IN FOCUS: Performance

Introduction

by Matthew Solomon, editor

Performances of various kinds have been fundamental to moving pictures since even before the inception of cinema. Eadweard Muybridge's sequential photographs of movement—representations of which he projected onto a screen with a zoopraxiscope—typically made use of subjects trained to perform the depicted actions.[1] In preparing his magnum opus, *Animal Locomotion*, between 1884 and 1887, Muybridge photographed student athletes from the University of Pennsylvania, models, and a professional dancer, all of whom were adept at comporting their bodies and were accustomed to performing for the view of spectators.[2] The performative character of many of the human movements depicted in *Animal Locomotion* was further emphasized by Muybridge's penchant for photographing his subjects while acting out little scenarios with a range of props. While Muybridge's work thus looks forward to both the narratives and the fantasies of cinema, as Linda Williams and Marta Braun have argued, his serial photographs also encapsulate the crucial dialectic between performance and mechanical reproduction that helps define the entire history of moving images.[3] These photographs captured people performing in particular ways under uniquely modern circumstances. Blanche Epler, Edith Tadd, and more than ninety other subjects performed not so much for an audience of people as for an audience of cameras. A bank of adjacent cameras pixelated their movements in both time and space. With sequentially operated shutters, these cameras captured series of staccato instantaneities that were each from an incrementally different point of view. As the recent rediscovery of the

1 Marta Braun, *Eadweard Muybridge* (London: Reaktion Books, 2010), 159–164.

2 Janine A. Mileaf, "Poses for the Camera: Eadweard Muybridge's Studies of the Human Figure," *American Art* 16, no. 3 (2002): 35–37.

3 Linda Williams, "Film Body: An Implantation of Perversions," in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 507–534; Marta Braun, *Picturing Time: The Work of Étienne-Jules Marey (1830–1904)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 231–254.

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Animal Locomotion proofs makes clear, Muybridge also subsequently altered the resulting photographs by carefully cropping, enlarging, eliminating, adding, and reordering individual images within a series.[4] Muybridge recorded, parsed, and reformatted hundreds of performances to create composite and virtual renderings of movement.

As such, Muybridge's *Animal Locomotion* photographs mark the advent of a new and unprecedented relationship between performance and mechanical reproduction—one in which performances were recalibrated in relation to the apparatus both *post facto* and, to a lesser extent, *pre facto*. The battery of cameras before which Muybridge's subjects moved effectively created a new set of temporal and spatial parameters that altered their performances, whether or not the subjects consciously chose to alter their performances for these peculiar conditions. This subtle (or perhaps not-so-subtle) dialectic of performance and mechanical reproduction would come to define the making of moving images, even though it has not received adequate consideration. Film theory, for example, has grappled long and hard with the concepts of mechanical reproducibility and photographic ontology, but the other side of the performance-reproduction dialectic has almost always tended to get short shrift.

This "In Focus" aims to open up a fuller consideration of performance in Cinema and Media Studies, as well as to point to several possible directions for further research. While rethinking the relation between the performer and the apparatus is one potential area for consideration and elaboration, another is investigating the role performance has played in exhibition and reception. Historically, cinema was itself a performance before the adoption of synchronized recorded sound: no two screenings were ever truly identical despite the often-noted mechanical reproducibility of the films. Most projectors were hand-cranked, and so the varying speeds at which a film was unspooled constituted an unseen manual performance by the projectionist, however rote and monotonous these laborious "performances" might typically have been. Sound accompaniment—whether musical, verbal, or otherwise—was a central nexus between projection and performance during the so-called silent period.[5] Sound cinema tended to systematize and mechanize the experience of cinema, but in many exhibition venues, performances of various kinds retained an important place in the movie program as preludes to a feature film. Nor did all performance take place on the stage. While the disciplining of audience members (who were strongly encouraged to remain more or less silent in their seats once the lights dimmed) was a precondition for theater's emergence as a mass medium at the end of the nineteenth century, neither theater nor movie audiences have always been compliant. Indeed, stories of quasi-performative audience behavior are ubiquitous and would likely constitute a fascinating study in their own right. Video has provided an impetus for new forms of performance, like the practice of karaoke cinema discussed by Barbara Klinger,

4 Marta Braun, "Muybridge's *Animal Locomotion*: The Director's Cut," *History of Photography* 24, no. 1 (2000): 52–53. See also Braun, *Eadweard Muybridge*, 202–207; and Marta Braun, "Animal Locomotion," in *Helios: Eadweard Muybridge in a Time of Change*, ed. Philip Brookman (London: Steidl; Washington, DC: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 2010), 271–283.

5 Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

wherein groups of viewers collectively recite the dialogue of their favorite films in synchronization with the actors speaking on screen.[6]

Contributors to this "In Focus," however, are primarily concerned with looking at and listening to media performances. While Cinema Studies, and to a lesser extent Media Studies, has produced a substantial body of work on stars and actors, far less attention has been dedicated to modes of performance that do not fit comfortably within established categories of acting. Early cinema is a hotbed of diverse performance styles, as one can see even from a brief look at the output of the Edison Manufacturing Company. Edison's Black Maria in West Orange, New Jersey—like Muybridge's outdoor photographic space between two Veterinary Department buildings on the University of Pennsylvania campus in Philadelphia—was a uniquely modern performance venue within which both amateur and professional performers were called on to present skits, athletic feats, and variety acts, all distilled to less than a minute in length and compressed into a tight space, and all shot by the kinetograph against a schematic or monochromatic backdrop.[7] Early cinema extended and elaborated the performance styles that variety theater showcased—what Caroline Caffin described as "genuine marvels in their control of muscle, poise and timing" in her 1914 book *Vaudeville*.[8] Although presentational forms of performance like conjuring, juggling, acrobatics, and the like were generally shunted aside by acting in the cinema,[9] traces of these other kinds of performances are visible in the acting of W. C. Fields, Cary Grant, Burt Lancaster, and others trained in the circus arts.

Conceived across a broader spectrum of bodily movement, speech, and sound, performance can reveal the nuance, diversity, and dynamism of human involvement in the media. Take, for example, the well-known final scene of *Bonnie and Clyde* (Arthur Penn, 1967). This landmark of cinematic violence is, of course, a result of slow-motion cinematography and elaborate editing. Director Arthur Penn explains that the machine-gun ambush of the eponymous couple was filmed in several takes using four cameras—each mounted with a different lens—that filmed the action simultaneously at different frame rates.[10] These shots were combined into a final montage of some fifty-one shots that spans just fifty-four seconds, according to Stephen Prince, including moments in which the tempo of shot juxtapositions exceeds two per second.[11] Editing

6 Barbara Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies, and the Home* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 183–186.

7 Charles Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures, 1890–1900: An Annotated Filmography* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997). As Musser notes, "Filmed theater (or more accurately filmed performance) as an approach to representation was only a starting point for the development of a multi-faceted relationship between the amusement world and film in this period" (30).

8 Caroline Caffin, *Vaudeville* (New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1914), 171.

9 Matthew Solomon, *Disappearing Tricks: Silent Film, Houdini, and the New Magic of the Twentieth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 38–39.

10 Jean-Louis Comolli and André S. Labarthe, "*Bonnie and Clyde*: An Interview with Arthur Penn" (1968), in *Focus on "Bonnie and Clyde,"* ed. John G. Cawelti (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973), 16.

11 Stephen Prince, "The Hemorrhaging of American Cinema," in *Arthur Penn's "Bonnie and Clyde,"* ed. Lester D. Friedman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 135.

and camera speed, however, are not the only factors responsible for what Penn called the "spasm of death" that ends *Bonnie and Clyde*. It is easy to overlook the montage of very brief and highly specific performances of death that is at the core of this virtuoso montage of shots. Indeed, this brief sequence relies not only on skillful montage but also on two writhing, pulsing performances of violent death from multiple gunshot wounds. As Bonnie (Faye Dunaway) and Clyde (Warren Beatty) are riddled with bullets, they topple and convulse themselves in ways that resemble marionettes or rhythmic dance performed while sitting and lying down—performances that are all the more striking inasmuch as they were microchoreographed across multiple takes performed in real time with the ostensible understanding that the actors' movements were being dilated by several undercranked cameras. The performances in this sequence are rarely discussed, but Penn alluded to them in a 1968 interview, pointing out that the deaths of Bonnie and Clyde were both performed as falls, even though Bonnie is inside an automobile when gunned down, and adding that Clyde's death was meant "to be rather like a ballet."[12] Penn's allusions to falling and dancing suggest the extent to which an analysis of acting is inadequate for taking measure of what we see in this sequence—as it would be for countless other unforgettable media performances. Clearly, different descriptive and analytic terms are called for. And the authors writing in the following pages begin to seek out exactly such terms.

Jacob Smith's contribution takes a performance-oriented approach to media history, juxtaposing *The May Irwin Kiss* (William Heise, 1896) to a number of relevant phonograph recordings to suggest what a transmedia approach employing some of the methods of Performance Studies, Folklore, and other disciplines can yield. Lori Landay's equally interdisciplinary discussion of kinesthetics across film, television, and digital media explores how mirrorneuron research might shed light on the affective responses that screen performances of dance and the like can inspire in spectators. Vinicius Navarro examines self-presentational performance in nonfiction film and video, arguing that its ubiquity on the Internet is evidence of exchange rather than solipsism. George Toles demonstrates how *The Third Man* (Carol Reed, 1949) is structured by a veritable network of often-subtle gestures (many by actor Orson Welles); Toles thus provides an example of how careful attention to performance can usefully complement other forms of close analysis. Drawing on both critical theory and Performance Studies scholarship, Edward D. Miller plumbs the acousmatic depths of Charles Garrad's 2000 film version of Samuel Beckett's play *That Time* to reveal it as a singular "performance of listening." Taken together, the authors assembled here find innovative ways to discuss performance, transcending conventional conceptions of acting and pushing our understandings of the meaning of performance in productive new directions. ✻

12 Arthur Penn, quoted in Comolli and Labarthe, "*Bonnie and Clyde*," 16. Asked what direction he gave to Dunaway, Penn said, somewhat opaquely, that he told her "just to be, simply to enact the death, to fall and follow the laws of gravity" (16).

Kissing as Telling: Some Thoughts on the Cultural History of Media Performance

by Jacob Smith

Much of my research has involved the analysis of types of performance as they have developed through history and moved between media forms and genres. My experience with that type of work has convinced me of the potential benefits of an interdisciplinary dialogue between Performance Studies and Media Studies. This is not the place for a lengthy discussion of all the possible synergies between these disciplines, but let me briefly mention two. First, the analysis of performance can help scholars to study the dynamics of trans- or intermediality—the relationships among media forms. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett writes that, since performance "lacks a distinctive medium," Performance Studies "starts from the premise that its objects of study are not to be divided up and parceled out, medium by medium."[1] Second, the study of performance is inherently concerned with process and change, with the relationship between tradition and innovation, between the doing and the already done.[2] Performance Studies can thus provide methodological tools for scholars embarking on what Rick Altman calls a "performer-oriented" approach to media history. Altman reminds us that nineteenth-century American entertainment was organized around acts and the people who performed them, as opposed to media products, and he suggests that film scholars must put aside a "firmly entrenched film-oriented approach to cinema in favor of a performer-oriented position."[3] A performer-oriented or performance-oriented approach has much to offer media historians, but it is not without its challenges. How does

1 Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Performance Studies," Rockefeller Foundation, Culture and Creativity, September 1999, http://www.nyu.edu/classes/bkg/issues/rock2.htm.

2 On the emergent quality of performance, see Richard Bauman, *Verbal Art as Performance* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1977), 37–45. On performance as restored behavior, see Richard Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 36. Marvin Carlson writes that "performance is associated not just with doing, but with re-doing." Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1996), 195.

3 Rick Altman, "From Lecturer's Prop to Industrial Product: The Early History of Travel Films," in *Virtual Voyages: Cinema and Travel*, ed. Jeffrey Ruoff (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 61.

one engage in a cultural history of media performance? What are the relevant historical documents in such a project? Does a turn to media performance amount to "formalist retrenchment," making it a "particularly conservative subsection" of historical scholarship that allows scholars to "continue to look at film form" while "ticking the box of locating film in its discourse networks"?[4] Is it possible to take performance as a focus of study and remain committed to situating media culture in its larger social and historical contexts? How can we go beyond the observation that identity is performed so as to locate the specific mechanics of those performances? What are the relevant points of articulation between media performances and everyday interaction (that is, between performance and performativity)? This essay addresses some of those questions through a historical case study having to do with what J. A. Sokalski has called "performed affection."[5]

Thomas Edison's 1896 film *The May Irwin Kiss* is an archetypal instance of modern media performance. The kissing scene between May Irwin and John C. Rice was taken from the popular play *The Widow Jones*, and film scholars have approached it by considering the contrast between stage and screen. Taking a performer-oriented approach to May Irwin's career can yield even more insights. Charles Musser notes that the kissing scene in *The Widow Jones* was not initially mentioned in the play's promotion, with emphasis placed instead on Irwin's "witty lines" and songs: "May Irwin's personality and her singing, particular her Negro or 'Coon' songs, were selling the show."[6] It is thus somewhat surprising that media historians have failed to examine a set of media texts that, unlike the Edison film, captured Irwin's renowned vocal delivery: a series of phonograph records that Irwin made for the Victor Talking Machine Company in May 1907. These recordings not only add a voice to a famous cinematic image but, when they are combined with other popular recordings from this time, also point to ways in which a performance-oriented approach can supplement more medium-oriented histories.

Such an approach to turn-of-the-century enactments of performed affection brings the phonograph into the conversation between stage and screen, and thus potentially brings nuance to both theoretical models and historical narratives. Sokalski argues that Irwin was particularly popular with female audiences who relished her stage performances for their enactment of power and control. Sokalski compares *The May Irwin Kiss* to Edison's 1900 follow-up, *The New Kiss*, and he concludes that "female actors underwent marked loss of personal control of their sexual enactments in transferring their performances into cinema." They became, in effect, objects "to be performed on." Thus, "May Irwin's strong control of her sexual performance suggests a model adopted and then quickly abandoned by cinema at its earliest point."[7] Irwin's phonograph

4 This is an argument that has been put forth in terms of intermediality. Andrew Shail, "Intermediality: Disciplinary Flux or Formalist Retrenchment?" *Early Popular Visual Culture* 8, no. 1 (February 2010): 13.

5 J. A. Sokalski, "Performed Affection: The Spectacle of Kissing on Stage and Screen," in *Allegories of Communication: Intermedial Concerns from Cinema to the Digital*, ed. John Fullerton and Jan Olsson (Eastleigh, UK: John Libbey, 2005), 299.

6 Charles Musser, "*The May Irwin Kiss*: Performance and the Beginnings of Cinema," in *Visual Delights Two: Exhibition and Reception*, ed. Vanessa Toulmin and Simon Popple (Eastleigh, UK: John Libbey, 2005), 98–99.

7 Sokalski, "Performed Affection," 316.

records, however, indicate that elements of her stage persona found a place in the modern media after all. Irwin's 1907 recordings are performed in a troubling "Coon" song style popular at the time, combining racial caricature with expressions of female empowerment. In "Mat-ri-mony," Irwin complains about her lazy husband and refers to "matrimony" as a "high-toned name for trouble" that you "pronounce with a sigh." Similarly, in "Moses Andrew Jackson, Goodbye," she announces her angry departure from the eponymous man, singing, "Get somebody else to wash and cook!" in a clipped and biting tone of voice. Given the phonograph industry's assumption that the majority of its purchases were made by women, Irwin's records certainly challenge Sokalski's suggestion that the modern media "quickly abandoned" Irwin's stage style and address to female fans.[8] These records cast new light on Irwin's media career and performance style, prompting us to pay closer attention to the voice as a channel of expression and to the performance of female empowerment and its entanglement with racial caricature (what Linda Williams discusses in terms of the "interracial lust" that sits "uneasily around the edges" of cinematic depictions of affection).[9]

The act of kissing is notably absent on Irwin's records, but another female recording artist of the time made records that often contained the sounds of performed affection. In 1905, the trade journal *Talking Machine World* described a phonograph record titled *Ev'ry Little Bit Helps*, which staged "a duet between a lady and a gentleman coon with a bad attack of spring fever," adding that "the sound their lips produce when they come together made a deep impression upon us." The reviewer conjectured that *Ev'ry Little Bit Helps* had "added another field for the collector of records. Why not a collection of kiss records? Cleverly classified it should prove of immense interest."[10] That record was performed by Ada Jones and Len Spencer. Spencer began recording with the Columbia Phonograph Company in about 1890, and he had a multifaceted career in the incipient media industries: he was a popular and versatile recording artist who experimented with adaptations of the minstrel show for the phonograph, and in 1908 he created a booking agency that supplied live talent to moving picture shows.[11] According to some accounts, Spencer was acting out a love scene in minstrel dialect with another male performer when a disgusted manager at Columbia studios requested that he find a woman to play the female part. Spencer hired Ada Jones, who was performing illustrated songs at Huber's Museum in New York. Jones thus became a pioneer female performer in an industry in which men had typically played women's roles.[12]

8 On the phonograph and female consumers, see William Howland Kenney, *Recorded Music in American Life: The Phonograph and Popular Memory, 1890–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

9 Linda Williams, "Of Kisses and Ellipses: The Long Adolescence of American Movies," *Critical Inquiry* 32, no. 2 (Winter 2006): 298.

10 "A Record of a Kiss," *Talking Machine World*, September 15, 1905, 23.

11 Patrick Feaster, "He Was the Edison Phonograph: Len Spencer, an Old New Media Pioneer," paper presented at the conference of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies, New Orleans, LA, March 13, 2011. See also Feaster and Jacob Smith, "Reconfiguring the History of Early Cinema through the Phonograph, 1877–1908," *Film History* 21, no. 4 (2009): 311–325.

12 See Feaster, "'The Following Record': Making Sense of Phonographic Performance, 1877–1908" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2007), 600; and Kenney, *Recorded Music*, 35.

Jones and Spencer made a series of remarkable recordings that should be of great interest to scholars interested in the history of media and performance. In particular, the Jones and Spencer records offer early examples of performed affection in the modern media, and so can facilitate a comparative analysis of the protocols of performed affection across media. Linda Williams writes that Edison's *The May Irwin Kiss* demonstrates "a divided attention; the actors are compelled simultaneously to face each other and to face front. Something of this divided attention persists in all representations of sex acts, torn as they are between the necessary close contact between bodies and the compulsion to make that contact visible."[13] I want to qualify that statement and assert that such a divided attention persists in all *visual* representations of sex acts. The sound—as opposed to the sight—of the kiss operates by a different logic. The smack that signifies the meeting of lips is radically ambiguous, since it is easily perceived from either participant's subjective experience or from an objective distance. Furthermore, the smack does not necessarily convey information about the position of the participants, whether or not one party initiates or dominates the act, or even whether one pair of lips or two made the sound. Williams argues that the kiss is "unique among sex acts" in its "great potential for reciprocity": "unlike heterosexual intercourse, mouths and tongues can interpenetrate in a potentially mutual give and take."[14] The potentially egalitarian quality of the kiss can blossom in the context of a sound-only media form like the phonograph. That said, Jones and Spencer records embed the kiss within dialogue that signals a range of interpersonal dynamics. For example, on the 1905 recording *Heinie*, Jones exclaims, "Oh, Heinie!" after a smacking sound, leading us to interpret Spencer as the "giver" of the kiss. The key point I want to make is that, whereas film-oriented histories of performed affection might begin with *The May Irwin Kiss*, proceed next to Edison's *New Kiss*, and continue on through the classical Hollywood cinema, a performance-oriented approach moves instead across and among media forms, in the process broadening theoretical models and prompting new historical frameworks.

Virginia Wright Wexman observes that kisses in Hollywood cinema were often used as "a means of effecting narrative closure."[15] Listening to the Jones and Spencer records, one is struck by the variety of narrative functions that the kiss can serve: the sound of kisses accentuates a romantic setting, as when two Bowery youths kiss when the lights go out in a trolley car (*Coming Home from Coney Island*, 1906); or resolves an argument (*Mr. and Mrs. Murphy*, 1905); or serves as a transition from dialogue to singing (*Peaches and Cream*, 1906); or serves as a transition from a dream back to reality (*Muggsy's Dream*, 1908). As a form of audio theater, these phonograph records bring singing, dialogue, music, and sound effects onto the same sonic plane, with the kiss existing somewhere between speech, percussive instrument, and sound effect.[16] More than simply a spectacle that serves as a dam in the narrative flow, the kiss becomes a powerful form

13 Williams, "Of Kisses and Ellipses," 293.

14 Ibid., 313.

15 Virginia Wright Wexman, *Creating the Couple* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 18.

16 I am thinking here of Rudolf Arnheim's assertion that, in radio, real sounds and voices are not bound to the "physical world"; instead, they claim a "relationship with the poetic word and the musical note," such that radio artists are given "the exciting possibility of making an amazing new unity out of pure form and physical reality." Arnheim, *Radio: An Art of Sound* (1936; New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), 15.

of narrative punctuation. As such, the sonic performance of affection might provide a rich case study for an "erotic translinguistics," which, as Robert Stam explains, would be based on a "sensual and reciprocal communicative model of sexual interlocution," drawing its metaphors from "the metalanguage of self-aware communication." Such a project would explore the proliferation of social meaning latent in the kiss and would pose questions about the grammar of performed affection as part of a larger investigation of "carnal polyphony, or sexual heteroglossia."[17]

Richard Bauman argues that performance is a mode of communication that "calls forth special attention to and heightened awareness of the act of expression," and we might say that performance is inherently reflexive.[18] Several Jones and Spencer records not only depict kissing but also thematize the public performance of the act of kissing. The aforementioned *Ev'ry Little Bit Helps* begins with an introductory announcement that refers to it as a "Vaudeville Specialty," which is followed by cheers of a studio audience that frame the ensuing dialogue as the depiction of a stage performance. At one point, Ada Jones, in minstrel dialect, tells Spencer, "Kiss me!" "I don't like to," he bashfully replies, "the audience is looking." He eventually concedes and even gives her "more" when she asks for it. Here is an example of how spoken dialogue frames the social dynamics of the ambiguous smack of the kiss, as well as another conflation of racial caricature and female sexual agency. We might also notice the reflexive quality of Spencer's statement: he seems to break out of the performance frame to acknowledge not only the audience in the recording studio but also listeners at home. In *Si Perkins' Barn Dance* (1909), Jones and Spencer play two "rube" types at a barn dance. A bashful Elmer asks Susan, "Do you like kissing games?" "No," she replies. "Why?" Elmer asks, to which Susan answers: "Cause there's always too many looking on." She goes on to kiss him in exchange for the flower in his buttonhole. We find here another reflexive moment that recognizes the presence of an audience, as well as an indication of a social context in which kissing was not typically seen in public (the latter supporting claims that cinematic kisses fascinated in part by providing a "scientific view" of the "mouthing techniques" involved in the kiss).[19] But this scene also leaves me wondering what these "kissing games" were. Were there vernacular traditions of courtship that were staged as social games and that might be more relevant as cultural reference points for turn-of-the-century kissing than traditions of performed affection on the stage?

The question of kissing games and their relation to the performances on *Si Perkins' Barn Dance* brings us to a particular strength of the study of performance in media histories: performance provides a window onto what Bauman and Charles L. Briggs describe as the process "contextualization," whereby "communicative contexts" emerge "in negotiations between participants in social interactions." Bauman and Briggs assert that it is necessary to "study the textual details that illuminate the manner in which participants are collectively constructing the world around them" to avoid reifying

17 Robert Stam, *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism, and Film* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 181, 186.

18 Bauman, *Verbal Art as Performance*, 11. See also Richard Bauman, "'It's Not a Telescope, It's a Telephone': Encounters with the Telephone on Early Commercial Sound Recordings," in *Language Ideologies and Media Discourse: Texts, Practices, Policies*, ed. Sally Johnson and Tommaso M. Milani (London: Continuum, 2010), 252–276.

19 Sokalski, "Performed Affection," 311.

"the context." At the same time, attempts to identify the meaning of texts and performances "in terms of purely symbolic, context-free content" disregard the "multiplicity of indexical connections that enable verbal art to transform, not simply reflect, social life": "To claim that researchers must choose among analyses of poetic patterns, social interaction, or larger social and cultural contexts is to reify each of these elements and to forestall an adequate study of any."[20] Elmer's question to Susan about kissing games is thus an index of one potentially relevant communicative context in this portrayal of a kiss, worth pursuing as a cultural frame for this media text. Performance not only reflects but also refracts its context, and one kind of analysis would calibrate how Jones and Spencer key their enactment of kissing games either as a nostalgic depiction of a romanticized country life lost to modernity or as a caricature of comic rubes as performed by two urban, sophisticated modern media stars.

To conclude, let me briefly return to some of the questions I posed at the start of this essay. Since traditions such as performed affection lack a distinct medium and cannot be "parceled out medium by medium," performance-oriented histories have the potential to draw our attention to unexpected media forms and understudied cohorts of media creators: in this case, the songs and sketches performed by early recording artists. Performance-oriented media histories can avoid "formalist retrenchment" by being attuned to the cultural construction of aesthetic hierarchies among performers as well as the struggles between emergent and traditional styles (for example, between protocols of performed affection on the stage, in the recording studio, and before the camera; or between homo- and heterosocial studio performance practices; or co-constituting regimes of racial, ethnic, or gendered caricature). Historical research on the discursive networks surrounding performed affection reveals the fluid boundaries not only between media forms but also between "media performance" as a category of popular entertainment and as a communicative resource for audiences. In the case of performed affection, we might explore film as a combination of "prurience and pedagogy" that educates audiences on proper kissing techniques, or we might consider the process by which traditions of "kissing games" move from the domain of social interaction to media content.[21] In this regard, media performance is best understood, to borrow the words of M. M. Bakhtin, as one of "the drive belts from the history of society to the history of language."[22] Media performances offer rich source material for historical arguments, but they require an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates the analytical precision and attention to contextualization provided by Performance Studies, Sociolinguistics, and Cultural Studies, as well as the theories of Media Studies. I end, then, with the assertion that cultural histories of media performance can help us to think about both media and performance in fresh ways. ✻

Thanks to Richard Bauman and Patrick Feaster for their advice and inspiration.

20 Richard Bauman and Charles L. Briggs, "Poetics and Performance as Critical Perspectives on Language and Social Life," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 19 (1990): 68–69.

21 Williams, "Of Kisses and Ellipses," 295.

22 M. M. Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. Vern W. McGee, ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 65.

The Mirror of Performance: Kinaesthetics, Subjectivity, and the Body in Film, Television, and Virtual Worlds

by Lori Landay

But I am not in front of my body, I am in it, or rather I am it.
—Maurice Merleau-Ponty[1]

Our Dancing Daughters (Harry Beaumont, 1928) opens with a shot of an art-deco gold statuette of a dancing woman frozen midkick, her elbows jutting and her hair swinging. Dissolve to a pair of shoes in front of a three-way mirror. Then, another dissolve adds a woman's feet and legs. They begin to dance, fast, and soon we see that they belong to Diana (Joan Crawford), and she and we watch her dance into her clothes. In the mirror images she shares with the spectator, and in her exuberant dance, which she will not pause even to slip into her modern step-in underwear, Diana embodies a modern kinetic aesthetic—a kinaesthetic—of an active ludic femininity that encourages viewers to imagine and emulate a playful subjectivity based on the lived, bodily experience of the dances and movement shared by both flapper spectators and flapper actresses.[2]

Joan Crawford's performance in the mirror reveals the character's sense of self as a fusion of being visible and kinetic. Diana *is* her body, and it is a moving body; she knows and experiences the world through its movement, even in the private moment of dressing in the mirror. Yet this moment it is not private but, rather, shared by the spectator, who is also herself engaged in the gaze at Diana's performance of herself for herself. The definition of "performance" is contested by Performance

1 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 2002), 173.

2 Focusing on the comic and kinetic appeal of silent films with flapper heroines who, through dance and movement, embody and perform a new mode of femininity based on a modern aesthetic of movement illuminates how seeing and being seen and how deliberate uses of the body functioned in Jazz Age culture. This does not negate obvious Lacanian interpretations of Diana's mirror dance as a narcissistic projection of desire to be satisfied by commodification, but it seeks to add other insights. See Lori Landay, "The Flapper Film: Comedy, Dance, and Jazz Age Kinaesthetics," in *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema*, ed. Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 221–248.

Studies scholars, but common ground emerges around the idea that performance, whether on stage, before a camera, or in everyday life, is an action done *for* someone, even if that person is the performer him- or herself. And so there is a doubling, a sense of an Other, either in the actor taking on a character or in the idea of performance for an audience.[3] Vivian Sobchack eloquently catches the doublings of performance and meaning for the film spectator from a phenomenological perspective:

> Watching a film is both a direct and mediated experience of direct experience as mediation. We both perceive a world *within* the immediate experience of an "other" and *without* it, as immediate experience mediated by an "other." Watching a film we can see the seeing as well as the seen, hear the hearing as well as the heard, and feel the movement as well as see the moved. As viewers, not only do we spontaneously and invisibly perform these existential acts directly for and as ourselves in relation *to* the film before us, but these same acts are coterminously given to us *as* the film, as mediating acts of perception-cum-expression we take up and *invisibly perform* by appropriating and incorporating them into our own existential performance; we watch them as a *visible performance* distinguishable from, yet included in, our own.[4]

But there is even more to the mirror of Crawford's dance performance; in the brain of the spectator, the actions she sees on the screen are also "mirrored" by mirror neurons, brain cells that activate when a primate does an action but also when a primate observes an action.[5] There is a reason performances of dance, movement, sport, action, kung fu—whether on the screen or live—are so engaging to watch, especially for those who have done that action themselves: "Your mirror neuron system becomes more active the more expert you are at an observed skill. . . . Male ballet dancers have a weaker mirror response when they watch videotapes of moves typically made by female dancers, even though both sexes train together. The same goes for ballerinas watching male ballet movements. The actions you mirror most strongly are the ones you know best."[6] If one has not performed the specific action, mirror neurons still fire, in a general way related to your experience of balance, or running and jumping, but in a less intense way than the mirror neurons of an expert, and there are specific

3 For good overviews, see Marvin Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 3–5; and Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 28–51.

4 Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 10–11. Original emphasis.

5 There is a considerable body of research and popular writing about mirror neurons, much of which focuses on how they function in empathy and social interactions. See, for example, Marco Iacoboni, *Mirroring People: The New Science of How We Connect with Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2008); Dylan D. Wagner, Sonya Dal Cin, James D. Sargent, William M. Kelley, and Todd F. Heatherton, "Spontaneous Action Representation in Smokers When Watching Movie Characters Smoke," *Journal of Neuroscience* 31, no. 3 (January 19, 2011): 894–898; and Ivana Konvalinka, Dimitris Xygalatas, Joseph Bulbulia, Uffe Schjødt, Else-Marie Jegindø, Sebastian Wallot, Guy Van Orden, and Andreas Roepstorff, "Synchronized Arousal between Performers and Related Spectators in a Fire-Walking Ritual," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences in the United States of America* 108, no. 20 (May 2, 2011): 8514–8519.

6 Sandra Blakeslee and Matthew Blakeslee, *The Body Has a Mind of Its Own: How Body Maps in Your Brain Help You Do (Almost) Everything Better* (New York: Random House, 2008), 169.

kinds of mirror neurons that prevent you from actually doing the action you see and that distinguish between actions of the self and actions of others. Neuroscientists are also interested in how mirror neurons function in empathy to reflect "an experience-based, pre-reflective, and automatic form of understanding of other minds. . . . The interdependence between self and other that mirror neurons allow shapes the social interactions between people, where the concrete encounter between self and other becomes the shared existential meaning that connects them deeply."[7]

Mirror neuron research can shed light on how subjectivity and intersubjectivity can be created through spectatorship of performance, especially of movement. The intertwined pleasures of glances and dances in the flapper film offered flapper spectators—who had performed the same dances as the actresses, and who refined their dancing, comportment, gesture, and movement by mirroring the actresses' performances—a kinaesthetic of empowered, embodied femininity and a particularly active subjective identification with the flapper actresses. As the flapper spectator gazes at Diana, she is nevertheless in her own body, and as she watches Diana materialize on the screen, dancing, the dance is in the spectator's body, too. As Merleau-Ponty asserted, "Between my consciousness and my body as I experience it, between this phenomenal body of mine and that of another as I see it from the outside, there exists an internal relation which causes the other to appear as the completion of the system. The other can be evident to me because I am not transparent for myself, and because my subjectivity draws its body in its wake."[8] With the dissemination of the movies at this time in modern American culture, a new aesthetic based on the body is indeed created and reinscribed through movement and dance. The flapper spectator's mirrored kino-body—that interior, neurological, not physical but still embodied reaction, so connected to emotions and empathy—dances along with Diana, with Joan Crawford.

Skip ahead to 1952. In front of another mirror, in a ballet studio, tutu-clad Lucy Ricardo finds herself hilariously out of her element in ballet class. Watching Lucille Ball's brilliant performance in "The Ballet" (*I Love Lucy*; CBS, 1951–1957), we see that the female dancing body as a site of kinaesthetic femininity running counter to tradition is not limited to Jazz Age silent-film flappers. The strict ballet mistress is counting out a *battement tendu* exercise, and Lucy's facial expressions change as her body catches the rhythm. Lucy shifts into the Charleston, a confident smile and look of joy spreading across her face as her knees knock and long legs kick out front and back. The disruption of the classical feminine performance—ballet—by the 1920s dance demonstrates Ball's brilliant physical comedy. To be sure, this is an example of what Patricia Mellencamp identifies as one of Lucy's schemes that "*narratively* failed, with the result that she was held, often gratefully, to domesticity," yet "*performatively* they succeeded."[9] The significance, though, lies not so much in the success or failure

7 Iacoboni, Mirroring People, 265.

8 Merleau-Ponty, Phenonemology of Perception, 410.

9 Patricia Mellencamp, "Situation Comedy, Feminism, and Freud: Discourses of Gracie and Lucy," in Studies in Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture, ed. Tania Modleski (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 88. See also Alexander Doty, "The Cabinet of Lucy Ricardo: Lucille Ball's Star Image," Cinema Journal 29, no. 4 (1990): 3–22.

but in Ball's substitution of the (comic) shadow side of "good" feminine comportment and behavior.

Ball's comedic use of dance subverts 1950s constructs of domesticity and femininity.[10] To bring the Charleston into a comic bisociation with ballet is to reject ballet's defiance of gravity, the impression that the ballerina is lighter than air, and to bring the female body crashing down into the modern world; when Lucy's legs get caught in the ballet barre later in the scene, her body is all angles, caught by gravity. The writer of a *Life* magazine article titled "Beauty into Buffoon" marveled at her willingness to look ugly, move awkwardly, and take a pie in the face for a laugh, and many popular-press articles echoed that sentiment.[11] Ball's use of her body, whether her dancer's body performing counter to expectation throughout the series or her clever use of a nearby coffee table to hoist her actually pregnant body out of a chair to answer a ringing phone in the 1953 *I Love Lucy* episode "Ricky Has Labor Pains,"[12] extends the flapper's performance of dance on the cinema screen into the television in the home. With the use of close-ups on television pioneered by cinematographer Karl Freund (yes, *that* Karl Freund) and editors Dann Cahn and Bud Molin, Ball combined a body-based performance with a comedic mime's facial expressions and witty scripts often based on one of the most successful radio sitcoms of the 1940s, *My Favorite Husband* (CBS, 1948–1951). The immediacy of the new medium, broadcast into the home, representing a marriage and domestic life, a feedback loop of representation and domesticity, no matter how comically distorted, certainly encouraged viewer identification. As hard as it may be to imagine, in light of the crazy situations in which Lucy was placed, the writers based the plots in everyday life: "We were looking for a situation where Lucy's and Ricky's problems and differences of opinion were the same ones that most of our audience had encountered. We called it 'holding up the mirror.'"[13] And that mirror resonated not only with the setup but also with Lucille Ball's embodiment of the woman who would rather do the Charleston than ballet; who used her pregnant body for comedy at a time when saying the word "pregnant" on television was deemed inappropriate; and whose comic performance of a lived, embodied, imperfect femininity performed the cultural work of the female trickster in the most popular story cycle of its time. A dancer who could have tendued until the cows came home, Lucille Ball often performed a kinaesthetic of movement and release that ran counter to Cold War containment, thus displaying a ludic aesthetic that bristled bodily and rhythmically against the dominant hegemonic ideals, comportment, and movement of domestic femininity.

If it is true that we make sense of the world through our bodies, and that what we see performed affects us, then digital and virtual technologies bring us new possibilities

10 Landay, *I Love Lucy* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010); Landay, "*I Love Lucy*, Television, and Gender in Postwar Domestic Ideology," in *The Sitcom Reader: America Viewed and Skewed*, ed. Mary M. Dalton and Laura R. Linder (Albany: SUNY Press, 2005), 87–97; Landay, *Madcaps, Screwballs, and Con Women: The Female Trickster in American Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998).

11 "Beauty into Buffoon," *Life*, Feburary 18, 1952, 93–97.

12 Landay, *I Love Lucy*, 73.

13 Jess Oppenheimer, with Gregg Oppenheimer, *Laughs, Luck, and Lucy: How I Came to Create the Most Popular Sitcom of All Time* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 180.

for the kinaesthetics of performance and spectatorship. Skip ahead into the following century, to the filming of *Avatar* (James Cameron, 2009). Actor Sam Worthington is not in costume or makeup, or even on a film set as we would recognize it; he is ensconced in a skintight bodysuit covered in reflective markers, the positions of which will be tracked by more than a hundred digital cameras around the "volume," the motion-capture stage. This is not simply motion capture but, rather, what Cameron calls "performance capture," with a camera mounted on the actor's head to capture the movement of eyes and face.[14] Performance capture calls for a new kind of performance, acting, and filming. The director can be right next to the actors but will not show up as data if he or she is not wearing the sensors, and there are no lighting setups, costumes, or makeup. Once the many cameras are in place, blocking, acting, and minimal props that stand in for what will be created by the computer-generated image (CGI) modelers and world builders are all that is needed. The action is not a dance performance, but footage of action sequences being filmed this way resembles an abstracted performance of movement more than narrative film as we have come to know it. Performance capture takes the *scène* out of mise-en-scène and relocates it to the computer. The actors must perform as if in an imagined mirror, one that will be realized digitally. This transforms acting and directing as profoundly as the development of film studio production challenged stage performance a hundred years ago. Steven Spielberg, who used the technology for *The Adventures of Tintin*, said, "I like to think of it as digital makeup, not augmented animation. . . . Motion capture brings the director back to a kind of intimacy that actors and directors only know when they're working in live theater."[15]

If performance capture takes away so much of the materiality of mise-en-scène, what is left is acting, and even that is augmented significantly by animators. The director minimizes the live-action portion of filmmaking and shunts the rest into an environment less constrained by physics, material cost, building costs, locations, you name it (although costs of the digital process itself are still extremely high). Even in what the spectator does not see, postmodern performance "vacillates between presence and absence, between displacement and reinstatement," to quote the theorist Nick Kaye,[16] but that is a central aspect of the performance of the body in *Avatar*, which mirrors the spectator's experiences of presence and absence in our time of telepresence, telecommunication, teleaction—the huge ten-foot-tall Na'vi bodies perform physical feats that the injured, human Jake cannot. The technology shown in the film, through which characters inhabit their avatars, actualizes what is virtual and imagined for the spectator, whether in games or virtual worlds or in watching the film. When Jake runs as his avatar, when he experiences what his human body cannot, the spectator runs with him, with his Na'vi body, a body that was never actually there.

14 To see the performance-capture rig demonstrated, with commentary by Cameron, see *Discovery News*, "*Avatar*: Motion Capture Mirrors Emotion," December 2009, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wK1Ixr-UmM. On whether performance capture is worthy of Academy Award consideration, and for Screen Actors Guild responses to performance capture, see Rachel Abramowitz, "'*Avatar*'s' Animated Acting," *Los Angeles Times*, February 18, 2010.

15 Abramowitz, "'*Avatar*'s' Animated Acting."

16 Nick Kaye, *Postmodernism and Performance* (London: Macmillan, 1994), 9.

What new relationships between performance and spectatorship, between the visible and invisible, arise from bodies that are not actually there?[17] Spectators are aware of the loss of indexicality (whether they know that term or not) due to the massive publicity around the digital production process; they know that what they are seeing was never actually there, and they probably play video games and have experiences that have something in common both with the performance process of *Avatar* and with the main character Jake's experience of having an avatar. Does it matter that the bodies we see in *Avatar* are not indexical? Consider Vivian Sobchack's comments:

> The pleasures of CGI are not about the gravity of flesh and blood. The same things are not at stake in terms of the illusion, but it goes deeper. There's some indexicality that counts that CGI can't achieve—like a real sense of death, of being hurt, of flesh being torn. So the pleasures of the digital are different. The kind of transcendent effects I think digital simulation can achieve are different from the pleasures and terrors that emerge in the presence of analog/indexical cinema.[18]

What makes that difference, for spectators? The knowledge that what they see is "real"? An aura of the real that somehow reveals itself? What if CGI becomes so photorealistic that you can't tell it's CGI? (And hasn't it already achieved this?) I might not agree with every part of what Sobchack says here, but I concur that the pleasures of the digital are about transcending gravity, about bodies exceeding their limits. That is why filmmakers who want to make whole worlds are so jazzed about performance capture, about shifting material elements of production to the computer but retaining actors for what they are good for: emotion, empathy. They don't want lifeless eyes or mechanical movement in their characters while the world around them vibrates with detail actualized from the imagination. We do not simply want a mirror of verisimilitude; we want the mirror neurons to fire.

Of course, the bodies of today's spectators are not the same as the ones who watched the indexical flapper films. The technology in which we live, in which our bodies are situated, by which we augment them, through which we experience them in all aspects of performance, is changing, and is changing us, just as the film camera, then television and other media changed the spectators of their times. As Ralf Remshardt argues, "Today, even without the element of the digital, the phenomenal body in the act of performance signals its own phenomenality, and so becomes

17 Many scholars are exploring this question. See Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008); Steve Dixon, *Digital Performance: A History of New Media in Theater, Dance, Performance Art, and Installation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007); Patrice Pavis, *Analyzing Performance: Theater, Dance, and Film*, trans. David Williams (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003); Ralf Remshardt, "Beyond Performance Studies: Mediated Performance and the Posthuman," *Culture, Language and Representation* 6 (2008): 47–64. See also Don Idhe, *Bodies in Technology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); Henrik Smed Nielsen, "The Computer Game as a Somatic Experience," *Eludamos* 4, no. 1 (2010): 25–40; Ingrid Richardson, "Faces, Interfaces, Screens: Relational Ontologies of Framing, Attention and Distraction," *Transformations* 18 (2010), http://www.transformationsjournal.org/journal/issue_18/article_05.shtml.

18 Vivan Sobchack, interview with Scott Bukatman, *Journal of e-Media Studies* 2, no. 1 (2009), http://journals.dartmouth.edu/cgi-bin/WebObjects/Journals.woa/2/xmlpage/4/article/338, accessed June 21, 2011.

mediated; not so much in itself but because it meets the consciousness of an audience whose perceptual frame is now irreducibly one of mediation."[19]

The ramifications of mediatization, the digital, and the virtual for dance and other performance arts are enormous.[20] With the digital, and the virtual, actors as well as "spectators" will engage their mirror neurons in a new virtual kinaesthetics, in which they will see not only with their own eyes but also with the virtual kino-eye of the kinetic in-game or in-world camera and will react with and to the telepresent and teleactive virtual body.[21] When I "choreograph" sequences and then film my avatars "performing" motion capture animations of dances in a virtual world, I experience a virtual kinaesthesia similar to but also distinct both from watching a dance performance by others and from actually dancing.[22]

What new kinaesthetics will arise out of people's experiences with avatar self-representations of their own whose appearance they can modify as they wish and control in dance, sport, action, and other movement in increasingly haptic and kinetic ways with gesture, touch, and whole-body control devices like the iPad, Wii, and Kinect? With increasingly accurate voice-recognition interfaces? In a fully immersive three-dimensional space? When the performance of self in everyday life stretches to encompass what is impossible in real life as well as the ordinary? Will experiences people have virtually trigger mirror neurons as if the people had actually had those experiences? Research from Stanford University's Virtual Human Interaction Lab suggests that experiences in virtual environments influence people's behaviors not only in those environments but in the actual world as well.[23] What will it mean to say, "I am not in front of my body, I am in it, or rather I am it," when we are both performer and spectator, in increasingly mediatized environments? Will we oscillate from being in front of to being in the body? Is that what might be seen in a virtual mirror? Merleau-Ponty called vision a "palpation with a look."[24] What will happen as looking, moving, and touching become more fully intertwined in the interfaces and spaces we use for performance and spectatorship of all kinds? I imagine a kinaesthetics of flux

19 Remshardt, "Beyond Performance Studies," 51.

20 See Helen Bailey, "Ersatz Dancing: Negotiating the Live and Mediated in Digital Performance Practice," *International Journal Performance Arts and Digital Media* 3, nos. 2–3 (December 2007): 151–165. See also Dixon, *Digital Performance*; and Drew Leder, *The Absent Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

21 Landay, "Virtual KinoEye: Kinetic Camera, Machinima, and Virtual Subjectivity in Second Life," *Journal of e-Media Studies* 2, no. 1 (2009), http://journals.dartmouth.edu/cgi-bin/WebObjects/Journals.woa/2/xmlpage/4/article/340. See also Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); and Friedberg, *The Virtual Window: From Alberti to Microsoft* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).

22 See "Domestic Technology, or, Never Alone" (Lori Landay, 2010), Machinima digital video: http://rhizome.org/artbase/artwork/53880/.

23 Nick Yee and Jeremy Bailenson conducted studies on the process they term the "Proteus effect": "an individual's behavior conforms to their digital self-representation independent of how others perceive them." Yee and Bailenson, "The Proteus Effect: The Effect of Transformed Self-Representation on Behavior," *Human Communication Research* 33 (2007): 271–290. See also Sun Joo Ahn and Bailenson, "Embodied Experiences in Immersive Virtual Environments: Effects on Pro-Environmental Self-Efficacy and Behavior," technical report, 2011, http://vhil.stanford.edu/pubs/2011/VHIL-technical-report.pdf.

24 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis, ed. Claude Lefort (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 135.

and transformation, of gravity defiance and boundary breaking, and an exultation of movement transcending even the very real pleasures and culture makings of the new kinaesthetics of the past as we put on virtual dancing shoes and not only watch but also leap to anywhere our imaginations can take us. It should be interesting to see what experiences performance—on screens and as whatever they evolve into as we create new ways of perceiving the world—will mirror. *

Nonfictional Performance from Portrait Films to the Internet

by Vinicius Navarro

There is a story about documenting personal experiences in the Internet age that goes like this: widespread access to recording technologies and distribution networks has spawned an unprecedented number of personal videos whose circulation overlaps with the rhythms of ordinary life. In these new contexts, playing oneself for the camera, as Thomas Waugh once described documentary performance, becomes a sort of lingua franca.[1] Personal videos, not surprisingly, often focus on the performance itself. Against the backdrop of uneventful situations and unpretentious settings, they have little to show other than the encounter between the player and the camera—the act of self-presentation. Much of this material, it is often assumed, is viewed by only a small number of people and can therefore be dismissed as solipsistic and inconsequential. Similarly, online performances end up appearing as a sort of compromise, a technological imposition that both facilitates and trivializes contact with others.

If we draw on the long history of performance in nonfiction cinema, however, there might be another way to tell the story of online personal videos. Documentaries have traditionally relied on the "contribution" of real-life subjects, and the practice of soliciting a performance from social actors goes back to the silent period. Now, as then, the performances create instances in which the referential world "erupts" onto the screen, or rather is summoned by the subjects in the film. Online personal videos are likely to revisit some of these practices, in particular the presentational modes of address associated with experimental nonfictional works. This is a kind of performance that

1 Thomas Waugh, "'Acting to Play Oneself': Notes on Performance in Documentary," in *Making Visible the Invisible: An Anthology of Original Essays on Film Acting*, ed. Carole Zucker (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1990).

resists narrative finality and rhetorical argumentation, and that is best described not as acting but as presentation or display. At its most basic, performing is a way of making oneself present to others. More than solipsism, it suggests a desire for conversation and exchange, which aligns the act of self-presentation with the contingencies of lived reality.

In what follows, I look at self-presentation as a form of intervention and a mode of address in nonfiction. The questions I ask are partly inspired by documentary scholarship; they involve issues of referentiality and rhetoric and invite us to think about the relations between individual performances and collective experiences. The examples I explore, however, assume a broad understanding of nonfiction. While I have no intention of sampling a large variety of performances, I do turn both to film and new media in an effort to examine how practices associated with documentary and experimental cinema are currently used in Internet videos. Underlying my claims is the belief that performance plays an increasingly significant role in the expanding universe of contemporary nonfiction media.

Performance, Nonfiction Film, and the Presentation of Self. Paul Arthur describes the portrait film, a type of film with roots in early cinema but which found more consistent expression in the 1960s, as one of "the most 'literal' or nonrhetorical of filmic genres."[2] Portraits privilege fairly uneventful scenes, in which complex structures are dropped in favor of an experience that seems to unfold in the present. Indeed, the very conventions of the genre, Arthur goes on to explain, conspire to create such experience: "Longer takes and relatively straightforward handling of the camera are preferred over the use of montage . . . [while] temporal arrangements of shots or scenes abjure dramatic development or rhythmic articulation."[3] Display, in other words, takes precedence over plotting. Lacking "proper" articulation, portrait films rely on the pose struck by the "sitter" to produce the subject of the film. The camera does not so much document a situation that exists before the moment of filming as it helps create that situation through the exchanges with the performing subject. Some of the examples used by Arthur are drawn, appropriately, from the cinema of Andy Warhol. Warhol's interest in portraiture exceeded his filmmaking activities; it involved media as different as painting, photography, and television.[4] Yet, starting with his early works, cinema provided the most direct response to an artistic practice centered on the notion of performance. Several of Warhol's films feature only a subject performing ordinary—albeit studied—actions. Awkward monologues and unrehearsed exchanges substitute for coherent plotlines, thus leaving us with the unstructured pleasures of digression and spectacle. The fictional world, when it exists at all, functions as a sort of excuse for the performance. At their most literal, Warhol's portrait films simply expose the presentational quality of this act; they turn the performance into the only event available for recording. The screen tests shot in the

2 Paul Arthur, "No Longer Absolute: Portraiture in American Avant-Garde and Documentary Films of the Sixties," in Rites of Realism: Essays on Corporeal Cinema, ed. Ivone Margulies (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 95.

3 Ibid.

4 On portraiture in Warhol's oeuvre, see About Face: Andy Warhol Portraits, ed. Nicholas Baume (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999).

midsixties, for instance, show a nearly static subject looking at the camera for approximately three minutes. We have no choice but to "look back" and confront the performance for what it is, a pose.

One way to think about how the pose produces that subject for the camera is to consider an analogy with the use of deictic pronouns such as *I* and *this* or adverbs such as *here* and *now*. Deictics are performative in the sense that they are meaningful only insofar as they are actualized in concrete situations. *I*, for example, can designate only "the person who is uttering the present instance of the discourse containing *I*," as Emile Benveniste has claimed in a formulation that suggestively situates language in the realm of performance.[5] Deictics also figure prominently as indexes in Charles Sanders Peirce's taxonomy of signs. An index, according to him, "signifies its object solely by virtue of being really connected with it."[6] The word *this*, to use another example, simply indicates the presence of the particular object to which it is connected. Closeness to "the present reality of speech" is thus what separates deictics from words whose relation to actual objects is established mainly by convention.[7] Indexicality is also, of course, what distinguishes an impression (such as a photographic record) from a drawing, although in this case the indexical connection is of a different nature. As Mary Ann Doane notes, there is a difference between the index as trace (a footprint) and the index as deixis (a demonstrative pronoun): "As photographic trace or impression, the index seems to harbor a fullness, an excessiveness of detail. . . . Yet, the index as *deixis* implies an emptiness, a hollowness that can only be filled in specific, contingent, always mutating situations."[8] By analogy, then, we may claim a special relation between presentational performances and lived reality, and we may say that the performance as well is part of a contingent, mutating situation.

That situation is, of course, the profilmic exchange with the camera. As a reaction to being filmed, the performance establishes the presence of the performing subject by directing our attention to that subject.[9] The gesture has double implications since it involves not one but two subjects. The figure on the screen is there only insofar as its presence anticipates our own. More than producing the subject we see, the performance thus signals our complicity with it and calls for a different engagement with the film, one that shifts attention from the presumed fullness of the record to the contingencies of the situation presented to the camera.

In this context, a film like Jia Zhangke's hybrid documentary *24 City* (2008) is especially noteworthy because it highlights the partial autonomy of these situations. *24 City* examines the closing of a state-owned factory in Chengdu, China, as a result of

5 Emile Benveniste, "The Nature of Pronouns" (1971), *Problems in General Linguistics*, trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek (Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press, 1997), 218.

6 Charles Sanders Peirce, "On the Algebra of Logic: A Contribution to the Philosophy of Notation," in *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*, vol. 1 (1867–1893), ed. Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 226.

7 Mary Ann Doane, The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 93.

8 Mary Ann Doane, "Indexicality: Trace and Sign: Introduction," Differences 18, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 2.

9 According to Peirce, the index "forces the mind to attend to [a particular] object." Peirce, "Of Reasoning in General," in The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings, vol. 2 (1893–1913), ed. the Peirce Edition Project. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 14.

changing socioeconomic conditions. Besides interviewing former workers and local residents (some of them played by professional actors), Jia has some of his subjects pose practically still, staring at the camera. The shots last just a few seconds, but their insertion between testimonies and scenes of everyday life changes our viewing experience. The images briefly interrupt the flow of story information, inviting us to consider not the alleged certainty of the reality documented but the process of documenting—not what has already taken place but what might still happen. Both disarmingly literal and highly contrived, the shots reinforce the closeness between the presentational act and the situation recorded by the camera, and they force us to look for the phenomenal world in the artifice of the pose.[10]

The special status of these performances—they elude narrative expectations and medium-specific requirements—calls for consideration of what role presentational acts may play in an expanded realm of nonfiction, a realm that includes but is not limited to documentary or experimental film. Along with the ease with which images of oneself can be generated, it is this relative autonomy that makes the performances adaptable to new media environments. To video bloggers and other Internet users, the attractiveness lies as well in the potential to address other online performers, to produce new forms of exchange so that presence and performance remain attached to the possibility of conversation and connection.

Connectivity and Engagement. In some ways, the Internet seems destined to maximize the promises of the presentational performance. A preference for display over rhetorical or narrative complexity is common to a wide range of online experiences. In lieu of linearity and cohesiveness, the Internet offers multidirectional forms of exchange that amplify the role of contingency in the production and circulation of information. As a result, closeness to actual, lived experience also seems more pronounced. All this suggests parallels with examples drawn from nonfiction filmmaking, along with a generally optimistic belief in the expanded significance of presentational forms of address. Yet a different assessment of online experiences is also possible. Excessive options and overabundant information can lead to confusion and dispersal rather than connection. Exposure does not always generate conversation, and there is no guarantee that access to the Internet produces effective, consequential, or satisfying forms of engagement. From this perspective, the expectations associated with the act of self-presentation are likely to be undermined, and the performing subject may "get lost" amid other indifferent players.

It is precisely this gap between connectivity and effective engagement, however, that makes the concept of performance especially relevant in this context. As the media artist Natalie Bookchin suggests, performative practices like video blogging render apparent both the failure and the need to engage with others: "Our equivalent of a public forum," she says, "is a person alone in his or her room speaking to a computer screen. But . . . we are not alone in our need for public conversation and debate about

10 In one of the shots, the filmmaker has a professional actor stand still before the camera, repeating a pose we have seen in other subjects. The shot appears shortly after the actor has performed lines from a scripted interview. Revealingly, the literalness of the pose tests the limits of what might otherwise be recognized as fictional acting. Standing motionless before the camera, the actor can do little more than play himself.

the circumstances of our lives."[11] Bookchin's own work tackles this contradiction by "documenting" the actions of individuals who use the Internet to share particular aspects of their lives. Bookchin neither shoots nor posts the videos. Instead, she collects and arranges them so as to create ensembles of individual voices that convey a sense of shared experience. In *Mass Ornament*, an installation from 2009, she shows clips of amateur dancers—mostly female—in their bedrooms, performing sexually insinuating movements that seem reminiscent of music videos. Bookchin displays the clips side by side, producing a sort of choreography that, as the artist herself has noted, brings to mind a post-Fordist experimental version of a Tiller Girls or Busby Berkeley dance number.[12] In another work from that same year, a series of installations titled *Testament*, she creates "choruses of vloggers [video bloggers] who comment on actions that have taken place off screen."[13] In one group, the subjects describe the experience of losing their jobs. In a different set, the vloggers comment on taking prescription medications. However distinct, the voices of the individuals in each group tend to echo one another, revealing a desire for collective engagement that might not have been fulfilled in the "vlogosphere" from which the pieces were taken.

Bookchin's installations revisit the idea of performance as an everyday social practice—"the presentation of self in everyday life," to borrow the title of Erving Goffman's classic book.[14] However, the situations that inspired Goffman to talk about social performance, the exchanges in which individuals try to impress one another, seem compromised by the potential dispersal of the individual vloggers. In this new scenario, the performing subjects, not surprisingly, end up substituting media imageries for social conventions, as is the case with the solo dances from *Mass Ornament*. Sociality is concretized, in part, through the hand of an outsider—that is to say, through the artist's intervention. "I take many original 'I's and make them into 'we's," explains Bookchin.[15]

Why, then, focus on the performances of anonymous, yet overexposed subjects? And what can we expect from these performances? To be sure, Bookchin's work does not really displace the roles of the individual performers. Rather, she seems to explore capabilities already found in the presentational acts. While the installations do involve a high degree of editorial intervention, the performances themselves embody a dialogical quality that makes it possible to create connections. In contrast with "properly" articulated narratives, presentational acts seem inherently "incomplete" and therefore open to addition and change. This sense of incompletion—the lack of finality or direction—accounts in part for the propensity to fragmentation and dispersal of content among Internet users. But it also enables the kind of exchanges visualized in

11 Natalie Bookchin and Blake Stimson, "Out in Public: Natalie Bookchin in Conversation with Blake Stimson," *Rhizome*, March 9, 2011, http://rhizome.org/editorial/2011/mar/9/out-public-natalie-bookchin-conversation-blake-sti (first published in Geert Lovink and Rachel Somers Miles, eds., *Video Vortex Reader II: Moving Images beyond YouTube* [Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2011], 306–317).

12 Natalie Bookchin and Carolyn Kane, "Dancing Machines: An Interview with Natalie Bookchin," *Rhizome*, May 27, 2009, http://rhizome.org/editorial/2009/may/27/dancing-machines.

13 Bookchin and Stimson, "Out in Public."

14 Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1959).

15 In some ways, her role seems akin to that of an editor, archivist, or ethnographer, one who puts together what might otherwise elude our desire for organization. See Bookchin and Stimson, "Out in Public."

Bookchin's work.[16] Online performances, such as those that we find in video blogs, may be thought of in relation to what Peter Lunenfeld calls "the unfinished business" of digital media. "To celebrate the unfinished in this era of digital ubiquity," he argues, "is to laud process rather than goal—to open up a third thing that is not a resolution, but rather a state of suspension."[17] Lunenfeld's claim recalls standard definitions of performance, which similarly conjure up the notions of process and contingency. It also remedies what could elsewhere look like a limitation. "Suspension," as he sees it, does not mean failure or disruption; it is, instead, a call for subsequent action.

Because they are associated with generative processes, performances shift focus from the network as a means of exchange to the actual relations between players. They allow us to see not simply the potential for dialogue but also the ways through which that potential is realized. Performances produce concrete effects. Insofar as they are part of contingent, mutating situations, they are likely to do more than simply reiterate "communicativity as such."[18] The unfinished business of the performance, to paraphrase Lunenfeld, propels us beyond mere connectivity toward actual engagement and connection with others. Still, since these are concrete interventions rather than predictable abstractions, the performances may also reveal the limits of that engagement. Not all performances are equal. Not all are equally capable of generating meaningful connections. Some simply fail to turn exposure into dialogue. In this sense, the performances make palpable the unequal distribution of attention that is typical of the network. The question to consider, then, may be not just how but also when the act of self-presentation serves as a form of engagement with others.

In his discussion of cinematic portraits from the 1960s, Paul Arthur claims that the films "served as a democratic forum for the display of alternative lifestyles and social diversity."[19] The presentational form common to several of these works is clearly noted in his statement. It is the display of diversity that is offered to the viewer. Performance and visibility are conjoined in the films, and this visibility—the screen presence of groups or individuals presumably banned from less "democratic forums"—gives the portraits their political valence. The performances, in other words, render concrete the oppositional attitude that inspires the making of the films, usually by aligning social and aesthetic values. It is a different kind of visibility that emerges from video blogs and other performative uses of new media, where the performances are not as easily bound up with specific cultural contexts. Gone is the certainty of anchoring the act of display in clearly defined institutional or political practices. And gone is the comfort of stable communities. Visibility is now related to the pursuit of ever-changing connections. What remains in the picture is the performance itself, revived as a form of media intervention in ordinary life. ✻

16 The association between incompleteness and dialogue echoes Bakhtin's notion of unfinalizability: "Each utterance is filled with echoes and reverberations of other utterances to which it is related by the communality of the sphere of speech communication." Mikhail Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. Vern W. McGee, ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 91.

17 Peter Lunenfeld, "Unfinished Business," in *The Digital Dialectic: New Essays on New Media*, ed. Lunenfeld (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 8.

18 Jodi Dean, *Blog Theory: Feedback and Capture in the Circuits of Drive* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2010), 88.

19 Arthur, "No Longer Absolute," 98.

Adding Up the Gestures: What We See of Harry Lime

by George Toles

Orson Welles's long-delayed entrance as back-from-the-dead Harry Lime in *The Third Man* (1949) occurs in a heavily shadowed Vienna doorway. Like so much else in the film's skewed, rubble-strewn world, the doorway and its mysterious concealed occupant appear at a tilt. Director Carol Reed gives Harry a precarious relation to solid ground, both as actual presence and as relentless topic of speculation. He has been briefly sighted on a couple of occasions before his suspenseful nocturnal unveiling, but from a far distance and turned away from us. Until now he has been the nameless "third man," a perplexing figure who appeared when Lime was apparently struck dead by a car. Lime's first significant gesture in the film is a static one. Although he is concealed in an entryway, his smartly polished black wing-tip shoes protrude sufficiently to catch the light and attract the camera's notice. The shoes seem to hold an intention of their own, or rather to gather into themselves all the unknown, withheld intentions of the man rising invisibly above them (standing stock still in perfectly creased dress pants). The camera settles in for a prolonged view of his lower body at cobblestone level but endows his shoes with the lustrous magnitude of discrete entities, as they remain poised (for what imminent business?) two steps above the street.

By staking out a surveillance space so near to Lime's feet, the camera turns the shoes into a condensed surface of secrecy (Vienna's essence, writ small). Thus, the camera is conspicuously involved in the gesturing process. Its pointing amplifies the shoes' capacity to point in their own right. The spectator is instantly alerted to the importance of any shift in the shoes' position, however minute. For all of our uncertainty about the story's latest turn, we suddenly need to move inside the objects' life and partake of their power to make something happen. The stasis is taut and pregnant with future assertiveness. The immaculate shoes also declare, with panache, an improbable victory over Vienna's dust and filth. A magical path to the shoes is suddenly created on the cobblestones glittering damply in the moonlight. We note the path's existence when a cat—emerging at exactly the right instant—proceeds to follow it. This cat gained prominence in the previous scene in the apartment of Anna (Alida Valli), Lime's former lover. Anna marks its exit through a window with the revelation that it "only likes Harry." The shoes seem

to be gesturing, though still motionless, toward the cat; the cat responds to their signal and moves without hesitation to one of them, pressing against it as though it were a proffered treat. The delectable sight of the cat rubbing against the shoe in an act of reunion lets us know, beyond any doubt, that Harry is very much alive and that we've found him, in advance of the main characters, who are still in the dark. There is another component of gesturing in this incandescent small episode. In addition to the shoes, the cat, and the camera placement, Anton Karas's zither music performs its own highly expressive, sustained pointing. As the cat perches on the shoe, gazing upward into the statuelike, towering silence of Harry before settling—in the absence of a welcoming touch—for a bit of shoelace to nuzzle, Karas's zither erupts into a frenzy of high spirits. Before this moment, the music in the film has always seemed more alive than the scenes it accompanies, an ironic memory of a spirited but vanished Viennese past. But here it feels as though the music has finally tracked down the source of its own unkillably jaunty ebullience. Harry's sense of exemption from the dolorous moods and restraints weighing down others is akin to the zither's. Even before we're granted a good look at him, the music tells us that he possesses the key to gaiety in a disorienting, bombed-out world.

My notes on *The Third Man*'s drama of the shoe are meant to illustrate how complicated a terrain character gesture in cinema necessarily is. Harry Lime's footwear conveys as much to the spectator in its thrilling, foreboding repose as any movement of Orson Welles's hands, face, or entire body (none of which have yet been introduced) could have. The shoes subtly establish, in advance of the character's full arrival, Harry's aloofness, his deceptive calm, his ability to keep himself free of the slime his very name prods him toward. Because the street is otherwise empty at this late hour, Harry's shoes alone, for a brief interval, imbue the night-world surroundings with human (or perhaps supernatural) presence. This figure who is "all feet" is aligned with the sinister expressionist shadows that define the cityscape. We sense that he may, in fact, be the generator of the darkness that effectively shrouds him. And the shoe the cat toys with wedges itself playfully, mysteriously, into the somber mood of the conversation in Anna's apartment that its "entrance" (on the street below) interrupts: Holly (Joseph Cotten) is hopelessly attempting to declare his love for Anna while saying good-bye to her. The shoe seems poised to change the dramatic dynamic from resigned and defeated to purposeful.

Orson Welles's Harry Lime takes up very little narrative space in *The Third Man*, yet Welles's Harry, backed by zither walking music, is invariably the first thing spectators recall about the movie. Lime's highly confined (and compressed) set of appearances attain a power and a weight of significance out of all proportion to the literal ten minutes that we are granted to spend in his company. For this reason, Harry Lime strikes me as a perfect figure to use in considering the tricky business of performance gesture in narrative film. One has an opportunity to examine the majority of gestures Welles makes and the network of correspondences his gestures establish with the character gestures of others, set against his own. The force of the contrast with other gestures depicted in the film world is crucial to establishing Welles's effect. We should bear in mind as well how the aura of Welles himself, and our sense of what we know about him, lightens our perception of Lime's iniquity and brings his gestures into

contact with the saving vitality of rapscallion mischief. Lime's crimes are dreadful, to be sure, but the mystery of Welles intermingles with the mystery of Lime to prevent us from arriving at too drastic an ultimate judgment of him. Paradoxically, the most troubling of the many faceless victims of Lime's penicillin racket are children, and Harry appears (like Welles) to be an overgrown child himself, naturally linked to Hansl, the ancient-looking boy who is our one direct image of childhood in *The Third Man*. This depraved-looking imp points out Holly Martins to a menacing crowd (he exists in the narrative chiefly for the sake of a single gesture), identifying Holly as a murderer. Lime is, in fact, more directly responsible for the killing. As Anna puts it in one of her numerous exonerating tributes to her memory image of Harry, he was someone who "never grew up." If that is indeed so, what allowances ought we to make for him?

Orson Welles's performance seems to consist almost entirely of emphatic gestures. As a fugitive in flight near the end, he is a purely expressionist being. He reminds me of the ever-scurrying Freder in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927), and he possesses a similar single-minded air of fluid desperation as he runs through his own version of Lang's underground labyrinth. Surrounded by shadows, stairways, tunnels, sealed exits, and cascading sewer water, Lime dashes through an environment that becomes a mirror of his psyche. His evasive consciousness and protean corporeal self are at last driven to recognize (if only dimly and fleetingly) that where he is, is what he is. In the echoing subterranean passageways, voices and footsteps approach Lime, confusingly, from all directions, and fear penetrates the defenses of a man who has always maintained a careful distance from the "moving dots" that were his victims, as well as from any voice claiming attachment. Welles's movement gestures have suggestive impact because the hollow, twisting spaces seem to establish emotional ties with him so readily. The tunnels conjure up the depth perspectives of his own work as a director and the memory maze of *Citizen Kane* (1941). There is always something triumphantly isolated about Welles, and it seems fitting that he should be hunted in his own expressionist domain, where he is both architect and a panicked "lost boy."

The two most potent gestures in the sewer climax are Lime's fingers reaching up through a locked grate in futile supplication and his assenting nod before a paralyzed Holly can mercifully finish him off with a bullet. To begin with the outstretched hands, a chill wind, bearing along a few dead leaves, and an unsettlingly vacant street greet Harry's fingers, which until now have mockingly resisted meaningful touch from others. He has long ago abandoned his faith in the fulfillment made possible by real human connection. Lime entered the film as a pair of impenetrable shoes, locked in place. Now, nearly at the end, Lime condenses to another close-up fragment: quivering, anxious fingers feeling for air and freedom (once again, at ground level). This is Lime's first acknowledgment of need. His reach magically brings high and low together. The freedom that Harry, in his imprisoned state, beckons at still seems dank and empty, as though he cannot envision, even at this moment of bereft extremity, a world in which he could be significantly joined to anything. Harry's second indelible gesture in the sewer is a mere movement of Orson Welles's head in close-up, a nod of permission that returns him for his last moments of life to an expression, however deep the irony cuts, of kinship. Harry is crouched, like a wounded animal, at the top of

a winding stair beneath the grate. He is bareheaded, his hair moist and tangled. The loss of Harry's hat at the beginning of the chase and the gradual dishevelment of his hair subtly delineate the crumbling of Lime's formidable self-possession, the defeat of a trimly masterful facade.

Harry has been convincingly held together in the viewer's mind by his reliable ensemble of dark overcoat, hat, and dress shoes, and by the prevailing impression that his sordid surroundings cannot make a dent, cannot visibly rub off on him. Minus his hat, roguish smile, and magician's power of dissolving from sight at will, he seems reduced and caught in a persecuting light. He is also made vulnerable to Holly's pity in a manner that he would previously have abhorred. His being cornered is less distressing than the fact that his face has nowhere to hide. Its dread, confusion, and diminishing shame are out in the open, available for our inspection. Harry has been obliged to crawl across the dirty cement and up the stairs, having been felled by a policeman's bullet. The knowledge that his crawling has gained him nothing shreds his confidence in his physical prowess and his death-defying capacities for recuperation. In so many ways he is no longer intact. Although Holly stands below him, Harry's awkward perch on the stairway gives him neither the distance nor the superior presence that he has so effortlessly maintained before. The mere fact that Holly's own hat is in place and that his suit is in good order, with no rumpling, reflects back on Harry's mortifying unkemptness. Holly takes in the spectacle of Harry's brokenness and realizes that putting an end to him is what the situation demands. Yet even though he grasps that Harry seeks the indulgence of a mercy killing, Holly seems stymied. He is still unable to reverse roles and claim the dominant position in the relationship. He cannot initiate a final move without Harry's explicit consent. So, Harry's affirming nod, in spite of being halting and stricken, and conceding defeat, manages to rebuild his authority and refurbish the sad majesty of his ego. There is forgiveness, movingly, in his gaze, and perhaps his first acknowledgment of Holly as someone with whom he has a genuine bond. The act of killing Lime becomes a tie that binds, a tie stronger than those present in their imitation friendship. As Harry nods to free Holly from his bewildered helplessness, he—in the blink of an eye—achieves a major reversal. He seems to hold his own fate and his suddenly feeble executioner in the palm of his hand.

The camera cuts away before the deed is done. We hear the hollow reverberation of Holly's gunshot from a distance in the tunnel, then almost instantly we are transported to the cemetery, where a comic reprise of Harry's initial sham funeral service is reenacted, gesture for gesture. The reminder of Harry's previous escape from the coffin prepared for him robs the second attempt to bury him of gravity and finality. The earth couldn't hold him before: what need for a conviction of permanence this time around? Anna's famous, endless walk away from the cemetery while the leaves of war-stunned Europe gently drift down in accompaniment from the trees that line both sides of the road is another gesture that somehow keeps Harry's ending from completion. Her manner of walking—brisk, purposeful, impassive—is designed to echo Harry's firm stride, although it is deprived of his lightness and contagious energy. Her heart—whatever may be left of it—belongs to Harry, and despondently loitering, expectant Holly is invisible to her as she passes him, and then us. Since her gestural

intention points unswervingly backward, to Lime's memory (as a force of vanquished good in her life), the film's own heart is sneakily, albeit ironically, transferred to him as well. His coldness and horrid crimes are clear to us, but still . . .

So many of Harry Lime's gestures are announced conspicuously by the camera. The camera is primed for them, as expertly timed eruptions of presence. In contrast to Lime, the gestures of the other characters are more likely to be embedded quietly in interactions that have a realist rather than an expressionist tenor. In the conversation scene between Anna and Holly that precedes Harry's grand arrival, there is much subdued business. Although the visual elements are potentially extravagant, the dramatic treatment tamps them down: a depressed Anna lying sleepless in bed in Harry's monogrammed pajamas, her silent face streaked with tears; Holly's presentation to her of a too-heavy bouquet of flowers; Holly nursing the bandage on his parrot-bitten finger as he weaves about drunkenly, trying to make a romantic case for himself while hinting at Harry's crimes; Holly failing to interest the cat with a piece of string; his equally unsuccessful efforts to engage Anna's interest, to lift her spirits, to extract a second laugh from her. The fact that the gesturing is low-key, unexpansive, so often listless, rebuffed, or otherwise thwarted, can be seen as a cunning preparation for Harry's bold and vibrant gestural vocabulary. His gestures ignite the frame in a manner that Anna's and Holly's aren't allowed to.

In summary, Harry's impact on-screen can't be grasped in isolation from the modes of gesturing assigned to other characters prior to his debut appearance. Welles's Lime is an untrammeled show-off, a clandestine dandy, an impresario of atmospheric effects. His purpose is to revive the nocturnal setting which contains (and, taking a metaphysical view, extrudes) him, to shake *The Third Man* loose from its pervasive stupor. The spotlighting capture of his face in the velvety dark niche where he has been lurking owes much of its special tingling pleasure to our relief that a human expression has at last managed to dispel the depression and soddenness that holds Vienna in thrall. We may not have known what sort of antidote we coveted for all the downcast, sourly conniving, disabled, and apathetic faces we have encountered since Holly first debarked at the Vienna train station at the beginning of the film, wearing his hapless innocence like a donkey tail. But Harry supplies the tonic we need. When Welles's features peer out on the melancholy street, having been speared by the light from a nearby apartment, he is neither menacing nor abashed. He does not recoil. He is momentarily displeased (but only mildly so). As the camera gestures toward his artfully illuminated demeanor, he becomes equal to the demand of being plunged onstage after the curtain has opened prematurely. He puts on a beguiling stage face, that of the unapologetic lad trapped in a bit of skullduggery. Before the light strikes him, Holly has stood across the street taunting this stranger in the shadows with drunken peevishness. He commences by singling out the hidden man's still prominent shoes ("Satchel-foot!"), then summons him with a dare from a child's game: "Come out, come out, whoever you are." Harry smiles (a raised-eyebrow smile) as the camera and the light surprise him at close range, then elects to linger. The smile releases the freshet of energy and devil-may-care sunniness that Anna had alluded to when describing Harry's rejuvenating power. The ease with which he smiles shapes an image of irresistible bravado. Harry's look extends itself, with impersonal warmth, to include Holly in its sphere of affability.

Although he says nothing, his features are sportively eloquent: "Well, old friend, here we are. Sorry to give you such a start. I am alive after all, as you can see. What do you make of it?"

The magic act that conjured up this puckish apparition continues with the abrupt removal of light. Harry reverts to the phantom state that is his preference. A car instantly speeds by the darkened arch, creating in its surreal emergence from nowhere a visual recap of Harry's presumed death by automobile accident. The car functions as a masking gesture, a further piece of abracadabra; it is a sleight-of-hand diversion that allows something that was palpable just moments earlier to be wiped away. We do not observe Harry bolting. He is quite simply gone. Harry's smile, in the aftermath of his vanishing, assumes an air of catch-as-catch-can challenge. Holly had indicated his willingness for a session of hide-and-seek. Harry cooperates.

Harry's one dialogue scene fittingly takes place in the bruised, nearly deserted Prater, with its desolate rides, towering Ferris wheel, and ghostly reminders of forgotten bustle. Lime enters the amusement park as a small, unmistakable figure in long shot, breasting the chill autumn air with a galvanizing quick step, as though out for a morning constitutional. His tempo of walking is more brisk and assured than anyone else we've spotted in the streets. Though still far away from us, he looks like a man free of encumbrance, and once again the camera announces the gesture of his gait by framing him in relation to a waiting carousel in the foreground. Harry is little more than a dot when Holly and we pick him out, resembling those other "dots" moving below the Ferris wheel a short time later, whose expendability Harry breezily urges Holly to think about. Nevertheless, Holly's forward movement in reaction to his first sighting of his "friend" makes Lime's progress in the distance instantly magnetic. We get to observe Harry scaling up his readiness for an awkward interaction. While still quite a few steps away from Holly, he overinvests in a posture of hearty, crooning joviality that he doesn't appear to need Holly to believe in. He presents theatricality to his deceived comrade as a value in its own right, preferable to glum recriminations for sorting things out. Harry removes a glove for a handshake greeting, which makes him momentarily vulnerable, to a small degree. When Holly pointedly ignores the offer, Harry is obliged to adjust and recover, registering feigned surprise at Holly's reluctance. But he manages to sneak in a lordly touch anyway, patting Holly's coat sleeve as he proposes that Holly accompany him to the Prater wheel for a ride. His pat has the effect of counteracting Holly's stance of sullen aloofness. Holly meekly reverts to his old status as underling follower. Although he has already declared his firm intention of meeting Harry on safe ground, out in the open, he submits without a hint of protest to the alternative site of the Ferris wheel, a space that is both confined and rife with danger. A seductive "Come on" and a reassuring touch from Harry are all that is required for the spectacularly guilty party to set the terms and the style for their meeting.

Orson Welles had already directed a treacherous fun-house episode in his own film *The Lady from Shanghai* (1948). His gestural style in the Ferris wheel scene involves reassuming a directorial role with his old Mercury Theatre collaborator Joseph Cotten. He adopts a director's tone appropriate for the intimidating interpreter of postwar revels. Cotten's Holly becomes, in response, a recalcitrant actor, resentfully declining to play his lines in the spirit the director cajoles him into taking up; he appears intent

on withholding any gestures that might endorse or collude with Harry's theatricality. The decency he asserts is tentative, nonrhetorical, and suffused with hurt. Holly, in spite of himself, seems to be hoping that Harry will tender the right sort of apology and give him some authentic token of fellowship. Has Holly ever mattered to him at all? Perhaps Harry, in the course of the ride, can transport the two of them—for all of Harry's misdeeds and dispiriting bluster—to a viable sense of their shared past. Some uncontaminated memory may be stirred that is touched with emotion. Maybe the viewer shares Holly's irrational, impossible expectation that a connection between the two of them will pierce Harry's sturdy masquerade.

What is remarkable about Harry's tactics in this scene is that, after having been concealed for so long, he resorts to an astonishing show of candor, however theatrically embroidered. He neither denies his crimes nor cobbles together a ramshackle moral case for them. He does not even hide his passing thought of pushing Holly out of the Ferris wheel carriage. He almost takes pride (as he ostentatiously slides open the door) in alerting Holly in advance to his plan of murder. Harry makes no false claims about his attachment to Anna, nor does he endeavor to woo Holly with a plausible account of their former closeness. His defense of his own activity is unapologetically remorseless: his gesturing to the moving, anonymous human dots below them plainly underscores the fact that distance from victims makes rapacious self-interest easier to pursue. Throughout his meeting with Holly, whether he is bullying or conciliatory, Lime trades on a vigorous, self-enclosed, theatrical mode of deportment. He invites Holly to believe that their being lifted above dismal, ground-level Vienna revives completely the exemptions of boyhood truancy. They are playing hooky from other people's restrictive picture of reality and its obligations.

Holly might profit, Lime's manner insinuates, from setting aside his largely fraudulent wormwood expression and acknowledging the tantalizing prospect of an illicit spree. Welles uses his imposing presence and bulk to deride Cotten's crimped and near-cringing efforts to be the injured moral party. "I am the same greedy lad as always," Lime tacitly proclaims. "I know that I'm giving a riveting, if not heartfelt, performance. You, Holly, are also performing. You're performing the agitations of conscience. What chiefly animates you, though, is jealousy; you're the defeated romantic rival." Once he realizes that shoving Holly out of the Ferris wheel will not benefit him, Harry turns his attention briefly to Holly's disappointments in love. He draws an arrowed heart in the dust of the Ferris wheel window and inscribes the name Anna, then taps the pane to catch Holly's eye. This gesture is meant to focus Holly—with a director's cunning—on what's really preying on him emotionally and what is most at issue. Harry sees through too much too readily, imagining that things as well as people mainly exist to be seen through. Use value for him is pretty much synonymous with ruse value. Whatever comes into his appraising sight is there to be exploited for as long as it can yield good value, and then it is discarded. He is an American entrepreneur, after all. Once the two men are sealed inside the Prater wheel's intimate compartment, Holly begins pushing, without much self-awareness, against the sheer magnitude of Harry's disregard. Harry circles, presses uncomfortably near, menaces, and teases Holly without ever quite taking him seriously. Harry won't grant him the dignity of someone who has authentic claims. As we watch him,

Lime metamorphoses, in a phrase that Jonathan Franzen applied to David Foster Wallace, into "a lifelong prisoner on the island of himself."[1] What works against that impression, keeping it from solidifying, is Holly's never entirely subdued craving to be let once more into Harry's sphere of pleasure and dangerous excitements. Death looms here as another schoolboy dare, impossible to sever entirely from an amusement park's glittering mock perils.

The scene also acquires a capering spirit from Harry's continuing sharp efforts to shake free of his own largely suppressed melancholy. We see him try to make a vision of nothingness feel hedonistically substantial, but his theatrical effort doesn't fully obscure his own sense of lack. He is like a storyteller expertly unfolding a tale of waste and withering, calling his ailments by name and almost persuading his listeners that they are a keen source of pleasure. Michael Chekhov speaks at length in his famous study of acting technique, *To the Actor*, of the "psychological gesture" at the core of a performer's physical conception of a character. Welles's psychological gesture for Lime is a persistent nervous touching in the vicinity of his heart. Harry complains of chronic indigestion and the pains he has taken to get black-market pills for it; his supply has nearly run out. The little chest taps and occasional moments of fatigue woven through his bursts of theatrical vivacity create an anxious whisper of mortality in woe-defying self-presentation. We behold him flirting with the specter of nothingness, and the further he carries it, the more we begin to sense that his alluring presence is scarcely distinguishable from an absence. Harry appears almost endearingly astounded at the idea of "not being everything," as Georges Bataille puts it, and at the bothersome fact that he too, now and again, must suffer. Harry controls the communication with Holly, but he is also visibly lost in it. He seems suavely to be addressing his own death in the Ferris wheel compartment; he is trying out arguments with death, in an effort to fend it off, to hoodwink it.

When the ride ends and Harry hops out, his spirits have revived. Feeling invincible, he enjoins Holly to throw off his gloom as well, reminding Holly that Italy under the Borgias was filled with "warfare, bloodshed, and terror," but that the country also experienced a powerful renewal, with a surfeit of inventiveness, and great art. Switzerland, by contrast, "enjoyed centuries of peace and brotherly love," which yielded nothing but (Welles pauses, never more the seasoned actor) "the cuckoo clock." As he bids Holly farewell and gaily trips off, we would be justified in concluding that Harry himself is a perfect embodiment of the cuckoo clock that he so delightedly evokes and dismisses. He has placed himself on the side of the superhuman knaves, the Borgias, but his criminality lacks the density, the tragic heft of his bloody forebears. He is instead a wanton child, confusing hopelessness with hope, caught in a cuckoo clock of American, rather than Swiss, manufacture. He's the crowning effect of a mechanism that he can't, for all his crafty intelligence, fully fathom. He gambols away to his fast-approaching doom, unknowing, and although we deplore his pact with the devil, we remain captivated by his bright moments of release from "inside the works." We cherish his off-kilter music, his speed, and the wind-up semblance of his dance. ✻

1 Jonathan Franzen, "Farther Away: 'Robinson Crusoe,' David Foster Wallace, and the Island of Solitude," *New Yorker*, April 18, 2011, 91.

The Performance of Listening: Samuel Beckett's *That Time*

by Edward D. Miller

In *Man, Play, and Games*, Roger Caillois devises a typology of games and identifies categories of chance, contestation, vertigo, and mimesis. He is also concerned with discerning the function of games and how ludic pursuits often extend the ability of a player's senses. Caillois writes: "Kite-flying . . . relies on the exploitation of a specific atmospheric condition. Thanks to this, the player accomplishes a kind of auscultation upon the sky, from afar. He projects his presence beyond the limits of his body. . . . [t]he game of blindman's bluff [similarly] offers an opportunity to experience the quality of perception in the absence of sight."[1] For Caillois, flying a kite grants the player the chance to diagnose the ether (auscultation is the act of listening to the sounds of the interiority of the human body, especially via a stethoscope). The player's being is propelled via string and paper into the sky and "hears" the condition of the atmosphere, becoming privy to the patterns of the wind that otherwise would not be known. Kites make the wind visually perceptible.

Deprived of the use of his or her eyes through the use of a blindfold, the player in blindman's bluff is duty bound to learn about the environment without sight, in order to detect where other players are located. This game reorders the hierarchy of the senses, privileging touch, smell, and hearing. Blindman's bluff lets the player know that the dynamics of a particular location are not entirely based on visual information and that distance may be measured without the use of the eyes.

Caillois's insight provides analogies for comprehending Samuel Beckett's ephemeral play and film *That Time*, a short work that follows strict rules like a child's game. The play, first performed in 1976, was made into a film in 2000, directed by Charles Garrad. Through the presence of a disembodied, silenced head interacting with three acousmatic voices (whose origins are shrouded), the film makes audible the patterns of memory and renders visible how a self bends toward the occurrence of a voice.

1 Roger Caillois, *Man, Play, and Games*, trans. Meyer Barash (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 29–30.

Recently, scholars such as Ulrika Maude and Samuel Porter have emphasized the importance of technology and media in Beckett's work, focusing on *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958), the radio play *All That Fall* (1956), and *That Time*, a text once maligned or ignored by critics and scholars.[2] In addition, Steven Connor, who has written an important book on the history of ventriloquism, wrote an earlier work that relates Beckett's texts (including *That Time*) to Derrida's and Deleuze's theories of presence and repetition. And Matthew Causey has discussed Beckett's nearly silent *Film* (Alan Schneider, 1965) as an allegory on the gaze and the "agony of perceivedness."[3] In sum, recent scholarship frames Samuel Beckett as not simply a playwright (or a novelist). Beckett is a composer of mediatized performance, and much of his later work is fundamentally intermedial, narrowing the gulfs between theater, film, and radio while relying on each medium's distinctiveness. Beckett's work catalogs what happens to performance when the live and the recorded clash and coincide, mirroring the intervention of the past into the present and prefiguring much of contemporary performance's use of onstage media to enlarge, duplicate, and complicate the presence of the actor.

Beckett's media compositions take on structures that prohibit traditional acting. Instead, they allow for performances that pinpoint the self's interaction with and investment in media—media that is used as storage for experience, sensation, and emotion. *Krapp's Last Tape*, which turns tape recordings into a kind of character that interacts with Krapp (the play also privileges the act of listening to recorded voices), is perhaps exemplary in this regard. *That Time*, although it is a somber text involving memory and regret, is also a playful text of auscultation, making internal processes audible and transforming the activity of listening into a visual spectacle.

The structure of *That Time* is deceptively simple. It consists of three voices, named in the text A, B, and C, and one head, called Listener. Beckett describes Listener as "an old white face" with "long flairing white hair" that appears lit in the dark, midstage.[4] In the film, the face is seen in a long shot as its breath is heard, and then as an extreme close-up when Listener opens its eyes. Subsequently, the face is seen from a variety of angles. The visible, disembodied face is reminiscent of Beckett's earlier work *Not I* (1972), in which the lips and tongue and teeth of the performer are all that is visible to the audience. The voice in *Not I* is designated as female; Beckett uses the possessive pronoun "his" in his stage directions for *That Time*, so we can assume that Listener is male. Beckett explains in his stage directions that the three voices originate from a similar place, but they do not share a temporality. He writes: "Voices A, B, and C are his own coming to him from both sides and above. They modulate back and forth without any break in general flow except where silence [is] indicated."[5]

Voices A, B, and C are similar in tempo and cadence, but in the filmed version there is a slight variation in tone, which allows for each voice to be distinguished.

2 Ulrika Maude, *Beckett, Technology and the Body* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Jeff Porter, "Samuel Beckett and the Radiophonic Body: Beckett and the BBC," *Modern Drama* 53, no. 4 (Winter 2010): 431–446.

3 Matthew Causey, *Theatre and Performance in Digital Culture: From Simulation to Embeddedness* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 25.

4 Samuel Beckett, *That Time* (London: Faber, 1976), 9.

5 Ibid.

Additionally, each moment in which the voice shifts is accompanied by a cut and a change in the camera angle, which underlines the movement from voice to voice. Each voice elaborates a particular time in Listener's life. As Steven Connor indicates: "A describes a visit made to his home, perhaps in Dublin, and the abortive attempt to revisit a ruin frequented as a child; B describes moments of love from youth; and C describes a number of occasions on which the man has sought shelter in public buildings" (particularly a portrait gallery and a rather dusty library, which might be in London). While these voices, Connor notes, can simply correspond to childhood, youth, and old age, they are also more complicated since each is equally consumed with "reminiscence, recall, or return."[6] In addition, each voice's distinctiveness is muddled by the repetition of certain phrases by both A and C, such as "was your mother ah for God's sake all gone long ago." C's comment "not a living soul" is also an echo of B's utterance of "not a soul abroad." Each voice also questions its own veracity, never sure of seriality and site; C appears particularly doubtful of when events transpired and is most obsessed with spatial and temporal dislocations. In one passage, C attempts to relocate Listener's body in a particular public building and his being inside a particular "skull":

> when you started not knowing who you were from Adam trying how that would work for a change not knowing who you were from Adam no notion who it was saying what you were saying whose skull you were clapped up in whose moan had you the way you were was that the time of was that another time there alone with the portraits of the dead black with dirt and antiquity and the dates on the frames in case you might get the century wrong not believing it could be you till they put you in the rain at closing-time[7]

Revealingly, in C's telling of the remembrance, the Listener does not know who he is when he is in the portrait gallery; neither does he remember when this was. Once back out in the rain, he regains an identity, as if the rain and cold serve as a homeland for Listener. Inside, surrounded by faces, though, he is left asunder.

Each voice uses the pronoun "you" and not "I" in referring to Listener's past. For example, A states at the beginning of the text: "that time you went back that last time to look was the ruin still there where you hid as a child when was that."[8] This use of the second person highlights the fracturing of identity into unfixedness, suggesting that Listener is not the sole proprietor of his own experience. Voice C chides Listener for the lack of an "I" in Listener's identity and asks: "did you ever say I to yourself in your life come on now [*eyes close*] could you ever say I to yourself in your life[.]"[9] The irony is that C introduces the "I" as an absence, lending this pronominal form to Listener, but then taking it away again, and so returning Listener to the pronoun "you." Listener can never lay claim to an "I."

6 Ibid., 150.

7 Ibid., 12.

8 Ibid., 9.

9 Ibid., 11.

As the title implies, the character Mouth in *Not I* is also denied the first-person pronoun; she refers to herself in the third person. In *Not I* there is also no capitalization in the text; sentences have been melted down to phrases. *That Time* not only removes capitalization but also eschews all punctuation. (In *Not I* Beckett uses ellipses to separate phrases.) Even as remembrance may rely on words, it does not abide by rules of grammar. One's mutterings to oneself have their own logic, and the reader quickly adjusts to the text's rhythm, alert to spaces between phrases. It is as if one is becoming acquainted with one's internal thought processes related to memories, which do not mimic the cadence of speech or writing. The recitation of memory has its own dialect.

That Time enacts the splitting of memory into voices that reflect, refract, and diffract; they interrupt each other, causing new patterns; echo each other; and venture off in different temporal directions, attempting to describe experiences in distinct locales. For Beckett, the voice may be a kind of signature of self, but it is also itself. The voice cannot be entirely claimed or owned by its speaker; it has autonomy.[10] As Steven Connor writes of the voice in *Dumbstruck*, "If my voice is mine because it comes from me, it can only be known as mine because it also goes from me. My voice is, literally, my way of taking leave of my senses. What I say goes."[11] Spoken words do not bring about an arrival at an unwavering identity but, rather, imply a departure from the self. The voice travels of its own accord; *That Time* provides the architecture of this severance of voice and psyche: the voice as outlining the self like a makeshift epidermis and the voice as ensuring the shedding of this skin.[12]

Ulrika Maude refers to Beckett's exteriorization of interior voices as "vocalic division" in which the subject "is divided against itself through diverse spatial and temporal positioning, epitomizing the paradoxes [of self-expression and alterity simultaneously] present in vocalic expression."[13] To augment her reading, I would suggest that the three voices construct an aural triptych with the visible face of Listener as a predella that connects each and provides an originary font for these voices. This predella supports a scenario that displays what it looks like to listen. The opening and closing of the eyes becomes crucial; it signifies a response to a particular word. When the performer Niall Buggy squints his closed eyes, it suggests a pained response to a voice and a strained effort to remember that which the voice recounts. When he opens his mouth and raises an eyebrow, it also serves to suggest shock or wonder, or even bemusement. The silent face is significant; every slight movement in the face becomes a grand gesture. Listening choreographs the facial muscles; it is a form of expression and an attempt at communication.

10 Derrida takes an opposing view of speech and self, viewing the voice as akin to a boomerang, reuniting self and voice, since the speaker can "hear oneself speak" (*s'entendre parler*). Derrida is physiologically wrong—voices reverberate internally during the act of speaking. Additionally, there is not only self-satisfaction in being able to hear one's utterances. One must also consider the development of storage and broadcast media that allow one to hear what a voice sounds like when recorded—the voice thereby loses its signature and sounds like another's. Jacques Derrida, "Economimesis," trans. Richard Klein, *Diacritics* 11, no. 2 (1981): 3–25.

11 Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000), 7.

12 Here, I am referring to Didier Anzieu's work on the "skin ego," which, he argues, "fulfills the function of maintaining the psyche." Anzieu, *The Skin Ego*, trans. Chris Turner (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 98.

13 Maude, *Beckett, Technology, and the Body*, 67.

In his essay "Listening," Roland Barthes distinguishes between hearing and listening: hearing is physiological, whereas listening is psychological. Listening is active and has a posture, and, as *That Time* depicts it, listening also involves movement—listening is not only an interior process, and it does not freeze the body (or face) into stasis. Barthes further delineates between three kinds of listening. The first is alert listening; almost instinctual, it allows the listener to identify sounds that are either friendly or threatening, akin to how an animal discerns a predator. The second form of listening is decipherment, which involves the decoding of signs. For the third form of listening, Barthes turns to the psychoanalytical practice of Freud, in which the analyst listens to hearing and offers the opportunity for an intersubjective space between listener and speaker, a mode that involves a risk (of misinterpretation, of introjecting one's own experiences upon the heard words akin to how one projects oneself upon a screen).[14]

For the philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy, listening has a porousness to it: "To listen is to enter that spatiality by which at the same time, I am penetrated, for it opens up in me as well as around me, and from me as well as toward me: it opens me inside me as well as outside, and it is through such a double, quadruple, or sextuple opening that a self can take place."[15] In his view it is not speech that asserts the self. Rather, it is in the act of listening that the possibility of the creation of self occurs through connections made between the person and the environment, between the entities that make sound and the person that attends to sonority, a person who is concentrating and is "all ears." For both Barthes and Nancy, listening is enunciatory and defining even as it appears silent; listening is a form of utterance and action.

In *That Time*, the viewer bears witness to the intricacies of listening and sees its various openings and trepidations (and tentative triumphs, as Listener finishes the play and film with a smile). The viewer observes how listening is an attempt at realigning interiority with the external environment. This realignment has ramifications for an understanding of performance in an era of mediatization in which technology imposes itself on the stage (and the self) in new ways and interjects the digital into cinema.

Matthew Causey argues that one of the key effects of new technology on performance is that "the material body and its subjectivity are extended, challenged, and reconfigured."[16] For Causey, the body is often doubled by the use of video on stage. Certainly, a cursory look at the work of influential theater artists like the Wooster Group or Robert Lepage allows one to see that use of videated images focuses on repeating the contours of a body (or provides a close-up of the face) on a visible screen through various means of projection. Indeed, in sports events or large concerts, video is used to show the expressions of the players or performers (and sometimes the audience), thus enabling a proximity that would not be available, especially for those seated near the rafters of a large arena. Increasingly, one goes to live performance to watch screens that create doppelgängers.

14 Roland Barthes, "Listening," in *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985), 258–260.

15 Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 30.

16 Causey, *Theatre and Performance in Digital Culture*, 16.

Indeed, arguing against Peggy Phelan's assertion that the ontology of performance is found in its nonreproducibility and that performance's uniqueness is related to its inevitable disappearance, Philip Auslander has stressed in his work on the interplay of the live and recorded that a sense of liveness is a product of mediatization.[17] If one goes to theater and popular performance, one is often going to see both performers and live or prerecorded video that reconfigures—or distorts—the onstage body. "Liveness" is no longer a term that marks a shared space; it is a term that is concerned entirely with simultaneity. That is why local television news anchors can repeat the phrase "Now we go live to the scene of the fire . . . ," and that is why the voices of Beckett's *That Time*, even as they are recorded before the performance (or the filming), are also "live." They are played concurrently, and the recordings of A, B, and C are turned on as part of the performance. As Beckett's title suggests, he is concerned with temporality and with how an instance of memory intrudes on consciousness. In other words, he is concerned with how the live present is constructed by stored images and sounds from some vague yesteryear.

Causey's emphasis on extension, challenge, and reconfiguration of corporeality is no doubt true in *That Time*, yet so little of the body is visible in the film, as only the face of a head is visible, appearing like a mask to the audience. This face is metonymic for the entire body of Listener, just as each voice stands in for the vastness of an experience from a particular time in Listener's life. Beckett reduces the body to a visage, which brings attention to that which is missing. But the body is not under complete erasure; the three voices construct an imagined corpus, and the girth of these voices provides dimensionality for Listener's lost body, thereby creating a resounding presence that is only partially visible.

Beckett's *That Time* foregrounds temporality in its interplay of a live, diminished body and recorded, replete voices. In its focus on a man's countenance, the play and film show the effects that voices have on the skin, on the eyes and eyebrows, and on the mouth. With this text and its filmed performance Beckett is flying a kite, returning with key information about how the psyche re-creates memories through phrases and how a self is stitched together by way of listening. If speaking fractures, then listening mends. For much of the play, Listener closes his eyes, enacting a blindman's bluff upon himself to attend to his own voices ever more deeply and to replicate how listening affords the possibility of a restored self. ✻

17 Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008); Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

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