

METONYMY IN THE MOVING IMAGE:
MULTICHANNEL CINEMA

by

Geoffrey Alan Rhodes

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ABSTRACT

Metonym in the Image: Multichannel Cinema, attempts to establish the fractured screen film form (variably called "split-screen," "picture-in-picture," "macro-cinema," "expanded cinema") as a distinct and important movement within cinema. Drawing from extensive art practice experience in multichannel film (see www.GARhodes.com), in this thesis Geoffrey Alan Rhodes analyzes the viewing experience of multichannel cinema in terms of semiotics and Deleuzian film theory. Rhodes begins with a survey of the different multichannel mediums: video games, computer windows, traditional and experimental film, and then centering on the feature film and Peter Greenaway's *The Pillow Book*. The feature film becomes the object of analysis, and specifically a critical comparison of the single channel narrative film form and the multichannel.

The basic difference between forms, the replacement of shots in single channel as opposed to the contiguous arrangement of shots in multichannel, is put into terms of space and time. Here an interpretation of the importance of these differences is given in terms of Henri Bergson, via Gilles Deleuze, and a direct comparison is made between the multichannel form and Deleuze's Time Image cut. The described opposition between "temporal montage" and "spatial montage" is then put in semiotic terms, and the opposition of metonymic and metaphoric planes of meaning, drawing from the writings of Roland Barthes on the photograph, and Roman Jakobson. Here Rhodes intimates that multichannel cinema can function as an important metalanguage through a more metonymic communication with the viewer.

Rhodes then returns to Bergson, and his theory of perception, to analyze the experience of spectating the multichannel. He proposes a special activity by the multichannel cinema audience, in which they must create a *virtual screen* that combines all the images presented into a whole. This creative act sets the multichannel spectating process apart from the single channel, and again points towards the possibility of a metalanguage system. Rhodes proposes this system as working within a playspace, in between the screen and the framed channels. This playspace, through the viewer's creative act, becomes a narrative arena than can break through cliché.

Let me first set out the area of investigation. Cinema, the analogue dinosaur, has ventured little into the non-linear database image structures of videogames and computers, but the few works that really attempt to reconcile the conventions of narrative montage and multiple channels are fascinating. They are like the sound waves of the supersonic jet that McLuhan uses figuratively to describe analysis of new media, the soundwaves become actually visible just as the supersonic jet reaches the speed of sound. These expansions of the cinematic structure call into question the representation of time in cinema. In *Cinema**, it is the film experimenting in multichannel screen forms that attempts to modernize the film form, by using the fragmented structures inherent to the bitmapped digital image, while sacrificing cinema's very basis, montage, because it trades temporal juxtaposition for spatial. Multichannel cinema seems to contain both a new direction and an obsolescence of the traditional film form. I find indications of an *edge* to be explored. Deleuze cites Nietzsche in the *Cinema 2*: "it is never at the beginning that something new, a new art, is able to reveal its essence; what it was from the outset it can reveal only after a detour in its evolution."¹ I will use as a touchstone example, the most narratively ambitious of multichannel narrative films, Peter Greenaway's *The Pillow Book*, and my analysis of multichannel cinema will move between the application of semiotic concepts, and Bergson and Deleuze on space and time. Analysis must rely heavily on example because the application of semiotic terms and theories are loose: as Barthes and Metz have said, images are not words. As well, there is not a direct wedding between concepts of language and concepts of space and time. What is of interest in the analysis, and what, I think, is of interest in multichannel, is where these concepts intersect. Multichannel cinema, though it has existed in film since almost the beginning, is a

* I capitalise, 'Cinema', because I am speaking of those feature films (albeit the fringe) that inspire the cultural complex which takes place in cinemas. I do this for the same purpose that Metz seeks out his semiotics of film in the narrative feature: "In the realm of the cinema, all nonnarrative genres—the documentary, the technical film, etc.—have become marginal provinces, border regions so to speak, while the featurelength film of novelistic fiction, which is simply called a "film"—the usage is significant—has traced more and more clearly the king's highway of filmic expression. ... To examine fiction films is to proceed more directly and more rapidly to the heart of the problem." [Metz, "Some Points in the Semiotics of the Cinema", p69 (see Citations)].

modern form, emerging out of the fractured perspective and bitmapped image structures in contemporary life. I will first survey the territory of the multichannel moving image in contemporary culture.

The advent of new technologies for translating and storing visual information has geometrically added to the quantity of mediums we encounter on a regular basis. The milieu of the duality of telephone and television (a divide of communication and broadcast entertainment) is technologically and culturally obsolete. Entertainment and communication have become linked through the ubiquitous proliferation of devices that talk to each other. Visual and auditory information, first divorced from their spatial constraints with the rise of the photo and audio recording, have been freed from the constraints of their contextual time through digital processes. Though no human can listen to an audio recording in its form as a code in bytes (it must first be translated back to a spatio-temporal sound), it can be "listened to" by a computer just as encoded pictures can be "seen" by a computer: manipulated, represented, processed. Before, through analogue recording, time could be delayed, doubled, and manipulated, but the duration of the original persisted in the form (the tape still must be played through and rewound); this persistence of duration also manifested itself in the loss of quality in "generations" of recordings. Freed from duration through non-linear digital recording, the current temporal image can be stored and presented based on elements for organization besides its temporal context: database structures, windowed environments, multi-layered perspectives in video games, etc. We are presented with a breadth of mediums presenting new moving image forms, most of them utilizing multiple channels of image.

The use of the term 'multichannel' to describe these new digital forms is, at first, uncomfortable. The term is a hold-over from descriptions of analogue mediums, using multiple source feeds or channels to create a single sound or video image, such as sound mixing or chroma-keying, the channel frequently referring to a physical cable connecting devices. But, considering the word 'channel's association with fluid dynamics (flows,

divertings, joinings, dispersings), the word can be used here to describe that virtual journey from source to representation that an image travels.* Taking as our definition the more general OED definition: *that through which information, news, trade, etc. passes; means, agency*, we can apply it to not just the final manifestation of that multichannel organization (the "picture-in-picture"), but to the entire image-information circuit, and also avoid the layered spatial implications of the common term 'windows'.¹² New multichannel screen forms are frequently tied to the mechanics of the digital systems which generate them: channels of information may be designed to interface with the user, such as video game channels, or as expressions of internal data organizations, such as the windows on a computer.[†]

GAMES AND WINDOWS

Video games are the long awaited vehicals of interactive narrative television. 2004 has been historically marked as the year that the video game market officially became larger than the film market (by about a 100 million USD\$ gross[‡]). Though potentially the cultural heir of cinema, the comparison of narrative technique between video games and film is problematic. Video games hardly ever have cuts (the 'atom' of film theory); instead they have channels. And these channels are not used after the style of montage: channels are not used to juxtapose images, instead they're mostly used to facilitate interactivity. This is, in part, a manifestation of games' dual purpose, part educational/ communicative and part narrative/ entertainment. If we look at the graphical layout of the original

* The water metaphor is apt to describe the streams and flows of encoded information. Digital channels from a computer's perspective are frequently joining and separating from other data sets, being *streamed* into decoded manifestations on the screen, ultimately only distinguishable as separate channels by the viewer's subjective perception, not by any physical marker on the data.

† Of course, since it was technically possible, multiple channels of audio have been the norm in TV, cinema, and phonograph. This following by visual image into the territory of sound is a theme that rises frequently in the analysis of multichannel cinema.

‡ And 2005 marks the year where projected ad revenue of Google and Yahoo! equals that of traditional single line broadcasters NBC, CBS, and ABC in primetime [eMarketer (N.Y.C.) / "Jack Myers Report" (N.Y.C.)].

version of the game, *Doom*, we can see a simple, standard "first person shooter" game. The single perspective is enhanced with the communicative tools that are graphical representations of computer data: health numbers, ammo numbers, score, etc. These channels are from different "sets." If the filmic world, in which the avatar exists to hunt aliens, is considered the rational set of images—that set of images which makes up a single whole or reality—then the graphical layers are irrational elements from outside that rational set. Here we use the distinction of "rational" and "irrational" as Deleuze uses the mathematical terms, distinguishing between that which is within a perceived set, and that which comes from outside that set; in the game, irrational elements are serving an informative purpose layered on top of the camera perspective images that are a rational set of the "real" world in which the avatar journeys. The irrational channels are not entirely technical expressions: the face is an affective closeup (the "reverse shot" of the first person perspective) which will become tired and hurt looking with "injury," but its purpose is iconic and repetitive, not representative. The main piece of the screen is, in filmic terms, a long take; in fact, an infinite take: turn the game on and you have a 1st person POV, a reverse shot of the face, a shot of the ammo, the score, and the health—these are endlessly generated. Through the fetishizing of resolution and graphical textures, the trend in video games has been to minimize these secondary information channels and move towards a total immersive graphical experience, modeled in form after what the human eye sees (as opposed to the mental process of perception, as in cinema). You can see in the below screenshots of *Doom 3*, and the popular *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*, these games minimize the informational channels to a level of distraction comparable to a cell phone or an iPod (the layout of *Doom 3* gives a rational context for the channels of information: a cyborg readout). Similarly, the typical race game *Pro Racer 2* simply reproduces in the boundaries of the screen the set of information channels one is already used to in a vehicular: a speedometer, a map, a tachometer, a clock.*

* Channels of image in cinema are frequently used to represent virtualities presented to us by technology, like the game's "presence" of the car's symptoms (or in cinema, the telephone conversation).



Doom 1 1993³



Doom 3 2001⁴



Grand Theft Auto 2002⁵



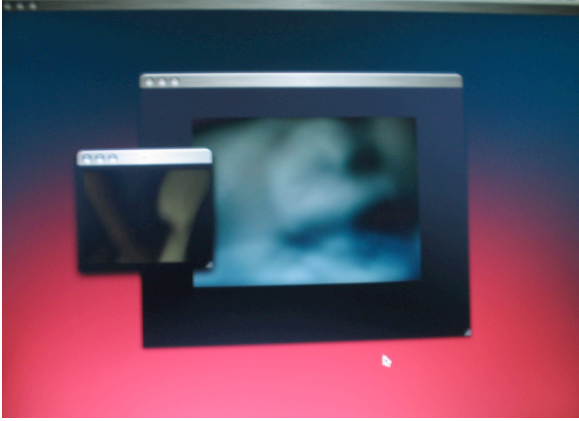
Pro Racer 2 2003⁶

These typical video games illustrate that the game world, though frequently borrowing from cinematic aesthetic and technique, is not really cinematic, just as VR is not. These image systems, no doubt challenged by the complexities of interactivity, are very simple: usually one sustained shot—whether, first person, or third person—presenting a single, what Deleuze terms, *optisign* / *sonsign*: a virtual audio visual reality. Cinema, instead, presents a brain—a perception system which is constantly choosing, arranging, and juxtaposing images... thinking. Cinema is a different animal, engaged in performing the act of perception for the viewer. This observation of difference in image technique between video games and cinema can be read as a reflection of a difference in Bergsonian perception. The critical difference between video games and cinema is the possibility of action—the critical ingredient to perception, according to Bergson. In cinema, the viewer exists in a state of spectator perception—a partial memory perception—leaving the viewer open to the shock of montage, but in the video game, the *sensori-motor* apparatus is fully engaged, selecting from the set of things on the screen what to give attention and react to.⁷ The pressing of the control button and the joystick take the place of the cut.

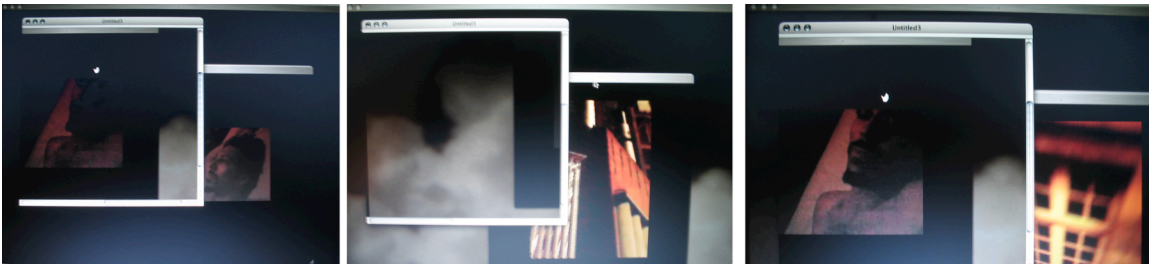
Computer windows environments, similar to the dash board, are commonly used as either manifestations of data organization—separations imposed by divisions within the computer's data, such as programs, documents—or interfaces for organization. But there is a similarity between the computer processor and the projector that has been explored by artists such as Peter Horvath, who creates montage cinema through the use of popup movie windows in a web browser. His films present a spread of images, each appearing in its own quicktime window, varying in size, proportion, frequency, and number, synchronized to each other and a soundtrack. His work functions on the level of cinema.

His newest piece, *Tenderly Yours*, 2005, Horvath describes as a new addition to French New Wave cinema; his piece *Either Side of an Empty Room*, 2002, is, on the level of the shots, part of the set of experimental films which abstractly explore dreams and memories. *Tenderly Yours* is orally narrated, the images taking on an abstract descriptive role, as the story of a young woman's exploration of both city and love (but not herself) is told. Multichannel imagery is used to represent immersion in sequences representing romantic sensuality: the screen fills with three panels, mixing abstracted bodies and images from old romantic movies. *Either Side of an Empty Room* presents montage in multiple channels: the abstract narrative of a character's waking and sleeping life. Here, Horvath uses the second-and-a-half dimension of layers to create relationships of immersion between the protagonist's waking life and dream life. The large, clouded, night-sky dreamscape waits behind all the waking panels, like a subconscious depth; on top of it, smaller panels of waking life, digitally crisp, but temporally dehumanized through fast-motion, pop-up and disappear. The structure follows a chronology, moving from day to night, illustrating the repetition of activities: going to the office, making dinner, going to bed. These web pages feel like cinema (albeit, experimental cinema)— in fact like the cinema experience of a theatre where the 'film' cannot be fast forward or rewind, but is, instead, projected by the computer. The animating force here is not the projector but the processor; the act of "popping up" a window, equivalent to a cut. Here we experience that bondage to another's clock of cinema*. Horvath has, in effect, created experimental "films" through a web browser. The key characteristics which make us recognize cinema in the work is the removal of interactivity (his works are watched) and the force which sets it in motion: we are conscious that somewhere in the computer, something is counting down.

* The "pop-up advertisement," is based upon this bondage. Though the intrusion of broadcast airwaves into the home has been completely accepted, the intrusion of special java pop-up programs onto the personal computer still violates people's feeling of property. Horvath's work is an elegant illustration of the artistic uses of such an intrusion.



From Horvath, *Tenderly*, 2005⁸



From Horvath, *Either Side of an Empty Room*, 2002⁹

NARRATIVE CINEMA

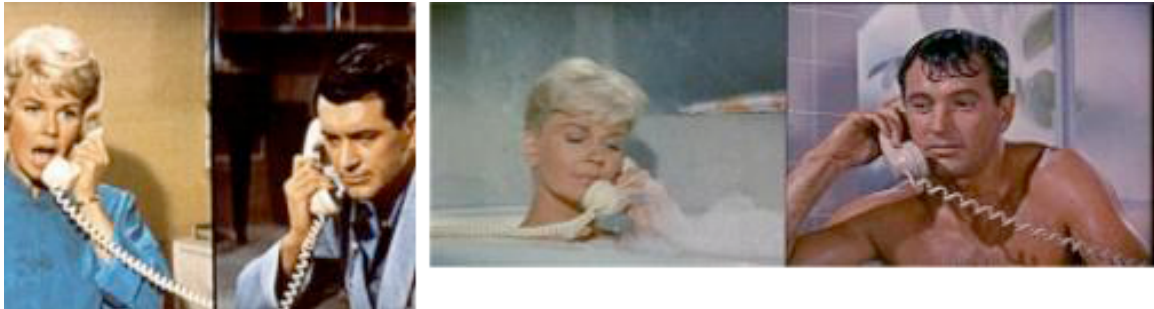
Film was never technologically removed from the possibility of creating multichannel cinema, though it has explored it in a very limited set of circumstances. Lev Manovich theorizes that "spatial montage" has not been prevalent because film technology lent itself to completely filling the screen, "to explore spatial montage, a filmmaker had to work against the technology," giving cinema "a historical imagination [temporal] at the expense of a spatial one."¹⁰ His assertion that the image structure of the bitmapped screen is technically essential to create multichannel "macrocinema," is not convincing: the expensive laborious process of major film production is not daunted by technical difficulty. Of course serious experimentation with multichannel montage (or "spatial montage" as Manovich refers to it) is a shift in *paradigm* that's been advanced through the ubiquitous technology of the computer display, but the concept of multiple channels of picture has always been in major motion picture production. There have been many

occurrences of multichannel film, such that there's a filmic term for the occurrence, "picture-in-picture" (which fits into the whole semantic system of 'The Picture' referring to the entire closed set of the film: all the shots, cuts, and sounds, of which this extra picture is part). The most common and famous occurrence of this is the "split screen" (again the term implicitly defends The Picture as a unity), a screen dissected into two or more sections. The classic occurrence is the telephone conversation, where both parties are shown simultaneously on the screen. This fracturing of filmic space is here used to represent the compression of space through technology.

To intercut a phone conversation can be awkward because the camera perspective must leap across the city or country with every exchange—this does not jibe with our experience of the telephone that only transports a voice, not the entire setting. The most common solution is to not intercut, but instead treat both as discreet scenes, following the conventions for moving between them, and using the soundtrack to unnaturally amplify the voice that is ported over the phone-line: the voice remaining true to Doanne's "psychological realism" of the personality listening to the phone (the voice is given a realism that lets it be heard, as opposed to a spatial realism which moves the microphone wherever the camera is moved).¹¹ In the montage technique described, the simultaneity of the represented action is dealt with through sound; in a split screen technique, the multichannel invades the perspective-collapsing territory of the soundtrack, and creates its own represented simultaneity: this is the classic bisected screen phone conversation.

Now we have something strange. It is no surprise that these sequences are used for comedy, because there is something funny about this view of the phone call—a view impossible without two cameras printed to one screen. We see what the characters do not, while seeing them not seeing it. But this is not all. We are seeing their circuit—the attention and voice of one passing out from the screen, through us, and back in to the other side. We are part of the circuit. We must be because they are facing out. The screen has made us into the telephone. Our point of investment is the gutter between the images; this is the space which traps us between two close-ups. It is for us, to reconcile

this irreconcilable space, to invent closure between these panels, to imagine the virtual set—or world—which includes both channels. This is the fascination of multichannel as used for narrative cinema. The narrative implicates us; forces us to resolve the space between channels. It is also the reason that cinema has been slow to experiment with multi-channel, because it changes the relationship of the viewer to the film.



Pillow Talk¹²

In the case of the phone conversation, the split screen uses the screen's visual fragmentability (as opposed to the limited audio fragmentability of the soundtrack projection) to represent simultaneities as spatially separate. This can be found further in the work of an important director of multichannel cinema, Mike Figgis, and his formalist piece, *Timecode*, where the screen is split up into four panels of simultaneous action. If this simultaneity were represented with only audio, it would be nearly impossible to distinguish which audio came from which location; the audio mixes in the speakers, it's unable to retain spatial distinction beyond stereo left, right. It is only through the fragmenting of the visual screen into four that we are able to organize the four perspectives and discern where each sound belongs: each visual perspective remains locked in its paneled quadrant.*

* *Timecode* was released soon after the mass-market introduction of the miniDV format on which it was shot. MiniDV became the format that revolutionized access to the production value of professional video, by mass-producing lossless shooting and editing equipment. *Timecode* is a formal representation of this non-linear video's relationship to film. It is an expression of the film screen as information... Four video cameras layered together carry enough pixel information to fill the information of one film screen.



Figgis, *Timecode*, 1999.¹³

Figgis used musical notation paper to compose the sequences of contiguous contrapuntal events contained in each of the four synchronous long-takes (an acknowledgement of the soundtrack nature of the multi-channel screen). Remaining true to its formal structure, *Timecode* never forges beyond simultaneity; Figgis is forever reassuring the audience that only multiple quantities of perspective are being presented, not qualities. There is constant emphasis of the simultaneity of the four panels: one character telephones another, three earthquakes occur which effect all four panels, a final scene is documented simultaneously from all four camera perspectives. It is as if Figgis were afraid to lose the audience in a multiplicity of timeframes, so he chose to present only spatial change, not temporal. The screen channels are only formally related by their equal positioning and simultaneity: position 1 filled by camera 1, position 2 by camera 2, etc.. It is, in the end, only four perspectives of the same reality set shown at once. As a result, the film is closed—there is never that relief of the cut—each rational long-take can only contain so many things. But, interesting contrapuntal relationships between the panels do arise as a result of their contiguity. A character in one panel is speaking about a character who is framed in close-up in another panel in a totally different scene, unable to hear. We invent a relationship between these: an emotion which links the two together, through the gutter between (similar to the unsynchronous juxtaposition frequently achieved through voice-over: the sound of a voice and the image of the invoked subject). At another point in the film, the intimacy of the scene taking place in one frame gives ambience—an emotive context like a soundtrack—for another scene in separate panel. It is the same relationship of contiguity that occurs in the soundtrack, the out-of-sync which Eisenstein

lauded, where we are perceiving two things at once that are not rationally connected (they are of different sets); it creates a sort of play space for the viewer in which they can imagine relationships between the two.

Figgis developed the multichannel style in his later film, *Hotel*, in which he breaks up the quad screen structure into different combinations of number and shape in montage. Though the panels still represent only simultaneous perspectives of events (there is a dream sequence, where one channel represents an unconscious man in close-up while the other three show abstract imagery, but we assume this is simultaneous), what is freshly experimented with is the frame as an emotive element: the change in size of the channels increases and decreases their impact. At the end of the film, a screen split into four shows a character that has been ostracized from the group presented in his own panel, while the other panels depict the group of friends together at the dinner table from three other perspectives. As the ostracized character moves through and from the room, this symbolic relationship between frame and character is maintained, such that the friends are always framed together beside a frame in which the ostracized character is alone. The edge of the frame becomes an emoting structure creating a psychological constraining box for the man alone, blocking him from joining the group at large in another panel. The spatial relationship is deliberate in a way much more forceful than tableau, because tableau can only show rational divisions, explained from inside the filmic world; here an outside force has come to bisect this individual from the group, placing a gutter between them. We, as viewers, must re-incorporate this irrational bisection into the master Frame, and the narrative.

This is like a cut—even the language: 'bisection', 'division'... 'cut.' The cut, too, is an irrational division: a force from outside of the screen world expressing itself (expressing the "open whole [which] *durée* plays through").¹⁴ Deleuze makes the distinction between the rational division of a Movement Image, where the cut's temporal breach is cloaked by the continuous action presented (like cutting between shots on the opening of a door), so that there is the illusion of continuous flowing time, and the Time Image, where the cut is

inexplicable within the film world—totally outside of the rational set, so that the cut, itself, becomes the marker (the "irrational interval").¹⁵ But the comparison between the cut and the multichannel image is not simple. The concept of Movement Image cannot apply to multichannel. In the juxtaposition of images, there can only be Movement Image between shots if there is simultaneity and spatial contiguity—which does occur in multichannel, but only as a visual element (that is, the truly simultaneous and contiguous set of panels is the undivided screen). Even when the screen is only nominally divided, diverging only slightly from the spatial/ temporal integrity of the single channel image, the framing of the panels takes on a noticeable, irrational role.

For example, the comic book movie, *The Hulk*, attempts to reference the comic book medium from which it draws through the use of a multichannel screen as a visual element. Throughout the film, multichannel is used as a flourish, similar to the dissolve*, presenting views of the next scene before it's arrived, or splitting a sequence into multiple simultaneous perspectives. In one of these instances, the exit of the corporate interlocutor, Talbot, is cut into three simultaneous perspectives mimicking the views of the three characters present: 1. Close-Up Bruce Banner watching, 2. Medium Shot of Talbot leaving as he looks through the window at, 3. Close-up Betty (see picture). The screen successfully communicates a closed circuit between the three (an element that, in the style of Hollywood film, is more of a reference to the idea of a love triangle plot than any actually occurring narrative) combining the two close-up affection images with the one movement of 'exit' in the third panel. But there is also a sense of gibberish to the scene: each character staring into the frame wall, the eyelines, not quite matching up... it looks cubist, which is an apt comparison: what we're being presented with are three separate durations of perspectives presented as one. Only once in *The Hulk* is the

* The dissolve is a fascinating hybrid of montage and multichannel. In the dissolve, there is always a first image and a second, a top and a bottom. This layered relationship, both metaphoric and metonymic is used as a sort of metalanguage: the film pauses to look at the metonymic relationship of the metaphoric process of replacement, two shots temporarily suspended in contiguous relation; one shot moving towards presence, the other towards absence.

regimen of multichannel simultaneity broken away from: an unimportant scene where Betty walks down a hall in the military base, punches in a code on a door, and finds out the code has expired, the door doesn't open. The action of typing in the code appears in a smaller channel before Betty has even reached the door in the larger. Here is something of interest! The near future being put into metonymic relation with a larger present—this is something only cinema can do. Here the viewer is forced to deal with this irrational interlocutor: the image from the future. It is read, not on a descriptive level, in that we don't think something has really moved into the future, nor do we think she is imagining that she's pushing the button. Nor do we take it on a symbolic level: we do not try to metaphorically equate her walk with the button pushing. We take it on an emotive level, as if part of the sound track: it gives the feeling of purpose to her walk.



The Hulk, 2003¹⁶

The combination of different timeframes forces the viewer to formulate a new, virtual set that can give closure to the discrete times presented. They are in metonymic / synecdochic relation in the rhetorical sense—the future always containing the past, and the past always implicating the future—but irrationally co-existing. Together, they are of a larger set than each of the shots individually. If they were cut in sequence, it would be a Movement Image cut. But presented together, they are impossible—the main panel, of Betty walking to push the button, co-exists with its own future. Robbed of its narrative inertia, the shot becomes shearly durational*: it exists in time, a Deleuzian time-image. In a sense, the narration of the walking shot has become superfluous, only the duration remains, because the narrative time has been communicated spatially, like a comic.

* My cousin, who works in the film industry, notes that her walk is not empty, because she is an attractive woman... it is "eye candy."

Scott McCloud defines comics loosely as “juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence.”^{* 17} He clearly leaves the door open for multichannel cinema (or moving comics) to be called "comics," but he notes that, in general, cinema is "sequential in time but not spatially juxtaposed as comics are."¹⁸ Time is communicated through spatial juxtaposition which demands "closure" from the reader in order to bridge the narrative gap between panels which he terms the "gutter": “if visual iconography is the vocabulary of comics, closure is its grammar.”¹⁹ Similar to Eisenstein's types of montage, he divides these types of juxtaposition into six groups:

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Moment to Moment, | 2. Action to Action, |
| 3. Subject to Subject, | 4. Scene to Scene, |
| 5. Aspect to Aspect, | 6. Non-Sequitur. ²⁰ |

There is an obvious similarity to types of montage juxtaposition. In representing space, films cut to change the camera perspective to view new scenes, new subjects within a scene, or new aspects of a subject. Too, films cuts on the action: here McCloud means that sort of action comic book juxtaposition where in one panel The Thing is throwing a punch, and in the next Dr. Doom is recoiling.[†] This type of Movement Image cut arose in modern montage, where time was compressed through the cutting of space: pieces of spatial movement were cut out in order to speed up a sequence, such as a shot of a key entering a lock, then a shot of a person already on the other side of the open door. What is different here is the implication of an invisible duration through spatial contiguity of images in the comic, and through image replacement in the film. This is the fundamental difference between the multichannel gutter (spatial montage) and the cut (temporal montage), the former is characterized by co-existence, the latter by replacement.

^{*} He leaves the door open for multichannel cinema to be called 'comics,' but he notes that in general cinema is "sequential in time but not spatially juxtaposed as comics are" [McCloud 1999, p7]

[†] It is interesting that the only way to describe an action panel is with a verb: inherently a durational description. Should I say a panel where The Thing "throws" a punch, or "is throwing"? Certainly we would never consider saying a panel where "The Thing's arm is suspended in the air as if he were throwing a punch," which is, of course, the truth. It is like Barthes' observation on the photograph, "a photograph is always invisible: it is not it that we see." [Barthes, Camera Lucida Transl. Richard Howard; Hill and Wang, NY, 1981. p6]

METONYMY IN THE IMAGE

To differentiate in cinema standard temporal montage from multichannel "spatial montage," we can pull out different contrary elements: replacement of images vs. co-existence of images; temporal contiguity vs. spatial contiguity; metaphoric vs. metonymic. Though the temporal spatial distinctions are clear, a comparison with language, and the concepts of metonym and metaphor, is useful, because they point us toward semiotic discourses that can help us analyze the implications of the multichannel form. Jakobson in his famous analysis of aphasic disturbances develops two opposing poles of meaning in language, based off of Saussure's two language operations: Syntagmatic and Paradigmatic, or Combination and Selection, or Concurrence and Concatenation, or Metonym and Metaphor... all of these terms serving to outline the two respective poles. The first terms of these sets are characterized by comparison "in praesentia," a horizontal plane of meaning in which "the entities are conjoined in both [the code and the message] or only in the actual message." The second terms of these oppositions, described as a vertical place of meaning, where elements are selected (and thereby substituted) and compared "in absentia," "entities conjoined in the code but not in the given message."²¹ Jakobson states that "a competition between both devices, metonymic and metaphoric, is manifest in any symbolic process," but there is a difference in degree in these methods of representative signification between single channel and multichannel.²²

In applying this vertical and horizontal model to temporal versus spatial montage, we are comparing the sets temporal contiguity and spatial contiguity; the question being: Are both temporal and spatial montage contiguous and *in praesentia*, one spatially, the other temporally? What is necessary is an evaluation of spatial contiguity versus temporal contiguity. It is important to recall Henri Bergson's warning against the confusion of evaluating time (which is essentially qualitative) in a quantitative manner... treating time

as space.* Bergson sees no contiguity in time, because the essence of time is replacement: repetition with difference. Yet this temporal linearity in spoken language is what is termed syntagmatic and contiguous by Jacobson: the flow of words through time makes the syntagmatic plane. But, according to Bergson, time cannot be contiguous; so the contiguity must occur elsewhere. What is contiguous in language is the virtual assemblage of the words in the mind of the listener—it is the ability of the listener to hold these words in order in memory that is effected by Jacobson's observed contiguity disorder, not the words themselves. Jacobson's contiguity must refer to either the contiguity on the page, or in that virtual perception of the text that occurs within the listener's mind as he assembles meaning.

This virtual contiguity does not translate directly to cinema. There is an important distinction between text and images: in comprehension of the text the listener is holding in his mind the memories of a string of signs, which he is comparing to the next utterance. What is remembered is essentially unchanged as a sign (though there is the tonal, and gestural as well). In cinema, there is a great difference between seeing and what is retained. Seeing, we are presented with that mechanized perspective—that oversaturation of context—moving and flowing with the open, out of frame. It is a durational experience of seeing. The memory is a selection... an impression: a single duration fractured into a multiplicity of signs and description (the observed action, the tone, etc.) sorted into a history. It is this history that we reference in the process of perception of the current shot; the actual shots enduring on the screen are not contiguous.† Multichannel provides a durational contiguity: a co-existence. The manifesting images, not their memories, are put into metonymic relation. Multichannel is true image contiguity, whereas single channel is image replacement. Though the in

* From Bergsonism [p20]: “The idea of disorder emerges from a general idea of order as badly analyzed composite, etc. And conceiving everything in terms of more and less, seeing nothing but differences in degree or differences in intensity where, more profoundly, there are differences in kind is perhaps the most general error of thought, the error common to science and metaphysics.”

† The only truly contiguous images are, perhaps, the last frame of one shot hitting the first frame of the next. The art of 'eye-trace' is concerned with this visual collision of two frames, based on color, luminance, movement, and shape.

memories of shots are contiguously held, the single channel images themselves are replaced in binary, one passing all its residual affect and narrative inertia to the next.

Metonym in rhetorics refers to a part standing in for the whole; Metaphor refers to the transference of meaning through replacement; the relationship to contiguity is the distinction of sets and wholes. The metaphoric is complete as it is selected, but the metonymic meaning is complete only as the set is complete. In multichannel, each channel is in metonymic relationship to the whole of channels, the set of images, the *virtual screen*—a virtual set, created by the viewer, which not only contains the channels, but the closure of gutters in between.* Instead of a transference of meaning, one shot leading/ building to the next, there is a spreading... a contagion. The metonymic relationship, Barthes describes as having a corrosive effect on metaphor in *The Metaphor of the Eye*, "there occurs a general contagion of qualities and actions... for metaphor, which varies them, manifests a regulated difference among them, a difference that metonymy, which exchanges them, immediately undertakes to abolish."²³ It is this effect that peaks our interest as to the possibilities of multichannel: the possibility that in creating metonymic relationships of durations, we can somehow relax, or subvert the symbolic didacticism of narrative montage.[†] In this respect, multichannel *cinema* is especially worthy of focus; cinema is a narratively entrenched art, vastly expensive and connected to power and capital. Its rules and methods of evaluation are established, making in stark contrast elements that subvert them.

Peter Greenaway, with his ambitious tableaux and fascination with the book as pictorial, is a creative designer of multichannel cinema. His 1991 feature, *Prospero's Book* figuratively expresses the progression of Peter Greenaway's frames: the hyper-saturated

* Jacobson, in fact, notes the "manifestly metonymic orientation" of durationally fractured Cubism "where the object is transformed into a set of synecdoches..." [Jacobson, p130]

[†] I think this subversive, unfettered "signifiante" (a term Barthes uses for photographic signification) can be tied to Barthes' "obtuse meaning," as outlined in *The Third Meaning*. *The Third Meaning* concludes with a sudden reference to "these 'arts', born in the lower depths of high culture [the comic and graphic novel that] possess theoretical qualifications and present a new signifier (related to the obtuse meaning)" [Barthes, *The Third Image*, p64, p66].

tableaux burst forth into multiple channels—though the book sequences play with dissection of the screen, the rest of the film deals with depth and layers—then collapse back down to the single frame tableaux. His 1996 work *The Pillow Book*, is still, 9 years later, one of the most elaborate experimentations in multichannel cinema.* Though of course influenced by the contemporary technological image forms in the 90's burst of webpages and CD-ROMS, the film makes no direct reference to these technologies. In fact, the multichannel structure presents itself as a reference to a 1000 year old pillow book, written in Japanese calligraphy. But this reference is only loosely adhered to—sometimes the screen mimics the layout of the featured calligraphy pages (as was done in *Prospero's Book*), but more often the screen structure goes off exploring, never keeping to a rigid semantics.

Keeping within a loose first person perspective, there are many experiments with diverse temporal frames presented simultaneously: screens in which the near future or causal future is juxtaposed against a 'present,' screens that juxtapose narrative present and flashback/memory, and frequent screens that layer a virtual reality over a narrative reality (sometimes presented as imagination of the main character, sometimes appearing on their own) showing the pages of the 1000 year old book being written. In addition, Greenaway plays with different distinctions of irrational and rational with text as a layer projected onto his scenic backdrops, moving on top of the screen, presented as subtitle—sometimes the text is narratively explained, sometimes it is conventionally explained (as in a subtitle), and sometimes it is inexplicable. *The Pillow Book* serves well as a subject for

* It is interesting that *The Pillow Book* is still not found in the indexes of much critical writing (though everyone writes about *Timecode*). Even Manovich fails to cite *The Pillow Book*. It may fall between critical levels, dealing with forms that are written about by new media theorists but its production and narrative keeping it within cinema. Jakobson theorizes on the dearth of metonymic theory: "Similarity in meaning connects the symbols of a metalanguage with the symbols of the language referred to. Similarity connects a metaphoric term with the term for which it is substituted. Consequently, when constructing a metalanguage to interpret tropes, the researcher possesses more homogeneous means to handle metaphor, whereas metonymy, based on a different principle, easily defies interpretation. Therefore nothing comparable to the rich literature on metaphor can be cited for the theory of metonymy." [Jakobson, p132]

analysis of the multichannel form applied creatively and experimentally to narrative cinema.

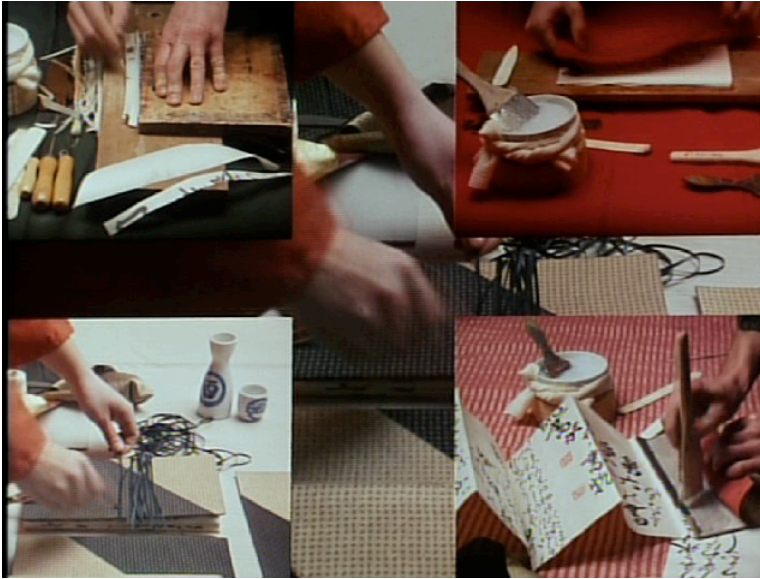
THE FRAME

The single channel image (either cinematic or photographic) is a mechanical analogue, a representation, of the *profilmic spectacle*,* with the exception of the frame. The frame edges of the image are sheerly mechanical, created by the irrational force of the camera gate, outside of the *profilmic* world and its analogue (or literally the border between the analogue and the outside). This frame edge is literally lined up in cinema projection with the border (the screen edge) between audience and film; it is in this way, put in a metaphoric position: the edge of the camera gaze—the border where the represented set gives on to the open filmic whole—is given as the end of possibilities, a whole, a film... there is no screen left. Multichannel is a complicating of the frame. Taken as a whole screen, there is no simple denotative† representation in multichannel cinema because it presents us with the irrationality of the frame, and the impossibility of viewing two durations at once. The frames are cut out of the entire screen, their edges exposed, and in the most eloquent examples, border on a fertile black that may at any point give birth to a new image. The frames separately denote what their cameras were pointed at, but taken as whole, as a screen, what is the denotation?

* The *profilmic spectacle* as defined by Étienne Souriau to mean whatever is put in front of the camera, or the camera is put in front of, to be shot. [Metz, p72]

† *Denotation* in film, Metz describes, is "furnished a motivation by analogy... by the perceptual similarity between the signifier and of the significate," through the "automatic process" of the camera for both the soundtrack as well as the image track. Multichannel projections perceived as a whole are no longer analogues or representations, but arrangements. Metz notes the denotative quality of the recorded sound of a dog barking; I wonder how Metz would assess the denotation in the common multichannel soundtrack: the dog barking mixed as a channel with music, for these channels are only separated into impressions of denotation in our interpretation; they are in fact a whole. [Metz, pp71-72]

To take a simple example of a sequence (or we could say a *collage*) from *The Pillow Book*, when Jerome is made into a book, the process of book binding is presented in four panels sequentially layered on top of a full-screen fifth (this is a reference to another sequence which appears earlier in the film). Individually, each panel can be taken to denote a specific process: the sewing of pages, the gluing of the cover, the gluing of the pages, the binding of the folios. But taken as a screen, there is no denotation. The screen is a set that articulates, 'Book Making.' It is a single screen utterance that expresses a sequence, but is never a representation. It is a compressed expression of the codifying of denotation that exists in the film sequence, which Metz calls the *filmic articulation*.²⁴ It calls up, in a particular, emotive way, the process of bookmaking: the connotations given by the multichannel structure are vague... we can associate adjectives such as, 'symmetrical', 'fragmented', 'modular', 'mechanical' that we would then add to the generally connotated verb-noun: book-making. Considering that in the narrative the book is being made from a dead lover, we might add: 'coldly mechanical', 'synthetic', or because a similar frame structure was used for Nagiko's childhood experience of book binding, we might say 'historical'. The connotation is not clear. This must be due, in part, to the un-explored forms being used: there are almost no codified semantics of multichannel cinema besides the phone-call. The frame structures are free to play with references to montage, tableaux, and deep focus, or to simply forge out on their own.



Greenaway, *The Pillow Book*²⁵

A more elaborate example of the frame as a signifying element from *The Pillow Book* is the multichannel sequence of Nagiko's first exit from Japan. She is pictured in closeup saying goodbye to her mother from the train door, a smaller panel represents a shot from a filmic time several minutes before-hand, when the party was just entering the train station. As her mother quotes from the pillowbook of Sei Shonagon (in a new 2-shot), a fullscreen image of the caligraphic page is overlayed, and above that a panel showing Sei Shonagon at her caligraphic table. Here the screen as a whole functions as an ambiguous connotative expression. The existence of the small panel of the near past both adds spatial information (that they are at a train station), historical information (that they arrived together), and gives an emotive quality to the closeup: the small panel depicts the process of departure of which the closeup is the finale; it gives the closeup that weight.

The layering of the semi-transparent pillowbook on top of the departure signifies on a level that is hard to identify. Though we can identify the first channel as representing the book page being quoted, and the second channel denoting Sei Shonagon writing the quote, the multichannel screen image which includes both these over a channel denoting the train station departure is ambiguous. The viewer explores in the realm of significance as to what the simultaneity and contiguity of these images signifies. We can make

guesses, such as: "Life is language," "Life is circular, historical," or take it simply as a representation of Nagiko's internal state (though this does not seem to be encouraged by the transition to 2-shot from close-up), but there is no clear delineation of what the connotation is.

The significations that spread contagiously through the multichannel screen are, perhaps, too elusive, organic, un-intentional to be termed connotative, though I use that term here to distinguish it from the denotative. The screen significance that takes place in multichannel is similar to Barthes' Third Meaning or Obtuse Meaning, which he terms *signifiante* and exists on a gestural plane, separate from denotative and symbolic signification. This third level of meaning emerges from the context and accidental recorded by the mechanical photographic device. It is based on qualitative meanings that can only emerge from an image. In his essay, *The Third Meaning*, Barthes compares the obtuse meaning to Eisenstein's "center of gravity," "montage by the collective calculation of all the piece's appeals."²⁶ Barthes finds a similarity between the obtuse meaning and Eisenstein's desire for a "vertical reading" where "the basic center of gravity... is transferred to inside the fragment, into the elements included in the image itself. And the center of gravity is no longer the element 'between shots'—the shock—but the element 'inside the shot'—the accentuation within the fragment."²⁷ Though Barthes uses this concept as a basis for analysis of the still image, this searching within images for contiguity seems to have a physical expression in multichannel. Still photography and multichannel film have a connection in the experience of viewing; in both, the viewer must grasp the image through their own durations: the viewer is made conscious of the frame—that which separates them from the image. Barthes describe the process of viewing as a closure between a past instant and a current existence—that is between the represented and the representation, the two durations: "I project the present photograph's immobility upon the past shot, and it is this arrest which constitutes the pose."²⁸ In that space between the image's duration and the viewer's there is a play space. It is inside this space that the viewer creates the *virtual* screen. And I think it is this territory in which this third level of signification occurs.



Greenaway, *The Pillow Book*

Deleuze describes the film frame in terms of sets: the frame encloses a closed set giving onto an open whole (from which the set was selected); the cut comes from outside this rational reality as a force of time (literally changing durations by changing shots).²⁹ The frame together with the screen (which he terms the "frame-of-frames") cause a "deterritorialization" of the image, by enforcing a "common measure for that which has none," meaning that the selection of the set creates and destroys connotations of the image; the closeup signifies differently than the longshot. The two cinema frames, the physical screen frame and the camera frame, and their corresponding sets, the closed and open sets of the film and the closed and open sets of our extra-filmic reality, are lined up in projection. The physical border between the spectator's reality and the film reality corresponds to the filmic border between the limited set of that which is seen and the open set that remains off-frame. This overlap seems to function more as a removal or cloaking of the physical border between spectator and film than it does as a resonance. In the cinema, we are frequently forgetting our own durational existences in favor of the film world—and this film world is inherently the off-frame whole (which the framed shot implicates).*

* This is the metonymy of the cinema—embraced very early in film production—which Jacobson notes: the close-up or the aspect standing in for the whole (though cinema can express relative synecdoche relationships, such as neo-realism's representation of the protagonist lost in a landscape which is both external and internal, it is hard to say that any shot can be truly synecdochic because the film represents an open whole) [Jacobson, pp130-1].

The cinema audience does not perceive the screen, in a Bergsonian sense. In the definition of perception used by Bergson, perception must contain a durational instant where the information is selected as it is considered for action-response through the sensori-motor schema ("an instrument for translating an external movement via the senses into an ensuing motor action")—instead the cinema audience invests their perception *into* the screen.³⁰ It is the camera which selects the aspects of focus, and delivers the resulting response to these aspects—it is the film that truly perceives the filmic world; it is in itself a representation of this perceiving mind. The audience is instead outside of their sensori-motor schema, in a state of passive reception: spectators. It is as if the audience relinquishes its active perception and remains solely in that memory perception—that part of perception only concerned with receiving, categorizing, memorizing, historicizing... "free from the constraints of action, but also passive (the spectator)."³¹ The screen edge is that border between the forgotten duration of the audience and the invested duration of the camera. What interrupts this complete investment is the cut which has the potential to shock the audience back into awareness of their own duration. This cut that loses the audience Deleuze calls the Time Image: the inexplicable that spits out the viewer and forces him back to a true perception of the film situation: the screen and themselves in different durations like Bergson's tea and sugar*, revealing "other durations that beat to other rhythms, that differ in kind from mine."³² The juxtaposition of frames in multichannel functions similarly to this Time Image cut.

The Frame in multichannel cinema is folded, complicated (here I use *complicated* after Deleuze's concept of expression: complicated as the co-existence of explication and implication, where a whole is unfolded or *explicated* into the multiple and each of the multiple *implicates* or enfolds the whole). The screen frame explicates into multiple camera frames, each and together implicating a virtual whole requiring closure. The screen frame no longer corresponds with the camera perspective frames, instead it

* Bergson illustrates the existence of multiplicity and simultaneity in *fluxes* of time, with the durational situation of sugar dissolving in tea. Not only is there the temporal interaction of the tea and water, but these are conceived within his duration, Bergson: "I must wait until the sugar dissolves." [Bergsonism, p32]

functions as an intermediary boundary (it literally frames frames), within which there is still an open whole (the outside of each camera frame and the gutters between them are openings out of the viewed closed sets), and outside of which is the extra-filmic reality. It is like the page of a comic book, which comic book artists refer to as the big panel. This space, between the picture and the picture-in-picture, is the play space of multichannel cinema. The viewer must assemble in their minds virtual frames that achieve closure between the channels in this space. To this extent, through the action of inventing a virtual screen that is a whole, the viewer becomes the filmic brain—the filmic perceiver.

The multichannel frame shares some qualities with the *mis-en-scene* tableau, the deep focus, and the long take—though it may be more appropriate to say that these techniques mimic some of the qualities of multichannel, because what distinguishes these techniques is the juxtaposition of disparate images which occurs within the shot or the *interior montage*—a type of montage in modern cinema, which Deleuze states "can appear only in conditions of the direct time-image."³³ For example *Citizen Kane*'s deep focus sequence in the cabin where the young Kane is visible through the window playing outside. This is a rational contrivance for a second channel: the window, through which we see a subject in a separate scene. In multichannel screens, the channel is presented as irrational—a division enforced from the outside; the frame edge a *semé*, indicating a certain reading of the image. In Greenaway there are uses of panels that allow for relationships between co-existing subjects, but co-existing simultaneously through separate channels, not within the tableau. In *The Pillow Book*, multichannel frames are used to communicate a separation of subjects similar to *Citizen Kane*. In the sequence in which Nagiko searches for her lover, Jerome, while he and the publisher are together, the panels are used to separate Nagiko that searches from Jerome and the Publisher, the objects of her search. Jerome and the publisher are present in an upper panel which eventually zooms out to reveal Nagiko having arrived and watching. Below another panel presents a cut montage of Nagiko's search. Here the frame edge acts as the irrational version of the window in the Kane scene. It provides a border, beyond which we can see into a separate durational reality of a separate character. But here, because of the irrational division, each separate

perspective runs in its own time, the montaged sequence of searching seems to take place over the course of hours while the above shot lasts only minutes. It is a different use of the qualities of space and time from single channel cinema. Deleuze describes a Bergsonian understanding of time and space in reality as a combining of space's "homogeneous and discontinuous 'sections'," and time's "internal succession that is both heterogeneous and continuous."³⁴ In this example of multichannel narrative, the discontinuous sections of space are being used to represent a multiplicity—a heterogeneous series—of durations.

The multichannel frame can signify multiple meanings; it is in this way comparable to the cut. For example in *The Pillow Book*, Nagiko twice experiences the book binding room of the publisher; both times multiple channels are used to represent her experience. In the first occurrence, when she is a child, the multiple panels are used to represent the confusing, and modular industrial practices of the book bindery. The master panel of the scene is overlaid with successive numbers of aspect panels presenting different activities in the room. The channels work in an ambient fashion—similar to the layering of sound effects in soundtrack to create environments. Each activity is presented simultaneously, with sound, to represent a simultaneous assembly line practice. Here the frames themselves signify a choice in number and relationship: they are geometrically numerous and equal, symbolizing the assembly line process. Similar panels are used later when Nagiko returns to the publishers when she is now grown, and seeking a publisher for her own book. Now, panels are used to communicate her memory. Here the frame edge acts as boundary divider between what is filmic reality, and what is filmic virtual/ memory; it indicates a reading of the image that appears within as narratively virtual.



Welles, *Citizen Kane*



Greenaway, *The Pillow Book*

Multichannel, like tableau, tends towards the long take because of the saturation of the screen. Commentary on the hyper-saturated screen of deep focus tableau seems to apply equally well to the multichannel screen. Fuery describes the technical process of deep focus as the semiotic where the focus further into the scene "allowed different sorts of relationships to be formed within the screen."³⁵ These different relationships can work counter to the narrative: the hyper-saturation of visual information draws attention to itself, drawing the viewer out of the diegetic space. To this extent, the hyper saturation of

the screen subverts the narrative. Patrick Fuery describes Greenaway's tableaux as able to “consume the narrative, making what is seen far more important than what is understood by them.”³⁶ Multichannel, too, is inherently tied up with the long take. Henderson's comments on the saturated changing frame of the long take could apply equally to multichannel: “It is the long take alone that permits the director to vary and develop the image without switching to another image; it is often this uninterrupted development that is meant by *mise-en-scène*”.³⁷ Torban Grodal has written on Greenaway's use of the tableau and the longtake. His analysis of the audience's response to Greenaway's technique is interesting both because of its pertinence to the multichannel form, and because it was these tableau techniques that Greenaway later developed into multichannel forms. Grodal comments on Greenaway's use of “fragmentation of the field of vision” in *A Draughtsman's Daughter*, where the image is split into panels through the panes of a window (it applies well to Greenaway's use of frames in *Prospero's Book* and *The Pillow Book*):

However, film, unlike drawing, is a spatio-temporal medium. The salience of the temporal sequence is important for determining whether the viewer feels that he is on a dull guided tour, and begins to notice the spatial and temporal schemata determining the tour, or whether he is following the tour as a free act of will. Whether the viewer will follow the focus of camera or protagonist in the temporal sequence, or whether he will refocus on the frames and perform meta-activities, partly depends on the salience of the temporal sequence... The strong isolation of visual attention for extended periods of time, which in real-life situations is relatively rare, is an important element in visual representations. Film may represent objects cut off from immediate metonymic relations to a broader, open life-world. This procedure of framing and isolation enhances the perception of the intense and saturated network of associations, but reduces the application of tense sequential schemata; it enhances the perception of space, but weakens the perception of telic or paratelic time... the film moves toward becoming a series of stills, a series of ‘tableau’ [p211-2].

This is clearly tied up with the delaying of the cut to present a saturated screen. It is a dampening of that stringing together of temporally contiguous units in the mind of the viewer, or a slowing or dismantling of the conveyor belt of montage which Benjamin describes. If we pull apart the statements about perception, this is a fairly lucid analysis of what changes in the perception of the audience. The perception of space is enhanced—meaning that the audience is returned more to their own perception, where they are

evaluating the surrounding images for the purpose of action (in the extreme this is an awareness of the darkened theatre, but here I think he means more an awareness of the image on the screen), and the perception of time is weakened—of course we do not see time, only images changing against their remembered state in time—but what is meant is that investment in the filmic duration is weakened; the audience is forced to interact with the film.

In the case of multiple channels, the audience is presented with multiple durational images; the audience must create a virtual set, within their own imaginations that includes all of these images. The viewer creates a 2nd order set which includes the channels of images, their frames, and is in itself a whole which describes their relation. This could be more spatial in nature—an imagined whole which includes multiple simultaneous perspectives—or temporal, the combination of multiple durations and times. This assemblage is not an instantaneous task, but ongoing, a resonance of images. The viewer is not returned to a sensori-motor perception—because the screen is not being evaluated for action—but put in a state of interaction where the relationships of images must be evaluated in relationship to their own perceptive center.* The viewer is, in a sense, existing within the cut.

* This perceptive center is similar to the body as theorized in telepresence: the body providing a point of reference from which to interact [Mark Hansen, *New Philosophy for New Media*, 2004]. This is one reason multichannel narrative may be an important future form of cinema and part of the discourse on the Time Image. Greg Lampert puts forward a "modern cinema" that I think could be sought out in multichannel cinema which "will be concerned with rendering an experience or connection between the body and the world, with creating new visual and sound images that might "give back" the body's relationship to the world, which has been lost in a chaos of clichés." [Lambert, Greg, "Cinema and the Outside." *The Brain is the Screen*, p280]

THE CUT

The most important element of multichannel cinema is its propensity for dynamic "spatial montage"; though spatial montage exists in single channel film (in the deep focus, long take, and tableau) just as temporal montage exists within the panels of multichannel film, the multichannel form is typified by its possibilities of spatial montage, just as single channel film has been evaluated since the beginning of cinema for its temporal montage. The cut has been the crucial element of film theory since its inception, such that deep focus, and other types of spatial juxtaposition, are referred to as "internal montage." Bazin, in referring to his three types of elevated montage (cuts that use the "potentialities" available in montage: parallel, accelerated, and attraction montage), notes: "they share one trait in common which constitutes the very definition of montage, namely, the creation of a sense or meaning not objectively contained in the images themselves but derived exclusively from their juxtaposition." He then goes on to reference the Kulishev experiment where the closeup of Mozhukhin changes meaning according to what shot precedes it, which "sums up perfectly the properties of montage... the meaning is not in the image, it is in the shadow of the image projected by montage onto the field of consciousness of the spectator."³⁸ There is an important distinction here, that the process of montage in the cut is not a juxtaposition of images, but the juxtaposition of an image with the memory of another that has preceded it... its "shadow." This distinction is important in differentiating temporal montage from spatial montage, which literally juxtaposes images. The distinction—though played out in a spatial arrangement—is in perception, durational. The temporal montage cut acts as a "relay station" or "aesthetic transformer" (as Bazin states) transferring meaning from one image to the next. The significances of the images and their ordered relations in the multichannel screen does not transfer, but exists in contagious relation, resonant, and fluctuating with the changing image. It is a juxtaposition perceived over a duration: a complicated duration containing the *durées* of each channel and the viewer. The significance of the whole—all the channels taken in their relations as a screen—changes while being perceived, with both the minute movement changes of the individual images, and in larger connotative sweeps

with the appearing and disappearing of major elements. This is a development from the conveyor belt of shocks that Benjamin describes.^{*} It is, necessarily, a contemplative perception by the viewer. Again in the example of Nagiko's arrival to the hotel where Jerome and the publisher lay in bed, the significance of the bottom panel changes through the course of its duration. Nagiko has arrived at the end of her search in the upper panel, while she still "searches" in the below panel, entering the hotel. But there is no longer an object of her search, in that she has already arrived at the end of it, above. The bottom panel has now been narratively exhausted, yet it continues to exist... endure.[†] This panel, no longer narratively connotative, now exists on an emotive, ambient plane, like a photograph, a picture of loneliness and futility[‡]. These panels resonate with each other, out of sync (narratively the time is "out of joint"), drawing attention to the force of time, pushing them ahead. The relationship is reminiscent of Eisenstein's desires of a more musical montage: "overtonal," "contrapuntal," out of sync and dependent on juxtaposition.³⁹

We can see a similar process of changing significance and narrative exhaustion in channels with a different layout and emotive result in the sequence where Nagiko is convinced by her friends to go to the publisher's bookstore to seduce him. The larger panel that first appears depicts her friends playfully convincing her, through singing a song. Below, a smaller panel appears depicting her already having arrived at the publisher's bookstore. It is "the next shot" which has arrived prematurely. Clearly, she

^{*} It is tempting, of course, to compare the structures of multichannel cinema to the networked rhizomic structures of contemporary information systems, just as Benjamin compared the cut to the factory. Certainly contiguity of information has become a principal organizer in network structures, but there is something in the filmic image, its contagion, and perhaps in cinema itself, that I am not sure lends itself to the information age.

[†] It is literally the *past*; it is, as Deleuze describes in Bergsonism, that which has "ceased to act or to be useful. But it has not ceased to be." [Bergsonism p55]

[‡] I think here of Barthes' description of the photograph and its temporal punctum: "By giving me the absolute past of the pose (aorist), the photograph tells me death in the future. What pricks me is the discovery of this equivalence. In front of the photograph of my mother as a child, I tell myself: she is going to die: I shudder, like Winnicott's psychotic patient, over a catastrophe which has already occurred. Whether or not the subject is already dead, every photograph is this catastrophe." [Camera Lucida, p96]

has been convinced. But the panel of convincing continues; now what was partially playful, is completely playful: there is no narrative relevance, it is a sheer indulgence in the play of their singing. The expression of Nagiko's face is now evaluated through the glass of the certainty of her being convinced. Here, unlike montage, we are not evaluating the memory of the image in light of what's come next, we are evaluating the changing image of the past in light of the diachronic present. It is like a representation of Bergson's true movement where the indivisible changing wholes of the moving parts (his tortoise and hare) cause a change in the larger whole of their relationships: "transformation."⁴⁰ This quality of multichannel images becoming shearly durational can be understood in terms of comics and Time Image. Because the screen is using the semantics of comics where a temporal change is communicated in spatial difference (here the lower panel is later) the movement-image role of the montage is not needed. The diachronic requirements of the narrative have already been expressed spatially through "comic-book" semantics, the shot, now superfluous, becomes an image of time: a duration, co-existing with the diachronic narrative (which is now continuing in the lower panel in this example). In fact the whole concept of present-future, imagined-reality, cause-effect is brought in to question. This is an essential element of the Time Image, according to Rodowick: "...sequences are formed not through linear succession in space and chronological succession in time. The "will to falsehood" of the direct time-image draws all of its powers from this quality of incommensurability: indiscernability of the real and the imaginary in the image; inexplicability of narrative events; undecidability of relative perspectives on the same event, both in the present and in the relation of present and past; and, finally, the impossibility of narrative worlds, which proliferate as incongruous presents and not-necessarily-true pasts."⁴¹

* "Equally important, however, is that through this shift in positions a qualitative change takes place that affects the tortoise, the hare, and the space they have traveled—a change in a whole." [Bogue, p24]



Greenaway, *The Pillow Book*

Deleuze describes the Time Image—the direct image of time—as a result of the "irrational interval"—"irrational" because "like an irrational number, it separates two entities without belonging to either."⁴² It is a paradoxical construction made as a result of the "dissociative force" of the juxtaposition of two images that don't rationally order themselves into narrative succession: "succession gives way to series because the interval is a dissociative force; it "strings" images together only as disconnected spaces... What the irrational interval gives is a nonspatial perception—not space but force, the force of time as change interrupting repetition with difference and parceling succession into series."⁴³ Here, Deleuze distinguishes between the conservation of space that occurs in the Movement Image, and a communication of temporal change. The irrational interval is based upon images in series that deframe each other, similar to the deframing in aforementioned multichannel examples. "Instead of one image after the other, there is one image plus another; and each shot is deframed in relation to the framing of the following shot."⁴⁴ Deleuze is using framing to describe the set: in the time image, the rational set refuses to identify itself, each successive shot jumps outside of it, putting the previous frame into question. Multiple channels exist in a similar state of deframing. Each channel exists in its own set, throwing all frames into question. Only the 'black' screen, from which a panel may at any moment appear, remains consistent: all images are

in flux of signification. And the movement maggiore: the appearance of a channel on the screen from black, is that irrational movement of the Time Image, Deleuze's "aberrant movement that depends on time." The multichannel screen, like the Time Image, is an intermediary step between the image and the changing whole: multiple durations existing in serial contiguity resonating with a viewer's perception, demanding closure through a virtual changing set within the viewers mind which is the "screen," the set of sets, the film.⁴⁵

IRRATIONAL BLACK

What is the multiplicity peculiar to time?... When we are sitting on the bank of a river, the flowing of the water, the gliding of a boat or the flight of a bird, the uninterrupted murmur of our deep life, are for us three different things or a single one, at will....

The flowing of the water, the flight of the bird, the murmur of my life form three fluxes; but only because my duration is one of them, and also the element that contains the two others...

The flight of the bird and my own duration are only simultaneous insofar as my own duration divides in two and is reflected in another that contains it at the same time as it contains the flight of the bird: There is therefore a fundamental triplicity of fluxes. It is in this sense that my duration essentially has the power to disclose other durations, to encompass the others, and to encompass itself ad infinitum. But we see that this infinity of reflection or attention gives duration back its true characteristics, which must be constantly recalled: It is not simply the indivisible, but that which has a very special style of division; it is not simply succession but a very special coexistence, a simultaneity of fluxes. "Such is our first idea of simultaneity. We call simultaneous, then, two external fluxes that occupy the same duration because they hold each other in the duration of a third, our own... [It is this] simultaneity of fluxes that brings us back to internal duration, to real duration."⁴⁶

This quote from Deleuze's Bergsonism places us in the durational situation of the multichannel cinema audience. Through a "simultaneity of fluxes" our own duration is consciously put into relation with that of the image, through our power of "intuition" we encompass the multiple into our own duration.⁴⁷ This results in both an external concept of a whole, a concept or virtual whole which encompasses the different durational shots

in "simultaneity," and an awakening of our own "internal duration," the "real duration" of our own living, through the process of creating that whole which unites the simultaneous. Deleuze describes the multiplicity of Abel Gance's multichannel screen in *Napoleon* (1927; the only multichannel film he addresses) as able to achieve an image of Bergson's idea of "the whole which changes," by providing a co-existence of images, a manifested multiplicity.⁴⁸ This is the temporal whole that, Bergson states, includes the relations between the rabbit the hare and the space traveled, as well as their individual durations. This whole Roddowick describes as "neither spatial nor actual" but "temporal and virtual."⁴⁹ Temporal because it is defined by the qualitative durational changes within a set, and "virtual" because it is the "Open," that space continually in flux, "it is the dimension of change itself," the temporal analogue to the spatial concept of "out of frame."⁵⁰ It is within this play space of multiple durations in relationship to our own, which can be multiple or singular, explicated or implicated "at will," that the viewer continuously generates a virtual frame (relative to their bodies and their invested *durées*): a changing set that includes all the channel durations (or fluxes). In the multichannel screen, the black of the screen is a physical manifestation of this playspace. It is the literal out-of-frame, graphically present.

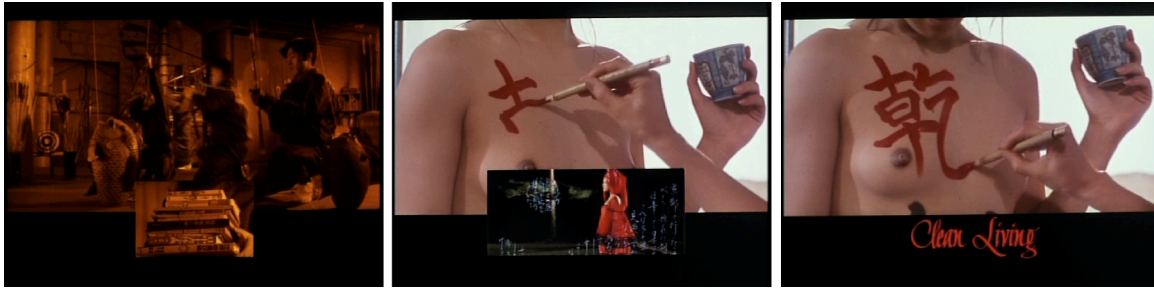
Deleuze calls the black screen the "interstice [or closure between shots] made visible."⁵¹ Here, Deleuze is referring to the black screen that seldom has a durational existence in film—at the beginning and end, and occasionally during the film in Fades, and present between shots to the extent that it is present between frames: a small fraction of a second. But in multichannel cinema the black screen plays an active dynamic role: it is framed—or that from which a frame is cut. It is a fertile black from which a new channel, a new duration, can appear at any time, and as well the black into which durations disappear. The screen black is the irrational out of frame: the durational cut, or gutter, over which the viewer must create that "closure" of sets. But it is not extra-filmic. It is still within the frame-of-frames, the screen. And in this sense, it represents the filmic whole: the "Open," the open set from which any shot can be selected, from which any frame can appear. In this irrational black, the greater whole can enfold itself into a discreet set of temporal

channels, these channels, in turn, implicate the filmic whole. In this sense, the black screen in multichannel cinema is the filmic unconscious. The whole *condenses* into each channel—in the sense that the filmic whole becomes manifested or selected into a discreet, closed set of images—transfers meaning through montage and metonymic contagion—a *displacement* where the affect of the images and the whole are transferred serially—and then dissipates back into black.* This offers the filmmaker an area of the screen that the viewer can relate to directly: a direct relationship with the generator of images, the "interstice made visible."

Greenaway plays with the black as creator in *The Pillow Book*. The film begins with an anamorphic screen letterboxed into a 4:3 screen, leaving a band of black at the bottom, which is used for subtitles. The subtitles generate in the black—an accepted semantics of an extra-filmic channel—but then the talking stops, while the subtitles continue; already the black has a mind of its own, not just parroting whatever the soundtrack says, but generating original meaning. The screen then bursts to full screen with the sync sound image of a record player; the child Nagiko's face is shown in a mirror, then this mirror gives through to another color channel, as if the black peering through from behind. The initial geometric structure returns throughout the film, but this black band at the bottom of the screen may generate text, or a panel showing the next scene, a different perspective, or a flashback. It is a band of fertile, irrational black across the bottom of the screen that could give forth to anything.



* The concepts of *condensation* and *displacement* in Freudian dream theory, Lacan has compared to the linguistic mechanisms of Metaphor and Metonymy [Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory, David Macey, 2000, "condensation"].



Greenaway, *The Pillow Book*

The boundaries between frame and black are a playspace in *The Pillow Book*. There is a growing contagion of the irrational into the profilmic spectacle through the film. This grows from the simple, incidental occurrence to the completely fabricated irrational. An example of the former is the shot in which Nagiko lays, mournful in the round bathtub; around her is darkness. We cannot know if this darkness is profilmic darkness, or the black of the screen. The shot is durational... waiting; we feel as if we are waiting for something to emerge from the black that surrounds her—the black becoming a profilmic representation of the world (the filmic open whole) from which Nagiko hides in her tub. As the film progresses, the formalist divides between elements—the layering of subtitle text on top of the image, and the layering of calligraphic pages—unregulate and the irrational becomes contagious, spreading text to the backdrops of the scenes, or projected onto characters themselves, a channel within a channel. This scenic structure reflects the spreading metonymic meaning that is occurring in channels where past, present, text, imagination co-exist, in contagious signification. Greenaway begins this practice playfully in a scene where Nagiko is being written on by a Cyrillic calligrapher. The backdrop of text, which the viewer has taken to be a rational scenic element (a profilmic painting on the set wall), suddenly dissolves and changes in mid shot, showing that it is not part of that shot's set, but instead a hidden layer—another channel within that shot.





Greenaway, *The Pillow Book*

The very divisions between the profilmic and the "aberrant movement" of the cut are deconstructed. There is an exhaustion of montage; the relationship of contiguity and metonymy has broken down into simple contagion... eroticism. This is a direct representation (and acknowledgement by Greenaway) of the corrosion of metaphoric difference that occurs through contiguity—the metonymic force of the different channels slowly dissolves the filmic separations, the film moves towards entropy. It is similar to the use of metonymy Barthes describes in Georges Bataille's *Histoire de l'Œil*.

This transfer of meaning from one chain to the other, at different levels of the metaphor (eye sucked like a breast, my eye sipped by her lips), we will doubtless realize that Bataille's eroticism is essentially metonymic... there occurs a general contagion of qualities and actions... for metaphor, which varies them, manifests a regulated difference among them, a difference which metonymy, which exchanges them, immediately undertakes to abolish.⁵²

This confusion of signifier and meaning Barthes sees as the source of the eroticism. The chain moves towards the exhaustion of metaphor, where every combination and relationship is tried. It is at the level of exhaustion of the montage—and exhaustion of the metaphoric meaning—that multichannel has the possibility of providing an image system that is beyond cliché. It is a similar goal and system as Deleuze's Time Image cut, but based on screen image structure, instead of on a distinction of image content (the distinction between Movement Image and Time Image being in the shots juxtaposed). In the multichannel image, I find a similar "bringing forth" of the image, which Deleuze describes as "the whole image without metaphor... the thing in itself, literally, in its excess of horror or beauty, in its radical or unjustifiable character, because it no longer has to be 'justified', for better or for worse..."⁵³ The image itself, realized in its own full *durée* "constantly attempts to break through the cliché, to get out of the cliché." In the

multichannel screen, the channels of images exist as durations—simultaneous fluxes that exchange meaning freely, and must be grasped through the viewer's own duration and intuition. But unlike the single channel Time Image, the multichannel screen is never solely the image: it is always a relationship of images. This may give the opportunity for a meaning system that can narrate while challenging the cliché. It seems the problem with Deleuze's Time Image is that in its pure form it is also without content; to inspire the viewer, the image must also engage. In its perfection, the Time Image is outside of all language, but in multichannel there may be a useful metalanguage: a signification system of images is allowed to flux, and the viewer given space in which to engage the meaning system—engage Derrida's *aporia*—and create new meanings.

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