

Introduction: Transforming Scholarship through *[in]Transition*

by CHRISTINE BECKER, editor

With the *Cinema Journal* editorial team under Will Brooker nearing the end of its tenure, it is an appropriate time to look back on what we have accomplished over the past five years. Undoubtedly, the March 2014 launch and subsequent growth of *[in]Transition: Journal of Videographic Film & Moving Image Studies*, which developed out of a partnership between the MediaCommons digital scholarly network and *Cinema Journal*, is one of the most significant and potentially enduring achievements.

From the start, Will Brooker set out to maintain *Cinema Journal*'s reputation as the top journal in the field of cinema and media studies while simultaneously expanding its sphere of influence beyond the printed page. The latter has been my job description as online editor, and, starting in the summer of 2012, together we brainstormed ways to cultivate digital satellites tied to *Cinema Journal* that would embody the scholarly and intellectual values that the journal and the Society for Cinema and Media Studies represented. *Cinema Journal* already had an online platform via library databases and the SCMS website, but those offered little more than virtual versions of the print materials. In our initial discussions, we envisioned much more: a podcast, high-resolution images and clips tied to articles, a supplement to *In Focus* that invited comments, an online revival of the Teaching Dossier feature, and timely reports on conferences and festivals. Brooker also conceived of the idea of open-access follow-up essays from *Cinema Journal* authors, thereby turning the limitation of publishing's slow process into a bonus by inviting retrospective reflection. Most fundamentally, Brooker expressed that he wanted to foster dialogue, connections, and conversation through these efforts as a way to transcend the

restrictions of the print medium.¹ Also, while we respected the financial imperative requiring the contents of the journal itself to remain largely available to subscribers only, we realized that with online content came the possibility of open access and the corresponding potential for a wider public reach. Those familiar with *Cinema Journal* over the past few years will recognize that we made good on many of these promising ideas, such as with the *Aca-Media* podcast, the Afterthoughts & Postscripts series on the SCMS website, the *Cinema Journal* Teaching Dossier series at TeachingMedia.org, and In Focus weeks at In Media Res.

We had similar ambitions for supporting videographic work, but it was a foreign world to us. While the scholarly intentions of a video essay might be similar to those of a print essay, the challenge was in conceiving what kind of platform could best host videographic content and how such scholarship could be evaluated in ways comparable to the long-accepted high standards of print publication that *Cinema Journal* represented, especially given that none of us had ever produced or evaluated work of this sort. Continuing his aim to turn limitations into advantages, Brooker sent me an email in 2013 with advice on how to proceed:

The video essay concept is complex and I don't think any of us are especially expert in the field, so my feeling is it would be better to take our time, consult widely, and invite discussion (maybe even an SCMS workshop to discuss it?) so we make sure we do it right. It would be unfortunate for us to venture into an area that a lot of people feel strongly about, and know a lot about, and which is perhaps quite new to us, and impose our ideas rather than be guided by others.²

I quote this personal email at length because I think it effectively pinpoints why our online ventures have been such a success: we sought the help of expert, passionate partners throughout the SCMS membership to execute the ideas we thought were most worthy for *Cinema Journal* to pursue. Unbeknownst to us at the time of Brooker's email, a number of SCMS members were already working toward starting an online journal devoted to video essays. Jason Mittell's essay in this collection explains how they then contacted me, and this seemed like the perfect fulfillment of Brooker's suggestion. We could let people who knew a lot and felt strongly about the potential of videographic work supply the expertise while we offered the value of *Cinema Journal*'s imprimatur. We wanted to make sure that *Cinema Journal*'s involvement wouldn't stop at the nameplate, however, and this was ensured when the group offered me a project manager position so I could represent the journal's interests and provide input. The rest of the *[in]Transition* founding team included the editors Catherine Grant, Christian Keathley, and Drew Morton, and Mittell served as project manager for MediaCommons.

Throughout our formative discussions, everyone pushed for the journal to be much more than just a distribution platform. In fact, we recognized that *[in]Transition*'s most

1 For more on Brooker's intentions, see Christine Becker, "Expanding the Media Studies-Dialogue Sphere," *In Media Res*, May 27, 2013, <http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/imr/2013/05/27/expanding-media-studies-dialogue-sphere>.

2 Will Brooker, email message to author, May 20, 2013.

valuable contribution could be in how it explicitly framed videographic criticism and commentary on this work as scholarship. This goal helps explain the quirky “[in]” at the start of the journal’s title. Initially, the working title was *Transitions*, which connoted videography, movement, a transitional moment in media studies, and the notion of the transitional object.³ But because a journal called *Transition* already existed, we had to distinguish the title more fully, and Catherine Grant suggested the addition of “[in]” to connote the notion of a frame and thus the idea of interacting with the terms and form of the media object itself. These four simple characters accordingly convey a thoroughly complex ideal at the heart of the journal.

[in]Transition was officially launched at the 2014 SCMS conference in Seattle during a workshop titled “Visualizing Media Studies: The Expansion of Scholarly Publishing into Video Essays.”⁴ The first press release heralded the journal as a platform that

will provide a forum for a range of digital scholarship (which includes such formats as the video essay and the visual essay) and will also create a context for understanding and evaluating videographic work as a new mode of scholarly writing for the disciplines of cinema and media studies and related fields. This goal will be achieved through editorial curating of exemplary videographic works, through critical analysis and appreciation, and through a system of pre-publication peer review and open peer commentary.⁵

While *[in]Transition* thus deserves note as the first peer-reviewed academic journal of videographic film and moving-image studies, the second goal listed in the press release, open peer-review commentary, stands to be its most revolutionary offering. When *[in]Transition* received an Award of Distinction in the Society of Cinema and Media Studies’ Anne Friedberg Innovative Scholarship Award competition at the 2015 Montreal conference, the award committee focused their praise largely on the curating and review process that *[in]Transition* utilizes: “[*in]Transition* not only provides a space for video essays but curates and frames them, and discusses their use as pedagogic tools. As an open access online platform, *[in]Transition* also provides resources for video essay creators and educators, and an innovative system of post-peer review. . . . [T]he committee believes it has the potential to reshape the field.”⁶

For a better understanding of what exactly is so innovative and potentially transformative about *[in]Transition*, I invite you to read each essay in this collection. The

3 For an explanation of the “transitional object” in this context, see Catherine Grant and Christian Keathley, “The Use of an Illusion: Childhood Cinephilia, Object Relations, and Videographic Film Studies,” *Photogénie* (blog), June 2014, http://www.photogenie.be/photogenie_blog/article/use-illusion.

4 The workshop was live-streamed, and a recording of it has been archived online in two parts. See “[*in]Transition* journal launch at SCMS 2014, Seattle: Part 1,” *Critical Commons*, March 2014, <http://www.criticalcommons.org/Members/mikissi/clips/in-transition-journal-launch-at-scms-2014-seattle>; and “[*in]Transition* journal launch at SCMS 2014, Seattle: Part 2,” *Critical Commons*, March 2014, <http://www.criticalcommons.org/Members/mikissi/clips/in-transition-journal-launch-at-scms-2014-seattle-1>.

5 “Announcing [*in]Transition*,” *MediaCommons*, March 14, 2014, <http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/content/announcing-intransition>.

6 “[*in]Transition* wins Anne Friedberg Innovative Scholarship Award of Distinction,” *MediaCommons*, January 23, 2015, <http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/content/intransition-wins-anne-friedberg-innovative-scholarship-award-distinction>.

journal's editor Drew Morton begins by arguing for a broad definition of videographic criticism that moves well beyond what the label "video essay" might imply. He then applies Bill Nichols's taxonomy of documentary representation to work posted at *[in]Transition* to call for a more nuanced conceptualization of videographic criticism. Project manager Jason Mittell follows with a discussion of *[in]Transition*'s revolutionary open peer-review process. Mittell returns to the founding moment of the journal to explain why this component was considered so vital from the start. He goes on to justify why open peer-review commentary is such an essential component of the mode of scholarship that *[in]Transition* offers and is even foundational to conceptions of the scholarly possibilities of videographic work. The collection then continues with four shorter essays solicited by editor Christian Keathley, which offer perspectives from reviewers and practitioners whose work has appeared on *[in]Transition*. Shane Denson discusses his experience as an *[in]Transition* peer reviewer, which reflects back on Mittell's points in illuminating ways. Maria A. Velez-Serna has both submitted to and reviewed for *[in]Transition*, and this twinned perspective gives her particular insights into how this scholarship compares to traditional written work. Patricia Pisters discusses what it was like to submit her very first work of videographic scholarship to *[in]Transition* and thereby subject herself to open peer review while still learning the form. Jaap Kooijman also produced inaugural work for *[in]Transition* and discusses how his video essay took shape, starting at a National Endowment for the Humanities-sponsored workshop in videographic criticism at Middlebury College, as well as how the peer-review process helped him thoughtfully reflect on his work. The collection closes with perhaps the most valuable perspective of all, given the author's status as a pioneering practitioner of videographic work and a key player in all phases of *[in]Transition*. Catherine Grant focuses on a specific category of work published by *[in]Transition*—audiovisual studies of film star performance—through her personal viewpoint as both journal cofounder and video essay maker, and she considers how such videographic criticism can challenge and expand both research paradigms in media studies and our own scholarly identities.

It is also fitting to close this collection with Catherine Grant's essay, because her work at the invaluable Film Studies for Free website provided inspiration for Will Brooker and me five years ago when we first envisioned what online contributions *Cinema Journal* could make to cinema and media studies. Curated tirelessly by Grant, Film Studies for Free offers open-access links to and commentary on film and moving-image resources across the web and thus acts as a dynamic and ever-growing hub of scholarship, which is what Brooker and I hoped to create for *Cinema Journal* online. In his 2013 inaugural issue editorial, Brooker offered his hope that through online satellites *Cinema Journal* would "become a network, a matrix, a dialogue with surrounding scholarship" and "a multiplatform vehicle for an age of media convergence while losing none of the qualities that have made it so special, for so long."⁷ We believe *[in]Transition* is one fulfillment of those hopes. *

7 Will Brooker, "Introducing the Band," *Cinema Journal* 52, no. 4 (2013): 1–2.

Beyond the Essayistic: Defining the Varied Modal Origins of Videographic Criticism

by DREW MORTON

During the past five years, the field of videographic criticism has grown exponentially. There have been several SCMS panels and workshops devoted to the subject, ongoing National Endowment for the Humanities summer workshops at Middlebury College, a trickle of books and e-books (*The Videographic Essay: Criticism in Sound and Image*, *Film Studies in Motion: From Audiovisual Essay to Academic Research Video*), and the launch of the first openly peer-reviewed journal devoted to the format—*[in]Transition: Journal of Videographic Film & Moving Image Studies*, now in its fourth year of publication.¹ Many of these enterprises were foundational in their foci. They sought to establish the validity of this mode of scholarship, to ponder how we might evaluate such works both professionally and in the classroom and—more pragmatically—how to produce them. However, the emphasis on the pragmatic has left a gap in how we might further explore the theory and history of videographic criticism.

To begin, let me begin to sketch out the problematic equation between videographic criticism and “video essays.” As I have written at *[in]Transition*, videographic criticism has been synonymous with such terms as “video essays” and “visual essays” over the past decade or so (we called them “DVD essays” in Janet Bergstrom’s seminar at UCLA in 2007). Yet this emphasis on the essayistic is not without issue.² As outlined in Timothy Corrigan’s foundational text on the mode, essay films such as Ross McElwee’s *Sherman’s March* (1985) and Chris Marker’s *Sans Soleil* (1983) embody a working through of subjective experience. Corrigan writes that the “essayistic indicates a kind of encounter between the self and the public domain, an encounter that measures the limits and possibilities of each as a conceptual activity. . . . [It] acts

1 Christian Keathley and Jason Mittell, *The Videographic Essay: Criticism in Sound & Image* (Montreal: caboose books, 2016); and Thomas van den Berg and Miklós Kiss, *Film Studies in Motion: From Audiovisual Essay to Academic Research Video* (Los Angeles: Scalar, 2016), <http://scalar.usc.edu/works/film-studies-in-motion/index>.

2 Drew Morton, “‘Look. I Know You’re Not Following What I’m Saying Anyway’: The Problem of the ‘Video Essay’ and Scorsese as Cinematic Essayist,” *[in]Transition* 1, no. 4 (2014), <http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/intransition/2014/12/12/look-i-know-youre-not-following-what-im-saying-anyway-problem-video-essay-and-scorsese-ci>.

out a performative presentation of self as a kind of self-negation in which narrative or experimental structures are subsumed within the process of thinking through a public experience.”³ Essentially, the essay seeks to locate the universal in the personal. This may be true of *some* videographic criticism—Jean-Luc Godard’s *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988–1998) comes to mind—but I would argue that the essayistic mode is but one submode of videographic criticism.

So, how might we define videographic criticism? Christian Keathley has defined video essays as “short critical essays on a given film or filmmaker, typically read in voice-over by the author and supplemented with carefully chosen and organized film clips.”⁴ Again, we see the link between the essayistic and videographic criticism. Now, I am not on a quest to bring my colleague and coeditor down a notch. On occasion, I still occasionally use the two terms interchangeably, and I would guess that the expansion in the field has pushed many videographic scholars and practitioners to reflect critically on terminology. That being said, further down the path that others have blazed far before me, I would push for an even broader definition of videographic criticism as rumination on moving images through the repurposing of moving image text(s)—with or without voice-over. This inclusive definition enables us to include the explanatory and essayistic texts of Mark Cousins and Godard while also including the poetic register that Keathley describes. Moreover, it allows for the inclusion of videographic works not based on film texts.

This broadening would allow for the considerations of mash-ups and videos like Nick Warr’s “Honolulu Mon Amour” (2016), a recent *[in]Transition* publication that utilizes split screen to juxtapose the television program *Magnum PI*. (CBS, 1980–1988) to itself.⁵ The video does contain voice-over narration and text, but it is an audiovisual collage constructed from an audio interview with Marguerite Duras, audio from Alain Resnais’s adaptation of Duras’s *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959), and text from a range of sources including Maurice Blanchot’s *The Infinite Conversation* (1992) and Duras’s *The Lover* (1984). Thus, while it contains the formal devices we might associate with the explanatory mode, the end product is far more ambiguous with regard to its direction and thesis. We can see the ambiguity of the piece’s meaning in the responses of the video’s two peer-review commentaries. As Christine Becker notes, “I found Nick Warr’s ‘Honolulu Mon Amour’ fascinating, though what I took away from it (and add to it here) may not be what he was intending. The [written] supporting statement indicates that the video essay offers an interrogation of the themes of reliving history, memory, and trauma, but I was engaged even more by its juxtaposition of works on very different rungs of the cultural taste hierarchy, poetic art cinema and popular network television.”⁶ In other words, Becker’s interpretation of this poetic piece is guided both by the mash-up of Duras and pulp, and her own research interests. In contrast,

3 Timothy Corrigan, *The Essay Film: From Montaigne, after Marker* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 6.

4 Christian Keathley, “*La caméra-stylo*: Notes on Video Criticism and Cinephilia,” in *The Language and Style of Film Criticism*, ed. Alex Clayton and Andrew Klevan (London: Routledge, 2011), 180.

5 Nick Warr, Christine Becker, and Gordon Hon, “Honolulu Mon Amour,” *[in]Transition* 3, no. 2 (2016), <http://media.commons.futureofthebook.org/intransition/honolulu-mon-amour>.

6 Ibid.

the impressions of Gordon Hon, the video's other peer reviewer, are more in line with the creator's intended meaning. As Hon writes, "The hinge of this diptych is also an articulation between forgetting and remembering, illustrating Blanchot's point that the former isn't simply the negation of the latter but that they work together in the processes of memory."⁷ In other words, the lack of explicit voice-over and rhetorical structure produces and nurtures a multiplicity of interpretation.

Returning to Keathley's definition, I should note that his conceptualization of videographic criticism as a spectrum defined by the poetic and the explanatory has been incredibly beneficial to me as an artist and as a coeditor at *[in]Transition*. I admit that my own work—theory and practice—initially favored the explanatory mode. However, I also wonder how we might further elaborate on Keathley's model by intersecting it with other modes of filmmaking like documentary, the avant-garde, and the mash-ups and remixes that have exemplified the "karaoke cinema" of contemporary Internet culture.⁸ Essentially, my intent is not to throw the baby out with the bathwater but to enter into a dialogue with Keathley by applying documentary theory to a selection of videographic criticism (most of which has been published at *[in]Transition*) to add a bit more nuance to his spectrum.

A fitting place to begin this elaboration is with Bill Nichols's influential organization of documentary according to five modes of representation: expository, observational, interactive, reflexive, and performative. Nichols begins his project by making an important disclaimer: the "modes belong to a dialectic in which new forms arise from the limitations and constraints of previous forms and in which the credibility of the impression of documentary reality changes historically."⁹ Essentially, these modes are not segregated or historically absolute. Just like film genres, we will witness the birth of hybrids and, perhaps, even new modes. According to Nichols, the expository mode "addresses the viewer directly, with titles or voices that advance an argument about the historical world."¹⁰ They are shaped around a commentary in which images serve as "illustration or counterpoint."¹¹ They position themselves as objective arguments in which the presence of the filmmaker is represented by the commentary.

Miriam Ross and Jonathan Mines's unorthodox "Stereotowns" embodies this approach. While it is perhaps the first work of videographic criticism produced in 3-D, the video—like most videographic criticism—addresses the viewer directly and makes a definitive argument. The piece begins with text and a visual example: "In the nineteenth century, millions of stereoviews were produced."¹² Ross and Mines go on to visually establish a dominant genre of stereoscopic photography—urban landscapes—and their status as both objects of spectacle and pedagogical tools (not unlike

7 Ibid.

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

9 Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 32.

10 Ibid., 34.

11 Ibid.

12 Miriam Ross, Jonathan Mines, Maria Velez-Serna, and Eric Faden, "Stereotowns," *[in]Transition* 3, no. 2 (2016), <http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/intransition/stereotowns>.

“Stereotowns” itself!). At the midpoint of the video, Ross and Mines include a quotation from Oliver Wendell Holmes that highlights the paradox of 3-D: “[The] effect is so heightened as to produce an appearance of reality which cheats the senses with its seeming truth.”¹³

This quote frames the rest of the video, as Ross and Mines draw our attention to specific aspects of the various visual examples to establish that the spectacle feels close before it feels familiar. Then, making the leap from stereoscopic photography to 3-D filmmaking, they trace how the illusion is often literally destroyed with the havoc wrecked on cityscapes by fires, earthquakes, and alien invasions. And yet, as the film concludes, the 3-D spectacle of destruction was a defining characteristic of stereoscopic stills. We can glean this argument from the video itself—which uses text fairly minimally and eschews voice-over all together. Of course, the published note by the video’s authors elaborates on some of the points, and the aesthetic of the work itself is, as peer reviewer Eric Faden notes, “poetic,” but this is overall an objectively argued video with images that serve as an illustration of the concepts outlined.¹⁴

According to Nichols, observational documentaries take the form of direct cinema or cinema vérité films, stressing the nonintervention of the filmmaker. Editing stresses real time and avoids voice-over, music, intertitles, reenactments, and interviews. For Nichols, “each cut or edit serves mainly to sustain the spatial and temporal continuity of observation rather than the logical continuity of an argument or case.”¹⁵ What might this look like in the case of videographic criticism? How can a critic *not* intervene when the very nature of videographic criticism is—to return to Keathley’s definition—at least contingent on the curation of clips? I admit, this may be one of the least practiced modes of videographic criticism, because it stresses original context (no matter how ethically naïve the observational model is) and would, by this philosophy, result in much longer videos than the “snack culture” of the Internet.¹⁶

One example is my own video, “*Jeanne Dielman, 23 qual du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles: Day x Day x Day*.”¹⁷ After seeing Chantal Akerman’s film for the first time, I was transfixed—like many—by Akerman’s depiction of routine. Aided by the observational nature of the film itself, which prompts us to pause and analyze Jeanne’s routine for subtle changes (like when she drops a spoon on the floor or overcooks the potatoes she is serving for dinner), I wanted to create a tool that could aid analysis while capturing the essence of the film faithfully. I utilized split screens to depict up to three days of her routine simultaneously (we are given only partial glimpses of certain days, so many times there are only two frames on the screen) and arranged chronologically according to time of day. Thus, the first scene depicts Jeanne’s morning, but only on the second and third days. Obviously, this project cheats a bit when it comes to Akerman’s original intent because it de-emphasizes the theme of sex (we do not see the first routine

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Nichols, *Representing Reality*, 40.

16 Eddie Guy, “Snack Attack,” *Wired* 15, no. 3 (2007): 124–135.

17 Drew Morton, “*Jeanne Dielman, 23 qual du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles: Day x Day x Day*,” Vimeo.com. <https://vimeo.com/96852873> (April 30, 2017).

involving the client until an hour into the remix). Yet the project does not provide any guiding commentary aside from a disclaimer that those interested should watch the film as it was originally presented, instead of using the video as a type of Cliff's Notes, and note that depicting the *entire* 201-minute film in 106 minutes emphasizes the temporality Nichols discusses as being key to the observational mode.

According to Nichols, the interactive mode is the inverse of the observational mode, making the filmmaker a “mentor, participant, prosecutor, or provocateur in relation to the social actors recruited.”¹⁷¹⁸ As Nichols notes, the verbal exchange between filmmaker and social actors produces a shift in argument toward the latter. With the exception of Marlon Riggs's *Color Adjustment* (1992) and small segments of Cousins's *Story of Film* that feature interviews with filmmakers (remember, Nichols noted that these modes can overlap!), most videographic criticism does not engage in this mode. The filmmaker herself, because of access, tends to provide the primary voice. One piece that does come to mind is Benjamin Sampson's “The Time Passing” (2015), which was based on interviews with scholars and reedited into a stream of conscious-style aural montage.¹⁹ Yet the presence of the filmmaker's interaction *with* the subjects illustrates Nichols's point: expository interviews serve the filmmaker's argument, while interactive interviews emphasize the authority of the interview subject.

Nichols traces the origins of the reflexive mode of documentary “from a desire to make the conventions of representation themselves more apparent and to challenge the impression of reality which the other three modes normally conveyed unproblematically. It is the most self-aware mode.”²⁰ For Nichols, the reflexive documentary uses many of the same characteristics of the other modes—voice-over, interviews, re-enactments—but “will employ such techniques only to interrupt and expose them.”²¹ The result of problematizing these conventions turns the text into an encounter between the filmmaker and the viewer. Thom Andersen's documentary *Los Angeles Plays Itself* (2003) does so more indirectly—through its content more so than its form—by examining how “the relation between reality and representation gets muddled.”²²

It is Godard's series—and the foregrounding of the process as his manipulations become foregrounded—that most obviously illustrates this mode, as does its mission to highlight the plurality of history. The series *Histoire(s) du cinéma* begins with a close-up of L. B. Jeffries (Jimmy Stewart) from *Rear Window* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954), looking through his camera at a neighboring window, with the text “May Every Eye” superimposed over it. The movement of Jeffries is slowed, and we can see the artifacts of the video medium within the frame (notably a margin of the frame that requires “tracking”). Godard then cuts to a brief glimpse of a magnifying glass from Orson Welles's *Mr. Arkadin* (1955) with the text “Negotiate for Itself” superimposed over it (also present

18 Nichols, *Representing Reality*, 44.

19 Benjamin Sampson, “The Time Passing,” [*in*] *Transition* 2, no. 2 (2015), <http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/intransition/2015/05/25/time-passing>.

20 Nichols, *Representing Reality*, 33.

21 *Ibid.*, 57.

22 *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, directed by Thom Andersen (2014; Cinema Guild), Blu-ray.

are the medium artifacts of video once again). Godard's voice-over kicks in, telling us "Do not show every aspect of things. Allow yourself a margin of indefiniteness" as the image cuts to a black screen. After a dedication card, Godard cuts to an editing table as we watch a 35mm print go back and forth through the gate, and there is a brief sound bridge as Godard feeds a piece of paper into an electric typewriter. He begins to type, telling himself "the rules of the game" as a freeze-frame from a Charlie Chaplin film fades up and down on the image track before the superimposition cuts to black.

The opening sequence—only about one minute of screen time—establishes several motifs of the series, both formally and intellectually. The emphasis on the eye and the act of looking as independent and subjective obviously dovetails with Godard's interest in pluralizing history and reaching beyond the canonical story of film. The later "the rules of the game" moment superimposed with Chaplin also surprises our expectations with regard to this history lesson. Thus, his mission is much like Cousins's, but their methods, according to the modes outlined by Nichols, stand at opposite ends. The use of slow motion and the video artifacts present on the screen are self-reflexive. Viewers familiar with the Hitchcock and Welles films (and even that juxtaposition is telling—a canonical film juxtaposed to a mistreated and widely underappreciated Welles film that exists in several versions!) recognize the slow motion as being out of context and imposed by an author other than the original auteurs.

Yet it is the editing table and typewriter—as solidified by the visual rhyming of the 35mm print weaving through the gears and Godard's paper being laced through the typewriter, and the sound bridge between the garbled dialogue of the print and the clickety-clack of Godard's electric typewriter—that give us Godard's central analogy: *le cinéma-stylo*. "Now," Godard seems to be saying, "I can write with cinema." *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is not expounding the objective truth that arises from the definitive use of text in "Stereotowns" or the strict observation of "Day x Day x Day" or the interaction between filmmaker and witness in "Time Passing." By foregrounding the process, the manipulations, the by-productions of representation, and the incompleteness of plurality, Godard is drawing our attention to the conventions of representation itself, just as he did when he used jump cuts in *Breathless* (1960) to make us feel the loss of continuity editing.

Finally, Nichols outlines the performative mode as emphasizing "the subjective or expressive aspect of the filmmaker's own involvement with a subject; it strives to heighten the audience's responsiveness to this involvement. Rejects notions of objectivity in favor of evocation and affect."²³ Here we can obviously see some overlap with Corrigan's conception of the essay film as the foregrounding of a subjective working through of a public experience. Perhaps because of this emphasis on subjective knowledge and personal engagement, which seems at odds with the bulk of academic scholarship, we have yet to see a wellspring of performative submissions at *[in]Transition*.

One that partially overlaps, however, is Jason Mittell's "*Adaptation's Anomalies*" (2016). Mittell begins his video with a disorienting music collage from Carter Burwell's score before stating—in a cold monotone—"When I try to make sense of the film

23 Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 32.

Adaptation, I find that there are two extra pieces of the puzzle left in the box.”²⁴ The use of “I” is notable here, as the form of Mittell’s voice-over seems to embody the intellectual distance of an expository narrator. Yet as the piece progresses, it becomes increasingly clear that Mittell is making both a video about *Adaptation* and a self-reflexive critique of videographic criticism. In short, if *Adaptation* is a dryly comedic, self-aware, and performative exploration of the trials and tribulations of the screenwriting profession, “Anomalies” is the equivalent of film analysis. It begins by attempting to ground instances of narrative excess within the theory of Mikhail Iampolski, but ultimately Mittell tells the audience that he is “not quite sure” about his analysis. As he notes in his accompanying author statement, “[P]erhaps I stand as an unreliable critic. . . . [But] this video is not offered as a ‘fake’ analysis. I believe it provides real insights into the film, albeit in unconventional ways. And as analysis, it speaks for itself.”²⁵ Like the film it’s analyzing, the voice-over favors evocation over the objectivity of the expository mode while parodying its vocal qualities.

I admit that we have only begun to scratch the surface of elaborating Keathley’s spectrum into a more nuanced taxonomy of videographic criticism. However, my goal with this brief essay is to encourage us to continue to move away from the term “video essay” and the theoretical conflation that it perpetuates. As I have argued here, I think we can begin forging more fruitful paths—beyond the foundational and pragmatic—toward the historical and theoretical via the work that has already been done by scholars specializing in documentary film more broadly. I am pleased to see the strides this discipline and practice has made within the academy in a few short years, and I would also suggest that further research can be done on the consideration of the ethics of videographic criticism and the intersections between the form and avant-garde filmmaking. *

24 Jason Mittell, Kevin Ferguson, and Adrian Martin, “*Adaptation*.’s Anomalies,” *[in]Transition* 3, no. 1 (2016), <http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/intransition/2016/03/18/adaptations-anomalies>.

25 Ibid.

Opening Up *[in]Transition's* Open Peer-Review Process

by JASON MITTELL

I must admit that my primary reason for getting involved with *[in]Transition: Journal of Videographic Film & Moving Image Studies* at its outset had nothing to do with videographic criticism. I was a passive observer of the emerging realm of videographic work, primarily keeping aware through conversations with my friend and colleague at Middlebury, Christian Keathley, but rarely watching video essays unless the topic was particularly compelling to me. I had no real interest in doing my own video work and certainly did not imagine ever investing my scholarly and teaching energy into videographic criticism as much as I have since 2015. Instead, I jumped at the chance to co-found *[in]Transition* as an opportunity to push new boundaries around an issue that I have been more passionate about for years: peer review.

This interest dates back to the originating moment of MediaCommons in 2006. With the leadership of Kathleen Fitzpatrick and Avi Santo, MediaCommons launched with ambitions to forge new experiments in academic publishing and create an academic network for media scholars. Back in those days, online scholarly communities were mostly found in the blog rolls of individual scholars or in group digital publications like *Flow*—2006 was before the birth of Twitter or Academia.edu, and Facebook was just a campus-based service mostly for elite American institutions. Fitzpatrick and Santo invited me to join the original MediaCommons editorial board, a role in which I have continued for the past decade on the promise that it would be an opportunity to try new things in a supportive, risk-friendly environment.

Not surprising to anyone who has read Fitzpatrick's excellent book *Planned Obsolescence: Publishing, Technology, and the Future of the Academy*, one of these "new things" was to offer innovative forms of peer review.¹ Rather than simply following the norms of print publishing, which themselves were then and still are highly idiosyncratic, inconsistent, and inadequate to the goals of producing better scholarship, MediaCommons started with a vision that, in a digital platform, review should be less about gatekeeping what gets published and more about filtering and contextualizing that which is already published.

1 Kathleen Fitzpatrick, *Planned Obsolescence: Publishing, Technology, and the Future of the Academy* (New York: New York University Press, 2011).

We launched MediaCommons Press as a site to publish drafts of scholarly writing, inviting open peer review via the platform CommentPress. Fitzpatrick pioneered the successful test case for the approach, with a highly engaging open “peer-to-peer review” of her book *Planned Obsolescence* preceding its print publication from New York University Press; I followed suit a few years later with my own book, *Complex TV*. In both instances, we found making the review process visible to readers transformed the function of peer review from that of simple gatekeeping via a closed black box, to a visible discussion about the merits and ideas of scholarship. In short, such open peer review made the publishing process more of a conversation than a monologue, a model that better fit my own academic ethos. However, the process of doing open review of a monograph is quite time consuming and daunting for most writers and is hard to scale into an ongoing set of projects.

Thus, in 2013, when Drew Morton reached out to MediaCommons to propose starting a journal of video essays, I happily signed on to represent the site in the journal’s development, specifically because I thought it would be ideal for innovative forms of open review. I knew that Christian Keathley and Catherine Grant had been discussing starting a similar journal on their own, so we connected the three together, who quickly joined forces to become the founding editors of *[in]Transition*. I framed myself as “project manager” for MediaCommons, and I also invited Christine Becker of *Cinema Journal* to become a partner, providing an expanded digital platform to the journal and disciplinary legitimacy for *[in]Transition* through its official connection to SCMS. The five of us developed the concept and operation of the journal from scratch, building off the work of MediaCommons’ development partners at New York University to design the actual site.

As we began to plan, we realized that simple publication of video essays is not particularly necessary in the media ecosystem of the 2010s—many video essays had already been “published” via sites like Vimeo and YouTube, with broad circulation and usage among scholarly communities, and anyone with broadband could simply upload work. The key value that a journal could add is not through the video itself but through the supporting materials that frame each video as academic work—we do not “publish” videos ourselves but embed them from Vimeo or Critical Commons. What we actually publish are the creator statements and peer reviews that strive to answer the question “How does this video function as scholarship?” I would argue that our approach is a more honest reckoning of the value of academic publishing at large: today, journals and university presses are more valuable for their ability to validate scholarship than to distribute it. In fact, traditional journal publishers are far worse at distribution and dissemination than blogs or other websites, and it is only because they adjudicate what “counts” as scholarship that they still matter—even me writing these words in *Cinema Journal* matters less for how the journal will make these thoughts accessible to readers than the validation that such conversations are happening in SCMS’s official venue. The same is true for *[in]Transition*—we offer validation of videos you could easily watch elsewhere by framing them as scholarship that “counts.”

[in]Transition takes this validation function a step further by publishing peer reviews openly. Although one might believe (as I do) that such open peer review would benefit all formats of publication, it is downright essential for a new form like videographic

criticism. Most scholars in our field are unlikely to ever produce a video essay themselves, making the format extremely foreign and distant from the typical forms of scholarship that we evaluate for hiring and promotion decisions. In addition, tenure cases that are reviewed by interdisciplinary committees and administrators from various backgrounds might regard the entire concept of scholarship in video form as questionable at best. Making the rationales as to why any given videographic piece functions as scholarship as visible and transparent as possible, signed by leading experts willing to stake their reputations on their assessments, is essential to the project of validation that *[in]Transition* has undertaken—we hope that anyone looking at a videographic publication to assess the author’s academic merits will not only watch the video but also read the conversation between reviewers and the creator that is published alongside the videographic work. Thus, I see the main job of *[in]Transition* not as publishing video essays but as generating and publishing the reviews and statements that accompany and frame every video.

This open process is particularly useful for a small community of practitioners. As a still-emerging realm of scholarship, we are bound to publish works from members of our editorial board, as they include many of the leaders in the realm of videographic criticism whose work may have few other outlets for scholarly publication. We faced this issue directly after I produced my own videographic essay, “*Adaptation’s Anomalies*,” and wished to publish it in a scholarly venue. After discussions with the journal’s editors, we decided that the open-review process provides a clear counterbalance to any perceived conflicts of interest: because the video would be published alongside two signed reviews, we can trust that the reviewers will write honestly about the merits of the project. In my case, Adrian Martin and Kevin Ferguson both wrote reviews that (generously) attest to my video’s value as scholarship, overriding any perceived conflicts of interest for the journal publishing my work—I doubt that Martin and Ferguson (or any of our reviewers) would risk their own reputations by publicly endorsing a video they believed was unworthy, just because of the creator’s role with the journal.² When the peer-review black box is opened, the resulting daylight enables anyone to see precisely why a given piece was published, thereby negating any perceived conflicts of interest or self-serving decisions that we know can affect decisions in traditional journal and book publishing.

Most important, publishing these reviews makes a broader scholarly impact beyond the individual video essay being reviewed. These public statements, evaluations, and conversations are helping establish the very values and possibilities that make videographic work an important mode of scholarship, and they raise issues and concepts that transcend the review of the individual video. For instance, in Kevin B. Lee’s review of Allison de Fren’s video “Fembot in a Red Dress,” he discusses her voice-over narration at length, in the context of the relative rarity of female narration in video essays. He concludes, “How these clinical/neutral/academic and warm/feminine/emotive qualities in the voiceover relate to each other become the video’s meta-reflection of the themes it explores. By virtue of recognizing what could be described as the fembot

2 Jason Mittell, “*Adaptation’s Anomalies*,” *[in]Transition* 3, no. 1 (2016): <http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/intransition/2016/03/18/adaptations-anomalies>.

qualities within the video's auditory aesthetic, we may no longer ignore the dialectical relationship between the rational and the affective when regarding videographic film scholarship, giving special consideration to the role of gender, male and female alike.³³ Not only does Lee offer compelling analysis of de Fren's video; he also raises scholarly ideas about the form itself that help deepen our understanding of the possibilities of videographic work. Typically the work of reviewing scholarship is invisible and undervalued; through this open peer review, writing like Lee's can be read, engaged with, and cited as scholarly work in its own right. Before launching *[in]Transition*, there was a paucity of writing about videographic work; through our process of open review, there is now a broader critical language expanding our understanding and appreciation of the form.

It would be wrong to paint this open-review system as a utopian breakthrough curing all that ails academic publishing. In fact, we do face significant issues in executing our system, in large part because it is such an anomaly. Most academics have been enculturated to see reviewing as something done privately and anonymously, thus making the prospect of writing a public analysis of another scholar's emerging work rather daunting. We have had a few reviewers withdraw once they realized that they would be writing critical comments about the video with attribution—such reluctance persists even though we publish reviews only for pieces that have been accepted and thus are usually more complimentary than critical, and we always allow reviewers to revise their statements for public consumption. We hope that as more scholars participate in open-review processes like ours, they become more comfortable signing their name to critical appraisals while also making such negative reviews more civil and constructive, as befits a signed work.

We have also faced pushback from creators of videographic work, concerned that any critical commentary on their work, even if positive overall in its appraisal, will undermine the validity of their publication and raise doubts about their scholarly work. Again, we believe that such concerns are part of the broader process of changing norms, by which we need to become accustomed to situating our work within a public scholarly conversation that is not uniformly celebratory. Of course, most of us are used to such critiques as part of pedagogy, both as teachers and when we were students; I hope that as open peer review becomes more widespread and normalized, it will make such critiques easier to take and less occasions for anxiety and concern.

Regardless of the challenges that open peer review, like any form of innovation within the highly hidebound realm of academic publishing, has faced, it is a system that we at *[in]Transition* are all highly committed to and feel that its benefits have greatly outweighed any costs. Although we are certainly quite pleased that our journal has helped promote a greater validation and embrace of videographic work, we also hope that the benefits of open peer review will be viewed as another of *[in]Transition's* positive influences. Although it might be hard to imagine exactly how videographic criticism could help shape the broader practices of traditional scholarly writing, we are

3 Allison de Fren, "Fembot in a Red Dress," *[in]Transition* 2, no. 4 (2016), <http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/intransition/2015/12/28/fembot-red-dress>.

optimistic that the benefits of open peer review will be felt more pervasively throughout the larger ecosystem of academic publishing in all formats and media. *

Open Peer-Review as Multimodal Scholarship

by SHANE DENSON

In contrast to the vaunted double-blind peer-review process, regarded by many as the gold standard for ensuring academic rigor, *[in]Transition: Journal of Videographic Film & Moving Image Studies* reviewers know the names of the scholars whose work they are evaluating—and even more important, they sign their names on those reviews, which appear alongside the videographic works accepted for publication. The effect is not just to remedy the double-blindness of both parties (authors or producers and reviewers) but also to provide the ultimate “consumers” of research, the journal’s readers or viewers, with insight into the process as well.

Indeed, the transparency of evaluative standards to outside parties is a key component of *[in]Transition*’s effort to achieve what the journal’s “About” page refers to as “disciplinary validation” for videographic work.¹ For without making the process visible to the outside, there is nothing to guarantee that publication decisions are made fairly and according to principles that, although they might not be shared in all particulars by all scholars in the field, at least are capable of receiving consensus from a broad community of scholarly peers. Of course, the advantage of the double-blind process is that (anonymous) reviewers are free to express their honest opinions, candidly and without fear of retribution or other negative consequences, while also ensuring that (temporarily anonymized) authors are judged on the basis of their scholarship rather than their past achievements, current standing, popularity, or power. Clearly, compromising the anonymity of either side potentially compromises the value and reliability of the review process itself. Unless, that is, the review process as a whole is opened to a further instance of public scrutiny or community “review.”

Whether or not open review is the ideal process for all scholarship is open to debate. I tend to doubt it. But it is clear how the process contributes to *[in]Transition*’s goal of “creat[ing] a context for

1 “About *[in]Transition*,” *[in]Transition: A MediaCommons/Cinema Journal Project*, <http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/intransition/about-intransition>.

understanding [videographic work]—and validating it—as a new mode of scholarly writing for the discipline of cinema and media studies and related fields.” For at stake is not just a new method for validating a familiar form of scholarship, but a method for validating a new form of scholarship *as scholarship in the first place*. The publication of reviews, signed by the reviewers—whose own scholarship can be tracked down and whose authority to evaluate the work can thus be verified—is an important part of this enterprise, because it initiates a conversation (rather than providing the “final word”) on what we can expect from this new type of scholarship, what constitutes valuable work, and why we should take notice of it at all. In this way, the journal’s readers and viewers—a public consisting of students, practitioners, established researchers, and the scholarly community at large—are invited to “engage . . . in this stimulating and important dialogue concerning the future of videographic work as a scholarly form.”

So much for the journal’s own argument for the open peer-review process, implicit in the journal’s public-facing statements about itself and its guidelines for contributors. But while I agree wholeheartedly with this account of open review and its merits, it should be noted that what it accounts for above all is indeed the public-facing significance of the process—its significance for the public already described here. Beyond this, however, the open-review process has important implications for the relations that authors and reviewers maintain with respect to one another—and above all for the experience of the reviewer who agrees to perform this role in public.

The latter impact was not at first evident to me, but it is just as important to account for this transformation, which takes the formerly invisible labor of the peer reviewer and makes it eminently visible. The open review, and the experience of writing one, sits somewhere between the “private” existence of the traditional peer review and the public performance of a commissioned book review—or even original scholarship itself. Having written several of these reviews for *[in]Transition*, I can attest to the fact that I approached my task differently than when I presumed I would remain anonymous to the author and—more significant by far—that my evaluation would not be read by a potentially very large online audience. Writing under the condition of openness, I weighed my words more carefully, perhaps, and I definitely elaborated on ideas and criticisms to a greater degree. But it was not for fear of consequences that I changed my approach; as far as I can judge, I was no less critical of the works that I reviewed openly as I am of those I have reviewed anonymously (but I do not wish to deny wholesale that problems might arise in this respect). What really prompted me to change my approach was a recognition that, in addition to this new form of videographic scholarship, it was the discourse itself about the new scholarship that was the ultimate object of the journal. In other words—and I think this is directly attributable to the open peer-review process—my experience of peer reviewing for *[in]Transition* became one of coauthoring a collaborative discourse that encircles but goes beyond particular video essays and ultimately bears upon the form as a whole.

Clearly, my contributions to the discourse as a peer reviewer were supplemental to those particular video essays and the authors’ statements that accompanied them. But supplementarity, as Derrida taught us, is a two-way street. Recently, videographic practitioners have debated the necessity (or not) of the textual supplement for making video essays’ arguments explicit and for legitimizing scholarship. And although I am

not confident that a blanket answer can be given to that question, my own experience as a reviewer supports the notion that at present, at least so long as we are coming to terms with what video essays can do and be, a wide range of supplements are necessary to mediate private and public experiences of authorship, readership, and evaluation. Above all, this experience leads me to affirm the necessity of conceiving the task of “disciplinary validation” in terms of collective, though distributed and occasionally conflictive, authorship—video essayists, viewers, and reviewers become the collective authors of a new type of scholarship: a prismatic, multimodal discourse for a multimodal form. *

Critics and Makers

by MARIA A. VELEZ-SERNA

One of the most recalcitrant habits I acquired from my film studies education is the tendency to refer to films as “texts.” That structuralist abstraction has its role, but the work of arranging words and that of assembling images are very different practices. People who write about films and people who make films based on the written word know very well that they are incommensurable. The videographic work that *[in]Transition: Journal of Videographic Film & Moving Image Studies* publishes allows for authors to think “in the original language,” as they say one should do with philosophy. But as this point has been made so much more eloquently before, I focus here on one observation regarding the practice of peer-reviewing videographic work.

Having submitted one piece and reviewed another one for *[in]Transition*, I got to thinking about the perceived completeness and finality of a short film as compared to an academic article. Peer reviewers are asked to comment on both the video and the supporting statement. On publication, a note accompanies some of the videos, explaining that the version available is an amended one—it has been revised in response to peer review. Amended videos are in the minority, but academic papers rarely get published without revision. This is not to suggest that the journal’s standards are lax, but perhaps that we approach the task of reviewing differently. Film scholars are used to writing about films we cannot change, only critique. The presence of the reviewers’ statements next to the published videos at *[in]Transition* positions this writing as a kind of public film criticism rather than the closed-circuit rhetoric of traditional peer reviewing.

In contrast, as many of the reviewers are also part-time filmmakers, it may be that their awareness of the pragmatic aspects of video

production and editing makes them more reluctant to suggest changes. I confess I was very glad not to have to revisit my video after submission, as that would have involved trying to book an editing suite (not everybody has a MacBook), scheduling scarce time with my coauthor, and dealing with the disarray caused by even a little trim or an extra insert. As a reviewer for Miriam Ross and Jonathan Mines's 3-D "Stereotowns," the tone of my suggestions regarding the video was much more tentative than those I made regarding the supporting statement.¹ I was already primed to accept the audiovisual work on its own terms, as a groundbreaking experiment that had already pushed the boundaries of my technical competency. I waited for weeks to watch it as I tried to find a virtual-reality headset I could borrow or, failing that, a pair of anaglyph specs. The anticipation, the novelty, and the music all enhanced the sense of consistency and persuasive power of the video. Emotions are always part of academic argument and peer review; video essays complicate this by engaging us through cinematic techniques, and thus activating modes of reception associated with cinema. Therein lies much of their pleasure but also their relative closedness.

Opening up the film by cutting it up, reassembling it, and rearticulating it is one of the exciting promises of videographic scholarship. That oscillation between critic and maker engagements with film is starting to generate its own practices. Online collaborative video editing is as commonplace in the industry as collaborative writing is in academia, so perhaps we will start seeing "tracked changes" on draft video projects as open-review models come into their own. A critical videographic project requires a third cinema-style skepticism about the finality of any edit, without obviating the need to show and discuss it.

Our video essay "Joining Up" was a spin-off of a paper David Archibald and I had published in *NECSUS*.² We have shown the video at festivals and bars, and it has been shared and liked on social media; it has been a small but meaningful intervention in the very political arena of the World War I centenary commemorations in Scotland. Videographic work situates scholarship in the contexts where film is shown, online and off, and thus enters the kinds of discussion and critique that characterize each site. *[in]Transition's* activation of a peer review practice reclaims for this work the generosity that underpins academia and online culture as a prefigurative space that resists the takeover of the public sphere by competitive hostility. This practice of openness and experimentation may be just what we need to retrain our textual habit. *

1 Miriam Ross and Jonathan Mines, "Stereotowns" (review by Maria A. Velez-Serna) *[in]Transition* 3, no. 2 (2016), <http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/intransition/stereotowns>.

2 David Archibald and Maria A. Velez-Serna, "Joining Up: Scotland, Cinema and the First World War," *[in]Transition* 2, no. 3 (2015), <http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/intransition/2015/07/29/joining-scotland-cinema-and-first-world-war>; and Archibald and Velez-Serna, "Kilts, Tanks, and Aeroplanes: Scotland, Cinema, and the First World War," *NECSUS*, December 4, 2014, <http://www.necsus-ejms.org/kilts-tanks-aeroplanes-scotland-cinema-first-world-war/>.

Imperfect Creative Criticism

by PATRICIA PISTERS

“Emoticons” was my first experiment with a new form of film scholarship that I can discuss only with modesty.¹ Even though I have since honed my editing skills, and the audiovisual essay has become part of both my teaching practice and research method, I cannot claim the same expertise (thanks to years of practice) that I have with writing and other traditional forms of scholarship. And this experience “out of the comfort zone of mid-career habits” is the first aspect that comes to mind when thinking about videographic criticism: it’s a humbling experience. It’s also a very joyful experience. The making of a video essay allows a freer and more creative approach to theory and analysis, one that also opens up new spaces for thinking about the role of images in our audiovisual media culture. A Dutch newspaper recently published a special issue on the harvest of eleven years of YouTube. Besides the usual funny videos, how-to basics, and famous vloggers, the audiovisual essay is mentioned as “surprisingly substantive.”² Moreover, it is invigorating to expand writing with words into writing with images and sounds, to literally feel the images and sounds in one’s hands. Submitting my first video for open peer review at *[in]Transition: Journal of Videographic Film & Moving Image Studies* was yet another new experience, and I am very grateful to the editors of the journal for their open-minded approach in exploring a wide range of forms of audiovisual criticism.

It was somewhat with pounding heart that I read the peer reviewers’ commentaries. To my relief they were both spot-on. Catherine Fowler translated exactly what I intended to do in “Emoticons,” especially translating “inward” and “outward” modes of cinephilia. Richard Misek’s review drew more attention to the ambiguous status and imperfections of the piece: neither academic work nor video art. Misek indicated he could not review the piece according to the criteria of traditional academic peer review nor those of art criticism, and so he looked for new criteria to indicate what he enjoyed while also pointing out the flaws, which he nevertheless suggested not amending: “[t]he video is what it is.” This review translated the “amateur” feeling that I have every time I make and present an audiovisual essay. There is much joy in opening up all these new doors of the academic discipline of film and media scholarship, but I never quite feel

1 Patricia Pisters, “Emoticons,” *[in]Transition* 2, no. 1 (2015): <http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/intransition/2015/03/10/emoticons>.

2 “De oogst van 11 jaar YouTube,” *de Volkskrant*, May 10, 2016, 13.

comfortable in how to present this type of work. I always hasten to say, “I am not an artist” and/or, depending on the context, “This is not traditional film scholarship.” So a certain “restlessness in new clothes” (to paraphrase Laura Mulvey) is certainly part of this experience of wandering in a new field.

And yet the pleasure of learning new skills such as editing, and the challenge of bringing theory, analysis, and practice together in creative ways, is one of the ways we can keep film and media studies both tied to the past and open to the future. The audiovisual essay is not a replacement for any form of traditional scholarship, which all remain intrinsically valuable. But it does open new doors, both intellectually and creatively. The open peer-review process was not only an invitation to accept imperfection and continue to learn more; it also led to new invitations to work with artists and film scholars in different ways, such as a project with Richard Misek on a collective video experiment following a project at “Indefinite Visions,” a collaboration between Whitechapel Gallery in London and *[in]Transition*. To be continued. *

To Critique Affect by Means of Affect

by JAAP KOOIJMAN

“It’s embarrassing to be solemn and treatise-like about Camp. One runs the risk of having, oneself, produced a very inferior piece of Camp”¹—these words by Susan Sontag immediately came to mind when colleague Wanda Strauven used “meta-cheesy-ness” to describe my audiovisual essay “Success,” which, as she quickly added, was meant as a compliment.² Although meta-cheesy-ness is not something I specifically was aiming for, the term does capture how the original source material ended up inspiring—or perhaps even dictating—the form of my audiovisual essay. The essay’s main aim was to connect the star images of black female superstars Diana Ross and Beyoncé Knowles as well as the fictional characters they had portrayed on-screen, Ross as Mahogany in *Mahogany* (Berry Gordy, 1975) and Beyoncé as the Ross-inspired Deena Jones in *Dreamgirls* (Bill Condon, 2006). Whether *Mahogany* and *Dreamgirls* can be considered camp by Sontag’s definition is open to question,

1 Susan Sontag, “Notes on ‘Camp,’” in *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject*, ed. Fabio Cleto (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 54.

2 Jaap Kooijman, “Success: Richard Dyer on Diana Ross [and Beyond],” *[in]Transition: Journal of Videographic Film & Moving Image Studies* 2, no. 4 (2016), <http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/intransition/2015/12/29/success>; Wanda Strauven to author, e-mail correspondence, January 28, 2016.

but both films rely heavily on the camp aesthetic of theatricality and diva worship, particularly the famous montage sequences, which constituted the essay's main source material.

I began working on this video essay at Middlebury College's videographic criticism summer workshop in 2015. From the start I knew what the essay should be about, but not what form it should take. The essay almost organically grew into shape as I worked with the material as part of the first week's exercises, including the videographic epigraph assignment. We were asked to select ten sentences from a critical text that did not explicitly discuss the film we were using. Moreover, both the images and the soundtrack of the source film were to be altered, with the quotation added "as text on screen in some dynamic interaction with the images in the scene."³ As text, I selected a relatively obscure two-page essay on Diana Ross by Richard Dyer from 1982, in which he argues, without referring to *Mahogany*: "The sheer ecstasy of the whole Diana Ross thing is an outrageous reveling in what success could feel like, but not how to achieve it."⁴ I altered the source material by reediting the montage sequence, enhancing the use of dissolves, and looping a fifteen-second segment of the instrumental "Theme from Mahogany," leading into a bombastic finale taken from the original score playing over *Mahogany*'s end credits. These elements of the videographic epigraph assignment ended up forming the basic structure of the final audiovisual essay.

As Catherine Grant has argued, audiovisual essays differ from conventional written ones because "they don't have to remove themselves from film-specific forms of meaning production to have their knowledge effects on us," enabling us to "feel, as well as know about, the comparisons these videos enact."⁵ In my written essay on *Dreamgirls*, I suggest that Dyer's argument about Diana Ross "also seems to apply to Beyoncé three decades later."⁶ The audiovisual essay made it possible to examine whether such a comparison works by literally applying the Dyer text to both the *Mahogany* and *Dreamgirls* montage sequence as well as to the footage of the "real" Beyoncé doing a 2011 photo shoot for the French fashion magazine *L'Officiel Paris*. In this way, I could not only show how Diana Ross and Beyoncé are connected through their on-screen characters but also make the "outrageous reveling in what success could feel like" visible by enhancing the camp aesthetic of the original source material.

"Success" was my first audiovisual essay to be published and to go through the peer-review process. Determining whether an essay is fit for publication, and as such giving it an academic stamp of approval, might be the most important function of peer review. Far more valuable, however, was the way the peer reviewers interpreted the essay, thereby articulating some of the choices that I had made rather intuitively. In his review, Richard Dyer emphasized "how editing . . . can do what words cannot,

3 See Christian Keathley and Jason Mittell, *The Videographic Essay: Criticism in Sound and Image* (Montreal: caboose books, 2016), <http://scalar.usc.edu/works/videographic-essay/index>.

4 Richard Dyer, "Diana Ross," *Marxism Today*, June 1982, 36–37.

5 Catherine Grant, "Déjà-Viewing? Videographic Experiments in Intertextual Film Studies," *Mediascape* (2013), http://www.tft.ucla.edu/mediascape/Winter2013_DejaViewing.html, emphasis in original.

6 Jaap Kooijman, "Whitewashing the Dreamgirls: Beyoncé, Diana Ross, and the Commodification of Blackness," in *Revisiting Star Studies: Cultures, Themes, and Methods*, ed. Sabrina Q. Yu and Guy Austin (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 105–124.

not just to enable one to (re)see and (re)hear the affective qualities of the material but actually to reflect directly upon them, to critique affect by means of affect.⁷ Chiara Grizzaffi's review highlights the essay's "formal use of repetition," which "serves both to draw and outline the connection between the two stars and to evoke the fetishistic pleasure of rewatching and replaying a favorite performance."⁸ The use of affect and repetition was the result of working with the original source material rather than based on a planned strategy. The peer-review process has made this explicit, as well as assuring me that the essay—in all its meta-cheesy-ness—is not a very inferior piece of camp after all. *

7 Richard Dyer, open peer review of Jaap Kooijman, "Success: Richard Dyer on Diana Ross [and *Beyond*]," *[in]Transition* 2, no. 4 (2016), <http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/intransition/2015/12/29/success>.

8 Chiara Grizzaffi, open peer review of Jaap Kooijman, "Success: Richard Dyer on Diana Ross [and *Beyond*]," *[in]Transition* 2, no. 4 (2016), <http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/intransition/2015/12/29/success>.

Star Studies in Transition: Notes on Experimental Videographic Approaches to Film Performance

by CATHERINE GRANT

When I see Marilyn Monroe I catch my breath . . .

—Richard Dyer, *Stars*

So what's a scholar-fan to do?

—Alexander Doty, *Flaming Classics: Queering the Film Canon*

In his 1995 book *The Avant-Garde Finds Andy Hardy*, Robert B. Ray writes that, if "instead of thinking about the avant-garde as only hermetic self-expression, we began to imagine it as a field of experimental work waiting to be *used* . . . then, we might begin to apply certain avant-garde devices for the sake of knowledge."¹ The first video published in the inaugural issue of *[in]Transition: Journal of Videographic Film and Moving Image Studies* was an experimental audiovisual work very much in the spirit of Ray's challenge, one produced by a foundational scholar in cinema studies who is also (and not coincidentally) a celebrated avant-garde filmmaker. That video was Laura Mulvey's (primarily) visual analysis of a fragment of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (Howard Hawks, 1953), the beginning of its song-and-dance duet "Two Little Girls from Little

1 Robert B. Ray, *The Avant-Garde Finds Andy Hardy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 10.

Rock,” performed by Jane Russell and Marilyn Monroe.² Mulvey worked through a “mechanical ballet” aesthetic, which she knew to be somewhat “evocative” of the practices of the Austrian experimental filmmaker Martin Arnold.³ She later reflected on her process: “Originally, perhaps when I started doing these kinds of analysis, I wanted to find the temporalities of the avant-garde within Hollywood cinema. [But] out of fictional performance, moments of emotion and something ineffable [inhabit] the image and [overwhelm] it.”⁴ Elsewhere she wrote, “Before I had ever thought of re-editing the [*Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*] sequence, I had watched it many times, fascinated by Marilyn’s ability to hover between movement and stillness and the way that the pauses, slow motion and repetitions of delayed cinema simply, in this case, materialized something that was already there. I realized that my attention had been literally caught as the figure moved into a fleeting moment of stasis; and that I paused the film to catch the high point within this unfolding of a gesture.”⁵

In reworking the *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* fragment (audio)visually, this research eloquently responded to both the ineffable and the expressive as they alternately inhabit Marilyn Monroe’s gestures in time and movement. In materializing something that was already there through the reproduction of exploratory techniques of replay and pause, Mulvey succeeds in creating an analytic and affectual artifact that performatively stages and invites an experience of increasingly close and sustained attention to it. Through her time-based segmentation and animation of Monroe’s bodily movement the (otherwise optically unconscious) “mediality of gesture” and “interrelations of the cinematic and performance” become more visible, or salient.⁶ Mulvey’s experimental video thus repurposes Monroe’s star performance to inform and instruct a

2 “*Gentlemen Prefer Blondes (remix remixed 2013)*” (Laura Mulvey, 2013). In this video, Mulvey re-edited the thirty-second long sequence from Howard Hawks’s film, “stretching it into three minutes, pausing on Monroe’s gestures and repeating the sequence, twice slowed down and silent, but beginning and ending with normal speed.” Catherine Grant et al., “[in]Transition: Editors’ Introduction,” *[in]Transition* 1, no. 1 (2014): <http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/intransition/2014/03/04/intransition-editors-introduction>. The version of the video we published was Mulvey’s precise remake (albeit in higher resolution) of a work she first made for research and presentation purposes in the late 1990s.

3 Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), 172–173. On the “mechanical ballet” aesthetic of some of Arnold’s work, see Steve Anker, “Reanimator, Stutterer, Eraser: Martin Arnold and the Ghosts of Cinema,” in *Film Unframed: A History of Austrian Avant-Garde Cinema*, ed. Peter Tscherkassky (Vienna: Synema Verlag, 2012), 245–255, 246.

4 Laura Mulvey in Tiago Baptista, “Delaying Cinema: An Interview with Laura Mulvey,” *Aniki* 1, no. 1 (2014): 86–91, 90, <http://aim.org.pt/ojs/index.php/revista/article/view/58/25>.

5 Laura Mulvey, “Cinematic Gesture: The Ghost in the Machine,” *Journal for Cultural Research* 19, no. 1 (2015): 6.

6 Walter Benjamin’s notion of unconscious optics is essentially the idea that the invisible *is* present inside the visible and can be revealed to us using new forms of technology—as achieved by the movie camera, in Benjamin’s lifetime: “Evidently, a different nature opens itself to the camera than opens to the naked eye—if only because an unconsciously penetrated space is substituted for a space consciously explored by man. Even if one has general knowledge of the way people walk, one knows nothing of a person’s posture during the fractional second of a stride. . . . Here the camera intervenes with the resources of its lowerings and liftings, its interruptions and isolations, its extensions and accelerations, its enlargements and reductions.” Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken, 1969), 236–237. For observations on the “mediality of gesture” and the “interrelations of the cinematic and performance,” see Nicholas Chare and Liz Watkins, “Introduction: Gesture in Film,” *Journal for Cultural Research* 19, no.1 (2015): 3–4.

sequential understanding—“in media res”—of its detailed workings, in ways that can be, and indeed have been (re)articulated and added to verbally later.⁷

Originally made in the late 1990s, before the appearance of YouTube and about a decade before the publication of *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (her 2006 book in part about the forms of “delayed cinema” that her video explored and enacted), Mulvey’s audiovisual work on Monroe (which she used to illustrate many of her presentations on the performer) might lay good claim to being among the first instances of academic videographic star studies.⁸ Yet interpreting it as such is entirely dependent on the context in which one encounters the work, given that it is unencumbered (as a stand-alone artifact, at least) by a conventional explanatory framework or apparatus. In this respect, free from credits or academic markings, it looks and sounds exactly like an avant-garde artwork that one might chance upon in a gallery rather than one fueled at all by scholarly intentions.

What is more, its author has described part of her video’s purpose as a “tribute to the perfection” of Monroe’s performance, a rhetorical move that may also remind us of some of the sensibilities of the avant-garde found-footage traditions of audiovisual portrait-homage to film actors made by experimental filmmakers of earlier generations, like Joseph Cornell (*Rose Hobart*, 1936); by Mulvey’s contemporaries, including Mark Rappaport (his 2016 film *Debra Paget, for Example*); and by younger artists such as Matthias Müller (elements of his 1990 collage film *Home Stories*) and Cecilia Barriga (*Meeting Two Queens*, 1991).⁹ Like some of these artist-filmmakers, Mulvey has written about how her starting point, in her practical analytical work, “is often fascination with particular pieces of film rather than the academic aspects of analysis. In terms of my two spectatorships: a possessive spectator—me—engages with a certain piece of film out of fascination and [...] then mutates into a more pensive spectator—also me. And the re-mix then emerges as a dialogue between pensiveness and possessiveness.”¹⁰

When we first published Mulvey’s video in our journal, as beautiful and insightful as I found it, I did wonder how influential its synthesis of a fascinated or tributary spectatorial stance with digital experimental practice and procedures of critical thinking might turn out to be in the nascent field of videographic film studies. It seemed a unique—not to say inimitable—kind of study at that point and in that context. In the period since the inaugural issue appeared, although the specific form taken by Mulvey’s work has not (yet) instigated a whole genre of “delayed cinema” analytic videos, its central strategies of replay and pause are almost routinely applied in audiovisual

7 Mulvey richly delivers on verbalizing this understanding herself, first, in her relatively brief commentary around the video in *Death 24x a Second* (172–173), part of which we reproduced beneath the embedded work at *[in]Transition*, and later in a substantial academic article devoted to reflecting on her analysis and its findings from which we were also able to quote: Laura Mulvey, “Cinematic Gesture: The Ghost in the Machine,” *Journal for Cultural Research* 19, no. 1 (2015): 6–14.

8 I am grateful to Mulvey for her e-mail correspondence with me (November 26, 2016) in which she added to the published accounts of the video’s production (for those, see note 7).

9 Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second*, 172.

10 Mulvey, in Baptista, “Delaying cinema,” 88. Also see Matthias Müller’s account of the genesis of *Home Stories* in “Scott Macdonald/ Matthias Müller—A Conversation,” in *The Memo Book: The Films and Videos of Matthias Müller*, ed. Stefanie Schulte Strathaus (Berlin: Vorwerk, 2005), 229.

studies of film performance in ways that are also underpinned, at times, by an understanding of Mulvey's arguments about digital spectatorship in her 2006 book. As for its fusion of scholar, fan, and artist, I would argue that this creative critical posture is now even more strongly in evidence, not least in several of the videos on film star performance (and persona) that *[in]Transition* has published to date, as well as in plenty of other found-footage films produced in or near the academy. These also routinely seem influenced by the emergence and consolidation of other digital forms of cinephilia and film fandom.¹¹ As Mary Desjardins writes of everyday online video culture, in her peerless 2015 book *Recycled Stars: Female Film Stardom in the Age of Television and Video*, "Mash-up videos featuring film clips or still photos recontextualize star images to represent the perspective and feelings of their fan authors. . . . The typical video mash-up of star images on YouTube also contains many of the found footage or collage strategies employed by Barriga . . . and Rappaport. . . . [S]tar recyclings via user-generated content online exemplify a range of motives, attitudes, functions, knowledges, and forms of participation."¹² In my view, two of the most dynamic, original, and productive works emerging from or most connected to the contemporary context of online video as mapped out by Desjardins have been published at *[in]Transition*, both following rigorous (and completely open) processes of scholarly peer review. I'm thinking, first, of Jaap Kooijman's four-minute-long video "Success," a highly effective and brilliantly engaging sequential montage comparison of the "successful" African American star persona of Diana Ross, as represented and allegorized by her role in *Mahogany* (Berry Gordy, 1975) and as theorized in a 1982 article by Richard Dyer (cited in the video), with that of her putative contemporary counterpart Beyoncé, star of *Dreamgirls* (Bill Condon, 2006). Kooijman's work relies, as does Mulvey's, on the performative effects of judicious and meticulously timed replay and repetition.¹³ And, second, of Cüneyt Çakırlar's more provocative and ambitious *Mothers on the Line: The Allure of Julianne Moore*, an extremely powerful ten-minute-long chaptered "supercut" that, as its author's accompanying statement avows, "appropriates the tribute/compilation format and tackles different analytical scales of sampling and audiovisual interpretation in star studies . . . to expose the thematic continuities in Moore's performances of mothers (or mother-substitutes) and to queer the on-screen operation of her maternal

11 In this category I would place the following short films and video makers: Mehrmaz Saeed-Vafa's 2012 film *Jerry & Me*, which Adrian Martin writes about in his article "Jerry and Me: Fan Psychoanalysis," *LOLA* 3 (2013): http://www.lolajournal.com/3/jerry_and_me.html; the videographic work of another foundational film scholar, Pam Cook, including her 2014 portrait-homage to the Hong Kong movie star Tony Leung in "Wait . . .," a poetic and analytic evocation of Leung's performance as a man in waiting in Wong Kar-wai's 2000 film *In the Mood for Love* (<https://vimeo.com/111103397>); Pasquale Iannone's audiovisual essay "A Note on Comedy Vitti Style," published in *NECSUS: European Journal of Media Studies* (2015): <http://www.necsus-ejms.org/note-comedy-vitti-style-2015/>, which highlights the skills of Italian actress Monica Vitti as a comic performer; and videos by two graduate researchers working on star performance and memories, Sarah Culhane (<https://vimeo.com/user21768201>) and Daniel Massie (<https://vimeo.com/danielmassie>).

12 Mary Desjardins, *Recycled Stars: Female Film Stardom in the Age of Television and Video* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 248.

13 Jaap Kooijman, "Success" (reviews by Richard Dyer and Chiara Grizzaffi), *[in]Transition*: 2, no. 4 (2015): <http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/intransition/2015/12/29/success>.

image.”¹⁴ Both videos combine a multilayered homage to the performers they showcase (and in Kooijman’s case, also, to the film theorist whose work he approvingly cites and tests out), with exacting critical audiovisual analysis, achieved through intricate processes of associative editing. Also, the two works profitably borrow techniques from music video, and especially from fanvids, in the way that some of their arguments and expressiveness are subliminally conveyed by inventive conjunctions of song lyrics and film footage. Indeed, as Dyer notes in his peer review, the implicit and explicit verbal quotations in Kooijman’s video (lyrics, film dialogue, and textual citations) work to anchor his video’s “images and sounds and their combinations and repetitions in wider, more abstract and generalizing considerations.”¹⁵ In his concluding peer-review remarks, Dyer shows a very deep appreciation of *[in]Transition*’s mission to publish only work that produces new knowledge or understanding through its audiovisual form:

Even when words do their best at conveying the texture, feel, and affect of tones, textures, and rhythms, of performance and presence, that best must fall short of the experience of these, in part simply because words can never be them. What Kooijman’s “Success” demonstrates is how editing (in the broad sense of selection and combination) can do what words cannot, not just to enable one to (re)see and (re)hear the affective qualities of the material but actually to reflect directly upon them, to critique affect by means of affect.¹⁶

The published peer reviewers’ reports on Cüneyt Çakırlar’s somewhat more ambiguous, much less verbally “anchored” video also very clearly made a strong case for publication of the work, and for what they felt were its strongest aspects. But the reviewers additionally raised some productive doubts about exactly what it was that the video achieved when measured against some of what its author had intended (as evidenced by the accompanying written statement on the work). For example, Jaap Kooijman’s review questioned where exactly the “allure” of the video’s title—normally, the power to attract or entice—might reside, noting that the video’s “poetic mode succeeds quite beautifully in providing a sense of Moore’s allure, yet without fully grasping what such a concept eventually entails—which might be its point.”¹⁷

The idea that the work may sense or “know” or reveal certain elements, or even make arguments about its object of study that cannot always be predicted and weren’t always authorially intended or “grasped,” at least to begin with, is especially compelling in the case of research undertaken using experimental artistic methodologies.¹⁸ As

14 Cüneyt Çakırlar, “Mothers on the Line: The Allure of Julianne Moore” (reviews by Liz Greene and Jaap Kooijman), *[in]Transition* 3, no. 1 (2016), <http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/intransition/2016/03/14/mothers-line-allure-julianne-moore>.

15 Dyer’s open peer review of Kooijman, “Success.”

16 Ibid.

17 Kooijman’s open peer review of Çakırlar, “Mothers on the Line.”

18 These might include “‘yielding the initiative’ . . . to a form” (drawing on Ray, *Avant-Garde*, 97), say, making a ten-minute found-footage compilation or collage using specific film material. Or “formal parameters lead[ing] to content discoveries,” say, placing a quotation over a film sequence to which the former did not originally refer. On the latter, see Christian Keathley and Jason Mittell, *The Videographic Essay: Criticism in Sound and Image* (Montreal: caboose books, 2016), 6.

artist-scholar Barbara Bolt has written, the problem for the creative or experimental academic researcher can lie in recognizing and mapping the effects, or “transformations,” that have occurred in their research: “Sometimes the transformations may seem to be so inchoate that it is impossible to recognize them, let alone map their effects. At other times the impact of the work of art may take time to ‘show itself,’ or else the researcher may be too much in the process and hence finds it impossible to assess just what has been done.”¹⁹ She then adds, of course, that as far as an academic context is concerned it “is clear that if a performative paradigm is viable it has to be able to do the work expected of a research paradigm, it has to be able to define its terms, refine its protocols and procedures, and be able to withstand scrutiny.”²⁰ And this is certainly the case: even if these requirements may not seem to be the most “creative” of generative constraints or formal parameters, they did, at least, lead to the founding of *[in]Transition*.

I conclude with a reflection on a star studies video of my own that was published in our journal. The work *Mechanized Flights: Memories of “Heidi”* was one of three online tribute videos selected by film scholar Chiara Grizzaffi to discuss the pertinence of that form for videographic film and moving image studies.²¹ I was surprised (and pleased) by her choice to include my work, as I wouldn’t have volunteered it for academic publication at that point. Unlike the other two videos she curated (by Drew Morton and Nelson Carvajal), which skillfully utilized their compilation form to “incorporate as many exemplary moments as possible” from the film performances of their (still living) subjects, mine was (very roughly) made from screen-captured sections of different YouTube versions of one continuous film sequence taken from Allan Dwan’s 1937 film *Heidi* that I remixed, or *remade*, on the day after the death of its child star, Shirley Temple, in February 2014 at the age of eighty-five.²² After I finished the video (in a few hours) I wrote a brief accompanying statement, which acknowledged the influence of some of Mulvey and Arnold’s work on mine, and disclosed that the video was “forged from personal reflections on (Dwan’s film) and uses refilmed, cropped, and re-edited digitized sequences from the black and white, and colorized versions” of it.²³ I noted also that immediately after I made the video, in preparing my statement, I had encountered Dwan’s account of the production circumstances of the sequence, which

19 Barbara Bolt, “A Performative Paradigm for the Creative Arts,” *Working Papers in Art and Design*, 5, 2009, https://www.herts.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0015/12417/WPIAAD_vol5_bolt.pdf.

20 Ibid.

21 The other two videos were Nelson Carvajal’s tribute to the work of the cinematographer Gordon Willis, “In Memory of Gordon Willis,” and Drew Morton’s tribute to the acting career of David Bowie, “David Bowie: On Film.” Chiara Grizzaffi, “On Video Tributes,” *[in]Transition* 1, no. 2 (2014), <http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/intransition/2014/06/23/video-tributes>.

22 I have made several posthumous star tribute videos. For the story of another, see Catherine Grant, “The Remix That Knew Too Much? On *Rebecca*, Retrospectatorship and the Making of *Rites of Passage*,” *Cine-Files: A Scholarly Journal of Cinema Studies* (2014), <http://www.thecine-files.com/grant/>. My videos in this genre are collected in a Vimeo folder: “My film studies tribute videos,” <https://vimeo.com/album/3215094>.

23 Catherine Grant, “Mechanized Flights: Memories of *Heidi*,” *Film Ireland*, February 12, 2014, <http://filmireland.net/2014/02/12/video-essay-mechanised-flights-memories-of-heidi/>.

seemed uncannily connected to the way in which my video had remade it.²⁴ Then I uploaded it online, where (once blogged and tweeted by the *Film Ireland* website) the work took up its place among the swirl of other online tributes to Temple in the days following her death.²⁵

For me, *Mechanized Flights* had begun as a spontaneous experiment emerging from the memories and mixed feelings I had of Temple's child-acting career (mostly drawn from my television-watching childhood and adolescence in the late 1960s and 1970s) that had returned upon news of her death. It became a freely associated and de-formative working through of the materials that I encountered and poached online in response to these affective circumstances. My thoughts on what the video was performing (in relation to any kind of knowledge) were certainly limited and relatively "inchoate," to use Bolt's word, at that point.²⁶ But reading Grizzaffi's insightful comments on the work in her curatorial statement (published only a few months after I had made my video) made me see that what I had thought was (largely) "hermetic self-expression" and lacking in "directive force," was sufficiently legible, even instrumental in some scholarly ways.²⁷

In the years since the video was published, I have been able to build on my (and Grizzaffi's) conclusions, and have come to see that, like other posthumous tribute videos of mine, *Mechanized Flights* is a materialization of "retrospectatorship," a viewing mode (identified by Patricia White) that is shaped by the experiences, fantasies, and memories it elicits in the spectator, and at the same time an experiment with "remaining images" (altered, remade, not just replayed or paused), as Catherine Fowler puts it (in her 2012 study of how, by "channeling introspection, film theory may yet learn from artists to love and live with cinema again").²⁸ While, through her play with mechanical aesthetics, Mulvey discovers and reveals something outside of herself, that Monroe's performance is organized around moments of pause, with my use of similar aesthetics, it seems, I add, I project—the video is undoubtedly about me, and my spectatorial experiences and contexts.²⁹

24 Ibid. In *Cinematic Flashes*, Rashna Wadia Richards writes about how subjective insights and intuitions can lead to "cinephiliac historiography." Richards and Rashna Wadia, *Cinematic Flashes: Cinephilia and Classical Hollywood* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 26.

25 Grant, "Mechanized Flights."

26 Bolt, "A Performative Paradigm for the Creative Arts."

27 On hermetic self-expression, see Ray, *Avant-Garde*, 10. On directive force, see Michael Piggott, *Joseph Cornell versus Cinema* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 21.

28 White uses the notion of retrospectatorship, in part, "to describe the irreducible play of past and present, the joining of audiences and artifacts, in the subjective and (sub)cultural experience of viewing and writing about films. See Patricia White, *UnInvited: Classical Hollywood Cinema and Lesbian Representability* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), xxiv. See also Grant, "Remix." On remaining images and channeling introspection, see Catherine Fowler, "Remembering Cinema 'Elsewhere': From Retrospection to Introspection in the Gallery Film," *Cinema Journal* 51, no. 2 (2012): 42, 45.

29 As both Grizzaffi and Corey Creekmur indicate. The latter noted: "In short, you have me pondering the relationship inherent in the tribute, and the thin line at times between the scholar and the fan in the realm of the video essay." Corey Creekmur, "[Comment] The Critic and the Fan," *[in]Transition* 1, no. 2 (2014), <http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/intransition/2014/06/23/video-tributes#comment-13>.

In his review of Robert Ray's *The Avant-Garde Finds Andy Hardy*, Elliott West is scathing of this solipsistic tendency. He writes that "if movies speak to our unconscious, they also have structure, ideology, and the rest of what the usual critics have fixed upon. Ray's experimental approach is useless there."³⁰ I would respectfully disagree and point to Dyer's conclusion to his book *Stars*, that "we should not forget that what we are analyzing gains its force and intensity from the way it is experienced, and that ideology shapes the experiential and the [affective] as much as the cognitive."³¹ The experimental work that I have produced in the affective idiom of the star tribute, along with the reflections I have produced on it, have led me in the direction of Lauren Berlant's work on cruel optimism, a term that "names a relation of attachment to compromised conditions of possibility," which she understands as an "aesthetic."³² As Jackie Stacey notes of Berlant's work, her approach "insists that, if we are to engage with the political, we must grasp the continuing affective work of its sentimentalizing forms and our complicity in mobilizing them in our own feminist (and other critical) practices."³³ One way to research the field is to work through these forms practically, aesthetically, through their "remaining" images and sounds—as I have done in my (inadvertent) audiovisual study of ambivalence about Temple as an (often unwanted) model child—and to reflect on them in their aftermath. Like Dyer, "I don't want to privilege these responses over analysis."³⁴ But nor do I regard experimental film studies and conventional written analysis, argument or reflection as mutually exclusive. In multimedia contexts, like *[in]Transition*, with its combination of videos and written texts, sometimes these "responses" can happen separately, one after the other, and at other times they happen most fruitfully together.

I have been writing here in a personal capacity, and from a personal perspective as one of the journal's founding coeditors, involved (sometimes specifically, other times generally) in the selection, evaluation, and framing of the work we have published but also (and more important here) as a practitioner and a maker of one of these videos. In both roles, I have faced productive challenges to my scholarly identity and established procedures regarding what such works should aim to incorporate or exclude when it comes to affect and argument, proximity and distance, or contemplation and commentary. But through engaging with these practical methodologies—film studies research by (re)editing—I have come to understand that the audiovisual essay form is not solely a compelling and uniquely expressive presentational mode through which we can translate, remediate, or repurpose preexisting written scholarship.³⁵ Potentially,

30 Elliott West, "Hymn to Mainstream Values," *Film & History: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Film and Television Studies* 27, nos. 1–4 (1997): 136.

31 Dyer, *Stars*, 162.

32 Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 21.

33 Jackie Stacey, "Crossing Over with Tilda Swinton—The Mistress of 'Flat Affect,'" *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 28, no. 3 (2015): 2.

34 Dyer, *Stars*, 162.

35 This is the framing for two excellent videographic film performance studies published by *[in]Transition* that I do not discuss here because their authors conceived of them, at least in part, as works of audiovisual translation: Ian Garwood, "The Poetics of the Explanatory Audiovisual Essay [including the video *How Little We Know: An Essay Film about Hoagy Carmichael*]," *[in]Transition* 1, no. 3 (2014): <http://media>

at least, and perhaps especially in its most experimental iterations and procedures, it opens up our access as film scholars to a whole new performative research paradigm, often usefully supplemented but never completely replaceable in scholarly contexts by written reflections and dialogue.³⁶ *

commons.futureofthebook.org/intransition/2014/09/14/poetics-explanatory-audiovisual-essay; and Bryn Hewko and Aaron Taylor, "Thinking through Acting: Performative Indices and Philosophical Assertions," *[in]Transition* 3, no. 4 (2016), <http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/intransition/2016/11/22/thinking-through-acting-performative-indices-and-philosophical-assertions>.

36 See my earlier exploration of this paradigm: Catherine Grant, "The Audiovisual Essay as Performative Research," *NECSUS: European Journal of Media Studies* (2016), <http://www.necsus-ejms.org/the-audiovisual-essay-as-performative-research/>.

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