themselves be filmed. As Green pitifully remarks, "their passive acceptance of my camera made them look like show animals on display." In addition to her feelings of guilt, Green is uncomfortable in her role of voyeur because she feels demeaned and captured by her own fascination with the baseball players. In the course of the video, the artist's main goal appears to change from sleeping with a baseball player to finding out why she so desperately wants to have sex with the men on the baseball field.

In the end, Green's self-reflection provides her with new insights into male desire for women, and about the relationship between her own sexual desires and her family history. This knowledge, she claims, came as a sense of reunion; it has liberated her

from her anxious, aggressive desires. This plot might be understood as a final (anti-feminist) renouncement of female desire – as a form of narrative closure which Teresa de Lauretis recognized in so many films. Laura Kipnis has critically remarked on *A Spy in the House that Ruth Built* that "the journey of the tape has been one of victory over transgressive desire and the narrative return of the good girl" (339). For Kipnis, Green's video is mainly valuable because it shows how the voyeuristic gaze can be adopted by women. This is an important reversal in light of the dominant dichotomy between looking men and looked-at women in visual culture. Yet, Kipnis regrets the fact that the tables do not remain turned in *A Spy in the House that Ruth Built*. I would argue, however, that it *is* important that the voyeuristic, objectifying gaze is reflected on and finally rejected by the woman who adopts it, for a mere reversal of poles or roles would still leave the dichotomy between the sexes intact. Although Green may too positively propose insight as a miraculous solution to the aggressive aspects of sexual desire, her idea that insight into gender and sexuality can reduce the oppression of one sex by another one is quite reasonable.

Unlike the production of new forms and languages of female desire, which is executed in both film and video, the strategies of copying and imitating are specific to counter-video. Artists and artistic duos such as John Knoop and Sharon Hennessey, Bruce and Norman Yonemoto, Mattias Müller and Christoph Girardet, Johanna Householder and b.h. Yael, amongst others, have produced videos which mimic or sample conventional film scenes. Remarkably, the strategies of copying and imitation are largely absent from feminist films, which generally shun resemblance to the films they aim to work against. An explanation of the fact that feminist videos use copying and imitation as critical strategies, while feminist films do not use these, can be that the reflective edge of copying and imitating mostly lies in the difference between original and copy. When films are copied by video, the difference between media ensures that there is always already a (potentially critical) difference between original and copy. An imitation of film by film would not have this automatic difference with its original, which enhances the risk of an obliteration of critical distance and difference.

One form of copying used by feminist video artists who reflect on traditional film structures is the appropriation of original film footage. Mainstream films are transferred to video or simply bought as a VHS tape or DVD. Subsequently, they are edited by the artists in a way which exposes the misogynist traits of the cinematic works. Two artists who have applied this method in their work are Mattias Müller and Christoph Girardet. Together, they have created a piece called *Kristall* (2006) in which they have collected and re-edited a large number of film scenes showing women and men in front of a mirror. The montage of the scenes exposes a mainstream film convention which stipulates that whenever men are looking in the mirror, they are shown to feel complete and satisfied with themselves. When female characters are looking in the mirror, however, the cinematic narrative in which they are embedded usually implies that something is missing for them. They are waiting for a man to complete them, and are dressing up in

front of the mirror for *him*.

Another video by these two German artists, *Phoenix Tapes* (1999), is a compilation of material from a large number of films by Alfred Hitchcock. The artists have chosen fragments and scenes from Hitchcock's films that are very similar to each other. These fragments have been pasted in succession in the video. One group of scenes for instance shows how women are trapped and brutalized in a similar fashion by men over and over again in the films. Another group of fragments exposes the way in which the look of the camera is attached to the look of male characters by Hitchcock's mode of editing. Muller and Girardet's work clearly underlines Mulvey's theory of narrative cinema in general, and Hitchcock's work in particular. The advantage which the work has over Mulvey's theory, though, is the impact created by the repetition of the similar scenes. When the structures and conventions so-often condemned are shown quickly one after another in large numbers, it becomes impressively clear how dominant these conventions are. What is more, when the repetitiveness of the misogynistic aspects is brought fully into view by *Phoenix Tapes*, the violent voyeuristic and patriarchal features in the films lose their normalized character. The repetitions point out an obsessive, compulsive fascination with women which is not consonant with sound and stable masculinity. In this sense, *Phoenix Tapes* joins in with Modleski's opinion that the strong fascination and identification with femininity revealed in Hitchcock's films subverts the claims to mastery and authority, not only of the male characters but of the director himself.

A second mode of copying which has been adopted by feminist videomakers is the form of the remake. Films or film scenes are re-staged and shot with a video camera. Some of the most precise shot-by-shot recreations of narrative cinema scenes have been produced by Johanna Householder and b.h. Yael. In their videos *The Mission* (2000) and *December 31* (2001), the two artists imitate scenes from Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979) and Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). In both films, women play no part whatsoever. The stories center entirely around male heroes who serve and save their country.

In *The Mission* and *December 31*, the cinematography of these films is imitated with precision; the remade scenes are shot-by-shot copies of the original ones. An important difference is, however, that the male heroes are replaced by females. In the videos, Householder plays the part of the male hero. In *December 31*, her sex is not immediately visible, as she plays the role of a male astronaut (Dave), which means her body is covered with a bulky space suit. In *The Mission,* on the other hand, Householder performs a scene in which Willard, the young protagonist, prepares for his important mission in a hotel room while wearing nothing but underpants on his well-toned body. Householder perfectly duplicates his masculine acts of drinking whisky and practicing battle movements. In addition, she wears men's underpants in order to look like the male hero. Yet, her body is that of a middle-aged woman.

In *December 31*, femininity does not so much enter the scene in the form of the performer's female body, but through the mise-en-scène. Householder and Yael

recorded their tapes in Householder's apartment. The backdrop as well as the props they use are therefore domestic ones. This is especially visible in *December 31* because in this video, space travel and space technology are mimicked with the help, for instance, of a refrigerator, a tiled bathroom floor, and a washing machine. In *2001: A Space Odyssey,* Dave dismantles the computer on board his spaceship with the help of sophisticated tools. In the video imitation, Householder carefully "dismantles" a CD-rack with a kitchen knife.

When performed by a woman in a feminine environment, the performed character of masculine behavior becomes noticeable in these videos by Householder and Yael. The fact that masculinity can be copied by a woman with conventional women's utensils has a rather comical effect that undermines the natural authority and seemingly innate masculinity of the films' heroes. In addition to exposing the artificiality of masculinity, *The Mission* and *December 31* point out that in spite of the fact that Kubrick's and Coppola's narrative films carefully construct and confirm conventional masculinity, they do contain moments which subvert this stable and conventional masculinity. The scenes Householder and Yael have chosen and copied, are scenes in which the male protagonist are in distress. They feel insecure and afraid; afraid to fail in their important masculine task. Although they attempt to remain calm and strong, it is clear that they are riddled with doubt about their own abilities. Willard even seems to face a full mental breakdown. In the films, these moments of psychological instability are, of course, overcome by the male characters. They bravely get their acts together, complete their mission, save the world, and hence fulfill their role of reliable hero after all.

These videos by Householder and Yael pull the scenes they recreate out of their original narrative, cinematic framework. The artists do not show the happy ending which follows the scenes. In *The Mission* and *December 31*, the weakness and instability of the heroes therefore remain unresolved. This re-contextualization, or rather de-contextualization of the film scenes, stresses that the gender roles played by the male heroes are not as stable as they seem. The male protagonists display fear and ambiguity towards their conventional male task of saving the world by way of violence or complicated technology. The fact that the heroes are replaced by a female actor further emphasizes the instability and ambiguity of the male heroes' gender roles. The video works read the films against the grain in a fashion similar to Modleski's deconstructionist readings of Hitchcock films. The videos, however, use the opportunities offered by their own medium to present their readings of two cinematic works in the form of an adaptation of the films, by copying the films with a difference.

The critical reflections on film by feminist film theorists, as well as the feminist movements of counter-cinema and counter-video, have not left the specificity of film untouched. First of all, counter-cinema has "invaded" the field of film, it has "conquered" pieces of the medium's field of application that determine the specificity of the medium. What is more, both the visual and textual critical reflections on the patriarchal structures of film have affected the dominant application of the medium. Mainstream narrative

cinema has not disposed of its gendered voyeuristic patterns entirely, yet they have become less stringent. In many contemporary films, men are not the only ones who look. Because of the feminist views on narrative films, women in mainstream films now get to look, too.