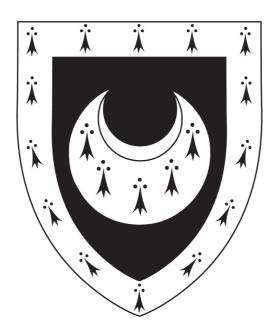# Cinema of the Self:
A Theory of Cinematic Selfhood &
Practices of Neoliberal Portraiture

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This dissertation is submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Declaration

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my dissertation has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

The dissertation is formatted in accordance to the Modern Humanities Research Association (MHRA) style.

This dissertation does not exceed the word limit of 80,000 words (as specified by the Modern and Medieval Languages Degree Committee).

Summary

This thesis examines the philosophical notion of selfhood in visual representation. I introduce the self as a modern and postmodern concept and argue that there is a loss of selfhood in contemporary culture. Via Jacques Derrida, Jean-Luc Nancy, Gerhard Richter and the method of deconstruction of language, I theorise selfhood through the figurative and literal analysis of duration, the frame, and the mirror. In this approach, selfhood is understood as aesthetic-ontological relation and construction based on specific techniques of the self. In the first part of the study, I argue for a presentational rather than representational perspective concerning selfhood by translating the photograph *Self in the Mirror* (1964), the painting *Las Meninas* (1656), and the video *Cornered* (1988), into my conception of a cinematic theory of selfhood. Based on the presentation of selfhood in those works, the viewer establishes a cinematic relation to the visual self that extends and transgresses the boundaries of inside and outside, presence and absence, and here and there. In the second part, I interpret epistemic scenes of cinematic works as durational scenes in which selfhood is exposed with respect to the forces of time and space. My close readings of epistemic scenes of the films *The Congress* (2013), and *Boyhood* (2014) propose that cinema is a philosophical mirror collecting loss of selfhood over time for the viewer. Further, the cinematic concert *A Trip to Japan, Revisited* (2013), and the hyper-film *Cool World* (1992) disperse a spatial sense of selfhood for the viewer. In the third part, I examine moments of selfhood and the forces of death, survival, and love in the practice of contemporary cinematic portraiture in Joshua Oppenheimer's, Michael Glawogger's, and Yorgos Lanthimos' work. While the force of death is interpreted in the portrait of perpetrators in *The Act of Killing* (2013), and *The Look of Silence* (2014), the force of survival in the longing for life is analysed in *Megacities* (1998), *Workingman's death* (2005), and *Whores' Glory* (2011). Lastly, *Dogtooth* (2009), *Alps* (2011), and *The Lobster* (2015) present the contemporary human condition as a lost intuition of relationality epitomised in love.

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Acknowledgements

Introduction

A sign we are, without meaning	Ein Zeichen sind wir, deutungslos
Without pain we are and have nearly	Schmerzlos sind wir und haben fast
Lost our language in foreign lands	Die Sprache in der Fremde verloren

Friedrich Hölderlin, 'Mnemosyne' approx. 1803, in Hölderlin 1990: 272-3

Who am I? Sooner or later, this question pops up in one's mind as the blessing or curse of consciousness. Scandalously broad, the thought occupies every thinking body, every thinking self. Throughout humanity the investigation of the meaning of the "I" proved to be an interest of all kinds of thinkers. Friedrich Hölderlin, in the excerpt of the poem 'Mnemosyne' above, traces the "I" through a "we" as a sign. I understand 'without meaning' as an invitation to look for the sign we are, and also the signatures we are. 'A sign we are, without meaning' inspired me to think and write this study to articulate the meanings "we" can have and the ways these significations come about.

There is no answer to the above question that will ever satisfactorily represent the depth of human experience, so I might as well try to provide a limited account thereof. In this study, I am interested in the possibilities of understanding contemporary selfhood and its construction. The question of "Who am I" here translates into "how", "what", and "why" "I" is. Selfhood as I understand it in this study is a concept that has transformed throughout intellectual history into the aesthetic-ontological condition it is today. By using the terminology of "aesthetic-ontological condition" I make a claim about understanding selfhood in philosophical terms. This means that I am interested on the one hand in the basis of the construction of selfhood, in terms of its appearance and representation, and on the other hand simultaneously in its nature of being, and understand my methodology as

interlinked inquiry. In other words, my interest in this project is an analysis of the construction of selfhood in terms of its manifestation as language and grammar: the self as sign as much as syntax.

In this dissertation I argue for the encounter with art as a form of negotiation of selfhood. My primary concern is how the concept of selfhood is produced and articulated through the exposition and presentation of itself within art, and how this creates a form of contact as encounter with the viewer. Throughout this study, I examine the philosophical notion of selfhood in representation. I argue that there is a loss of selfhood in the construction and presentation thereof within the encounter with the viewer. The encounter of selfhood through the act of recognition and negotiation with the work of art is at the core of the aesthetic experience. I am thus interpreting the aesthetic experience through the experience of selfhood and the experience of loss for the viewer as a form of renegotiation of selfhood through the production of a cycle of representation. In other words, I am drawn to the discourse of the self in contemporary culture within which I advance to the concept of selfhood through three main focal points: the concept of an image of selfhood, the concept of duration, and the concept of engagement with a self through another self.

According to the OED the term 'self' is rather vague. The dictionary offers 'a person's essential being that distinguishes them from others, especially considered as the object of introspection or reflexive action' as a definition. However, interestingly the common definition thereby already positions the self around the link between ontology and aesthetics. By locating the self on the one hand between the distinguishing features found in being or ontology, and on the other hand in the introspection or reflexive action as a form of aesthetics or consciousness it becomes clear: any conception of self evolves both around ontology and aesthetics. In my understanding, the notion of the self is a discursive concept

interlinking being with the world, and giving subjectivity to consciousness. The notion of the self thereby links conceptions of singularity and identity to all other attributive conceptions of personhood, the self is a tissue in which and through which subjectivity is enacted and related to. Traditionally the self is found through self-reflexive accounts thereof in writing or portraiture, in which a self or author expresses an "I" and through that creates a "me".

I understand the history of ideas of the self to be profoundly shaped by the medium of writing, and the practice of confession as exposure of and access to the self. This practice is so evident that it gave some of the most notable examples of the form its title, such as St Augustine's *Confessions* (around the year 400/1961), or Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* (1782/1903). In this canonical understanding of writing the self through the confession, the concept of "me" within this performative use of language is a construction of a self towards an other. As a form of action, the confession of the "author as me" also points to the performance of othering the experience of existence towards a figurative authority, such as God, a catalogue of norms, or a conception of the good life. Written language here in the form of the autobiography or memoir à la Montaigne transforms interiority into exteriority, and exposes the experience of being alive within an interiorized normativity. The role of the self within the practice of presentation of selfhood can be thus seen on a spectrum ranging from solipsism as the ultimate affirmation yet limitation of selfhood to the extrapolation of self-experience historically attributed to Descartes's cogito.

In writing, the exposition of selfhood is characterized by its nature as a project and attempt, and its motivation of liberation within the confessional as a mode of presentation. Through the act of revelatory exposition of the inner soul through the text, the author stabilizes experience within recording and promotes a possibility of self-understanding for

themselves and the reader. Roy Porter asserts in *Rewriting the Self* that 'the secret of selfhood is commonly seen to lie in authenticity and individuality' (1997: 1) meaning that differentiation and personalisation are key in the effective enactment, performance, and recording of selfhood. However, I contend that there is no secret to the self, and in my conceptualisation the self is bare, transparent, true to itself, and as I will show in my argument it is an exposition and presentation within means of representation. I am interested in selfhood as a representational issue, rather than as an attribute of authorship, as it is commonly understood within the realm of writing. The subject of my analysis is the articulation of selfhood, the act of enacting a self that exposes itself within the discourse and nexus of self and other, and inside and outside.

Recently, the rise and popularisation of self-photography in the 21st century through camera phones brought culture the term *selfie* and a renegotiation of the meaning of visual representation of oneself. The primacy and dominance of the visual as an aesthetic, epistemic, and ontological axiom of relating towards the self and specifically towards oneself has overtaken the relationship of the writerly as the primary medium of self-expression in mainstream society. In common sense of the early 21st century, it appears that something like a representation of oneself can be found in photographs taken of oneself. There is huge cultural momentum away from distinguishing the photographable self from the unphotographable self. The representation *is* the self. The movement and distribution of these images, more than just creating a recording of oneself contribute through its presentation in the production of selfhood in platforms such as Instagram. Further to that, a billion or two of the world's population feeds each other with data in a platform programmatically called Facebook financed and mined by the latest capitalism, and valued as one of the most valuable enterprises in the world. It is in this eerie climate of tectonic

cultural shifts that the concepts of freedom and autonomy are explored both intrinsically within the self as constituent of the psyche and body, and as extrapolations thereof in its representation – whether as art or real life. In this neoliberalised environment the self mediates and is mediated through various cultural changes fuelled by rapid techno-cultural developments, while reality itself is a mixed media assemblage of worlds, mirrors, temporalities, and spatial relationships.

The interest in this project comes from an engagement with both philosophy and visual culture. I seek to deliver an original contribution to the exploration of ideas of the self through the combination of readings in philosophy, aesthetics, critical theory, and film studies. Although in this way my study falls into the field of academic research known as film philosophy, it seeks also to extend the canonical relationship towards the medium of the cinematic. By thinking through, with, about, and with film through philosophical methodology, I aspire to transgress the boundaries of criticism, theory, and interpretation, and make an original contribution to knowledge. The research question that thus drives and motivates this project within this field is how contemporary selfhood is constructed and what the meanings of its constructions are. Although research in philosophy and media studies discusses positions on the self, there are no positions, particularly in film studies more specifically that propose a relational investigation of the self as aesthetic-ontological phenomenon.

In this project I aim to develop an interpretation that consists of combining media archaeology and the study of the portrait as a form and practice. Inspired by the popularisation of self-photography through the rise of the photographic self-portrait, my interest in this form is related to the character of the integration of the viewer into the dynamics of meaning making, rather than because of the self-referential nature of

authorship thereof. The self-portrait has a long lasting history in visual and pictorial culture, commonly associated in the Western canon, with for instance Albrecht Dürer and paintings in the 15th century, or Leonardo da Vinci's drawings in the 16th century. This form of the portrait has found its way into society together with the earliest manufacturing of glass mirrors in Europe. The front-facing camera, turning the smartphone into a mirror that can fixate a moment, thus provoked the mass cultural popularisation of this form. As so often with a fashion or a cultural tendency, the photographic *selfie* is in fact a return to an occupation shared by many of the earliest experimenters of silver prints.

Figure 0. Revolving Self-Portrait, by Nadar, Bibliothèque Nationale de France. c. 1865.

Figure 0 is a shot and it is not a shot. Immediately reminiscent of Eadweard Muybridge's later studies of motion, the shot is a confrontation of a face in multiplicity. Gaspard-Félix Tournachon, better known under the pseudonym Nadar made the photograph *Revolving Self-Portrait* as seen in *Figure 0* as an original photographic account of himself. In the photographic series the subject is seen to revolve around himself on a vertical axis, thereby presenting a panorama of positions and representing himself while coming full circle. The photograph thus is not a singular photograph, but already plural as it comes as a dozen photographs, yet in unison and closure while eternally spiralling and looping: revolving around itself clockwise and thus establishing. Confusing as the gesture of spinning may appear, it captures what interests me in the construction of a portrait of selfhood. There is one image, there is a series or a grid, and taken together there is a sequence, a scene, or what today one might call a gif or even meme. This photograph (to keep the term for the sake of convention) is interesting for me as it displays the act of portraiture and the act of representation: photography and self-display are a performance to record a moment and the making of a moment. The viewer here on the other hand does the assemblage of time, following intuition of Western writing by crafting a linear series from left to right, a collage in the mind produces a spiralling image, a temporal loop.

Nadar's *Revolving Self-Portrait* illustrates, exemplifies and introduces my focal point of inquiry: the still image and the series of images otherwise known or projected as cinema. However, it also demonstrates the difficulty in speaking of and with this medium, which we look at when it is not moving although it is, and when it is moving although it is not. The cut, editing and the construction of the movement across different times of photographing further complicate understanding of its construction. Plus there is another layer of sensation with the audio track or sound. With the movement to digital photography and

filmmaking everything has changed to remain the same, when thinking of cinematic realism. Needless to say, it is not all just an illusion, even though it is. Within these and other fundamental relations of the cinematic, I am interested in the role of the encounter of the self of others through the artistic medium and object, and its effect in the negotiation of the selfhood of the viewer. The portrait, whether a self-portrait or portrait is a work of mirroring, of othering, of presentation of selfhood. My analysis shows that ultimately the authorship of the work matters less than conventionally ascribed. What matters more is the configuration of presence and absence, death and aliveness within the phenomenon of representation of a self. It is this conception of presentation of selfhood as a discourse that I intent to explore in moving images and moving selves, in multiple sensuous forms and media. The viewer is confronting and producing a relationality through which their sense of time and space is negotiated and moved – an idea that has not found much resonance in academic scholarship yet.

I will very briefly review the current state of research in philosophy and media studies before presenting my path of reasoning. Contemporary scholarship in French philosophy and intellectual thought has delivered a wealth of accounts of the constructions of selfhood in post-structural and post-modern terms. To name but a few, Alain Badiou's *Theory of the Subject* (2009) and Julia Kristeva's *Strangers to Ourselves* (1991) work from a psychoanalytic and marxist tradition, while Paul Ricœur's *Oneself as Another* (1992) presents a hermeneutic theory of selfhood. Comparative studies of selfhood such as Dan Zahavi's *Subjectivity and Selfhood: Investigating the First-Person Perspective* (2008) provide a phenomenological reading, while Amy Allen's *The Politics of Our Selves: Power, Autonomy, and Gender in Contemporary Critical Theory* (2013) and Nick Mansfield's *Subjectivity: Theories of the Self from Freud to Haraway* both read selfhood from a critical theory and feminist perspective.

Other critical theorists work such as Adriana Cavarero's *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood* (2002), Bryan Reynolds' *Transversal Subjects: From Montaigne to Deleuze after Derrida* (2009), Katerina Kolozova's *Cut of the Real: Subjectivity in Poststructuralist Philosophy* (2014), and Maurizio Lazzarato's *Signs and Machines: Capitalism and the Production of Subjectivity* (2014) position ideas of the self through narrativity, subjectivity, and the formation of identity as much as the landscape of reality structured by capitalism.

In the current discourse in media studies, visual studies and film studies the self is discussed within the concepts of authorship and subjectivity. Most prominently, Laura Rascaroli's *The Personal Camera: Subjective Cinema and the Essay Film* (2011) and Alisa Lebow's *The Cinema of Me: The Self and Subjectivity in First Person Documentary* (2012) discuss questions of authorship with respect to subjectivity within essayistic and documentary cinematic works, while Jenny Chamarette's *Phenomenology and the Future of Film: Rethinking Subjectivity Beyond French Cinema* (2012) proposes phenomenological paths of subjectivity in contemporary fiction. Sarah Cooper, on the other hand, in *The Soul of Film Theory* (2013) turns to the soul in film and film theory and traces its relevance as a constituent of subjectivity. Other philosophical considerations of the medium with respect to subjectivity are raised in Daniel Frampton's *Filmosophy* (2006), and Richard Rushton's *The Reality of Film: Theories of Filmic Reality* (2013) with Deleuzian approaches to renegotiating the power of the cinematic experience as aesthetic phenomenon, and cinema as immediate philosophy, ontology, and reality in its own right.

The notion of the self is thematised more closely as a central phenomenon within the nature of the cinematic medium and its role in narrativity in a few comparative studies. Edward Branigan's *Point of View in the Cinema: A Theory of Narration and Subjectivity in Classical Film* (1984) indexes a taxonomy of variations on spectatorial forms of identification. Marie-

Françoise Grange's *L'Autoportrait en Cinéma* (2008) and Stephen Mulhall's *The Self & Its Shadows: A Book of Essays on Individuality as Negation in Philosophy & the Arts* (2013) analyse the presence of selfhood within self-portraiture in film and as a figure of redemption in narrative cinema and philosophy. Nevertheless, besides these few examples the general scholarly discourse in cinema and visual studies is characterised by a lack of discussion of the notion of the self as a notion of comparable importance to discussions of the face or character. Moreover, none of these texts attend to the multifaceted nature of film and interpret the cinematic medium across demarcations of genre. Stephen Snyder's *The Transparent I: Self/Subject in European Cinema* (1994) is one of the few studies that raise significant and central attention to the role of the self in post-war European cinema such as Antonioni, Bergman, Buñuel, Fellini, and Godard. However, this study works outside the context of a relational discourse of viewer to film, and without a perspective that goes beyond the scope of cinema and the 'motherland', to use Francesco Casetti's (2001) term of the filmic theatre as primary space of cinematic encounter.

Thinking of a relational perspective concerning ideas of the self both within cinema, literature, and art, my study aims to extend and connect certain focal points of scholarly inquiry. Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* (1998) paved the way of understanding the viewer's relationship to the aesthetic experience and encounter within institutional contexts such as the museum, which I would extend to environments such as the filmic theatre. Asking representational questions with respect to the involvement of the self in aesthetic practice, Thomas Hilgers's *Aesthetic Disinterestedness: Art, Experience, and the Self* (2017) proposes the viewer's self as place of aesthetic experience and encounter of art – however not cinema. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's (2003) *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey* centralises the encounter of the moment as main practice of aesthetic experience of

the reader in literature and viewer in art, however without attending to dynamics thereof in cinematic medium. Likewise, Amelia Jones's *Self/Image: Technology, Representation, and the Contemporary Subject* (2006) works through the role of the body and subjectivity within various forms of art, but not cinema specifically. In this project I thus aspire to extend both the aspect of media archeology found in Jones (2006), the encounter of selfhood within the aesthetic experience of Hilgers (2017), and multidimensional understanding of sensual engagement with artistic forms of expression.

Throughout this study, I relate the developed theoretical conceptions to the wider field of cultural analysis and critique of the neoliberal societal order. Emerging together with postmodernism in the late 20th century, the neoliberal economic order capitalises on self-realisation as human form of productivity within Western society. While self-realisation in this tradition traces back to John Stuart Mill's (1859) *On Liberty*, the discourse on individualism and the self-centered culture of capitalism are popularised in the 20th century cultural discourse through Christopher Lasch's *The Culture Of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (1978). Media and technology, the state and the global economic and financial order, and their influence on the existential understanding of reality on the other hand are subjects of Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation* (1994), David Harvey's *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (1991) and *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (2005), and Frederic Jameson's *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1997) – works that I draw on as points of reference and influence. My cultural understanding of the self and reality is influenced by these 20th century thinkers as much as more recent 21st century critiques of the economy and society such as the Invisible Committee's *To Our Friends* (2015) or Mark Fisher's *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (2010).

The methodology for this study is constructed through a reading and interpretation of philosophy. Aspiring to diverge from these common trajectories tackling contemporary selfhood, my contribution to the discourse on the ideas of the self brings various recent and modern French and continental thought in contact with one another. I build my argument on the presentation of selfhood within and through the aesthetic-ontological contact via a methodology of combining ideas concerning the nature of representation and the artworks that inherently question the frame of their own representation. One of the main thinkers with whom I am interested in working through my argument is Jean-Luc Nancy, whose work on representation, the body, cinema, and more broadly philosophy and aesthetics has found large resonance within the scholarly community in critical theory and film studies. As I have already pointed to in Rosinski (2015), I am particularly drawn to discussing the question of representation of selfhood through the presentational paradigm of Nancy established through my reading of *Corpus* (2008) and *The Ground of the Image* (2005), while art and the concept and the aesthetics of the moving image are thematised through *L'Évidence du Film: Abbas Kiarostami* (2001) and *The Muses* (1996). While excerpts of Nancy's thought are a vital part of my analysis and understanding of how I confront the status of the self, his influence reaches beyond the textual exegesis to an overarching style of thought and argument, and also subtly influences my usage of language more broadly.

Besides the representational influence of Nancy on my project, I make use and reference to philosophical deconstruction more specifically. The questions of presentation of selfhood are brought into contact with various aspects of the thought of Jacques Derrida, most notably the late work on aesthetics and photography *Copy, Archive, Signature: A Conversation on Photography* (2010). The questions of the nature of representation found in photography is for me profoundly influenced by Roland Barthes, whose *Camera Lucida:*

Reflections on Photography (1981) and ideas of subjectivity, loss, and collection offer punctuating points of interaction with the self. Duration and time in the context of the (moving) image are explored through the thought of the scholar Gerhard Richter, whose *Afterness: figures of following in modern thought and aesthetics* (2011) offers crucial ideas concerning the nature of the passage of time. Lastly, Michel Foucault provides focal inspiration and influence for my understanding of selfhood within the field of representation. In this study I draw on the notion of the episteme, and his work concerning perspective in representation developed in *The Order of Things* (2005), and the unfinished project of comprehending the possibilities of understanding selfhood developed in *Technologies Of The Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (1988b) and *About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self: Lectures at Dartmouth College, 1980* (2015).

In this study I move away from writing, written language and literature as a privileged site of the encounter of selfhood. My interest in the "I" is deeply linked to the "we", and thus this dissertation aspires to be a broader reflection concerning the construction of selfhood through an interpretation of the relationship of self and other. The self does not exist in isolation, but it exists in relation. I am thus understanding the interpretation of selfhood as an analysis of perspective and representation: the self is located *within* the encounter between "I" and "we", it is a relational notion and condition. Conceived of as aesthetic-ontological, the self that I speak of as "cinematic self" is a relational configuration that configures itself within the encounter of art. My argument is thus built around this construction of selfhood to advance a novel conceptualisation thereof. For that purpose I analyse the self in artworks that provide an environment of encounter for the viewer, and works that allow for an enactment of mirroring so that a self can come into being.

The title of this dissertation 'cinema of the self' pays tribute to understanding the self as focal point and nexus of film analysis and cultural studies. Across the boundaries of what is traditionally conceived of as documentary and fiction in cinema, I aspire to provide a point of intersection between questions of genre by interpreting the construction of subjectivity and personhood through my notion of the cinematic self. The approach that I take to construct a fruitful analysis of selfhood is thus shaped through an emphasis on the relationship of self and other that I analyse in depth and through my understanding of art: a radical intervention in the understanding of the cinematic situation and aesthetic encounter – the viewer facing another self. This situation that occurs I term "the cinematic self", which thus does not only refer to the self on screen or self as seen, but also to the function of mirroring, and the viewer's self, a triangulation in unison that the term describes. Emerging in tandem with the technique and the medium of cinema, the term cinematic self expresses the continuous development of building a relationship of the viewer and the cinematic medium as it evolves.

The notion of the cinematic self is developed throughout this dissertation and the methodology of interpretation of the artworks. Each individual artwork that I interpret offers an enactment of a technique of the self, a term that I develop after Foucault and produces a cycle of representation. This is what I then, also after Foucault, term an epistemic scene, in which the construction of a cinematic self is produced through and with the viewer as partaker in its construction. The individual works accumulatively build my argument through the movement through different forms of engagement with the senses. In my multi-sensual approach, I thus move away from understanding the self solely within the particular artistic form, and approach representation more holistically as aesthetic experience. Through this multimedia methodology I aspire to move towards a

comprehensive representational perspective that simultaneously allows for a discussion of the nature of artistic recording and reproducibility in time and space.

In the first part of the dissertation *Towards a Theory of the Cinematic Self*, I establish my methodology of a presentational perspective through an interpretation of three artworks. In this section I establish my understanding of technique of the self as an exposition of selfhood found within epistemic scenes through a reading of Stefan Moses's *Self in the Mirror* (1964), and Diego Velázquez's painting *Las Meninas* (1656). Moving from from still photography and painting to video to introduce duration into my methodology and argument I interpret Adrian Piper's video *Cornered* (1988) as a work of othering selfhood. Selfhood as a set of relations in these works is established through a presentation towards the viewer, and the viewer closes the cycle of representation and through that enacts a form of contact and brings the cinematic self into being. Based on the presentation of selfhood in those works, the viewer establishes a cinematic relation to the self that extends and transgresses the boundaries of self and other, inside and outside, presence and absence, and here and there.

I proceed by incorporating feature-length filmic material into my study in the second part of the dissertation *The Cinematic Self: Selfhood as Collection and Dispersion*. In this section I pay extended attention to the forces of time and space in the construction of the cinematic self and develop my notion of collection in time and dispersion in space. I interpret epistemic scenes of cinematic works as durational scenes in which selfhood is exposed with respect to the forces of time and space in four different cinematic works at the margins of cinematic realism. My close readings of epistemic scenes of the films *The Congress* (2013), and *Boyhood* (2014) advance my notion of selfhood as collection in time, through which I exemplify cinema as a philosophical mirror collecting loss of selfhood over

time for the viewer. Further, through an interpretation of epistemic scenes in the cinematic

concert *A Trip to Japan, Revisited* (2013), and the hyper-film *Cool World* (1992) I argue that

these works create a cinematic self in which a spatial sense of selfhood is dispersed for the

viewer.

In the third part of the dissertation *Moments of Selfhood: Neoliberal Practices of

Portraiture of Selves* I turn to three filmmakers who are preoccupied with the domain of

selfhood in their corpus. In this third section I examine moments of selfhood and the

forces of death, survival, and love in the practice of contemporary cinematic portraiture of

selves in Joshua Oppenheimer's, Michael Glawogger's, and Yorgos Lanthimos' work. From

the theoretical construction of selfhood in space and time in the second part, I here move

to the application of the cinematic self in the practice of current cinema within the cultural

paradigm of neoliberal society. While the force of death is interpreted in the portrait of

perpetrators in Oppenheimer's *The Act of Killing* (2013), and *The Look of Silence* (2014), the

force of survival in the longing for life is analysed in Glawogger's *Megacities* (1998),

Workingman's death (2005), and *Whores' Glory* (2011). Lastly, Lanthimos's *Dogtooth* (2009), *Alps*

(2011), and *The Lobster* (2015) present the contemporary human condition as a lost intuition

of relationality epitomised in love. Concluding my study, these films offer portraits of selves

and the world of the early 21st century within highly innovative practices of filmmaking

testifying to the power of selfhood within representation.

In this dissertation, I am interested in providing an innovative and original account

of how both thinking about selfhood and the cinematic form are intertwined. This means

that I understand the cinematic experience as an encounter between the viewer and the

medium, through which the viewer experiences something. The aesthetic experience of the

cinematic in my understanding thereby creates an exchange and impression onto the viewer,

who in and through the encounter re-organises and re-orientates their own sense of self. The cinematic self is thus a bridge of intimacy and communication, a form of contact of the senses and the self. Far from a sense of passivity, the enactment of presence constructs a performance of selfhood for the viewer as partaker of the artwork. My approach of contributing to the ideas of the self in this way comes from the intersections and margins of aesthetics, philosophy, visual studies and critical theory. I argue for the construction of the self as a conceptual invention of meaning for the human experience in excess of its presence. Who am I? I am in movement, in construction, I am in exchange of myself, finding myself not in permanence but in passage.

SECTION I. Towards a Theory of the Cinematic Self

'*When one looks at oneself in a mirror, one sees oneself either as seen or as seeing but never as both at the same time.*' (Derrida 2010: 31)

'*The philosopher should start by meditating on photography, that is to say the writing of light before setting out towards a reflection on an impossible self-portrait.*' (Derrida in Pyke 2011: np)

The two fragmentary excerpts of Jacques Derrida's thought form a looped contemplation of selfhood, photography, and philosophy. It is the relation between those terms that I aim to illuminate in this first part of the dissertation. Thinking of the mirror and Derrida's 'paradox of selfhood' – the ostensibly impossible moment of simultaneously seeing oneself as oneself (in the mirror), and seeing the mirror and oneself in it (as another) – inspires my inquiry of understanding selfhood. Where is selfhood located, when it cannot be seen while seeing? What is the contact that informs the constitution of selfhood in the act of mirroring through the loop of referential identity? In conjunction with the idea of constructing a self-portrait present in the second quotation, I follow the assumption that the paradox might be resolved by looking at another mirror: photography.

Every photograph of a human subject is a fixation of a self, which is looked at, and looked into. The surface of physical photographs has an ingrained mirror structure that invites one not to overlook the reflection of the print's surface. This double looking into the mirroring of photographs, the impossible image of 'seen as seeing' is the paradox that informs my discussion of the self (Derrida 2010: 31). Stilling observation into an image produces a fixation of reality that the practice of viewership confronts. The contemplation of the photographic image is thus accordingly both an interpretation of the seen and the confrontation of the act of seeing. Additionally, in photographs depicting subjects - the photographs of my interest here - the subject's body confronts the viewer. The thought

concerning both sides of this process, first the subject of the seeing, and second the subject of the fixation, constitutes my reflection on selfhood.

The introduction established the self as plateau of subjectivity and traced the notion of the self back from romanticism to the contemporary neoliberal moment. Now I am turning from an abstract understanding of the concept as such within contemporary culture, critical theory, and philosophy to techniques of the self that are laid bare through films – itself introduced through photography. While the introduction has also discussed the notion of the self, or the lack thereof, in the writing on cinema, this section establishes conceptions of the self in cinema by virtue of discussing concrete techniques of the self. These techniques are informed by an analysis of scenes taken from individual films. Before, however, coming to the distinct techniques of the self, I raise a couple of intermediary questions, which are answered throughout the five chapters of this section: What is subjectivity? What is interiority? What is exteriority? What is the relation between the image of oneself and the self? What is the relationship between the body and the self? What is the relation of the inside to the outside, and the outside to the inside? What is presentation and what is representation?

The questions concerning the relationality of the self to its bearer and to the viewer, and the status of the self in an image and in images - whether photographic, painterly or animated - will be the guiding questions throughout this and the other two sections. In a nutshell, this first section thus provides one angle on answering the question: what is the self within contemporary cultural and critical theory – as well as in the lived reality – and how does film present the self and simultaneously present the forms in which its presentation is constructed? The self here is thus analysed in its potential as a concept of relation, a connecting tissue of the ontologies of the photographic image, cinematic image,

painterly image and animated image and the viewer. The self here is approached as a frontier of philosophical understanding, and the focus on the theory of representation of the self provokes a rethinking of the relationship of a fixed self and viewer. How can a self be constructed through the visual? What does it denote and is this meaning stable? How do time and space produce a self? The discussion of stilled images helps to concentrate on these crucial questions, preceding the introduction of mobility in time and space through the duration of film.

Chapter 1: Framing the Self in Photography

Photographic images provide a means to analyse stilled images that are brought from reality and a sense of flow into a sense of fixation. I understand photography according to philosopher Gerhard Richter's exposition of photography as a means to address relational questions. In the introduction to Derrida's *Copy, Archive, Signature* Richter considers photography as 'operational network and a metalanguage through which larger philosophical, historical, aesthetic, and political questions can be brought into focus' (2010: xxiii). As noted earlier, I focus on all those questions with an emphasis on the aesthetic relationality through my reading of the self as 'plateau of subjectivity' based on Foucault's *Technologies of the Self* (1988b: 25). This also foregrounds the role of photography as a representational device and the role of technology in producing opportunities for difference and thus for techniques of the self. Thinking again about the relationship of the self, the mirror, and the viewer, either imagined in the act of photographing, or real in the act of viewing a photograph a posteriori of its construction, the 'operational network' after Richter is a network of relations that operates towards communicating with each other (in

Derrida 2010: xxiii). This communication is the basis of the establishment of relationality, whether there is an other that is looked at in a photograph (of another), or the own self that is confronted through the photograph.

Looking at an image of one's own self is looking at an image of an other. By the way seeing oneself 'as someone else' in the photographs of others influences seeing oneself 'as oneself', the ellipsis of selfhood is perceived from a distance. The other helps to understand the bridging act that photography constructs as a space of mirroring. Even when looking a photograph of oneself, is it not manufactured from the perspective of the other? The self as an image is perceived from the point of elliptical construction, a point of looped referentiality of selfhood. In contrast to Derrida's linguistic employment, I use the term ellipsis here as a geometrical figure and form of looped referentiality, rather than as an omission. The construction of the self goes via the intermediary route of othering to find the way back to the self as an image. However, my use of ellipsis points to the lack of ontological congruency and identity between the image of self and selfhood. There is temporality inserted in this observation of a mirror. This well known image of self-consciousness as popularised by Jacques Lacan's essay 'Le stade du miroir' thus with temporality turns the relationality of the I through time and space – understood as a form of spacing – into an observation of the self (1966: 93-100). The omission of the lack of ontological identity in the understanding of the self arises from the temporal spacing in between the time the photograph has been taken and the time the photograph is being looked at. This act of mirroring, although a relooking, and regarding of the self nevertheless is of the same self and foreshadows the need of an analysis of techniques of selfhood. The main question is thus: is not photography the tacit technology that makes an observation of

oneself via the position of the other visible? Is not the other the interrupting aperture yet reflective interstice for a constitution of selfhood?

A photograph of oneself is a photograph of *an other*. The necessity of a relationality between self and other makes a presentation of selfhood, such as through photography, always at the same time a presentation of otherhood. Even a photograph of oneself taken by oneself inhabits the perspective of the other. There is no such thing as a self-photographed self, the self is constituted by the act of mirroring from the point of view of the other. The representation of the self is possible in the first place through this relationship, and informed by this epistemic process and ellipsis. The reproduction of self as an image is the closure of this loop. The vantage point of the other is inescapable, the other presents and doubles selfhood. The dislocation of the self into the perspective of the other is the opportunity for its presentation in an image. Without the other there is no self. Without the other there is no perspective on the own self. The other acts as the harbour and caller into presence of selfhood. However, there is more than just positionality and perspective at play in the constitution of selfhood, as much as there is more to photography. For Derrida photography has to do with time and differences, with the difference between presence and absence, and the difference between life and death. Besides being of identitarian nature, those differences have to do with time and space, and their function in representation and the constitution of subjectivity therein. As Gerhard Richter further notes '[l]ike photography, deconstruction is concerned, among other things, with questions of presentation, translation, *techné*, substitution, deferral, dissemination, repetition, iteration, memory, inscription, death, and mourning' (Richter in Derrida 2010: xx, original emphasis). The significance of deconstruction is the establishment of these differences in thought and as a form of philosophy. These terms and the links between

their nature and the nature of photography – as much as the other forms of representation analysed here – are of importance with respect to the interpretation of the self within and through representation.

A photograph of a self is of a self that passed, from the past, as much as it is a self now, there in this moment of observation, of looking at it. My reading of photography differs with respect to the understanding that a photograph, qua its existence as artifice is "of" the past, but the looking at it, and the mirroring of selves it can produce, is of the now. The recording of photography produces memory and remembrance, but at the same time, it unfolds within the momentary blink of an eye now, literally the *Augenblick* in German, and by privileging the mirroring function of photography as an embracing of the moment, it is possible to foreground processes of relationality at work in that moment. This is not to say that the past is discharged as a producer of meaning, on the contrary, the temporality of the production of selfhood is of vital importance in the presentation of the self in the now. However, whereas Derrida is mainly concerned with the 'effacement' of traces (2010: xxix), the possible disappearance of the trace of selfhood and its possibility of remembrance with technology such as photography, my interest here does not focus on the thanatographical reflection of the photograph as such, the archival forces of preservation of the "what-has-been", but on the forces of construction of presence of the "what-is-there" in the image. This means that I am thus interested in the 'disallowed and marginalised, even repressed, modes of knowing', the relations of the terms of deconstruction introduced above and their structural relation to one another (Richter in Derrida: xxviii). Within this construction of relationality, the focal point of attention is the body as the medium of the self.

The body as the subject in photography relates to questions of portraiture. The questions of portraiture are framing, composition, light, and other specificities of the

presentation that is in the representation. The purpose of the representation is the presentation of the body. The presentation in photography is the recollection or the recording of its trace of the past. Photography, however, as noted above, in my reading inhabits the possibility of presenting the body in the here-and-now of the moment of viewership, thus constructing a relation in the present moment in which the viewer enacts the relation. I find Jean-Luc Nancy's understanding of the body helpful here. In *Corpus* (2008) Nancy provides a reading of the body as medium of immediacy, or of unrepresentable nature, merely presentable. This framework of thinking the body through, however, is not reductionist or essentialist, but attempts to see the nature of the body as truly individual, and overwhelming, and overspilling in its nature of existence as excess. This means that the body is ontologically – within or inside the forms of the arts and literature in which it is encountered – outside of the discourse of representational theory as a form of aboutness, and outside the relations of semiotics. The body is primarily and exclusively itself. How to approach the body then, for instance, in the case of photography of the body? Again, thinking outside the thanatological dimension of photography as a recorder of death, or a death to come, here, Nancy suggests that 'a body is an image offered to other bodies' (2008: 121). This offering of the body is the invitation of an establishment of a relationality, in which the body as image of itself in all its itselfness or ipséité is approached as a harbour of meaning that is exposed to the outside. I follow Nancy here, who suggests some technicalities of bridging the relationship of the inside of the body to the outside.

The body relates a self in its embodiment to others. Nancy advocates that '[t]he body is neither a "signifier" nor a "signified". It's exposing/exposed: ausgedehnt, an extension of the breakthrough that existence is' (2008: 24). This point is made by Nancy

using terminology that is inspired by his reading of Freud. I see his use of the terms exposition and extension not as a reference to the inner life of the body that stretches towards death, but rather as the inner life of the body that stretches to the outside, to the world, and to the other. Rather than in its etymological retracing of psychoanalytic processes of interiority, outstretching, in its English meaning refers to the unfolding of the body, while the German *ausgedehnt* proposes a temporal dimension of duration as stretching, and the original French exposé denotes the aspects of visibility, emphasising the visual dimension of the encounter with the corporeal. Further to this, however, there is a compelling use of the slash or stroke "/" in the excerpt above. Underlining the temporal technicalities of the now I have outlined above, the body for Nancy is both 'exposing/exposed' or 'exposant/exposé' (2008: 24). I understand the slash or stroke sign here as a figurative sign of mirroring, proposing a sense of unison in difference through the interlocked nature, simultaneity and atemporality of the proposed system of a togetherness of 'now/then'. This temporal or grammatical double use of time, or inconsistency of "exposing" in the gerund as being in the moment and of the moment, an act of being in its exposition (without the objectifying connotation this might entail), while also being in passive mode "exposed", or denoting some past tense in that use is underlying the sense of breakthrough that Nancy links to existence. For me, it is a form of understanding the complications of the situation of the body, which is both itself, a breakthrough of existence, while also a carrier of meaning and offering for the other. In addition to all this, it is in excessive meaning. Also it underlines the temporality of being and having-been that I introduced above within the communication of the body and the viewer of the body.

The role of the body as exposition in photography is in line with the direct technicalities of observation of the body in reality. However, in order for the tracing of the

body to be these expository values, the photograph as a form of recording or writing has to accord to a certain set of principles. In *Corpus* (2008) Nancy terms those principles of presentation as follows, '[l]et there be writing, not *about* the body, but the body itself. Not bodihood, but the actual body. Not signs, images, or ciphers of the body, but still the body' (2008: 9, original emphasis). I relate his appeal to the body [corps] as opposed to bodihood [corporéité] to the functions of photography as the writing of light that can produce some ontology of and for the body that relates it to the world in its exposition as an exscription. The account of an ontology of the body and the possibility for an articulation of a self comes through an exscription (2008: 19). This form of exscription is what links the body to the self. I consider the self, as what Nancy terms exscription, 'language as body' (2008: 71). The self exscribes a form of inner life, and the body as a form of self is the exscription of the introspection that the self is, as much as an outward orientated exscription of appearance, an unfolding of a confession of the body as it is. This exscription of the self can be achieved with photography, at least photography is able to present the body and establish visual communication that relates and relates back, via the viewer.

The role of photography is the recording of reality, and the role of viewership is the establishment of a relation towards photography. This creates a form of unison between the viewed and the viewer. The body is able to be within this relation and to be its vital carrier. The ontology of the photographic and cinematic image is established through and with the look as a mechanism of opening and access – as a form of opposition to the overly connoted term of gaze – or other forms of voyeurism that Nancy neglects or rather opposes with their denotation of social meaning outside the sensual function itself. The ontology of the photographic medium is defined by its force of mirroring, of being in an act

of looking and being looked at: the viewer as much as the photograph is looking back while being looked at, and through this an establishment of a relation takes place. In *L'Évidence du Film* Nancy argues that:

> [t]he reality of images is the access to the real *itself*, with the consistency and the resistance of death, for instance, or life, for instance. [...] We are not dealing with sight – seeing or voyeuristic, fantasizing or hallucinating, ideative or intuitive – but solely with looking: it is the matter of opening the seeing to something real, toward which the look carries itself and which, in turn, the look allows to be carried back to itself (2001: 16–18, original emphasis).

This passage is of importance to my argument, as it links the temporality of looking introduced in the previous paragraphs in between looking, looked, and being looked at, with the function of the relationality as a form of access. '[A]ccess to the real itself' denotes the ability of photography to exscribe the real which I link to the conception of the self as the exscription of the body (2001: 16). The image of the body as self is thus the relationality of the body as access to itself. This relationality is established by the act of looking, and the vehicle that the look becomes by virtue of the ability to access a form of selfhood exposed. The importance of looking brings my discussion back to the beginning of this chapter and towards the notion of the mirror. The mirror as a site of image-production and self-production via an image of the body links the conception a relation to a self, whether it is an own self or another self with the conception of collecting a self. However, the forces at work in the constitution of an image of oneself function both through the mirror as a space of othering, as well as through the mirror as an access to the self that otherwise would be veiled from this perspective of the other. I will argue that the self can be seen through the

function of mirroring as an image of relation and an image of collection. This analysis will

be brought forward by a discussion of the photograph *Self in the Mirror* (1964) by

photographer Stefan Moses. During my discussion of *Self in the Mirror* and its process of

construction as an image I further develop an understanding of the temporality at work in

the act of viewership and the construction of the self based on afterness and collection.

Chapter 2: The Self and the Mirror – *Self in the Mirror*

Figure 1. The making of *Self in the Mirror*, Stefan Moses. 1964.

Looking at *Figure 1* grounds my argument with respect to the constitution of

selfhood. We see a making-of photograph of *Self in the Mirror* (1964) in which philosopher

Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno photographs himself. Adorno – as photographer – sits in the centre-right of the frame and observes his mirror image, while he holds onto a cable connecting him to the camera positioned towards our left. We spot this scene from a distance behind the mirror and the table, being literally *mise en scène* off-frame the actual photo from an omnipresent and omniscient panorama. Even though Adorno looks towards the front of the image into our direction, we are conscious that our eyes do not meet, that he looks at himself in the mirror. His image of himself is constituted by the act of mirroring from the point of view of the other – via the mirror. For us, the black and white image we "look at" here is an illustration of the ellipsis of selfhood, while we simultaneously witness in the image itself how Adorno performs the elliptical composition of selfhood. This performance, or as I suggest to term it, epistemic scene, elegantly enacts the relations between selfhood, photography and the mirror. Adorno sits between two images and their axes: the one in the mirror he sees, and the one he shoots through his shutter release in his hands. Both axes cross through him, and through the mirror. Literally holding onto the umbilical cord of the camera with his hands while seeing himself in the mirror, the photographer and subject of the photograph establishes through the sense of touch a photographic construction of their self as an image.

The use of the physical umbilical cord as shutter release in the photograph allegorises the relationship between photographer and photographed. It reminds me of the Nancean conception of a photographic image as 'access to the real itself' made earlier, while at the same time being an image of this relation for the viewer through the physical mirror in the image (2001: 16). The access to the real is expressed for me through the image being of physical nature by expressing a physical relationship, while simultaneously serving as a metaphysical image: an image – or a figure – of relationality itself. The looped relation

between the image-bearing photographic camera, and the image-taking, yet image-of-oneself producing photographer is palpable here through the physical cord bending on the carpet of the floor. The cord is the connection between the hand of the photographer and the camera, and an expression or figuration of time through a representational arrangement within an image. Witnessing the image of this epistemic scene here excavates the technology at work and at hand in the act of giving birth to the self as a photograph: the power of the transformation of the umbilical cord into an image, and thus the access to the production of an image of oneself. As Roland Barthes comments in *Camera Lucida* on the relation between photograph and viewer '[a] sort of umbilical cord links the body of the photographed thing to my gaze: light, though impalpable, is here a carnal medium, a skin I share with anyone who has been photographed' (1981: 81). The use of 'body of the photographed thing' and the 'gaze', a translation of *regard* – here used like Nancy's looking [regard] – points towards the relationality of the exposition, and the fixation of an image (1981: 81, 1980: 126-27). In the case of the 'thing' photographed being a body, I argue that the photograph creates as a 'carnal medium' the relation to a body, and more concretely the self of the body exposed (Barthes 1981: 81).

In *Figure 1* the body of the photographer and the immediate viewer of the photograph within the photograph are identical bodies. The body of the photographed subject and the look of the subject photographing are in an act of connection with one another, via the mirror. Since the photograph is a photograph of oneself, it is indeed the formation of the umbilical cord into an image of oneself that we witness from the exterior. The image as skin of oneself, to come back to Barthes's point, is the creation of intimacy towards oneself, via the process and the act of mirroring. However, the distancing look into the reflection provides at the same time a fixation of a momentary production of

an intimacy with oneself as an image. The photograph in its moment of becoming, in the moment of its creation, fabricates a tissue, a web interweaving the arrested matter of light into a form of skin [peau]. The transformation of matter of light into the process of writing of light manufactures the tissue of the self as an image, what is in more common terms referred to as self-photograph. The self-photograph as 'milieu charnel' (carnal medium) forms a skin [peau] of oneself, the skin that is understood to be the image that constitutes selfhood (Barthes 1980: 127). Rather than as a formation of relationality between the viewer and the image, the Barthesian umbilical cord here is the bearer of materiality of selfhood in the creation of an image of oneself. The ritual character of the epistemic scene that we witness is emphasised by our distance: our proximity to the scene and its carnal nature, yet our inability to be included in it. The actual self-photograph that is being carnally created is left in blindness for the viewer, as much as the viewer is not part of the skin.

Our parallax position and cultural knowledge of shooting photographs allows us to form a precise image of Adorno's self-photograph in our mind. As in every other photograph, the photographer needs the mirror, either imagined, or physically present, to perceive an image of himself or herself as an other. The visual self is the production of othering. The visual self is the production of a double. Being able in *Figure 1* to navigate between (imagining) seeing Adorno in the mirror, and seeing him as we see him in the blink of an eye moment (*Augenblick*), we do not face the 'paradox of selfhood' introduced in the opening of the section the photographer is confronted with. In our distance outside the frame we yet form an intimate relation to the unfolding scene, a scene of the production of an image of oneself. In a way, we are performatively positioned together with Adorno in the room and empathically enact a pursuit for the decisive moment of pressing

the umbilical cord, fixating a singular yet fleeting moment in time and shooting the

photograph. Nevertheless, it is ambiguous whether the photograph of the photographer has

already been taken, or whether it will be taken in time to come. Our imagined differences

and alterations of the photograph are independent and outside of time occurring in the

form of variation of position, mimicry and gesture.

Figure 2. Portrait of Adorno's self-portait, 1964.

Looking at *Figure 2*, a second photograph that documents the process of

creating *Self in the Mirror*, we can see a reflection of Adorno in the mirror. We do not see the

actual photograph *Self in the Mirror* Adorno has taken himself (of himself), but we have "one

of him" nonetheless in the mirror by virtue of the mirror's physical function of reflection.

Our capacity to actively imagine the image of Adorno in the mirror in the previous

photograph, where only the grey backside of the mirror was visible likely resembles the

mirror image we see here. Our familiarity with the reflective capacity of the mirror produces

the image in our mind. Whether *Self in the Mirror* has been taken already, or will be taken in a

point in time in the future becomes a moot point. We imagine an image facing the absence

of the image here: the image we look at approximates the self-photograph in construction.

Even though, in this photograph, we tangentially contact the Barthesian 'carnal

medium/milieu charnel' of the photographic self-production, we assemble in time – rather

than see – the self-photograph that is taken by Adorno (1981: 81, 1980: 127).

As a still life in both photographs, the desk influences our judgment of when *Self in

the Mirror* was taken. The desk displays a calendar with a date in time, an empty ashtray, a

reproduction of a flower painting, and some books on top of a newspaper, which, under

closer examination, are revealed to be sheets of music. There is also the plant in the

foreground (or background), as decor of the room, and other living and transitory thing

present. This hollow examination, this *studium* – to use the formulation of Barthes – reveals

nothing that changes the substantial *punctum* of the image (1980, 1981). The two

photographs of *Self in the Mirror*, the making-of of the photograph, and *Self in the Mirror*

itself, reveal differences between presence and absence, and life and death, here and now,

and before and after, rather than expose a timely difference and fixate a point in time.

Through the photographs untimeliness duration is excavated as a force of presence, and the

force of photography as such. Thinking again of the deconstructive power of the analysis of

photography outlined in the introduction of this section, *Self in the Mirror* displays

the 'operational network' of here and now, and before and after in relation to one another

(Richter in Derrida 2010: xxiii). The photograph also displays the way in which this form of

'metalanguage' is constructed and held together through and with the body and the object

and subject of the mirror as the central focus of the photographs (Ibid).

Figure 3. Self in the Mirror. 1964.

The self in the mirror is visible in *Self in the Mirror*, the proper or final arrangement

Stefan Moses chooses for the photograph of Adorno as seen in *Figure 3*.[1] The sitting

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[1] For Adorno's 'Selbst im Spiegel' see Stefan Moses, Ulrich Pohlmann and Marion Ackermann, *Stefan Moses, Die Monographie* (München: Schirmer/Mosel, 2002). For the two photographs documenting Adorno's 'Selbst im Spiegel' see Willem van Reijen and Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, *Grand Hotel Abgrund* (Hamburg: Junius Verlag,

arrangement and gesture of the hand is almost identical, or even identical to the previous

two photographs. Noteworthy is the differentiation of the position of the camera, the slight

vertical panoramic adjustment, and the perspective change adjusted by tilting the mirror

horizontally. Also, the viewer, or the image, or the mirror image – or all of those positions –

have changed and determined the final composition of *Self in the Mirror*. The mirror in all

the three photographs does not only queer the understanding of left and right, as those

spatial, commonly perceived anchors of orientation in space can shift, exchange, dislocate

and vanish, by virtue of shifting perspective, mirroring, or the ejection of the mirror.

Additionally, one of the ways in which all three images share a characteristic that punctuates

the photographs is the use, placement, and function of the mirror as mirroring object. All

of the photographs above excavate a '*Zeit-raum'* [*time-space*], to use the term of Gerhard

Richter (2011: 125). In *Afterness*, Richter both translates and summarises this notion in his

discussion of the making of *Self in the Mirror*, as a 'temporal space' that brings forward a

collision with a conceptual perspective (Ibid). Time, conceptually speaking, becomes a

figure of space, time spatialises. The concept of time-space will receive continuous attention

and elaboration throughout this section in the analysis of the images to follow, and

in particular the films to come. Here, the conceptual space is an opening to an

understanding of composition, the technology of photography, the exposition of Adorno's

body, and as I will argue, to an image of his self. The mirror as the central object and agent

of othering creates this conceptual space: both for us, and for Adorno, in between here and

there, present and absent, seeing and waiting to be seen.

The use of the mirror in *Self in the Mirror* opens a time-space, a conceptual frame of

representation. The mirror as territory, as a space of projection and recording provides a

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1990), p.18-30.

non-temporal space that enables a thinking of layered time, an injection of time into its representation. Thinking again about the dispute of when *Self in the Mirror* has been taken in time, or shot in time, with respect to *Figure 1* and *Figure 2*, the particularity of time in this photographic scene and arrangement becomes foregrounded. Time is not a function of the photograph, or the capacity of the camera, but an inserted concept into an account of the image. The layered shadowing and future tracing of time enabled through the production of presence of the mirror reminds me of Gerhard Richter's employment of the term 'suspension' in relation to the non-reproductive nature of photography when analysing Stefan Moses's *Self in the Mirror* (2011: 121). Attending to the relations of identity and non-identity of the Adorno portraits of self-portraiture, Richter allegorises photography in its plurality as 'a force field of relations that erratically thematise, always one more time, their own status as a relation, a relation that differs from and with itself even while suspending itself' (2011: 121). This notion of suspension relates to the concept of time-space introduced in the last paragraph. The use of suspension denotes fixation and arrestation, while suspension also offers the contact and erosion that comes with deference and delay, an effect Richter embraces privileging the temporal effect as afterness. In my understanding of the effects of afterness, it is selfhood of the subject (of time) that is negotiated in the erratic field of relations, rather than time.

The function of photography, as explored in *Self in the Mirror* is the arrestation and simultaneous suspension of time. This double function might inhabit a paradox at first glance, however, I clarify this thinking of the grammatical double use of time in the act of viewership via Nancy. The alterity that the afterness produces as an effect of difference goes beyond the scope of the temporal, as this alterity is about being and the lack thereof. Afterness touches here the ontological characteristics of self as selfhood, in its

existence in time outside the photographic composition of a photograph in time, rather than as variation of time in self-in-time in the time-space of the particular photograph. The temporal space of photography allows for selfhood to present itself, a form of composition of a self both in time, and outside the properties of time. Fixation and arrestation are at play or at odds with suspension and delay, and a field of erosion and dissolvance. Ultimately, the point that Richter makes is important in that if allows us to think of photography in the double function of collection of time, and dispersion of time, two key terms that I will explore further on in the chapters of Section II. While time is collected in a photograph, it is simultaneously dispersed, and selfhood as pictured punctuates the images as a field of relations, rather than a point of relation or identification. Thinking again of *Self in the Mirror* however, the exposition of temporal difference reminds me of the point Nancy makes concerning exposing and exposed at the same time: that selfhood via photography presents itself or "is". Shifting between two modes of ontological being within its nature as representation, the role of the viewer shifts via and with the mirror as reflecting the status of the body and self, the mirror, and the reflection of their own status as viewer via the mirror. My reading of Richter's notion of afterness is as an access to the subjection it depicts, rather than as a means to an end to access time as a figure of following. However, the after or other in time, is also just one of the two categories in which suspension is achieved in this photograph of Adorno's self, as well as in photography overall, as the other force of space, is also in afterness or in the play of fixation and suspension, primarily through the mirror. What space, however, is the mirror ontologically?

The mirror serves as the space in which selfhood via the perspective and reflection of the other finds itself projected back as an image of selfhood. Already Walter Benjamin notes in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* the alienation, or the othering

the mirror – Benjamin uses 'Spiegelbild' [mirror-image] as an allegory for photographs – produces in the wake of photographic technology (2003: 27). However, Benjamin underlines that in this function of realism as the defining naturalist or objective representational quality of photography, mirroring is a double function. The mirror image can be peeled off, suspended from the physicality of the real mirror, and is transportable. Spatio-temporal infidelity to its own proper construction positions the mirror image in the field time-space, and any self in the field of selfhood. This point concerning the mobility of the image (of the "I") has consequences on the peeling-off of selfhood. The mirror here as a glossy figure of substance of mobility of selfhood as an image is thus making photography a technology of un-belonging. Nevertheless, this un-belonging, or othering is simultaneously, the opening for any meaning, as the self can be transported via the force of othering into and out of 'erratic fields of relation' (Richter, 2011: 121). Roland Barthes describes this function of the photographic image as follows, '[f]or the photograph is the advent of myself as other: a cunning dissociation of consciousness from identity' (1981: 12). The temporal as dimension of the ontological in photography gives presence 'to the advent of myself as other', to use Barthes's words: selfhood disassociates itself from the singular self-in-time (Ibid). It is important to note what the photograph peels off here, according to Barthes. Whereas in the lived self there is consciousness and identity, the photograph displays identity minus consciousness ['retorse de la conscience d'identité' (1980: 28)]. This difference the photograph creates, in terms of subjectivity in its breathing aliveness, and its unconscious objectifying depiction as photograph, however, is not to be seen in a field of false sentimentality or loss. On the contrary, as Susan Sontag explains, for Barthes 'impersonality [is] the highest achievement of the personal', and selfhood is the advent of othering (1983: xxiv).

Photography as a mirror and fixation of time and space serves to collect selfhood. The photograph of a self is the collection of selfhood, exposed and exposing, here and there, fixed and unstable. Through the nature of the photograph as dislocating, as in *Self in the Mirror* via the mirror as a field of relation, selfhood is collected. The collection of selfhood that is produced in this image, however, nevertheless is not a stilled life, but a stilled aliveness. Barthes writes on this presentational capacity of the image, when he notes, '[p]ainting can feign reality without having seen it…in Photography [sic] I can never deny that *the thing has been there*. There is a superimposition here: of reality and of the past' (1981: 76, original emphasis). The reality of viewing the photograph of a self is its confrontation in the here and now, and thus a collection of selfhood. The relationship that this collection of selfhood advocates arises from an understanding of the ontology of the images as a vehicle for collection. Photographability, in my reading of Barthes, is the ability to collect, and the ability to superimpose, to recollect that collection. Superimposition, however, is the reconfiguration and renegotiation of an impossible temporality, simultaneous absence and presence. It is thus more accurate and useful to note presentation as the principal characteristic of a photograph, instead of representation, as the photograph is of time and in time, and presents always again its presence in time. Nevertheless, the superimposition comes to its relational limits in interpersonal terms, when ontological finitude as death overshadows the image. Whereas *Camera Lucida* is a meditation on the collection of loss, an epistolary take on photography via the remembrance for the loss of a part of oneself, or one's relation and history towards the world via Barthes's mother, interpersonal relationality to selfhood can be seen in further expository terms. Nancy proposes the term 'nous autres', potentially translatable as *we others* or *us others*, as a noun, or personal pronoun in which the mirroring of the substance and ontology of photography – introduced as

reflective surface tension in the introduction of this section – can be understood (2005: 105).

In *The Ground of the Image* (2005) Nancy evokes the act of viewership as an interpersonal experience. In my reading and interpretation regarding *Self in the Mirror* "nous autres" is the othering, while keeping the sameness within the other that has adverted/found advent as the self. Nancy writes:

> Each photograph forms a *nous autres* in which, for a moment, the eternal instant that trembles in the photo unites photographer and photographed who are now one – a single identity assumed, and presumed, for which the photograph is only the supposition and the support. Consequently, although every photograph articulates this "nous autres", it also ends up pronouncing and performing a tacit *I* that it itself immediately and improbably *is*. (2005: 105, original emphasis)

This important passage brings me back to the questions of unity or unison of exposed selfhood, as much as to the question of photographing and photographed. The relationship between self and self, and self and viewer, it seems, can be seen along the lines of a momentary establishment of connection. Perhaps, this can indeed be seen as a form of 'silent *nous autres*' (2005: 105, original emphasis). However, this form of superimposition or "over-seeing" and "coming-upon" is only happening to one another when there is a concrete exposition of a self achieved, across time and space. Immediateness occurs as the superimposition of an assumed eternity via the oneness of perspective, through the momentary unison of photographer and photographed, as a play on and with perspective, self and other, identity and alterity. A collection and a formation of a *nous autres* is an

arrangement in space and time, possible only through the collection of selfhood in which the viewer takes a part, as bystander or superimposing creator of the image.

The advancement, suspension, and alterity of the image of oneself as an other is experienced through the mirror space. With the mirror space, as much as with photography as such – as a mirror – there is no "still life". There is always an image of oneself which becomes an image of an other. In contrast to a fracture of the I – which Lacan recognises in the act of recognition of the owned self in a mirror (in what is termed the mirror stage) – in the afterness of photography the fragmentation of selfhood is primarily of spatio-temporal relationality. Photography as a marker, delay, and extension of time, produces a shock of the now through the presentation of selfhood. The mirror establishes a space of confrontation of the I, not as identification of a self now with a self now, but with a self here/now, and a self elsewhere/then. Michel Foucault elaborates on the mirror as a space of relationality and the self in the 1986 essay 'Of Other Spaces'. He notes that,

> I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself where I am absent (1986a: 24).

This passage opens the spatial questions of belonging as a matter of and in space. For Foucault the mirror serves as a privileged space of othering and shadowing, while at the same time, giving, or to come back to the Barthesian formulation, advancing an image of oneself. The tension of the mirror in Foucault's analysis of space is the dual identity of the mirror as power of reflection (of here into an elsewhere) and epistemic access (to an elsewhere of here via the here). The mechanics of visibility of the mirror make it possible

for the viewer that, as Foucault further observes, 'I begin again to direct my eyes toward myself and reconstitute myself there where I am' (1986a: 24). This means that the mirror is a space of direction and redirection and a form of technology through which selfhood can be advanced: from and towards the self.

Foucault here, like Barthes, is not discussing the body and face as constituents of selfhood, but the territorial relation of mirror and space in abstract terms as form of advancement of self. The mirror is a space of difference between utopia and heterotopia, paradoxically both elsewhere and real, both othering and *propre*. In its property, the mirror emerges as a space of destination and origin, to simultaneously also emerge as a space of departure and advancement. In *Self in the Mirror*, the position of Adorno in the space of the photograph exposes this bidirectional and transitory property. Presumably for the benefit in lighting, as it collects front and back light, Adorno positioned himself at the threshold of the *Durchgangszimmer*, the "walk-through room", a corridor-esque space. This particular space in which the writing of light traces an image provides the oscillation between meaning and materiality. The walk-through room is opened on both sides, and the space of this image is an opening for understanding selfhood as materiality. It offers a surface of a ground, a space of an image, while at the same time incorporating its own groundlessness: it dissolves through its own constitution. More than just constituting a position in the space of the photograph, there is an allegorical meaning beyond the singularity of the photographic scene to the transitoriness of the space. Like Barthes's Winter Garden Photograph of his mother, which we envisage seeing, but never encounter in *Camera Lucida*, Adorno's room is a liminal place of in-betweens, of circulation and passage. The intersecting room conserves an image and serves as an allegory for passing of spaces and times, and the mirror returns the image departing from the self back to the self. Like the

transitory winter garden, the "walk-through room" here is an allegory for the passing in space between outside and inside, and the passing in time, between life and death, and light and darkness.

The three photographs of Adorno at are not merely self-portraits, but testimonies of an epistemic scene. We observe an episteme: the enactment of a representation of the act of self-representation in the presentation thereof. In other words, the scene both is and tells of what it is, it is simultaneously medium and mediating, technological and technique. The representation inhabits its own making-of as part of its presentational construction. I understand epistemic here together with the conception of collection outlined earlier as a form of image production through a scene, an arrangement of forces. Analogously to the garden that Foucault takes as example of spatial arrangement, framing an epistemic scene enables the foregrounding of the forces at work in the constitution of a photograph, and particularly the forces of space and time at work in the operational network and metalanguage of photography (cf. 1986a: 24-7). Space is primarily, a "set of relations", and a photograph as an epistemic scene exposes abstract relationality in embodiment. The abstract here and there, now and then, are materialised and collected through the self of the exposer, exposing, and exposed, in which the mirror serves as a force of exposition of temporal and spatial difference. The epistemic scene in *Self in the Mirror* thus takes afterness and othering, and presents this as a way in which the self is framed as episteme.

Crucial to my argument in this first section is how the presentation of selfhood is achieved through the use of what I term a technique of the self. As argued in the introduction of this thesis, the term technique of the self is borrowed from Foucault's seminar entitled *Technologies of the Self* and the study of the self as a production of writing therein, analysed from the Greco-Roman culture onwards (1988b: 22). Here, I take the term

or inquiry of the writerly production of a self to a visual dimension as the collection of a self. In line with Foucault, I am interested in the ways in which a 'human being turns him- or herself into a subject', or the articulations of subjectivity forming the techniques in which selfhood is legible (1988b: 3). In the seminar Foucault is interested in

> technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way[s] of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality (18).

Recalling operational network as metalanguage of photography, I understand 'operations of their own bodies…so as to transform themselves' as transformation of the body enabling arrangement, projection, and reflection of selfhood (1988b: 18). However, rather than understanding the production of an image as the production of 'immortality', in this first section I understand it as a means in which relationality is enacted to the self and world outside aliveness and death in the moment of the now (1988b: 18).

My reading of Foucault's *Technologies of the Self* interprets the fixation of a self as a technique in its own right. Written after the completion of the third volume of *The History of Sexuality* entitled *The Care of the Self*, the American seminar and English text bridges the historical occupation of understanding human relations via sex to the self as the holistic term through which subjectivity is understood, enacted, and regulated through others. For me, a technique of the self implies that the visual image collects a self and lays bare at the same time characteristics of selfhood and the nature of space and time, or other 'operations' of representation (1988b: 19). Whereas in the second and third section

of the dissertation I will be focusing extensively on the differences within selfhood, in the following I continue to limit observation on the treatment of space and time. The epistemic scene is a disciplinatory framing, through which the presentation of selfhood is enabled to present itself. The visual collection of selfhood as the technique of the self takes the writerly aspects of confession and introspection and turns them inside out, where selfhood exposes itself through a visual fixation as an image. This process is paired with Nancy's notion of presentation, exscription, and the presentation of the body. What does this mean for the first example at hand, *Self in the Mirror*?

Self in the Mirror lays bare the elements of a photograph of a self in its arrangement as an epistemic scene. This means that the viewer as a Nancean *nous autres* confronts a presentation of selfhood. Rather than constituting a recording or a representation, the distinctive presentation of the epistemic scene displays a technique of self. The technique of the self that *Self in the Mirror* presents is the photographic production of a self. This is subject to the broader implications of the way in which time and space are framed, and the self collected across the forces of representation, which are at the same time self-reflexively exposed. On the one hand, it is the arrangement of exposition of forces of fixation through the mirrors and the physicality of the photographic arrangement that it displays. As noted earlier this includes the fixation of an in-between space, and arrestation of a moment in time. More interpretatively, I see an imaginative function of ephemerality in *Self in the Mirror's* technique of the self, and the exposition of Adorno's selfhood as philosopher standing in-between ideas, compositions and the mirroring function of thought and articulation, and the viewer. The imaginative dimension here arises through the chosen space of projection the photograph offers, a true Foucauldian 'plateau' of subjectivity (1988b: 24). Within this plateau, the viewer is consciously implicated.

Self in the Mirror constructs a technique of the self in which there is a looped relationship of the selfhood presented with the self of the viewer. Through this act of looking and understanding the presentation of self-representation, the power of this epistemic scene consists in its force of the viewer becoming aware of their own self, as the look towards the other reminds the viewer of the look towards themselves (to use the grammatical portmanteau devoid of gender), and additionally of its power to be represented. By sharing the look with the hidden and invisible spectral spectator – the photographer Stefan Moses that provides the scene for us – our self-consciousness articulates itself in the position outside the photograph, off-frame hidden in invisibility. The omission of the viewer in the cycle of representation enables the ellipsis to close and thus simultaneously to be completed through the contact with the viewer. We understand, by looking at all three photographs, the ellipsis of representation of selfhood in its completed cycle, with us, the viewer, as a partaking bystander, experiencing a passage in which we understand how self-consciousness is enacted. However, we also look at a self-portrait of representation itself as an epistemic scene: a *Las Meninas* of photography. Like in the 1656 painting *Las Meninas*, where Diego Velázquez includes and impositions the viewer into the relations of the scene in the painting, the epistemic forces of photography unfold through Stefan Moses's testimonial vantage points of the two making-of photographs of Adorno's *Self in the Mirror*.

Chapter 3: From the Mirror to the Canvas – *Las Meninas*

Figure 4. *Las Meninas* by Diego Velázquez. 1656.

Diego Velázquez's 1656 painting *Las Meninas* testifies to the power of a representational image to present and excavate the viewer's sense of selfhood. The painting displays the powers of representation in the creation of a looped relationship between the image viewed, and the viewer's position outside and inside the image. Like *Self in the Mirror*, the painting presents a double-image, an image of making a painting, while simultaneously engaging in an act of mirroring, inside of it, and outside to the viewer. However, the subject of the materiality of viewership in visual and pictorial representation more broadly, such as photography is addressed here, and fundamental questions of viewership and representation are self-reflexively posed by the work through the gaze of the painter within the painting looking at the viewer. The painting engages in the excavation of viewership that leads to a form of passage of the viewer during the confrontation of the painting. The viewer closes the representational cycle through the imaginative projection of their image in the making onto the canvas within the painting, and through this mirror gesture also closes the presentation of *Las Meninas*. The viewer places themselves into the inside of the image, and from inside of the image to the outside, from here to there, from now to then, back to now. For me, *Las Meninas* thus is an image of the relationality of the viewer and power of image-production to expose while exposing, to cross time-space, and to create a looped relationship in-between viewer and image.

In the discussion of *Las Meninas* in *Les mots et les choses* (1966) Michael Foucault does not address the double passage of the "representation in the image" – itself located in a space of passage – and the viewer. The cycle of representation transforms from an observation of an elliptical loop into a representational episteme. The power of the regard of the viewer presents the representation, enacts that re-presentation through what becomes an epitome in its own right. While observing the painting, the viewer becomes

self-conscious of their own self as being integrated into the image, through the projection

onto the canvas the self-consciousness of the viewer produces an imaginative self-portrait

that is integrated into the representational mechanics of the exposition of the image. The

viewer looks, exposes, and is exposing, while being simultaneously exposed by the

image. Thinking again of Barthes's argument concerning the nature of photography, the

fact that consciousness is split from identity and then retroactively enacted again,

Las Meninas foreshadows this photographic quality already in a seventeenth-century

painting. The viewer is engaging in an act of orientation within the boundaries of the

painting and the mirror-producing qualities of the observation of this image of themselves.

The image, from the writerly quality of introspection moves as visual episteme here into the

unfolding of the viewer as witness of their own viewerly as readerly self. It is the language

of representation that speaks, performs, presents this episteme, not the image.

The location of the viewer's self in the observation of *Las Meninas* underlines the

enactment and process of viewership of being located both within and outside the

image. Foucault supposes an integration of the viewer into the 'entire cycle of

representation' in the painting's painting scene (2005: 12). For Foucault the viewer is both

looked at by the male painter in the painting, and by virtue of this gaze, apparent 'subject'

[*sujet*] of the painting – and thus ultimately – observing the painting of this ellipsis in

entirety (2005: 12 & 5 [1966: 21]). Even though this integration as a subject, marks, as

Foucault recognises correctly, the constitution of a 'spiral shell' [*coquille en hélice*] subject to a

'never-ending flicker' in the reciprocal relation between the male painter in the painting and

the viewer, the epistemic scene of *Las Meninas* is not considered by Foucault in its force as a

transformative, ritual-like, observation of the architecture of visibility (2005: 12 [1966: 27] &

335). Whereas in the making-of photographs of *Self in the Mirror* (*Figure 1* and *Figure 2*), the

photograph as blind spot of the two photographs is filled by our imagination of the self-photograph of Adorno as the other, we are not a bystander in *Las Meninas*. Our imagination of ourselves composes our self-portrait in *Las Meninas*: we transform our sense of self into an object of painting. The androgynous viewer's subjectivity is the subject of this epistemic scene, and the possibility to advance their self as an other.

As a viewer of *Las Meninas*, we are outside the image while simultaneously being able to influence a movement within the pictorial space of the image. The viewer's understanding of selfhood is negotiated both by the other as the visitor in the staircase and a symbolic self as the king and queen in the mirror. We, as the viewer, are not only the subject of a painting-in-construction, in which we are the subject and thus sovereign of, which we in fact enact, but we are clandestinely in passing of its creation. The articulation of self-consciousness and the viewer's constitution or enactment of a self in the 'spiral shell' comes through the architecture of representation as a passage (Foucault 2005: 12). This is supplementarily, also embodied in *Las Meninas* by the visitor in the background, in the liminal place on the threshold of the staircase and the room (cf. Foucault 2005: 12). Here, the staircase serves as allegory of the passage of time through space, and vice versa, time-space is presented as interlocked paradoxical hybrid travelling, traversing, and transitional figure. Foucault states that the ambiguous visitor is coming in and going out at the same time, like a pendulum caught at the bottom of its swing (cf. 2005: 12), seen in stillness as it is in physical motion. The image of the still-yet-moving pendulum serves as a metaphor for the opaque fixation of selfhood, as if it were not actually in movement. Through the observation of the other-in-passing on the staircase of time and space – a Kafkaesque Odradek-like figure in a space of passage, this telling threshold of durational force-relations in which a moment is encapsulated is embodied by the other, as the mirror-image of one's

own selfhood. The look and the position of the other, in the background, behind, yet, in the scene, rather than opposing our perspective, "surveils" and confirms it: the other here is not an object but the figure of a passerby and spy. However, the recognition of the temporal and spatial fixation of the other, is also a passage of a cognition of the viewer's sense of selfhood. The other serves to present how we are necessarily fixated in our imagination as one image of ourselves in *Las Meninas'* painting-in-painting of the recognition of our self as viewer.

The epistemic scene of *Las Meninas* is the production of an image of a cycle of representation. Our selfhood as viewer is, in the force of the passage that the representational ensemble creates, negotiated between the differences of our temporal being, i.e. here/there, and life/death, and our ontological and existential being as self in our self-consciousness, as "sovereign" of our selves. These differences materialise in *Las Meninas*, like in The Winter Garden Photograph of Barthes's *Camera Lucida*, and *Self in the Mirror*, in a transitional space. The viewer is in a transitional situation of watching this ensemble, while at the same time the viewer is conscious and self-conscious of this to take place. It is not only that *Las Meninas* provides, as Foucault argues, an 'oscillation between the interior and the exterior' (2005: 12), through the placement of the mirror in the back. *Las Meninas* also extends the realm of the interior and exterior difference into an ensemble that enables a sense of self to be enacted for the viewer. It enacts relationality to the self via this ensemble, rather than just being, as Gilles Deleuze notes, a 'poem of receptivity' that presents itself (1988: 81). *Las Meninas* thus constructs a four-dimensional ensemble of representational forces through the other as the passerby and spy, the painter as the architect of visibility, the mirror as object of conceptual identification as sovereign

self yet other, and the life-sized frame of the painting as visual space in which the

viewer projects themselves.

The tension between the viewer of the scene of representation, and the viewer as

the subject of representation is the passage of a recognition of selfhood for the viewer, the

oscillating and cutting moment in which we are able to understand the construction of our

self as a collection of those forces. The technique of the self that is of *Las Meninas* is the

production of a self of the viewer as subject, in contrast to the reproduction of a self for the

viewer as subject. In other words, the presentational power of the painting is the enactment

of a production of our self. *Las Meninas* uses the self of the viewer as the subject "of" the

painting and as subject "in" the painting. The self is negotiated in the realm of temporal

difference through the traversal of pictorial space in and outside its proper construction.

Like in *Self in the Mirror*, where the production process is in its own presentation as

being enacted, we as the viewer have no clue whether the canvas that is inside the painting

of *Las Meninas* or is blank, or whether the painting is in the process of being painted, or if

the painting has been painted already. Our alterations of our own appearance, like in the

self-photograph of Adorno, are not by virtue of the punctuations of a fixed point in time:

our pendulum of self-appearance is comprised of forces of mimicry, gesture, and age.

Temporality as an image materialises through its meaningful figure, as the embodiment of a

sense of moment and afterness, rather than the measurability of differentiality. The

temporal alternations are expressed in corporeal difference in the viewer's self-embodiment:

they are an expression of time, rather than accounting for its moment of coming into being.

However, in contrast to Adorno's photograph of photographing himself, in which the

portrait is a technological product of the time-released apparatus of the camera, in *Las*

Meninas we are able to find the embodiment of the power of representation in the embodied figure of the male painter.

Foucault considers that,

> just as we are about to apprehend ourselves, transcribed by his hand as though in a mirror, we find that we can in fact apprehend nothing of that mirror but its lustreless back. The other side of a psyche. (2005: 7)

This form of mirror in *Las Meninas* is and becomes, exposes while exposing both the technology of representation, painting, and the product of representation, painting. Also, this mirror is a ground of this pictorial form of representation, yet through its ability to provide the ground for an image, it reminds us at the same instant of the groundlessness of any image of our selves. The ground of an image of our selves is a function of the imagination that the mirror as space can provide for the self within the act of viewership. *Las Meninas* enables the collection of a sense of self for the viewer within the flickering of the mirror function of the painting and the passage-like experience of passing the cycle of representation, and the acknowledgement thereof. I consider the power of the painting to produce a self, as the pure or 'purest form of representation' that *Las Meninas* enacts (Foucault 2005: 18). This stands in contrast to 'representation, freed finally from the relation that was impeding it, can offer itself as representation in its purest form', as the relation that Foucault sees *Las Meninas* enacting (2005: 18). The 'limits of representation' that *Las Meninas* displays and crosses into what critical theorist David Carroll considers the realm of an 'extra-aesthetic' experience (1987: 59), is in my reading for the emergence of the presentation of the self of the viewer. The selfhood of the viewer appears in the presentation of the representational ensemble and cycle *Las Meninas* enacts, and is produced

by it. The viewer's self is produced within the structure of the empty shell or function to be filled, in the groundlessness of the painterly mirror.

The canvas as a mirror functions in the same way the mirror in *Self in the Mirror* does: as a blind spot. The canvas is the space of the other in which we imagine transubstantiating ourselves through the presentation, either by virtue of painting, or by virtue of photography. Both technologies allow for this presentational episteme to be enacted, independent of their nature of representation, which in both cases present a meaningful ontological articulation, a coming into being of a viewer's self. Photography is precisely the technological mirror that the hand of the painter in *Las Meninas* cannot be: an actual technology of mirroring, and an 'other side of a psyche' (2005: 7). The self is coming into being in a self-assertive process in photography, not in the production of a painterly image, which nevertheless in its construction remains powerfully held together by the forgetfulness of its othering as a principally subjective process. In painting the episteme becomes enacted by virtue of an invisible hand in the image as an object, while in photography selfhood is enacted, as seen through the other by the force of the photograph as optical unconscious. Whereas the psychological passage of the 'sagittal dimension' [*dimension sagittale*], as Foucault (2005: 26, 1966: 12) calls the relation to the painting of the painting in *Las Meninas*, is an observation of pictorial tracing in the Adorno photographs, in *Las Meninas* the passage is and becomes the act of realization of self-consciousness of viewerly selfhood. Like the mirror in the Adorno photographs, the canvas is empty on its back, not only visually offering a space of projection on its backside, but on its front necessitating an imaginative articulation, as I have argued, providing the space of materialising selfhood as an image through the imagination of our self-image on it.

Chapter 4: Video – The Collection of Self in Immersion

The epistemic scenes of *Self in the Mirror* and *Las Meninas* both enact a viewer's sense

of selfhood through pictorial movement of the viewer within their representational spaces.

The movement, the advancement of selfhood is through the representational space of the

photograph and painting. However, this movement, although taking a stretch of time, is

relational, as I have argued, rather than durational. What happens when we introduce time

not as only as relational or figurative form of temporal difference into the stillness of fixed

images, but take the advancement of time as the factor that enables an unfolding of an

advancement of self to occur? In this chapter, I establish time and temporality as durational

aspects of the technique of the presentation of selfhood, examined through video-art via

Rosalind Krauss's essay 'Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism' (1976) and exemplified

through my reading of Adrian Piper's 1983 video *Cornered* in the following chapter. By

analysing the mirroring function of the durational unfolding of the self in *Cornered*, I

establish and interpret the relational forces of a temporal, durational exposition of

visual selfhood. Therefore I argue in Chapter 5 that *Cornered's* technique of the self is the

exposition and confrontation of a self via the articulation of an immersive monologue, as a

powerful address of the self as the other. Here in turn, the other returns into the viewer's

self as the enactment of the presentation of the viewer's and listener's articulation, indeed

presentation of selfhood.

      Video art extends the earlier discussion of the visual collection of selfhood through

an image, but also introduces duration as an aspect of the quality of the image. To recollect

the earlier argument, *Self in the Mirror* produces an arrangement in which the self of the

photographer exposes while being exposed. *Las Meninas* foreshadows the cinematic sense of

flickering of self and subject of the lens-based arts in the construction of a presentation of a self for the viewer. Where does video art bring the discussion of the collection of the self over time? More than just a quality of the image, video art works through and with duration. The collection of selfhood advances and suspends itself while collecting a sense of self on screen and for the viewer. My interest in the durational image thus is to argue that with duration, in video and – in the next two sections – film, selfhood can be on the one hand collected and on the other hand dispersed; selfhood encapsulates itself in transition of its construction. As I will argue in this chapter, the specificity of video in comparison to cinema is the presentation of a self in a direct immersive confrontation of a self in an already bracketing sense of duration. While I continue my earlier discussion of collection in Section II with my interpretation of *The Congress* (2013) and *Boyhood* (2014), I also move to the qualities of dispersion of the relationship of the viewer towards the display of selfhood with my interpretation of *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited* (2013) and *Cool World* (1992). Before turning towards film and the exposition of selfhood through epistemic scenes within feature-film length durational material in Section II, I interpret the durational aspect and implication for the collection of a self in the shorter immersive form of video.

Returning to self-photography as a point of analogy and genealogy of video, however, as self-photography this time "in" time, video art epitomises the relationship of the camera as mirroring device. While shorter in time than feature film, my interest in video stems from its potential of embracing singularity with respect to the overall more simplifying fields of relation of location, cinematography, and mise-en-scène. While sharing aspects of this singularity with respect to the earlier analysed untimely, or non-moving images *Self in the Mirror* and *Las Meninas*, my analysis of the medium video also provides the transition to the focus on film in the remainder of my study. Video, so my reading of the

medium with respect to the analysis of the cinema of the self, provides and anticipates what I later term "moments of selfhood" in Section II and III. This part of my argument thus engages with the conceptions of movement and advancement of the self through duration. Thereby I interpret the temporal exposition of the self, not in terms of notions and conceptions of temporal difference, such as in *Self in the Mirror* and *Las Meninas*, but indeed observe the unfolding of selfhood within the interaction of a camera over time. The ellipsis of the self and the other has moved to an ellipsis that is constructed and constructs itself over time – in a bracket – and also plays into the technicalities of its own exhibition, when thinking of the conventional looping in which video is presented and interacted with for the viewer, for instance in a museum environment. For me the question is, whether the mirroring of the camera and the work of the self of the filmmaker, camera(wo)man, and depicted self on screen is one that exposes a self for the other, and retrospectively enacts the selfhood of the viewer. This means that, like in the earlier part, the relationship of the self on screen or on the monitor is analysed with respect to its relational aspects. However, this time this analysis of selfhood intricately linked to the complications of this relationship that arise through the means of time as duration that intrudes, features and works within this relationship. At the same time, the relationship I am interested in remains the same: what is the meaning of an image of selfhood – in and through time – and what is the relationship to the viewer that emerges through this enactment?

In the seminal 1976 essay 'Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism', Rosalind Krauss diagnoses a relationship between the emerging video art of the early and mid-70's and the notion and potentially arriving cult of narcissism. To use Susan Sontag's credo and coda of 'Against Interpretation' (1966), Krauss considers the possibility of both the hermeneutics and erotics of artistic video works of artists such as Vito Acconi, Lydia Bengli, Nancy Holt,

and Joan Jonas, and more broadly of video art as a medium, to be of a fundamentally narcissistic nature. The nature of this asserted narcissism, however, lies within the techniques of employment, the use of the novel technology of the video camera with respect to the artist's representational apparatus or creation of images. The shock of the new here is thus that the work potentially engages an erotics of the medium and the artist, as much as hermeneutics of this relationship of the artist towards their medium. In other words, narcissism appears rooted within the aesthetics of the work, within the mode of producing and the resulting production. These aesthetics, however, are in turn influenced by the use and performance with and of the camera as being a device that relates to the selfhood that is in presentation and presented as a product of the video. How the video camera is being used, for Krauss, equals in a way, in a mirroring function the backside of the image that the viewer sees in the product or presentation of the work. At the same time, however, like the mirror in *Self in the Mirror* or the invisible frontside of the backside of the canvas in *Las Meninas*, I suggest that the camera is not being a mirror for the photographer or painter alone, but intentionally so for the viewer.

According to Krauss, artists in staged solitude and dialogue with themselves perform the experiments with the (then new) technology of the video camera. However, this dialogue, argues Krauss, in effect turns out to be an address of the selves of the artists or filmmakers towards themselves, without the intention of legibility or address towards the other. If the medium of video is narcissism, and the object created is narcissistic, and the artist an narcissist, then what is video, if not a destination of a psychological drive of narcissism? This is the line of argument that Krauss constructs. These relationships, however, are more complicated, as the camera in video art works as a mirror of the self, and also a mirror to the world. The apparent lack of the other is an interpretation of the viewer

and critic of the way in which the medium of video is used. The other is figuratively there, the mirroring function of the camera resembles the position of the other that reflects, produces the gaze which is then considered to be the artist's self. The role of the other – in which the lack of the other is one option – is chosen by the artists to produce meaning; a space is produced *as if* there was no other. Contrary to Krauss's argument, the asserted lack of the other is not a testament of the neglect of the other as a psychological default or existential template. The viewer, according to Krauss however, in the reading of the works with programmatic titles such *Centers* (1971) by Vito Acconci, *Vertical Roll* (1972) by Joan Jones, *Air Time* (1973) by Vito Acconci, *Now* (1973) by Lynda Benglis, or *Boomerang* (1974) by Nancy Holt is not only absent in the directionality of these works, but effectively, the viewer is also not incorporated into the mechanics in which the works are exhibited and consumed. The loop between the selves of the works exposed and the self of the viewer is not established, the makers of the videos exist as selves without any sense of or orientation towards otherness, claims Krauss. In other words, the question for Krauss is one that I have asked earlier in this first section with respect to both *Self and the Mirror* and *Las Meninas*: where is the viewer located in the loop or elliptical relationship with the exposition of the self viewed?

Figure 5. Nancy Holt (with Richard Serra), *Boomerang* (still photograph), Video, 10min, 1974.

The main question of video is the effect of time as duration within the unfolding of the work. Whereas in the works of photography and the painting discussed before, time functions outside the medium, as time is halted, arrested and fixated within the medium and continuous outside of it, video records, produces, and reproduces a temporal presence. Does duration of time in video nevertheless enable a collection of selfhood to occur? Is this collection an act of the self for the self exclusively – as contended by Krauss – or is it an act that is also for and towards the viewer? Nancy Holt's *Boomerang* serves as an example of the self in suspension of itself via the force of othering, as an effect of temporal mirroring and delay. In the video Holt speaks, and while wearing headphones, as seen in *Figure 5*, the headphones reproduce her voice in an approximately one second delay of the

recording. The cinematography (or continuous self-photography) remains in a stable close-up of Holt's face accompanied by the experimental setup inside a barely noticeable recording studio in the background. Yet, an improvisational live atmosphere with Richard Serra commenting, and interrupting audio trouble in the middle of the video takes some attention – and time – of the viewer away from the seemingly endless repetition of Holt's voice and its delayed echo over the ten minutes of the video. Through the delayed replaying of Holt's spoken voice to herself a looped relationality of the voice to the self is enacted.

In *Boomerang*, the other is shown, made visible, as a loop of the self. The other in *Boomerang* is the return of the voice of the self of Nancy Holt. Othering here is a form of mirroring and doubling by virtue of the recording and echoing of Holt's self. Intruding into Holt's understanding of the present moment and her self, the viewer observes, indeed hears the attempt of a fixation of a self in suspension through the act of voicing. Besides the stasis of the situation, the camera angle, the progression of the video and the face of Holt, the voice is all there is in movement. Through the continuous mechanical reproductive replaying of Holt's voice – self-consciously speaking about the act of speaking – a re-enactment of the already spoken voice takes place "in" time, in a looped delay of repetition. This process of overlap (of past and present) is the experience of selfhood through the act of othering that the video presents, and enacts for the viewer as a shared, intimate experience. *Boomerang*'s technological setup allows for an encounter of self through the recorded, taped, and taping self as the rewinding return of another self as oneself in snipingly delayed time. With the parlance to oneself Holt produces a temporal overlap of speech and echo, departure of meaning and to resonate upon its return. The self here is in sync, counter-intuitively through the non-identity of the spoken and the echo – the process of othering of the self is here an experience of rhythmic unison in pre-identitarian ways.

Yet, the self is in an identitarian process of mirroring, as an aesthetic function and performance.

The returning voice touches the self. As seen in *Figure 5*, Holt's hands gesture towards capturing the other as the voice of oneself in her own self. Holt's words are othering in their sense of disconnection and dislocation of the past. As a function of the materiality of the tape, the sound plucks or glitches while intruding back into Holt's articulations of the present moment. Thinking of Derrida's visual claim of being unable to see oneself while (in the act of) seeing, introduced in the beginning of this first section, the modality and sense of hearing shares a similar conundrum (cf. 2010: 31). This paradox or impossibility of analogously hearing oneself while speaking is made visible and audible as an act of mirroring in the video. The voice becomes a mirror of directionality, yet also an address, a rapport, a form of glue, and an echo of the self. As Holt suggests in the video 'I have a double take on my self, I am once removed from my self'. The removing yet returning, and thus heterotopic experience of self in the suspending brackets of time of the "now" of the video informed by speech and echo are concluded by Holt to performatively be 'a constantly revolving involuting experience': thinking of the viewer's experience of *Las Meninas*, indeed an act of spiral shelling of the self, here enacted in an durational and aural sense.

Evacuating the viewer from the equation of the constitution of the artwork's communicative structure, Krauss contends that instead of a relationship of the self to others, or the other, video art works inside and towards itself. The situation in which video art is constructed is one in which the other disappears – and with it the viewer. The involution of the self is an involution towards only the self, and thus a disappearance of the other. This is considered an existential condition of the production of video art in which

the camera work is also the work towards the presentation of a state of self. Thus, temporality and space are supposedly claustrophobic in video art. For Krauss in Holt's *Boomerang*, the viewer's situation is the confrontation of a 'prison of a collapsed present' (1976: 53). I would rather suggest that the 'boomeranging', to use Nancy Holt's formulation within her work, is also a function of the address of the self via the mirror of the camera to the world: the viewer. However, is this boomeranging an ellipsis that leaves the self of the video maker exposed while not relating to the world but merely back (to use the figure of the boomerang) in time to itself? Or is this an ellipsis that through the engagement of the world and the viewer becomes closed and thus incorporates the viewer into the mechanics of the work?

Thinking of the video work of Vito Acconci for which Krauss argues that 'self-encapsulation – the body or psyche as its own surround – is everywhere to be found in the corpus of video art' (1976: 53), I see the occupation with the self as a means of address to the other via the radical lack of the other – like in *Boomerang* – within this address. The ellipsis in *Boomerang*, I argue, is closed through the witnessing and recognition of the viewer's self as listener and viewer, and thus incorporates the viewer into the mechanics of the work. The spectatorial engagement with the viewer is necessary for the production of meaning, and the interpretation of the work. Video achieves, like the previously introduced self-photography, a corpus through the camera that enframes the vision and holds time. By looking with and conceptualising the perspective of the camerawork in photography and video the viewer produces an ellipsis of the self visually seen, and enacted by the viewer. Time is the medium of this address, as the operator of synchronicity understood as an overlap between self (of camerawork) and self (seen through camerawork), and self and

(imagined and real) other/viewer. The viewer shares the synchronicity of the camera, while being able to position themselves simultaneously inside and outside the work.

Video art enables articulations of the self. Video, indeed, is a technique of the self. For Krauss, the other disappears in the world of the narcissistic medium of the world of the "I". For me, however, the question here remains within the critical interpretation of these works and the durational visual work of the self to ask, whether there is irony or sarcasm in those works, or whether they should be indeed, taken at "face value" as narcissistic. The rhetorics and performance of self might very well point towards the exhaustion of the medium in its representational capacity, as well as to the alienation experienced by the artists through the production of work. I agree with Krauss's conclusion that exhausting the medium to exploit it from within is a productive way to understand the expositional powers of video art (1976: 59-64). Yet, for me video is used as a medium to describe the need for an other, to understand the construction of a self. Whereas Krauss (1976: 58) considers narcissism as 'perpetual frustration' through a reading of Lacan's *The Language of the Self* (1968), this frustration considers artistic intentionality in the therapeutic value of the production of the work, rather than in its interpretation (in Sontag's sense) by a viewer. Foucault's *Technologies of the Self* (1988b), on the other hand (inspired by Christopher Lasch's *The Culture of Narcissism* (1978)) considers the productivity of a self – whether narcissistic or not – in the construction of a self for the reader, or, as I argue here, viewer.

Video art exposes a self through the use of the camera as epistemic device. Rather than understanding the epistemic condition of video through the use of the camera to be intricately linked to a self that relates to itself, I understand the work of video to be the production of an epistemic scene of address to the other: the viewer. As Krauss argues, video art allows for the 'vanquishing of separateness' between the self of the video maker

and the object of the video work as it 'illusionistically eras[es] the difference between subject and object' (1976: 56, 57). For me this is an argument of immediacy and for the viewership of video art to be immersive. Video can produce an immersion into a self of an other and thus be a medium of relationality, what in Krauss's words could be a 'real psychological situation' (57). Video is the exploration of the presentation of selfhood (of others) as others in which the viewers can locate themselves as other. The importance of the act of othering is crucial in the confrontation of the viewer with video work, to compose and recompose a sense of selfhood within that encounter. The viewer is embedded in a process of observation, empathy, and a passage into the other, rather than observing a purely self-serving singular self-self looping relation. If the works of video were truly selfish and narcissistic, there would be no viewership, no act of relationality possible in the first place. My understanding of techniques of the self within the understanding of the mirror of video work as mirror-reflection, analogously to Krauss (56-57), implies the mirroring of the video camera as being inherently of the nature of being a mirror for the viewer, if not visually, then figuratively.

Chapter 5: *Cornered* – Confronting the Other/Self on Screen

Figure 6. Adrian Piper, *Cornered: A Video Installation Project (*three still photographs). Video installation. Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. 16 min, 1988.

The durational unfolding of a self is a function of mirroring of the self and

other. Like in photography and painting – as earlier established with *Self in the Mirror* and

Las Meninas – an exposition of a self is presented through the production of a durational visual epistemic scene. The introduction of time, in addition to the introduction of continuous camera work as a reflection of that time, produces a mirror, indeed, as foreshadowed in the previous chapters, as an endless spiral function. Self-photography, as argued earlier, is the instalment of a mirror, however, not only on the self presented, but also onto the viewer interacting with the presentation of the self in the chosen medium. However, beyond a fixation of a particular perspective, or conceptual perspective on the self, time provides the means to collect a self. For me, collection is the act of movement of the self, and accumulative movement of meaning from a singular origin, or towards a singular direction, or as a singular address. This collection, in the act of recollection though the viewer, engages in a dialogue with the presentation of a self between the viewer and the presented self and is thus a communication of a loop of self and otherhood. Before moving to the chapters of Section II and the analysis of cinematic selves in feature length cinema, I here introduce the force of a confrontation of a self via the articulation of a self as self, and non-paradoxically also self as other, as a means of an immersive presentation of selfhood.

Adrian Piper's *Cornered* (1988) – like Holt's *Boomerang* – is a mirror of directionality, address, rapport, and echo of the self. However, *Cornered* extends the earlier discussion of *Boomerang*. In contrast to *Boomerang*, the position of the speaker is not in delay and echo to its own voice, but the echo is the resonance of the words spoken in the viewer's apprehension thereof. The viewer, unlike in *Boomerang*, is not observing, but distinctively implicated in the rhetoric of speech and the mechanics of address of the video: through the viewer's thought the video's loop of address and continuation of this address comes to a closure. It is the viewer that closes the loop through the confrontation of an other, and the

intimate feeling of being addressed as a self. Without the viewer, the address, and thus the

video itself would unfold into a void, yet be meaningful through its presentation in the

arrangement of the museum. In fact, this is one of the important mechanics in which

Cornered works: as a repetitive speech act voicing into a void, through the act of listening

interrupted in its directionality by the immersion of the viewer, but as a political act not

dependent on the viewer for its existence as performance. Yet, the speech of the video

restlessly continues without the influence of verbal response of the viewer,

and unacknowledged in physicality of the situation the viewer as other remains silent; the

ultimate strength of the video is Piper's voice, which silences the other with the immense

and immersive weight of argument and reasoning. The rhetorics of the video work thus

point to questioning the overall status of being and belonging, through the

specific questioning of the establishment of race as a societal institution of difference, in

and through an act of questioning its very foundation. This racial difference as a powerful

means of community and separation is deconstructively exposed to be an institution of

power beyond control of the controlled population, who, additionally, as argued by the

video, bears the weight of responsibility for this status quo.

As seen in *Figure 6,* the video installation is on display in one corner of the Museum

of Contemporary Art Chicago. The television set screening the looping videotape is set up

on top of an upset wooden table leaning against the corner. This installation is accompanied

by two birth certificates framing the videotape display. The viewer is invited to sit in the

provided pyramidal seating arrangement, a numerically increasing number of three rows of

seats. Like in Holt's *Boomerang,* the video's cinematography is decisively simple: a single shot;

a medium close-up of Adrian Piper sitting at a table, with her hands resting on the

table. This single shot is a progressive zoom throughout most of the video's duration

halting into a close-up of Piper (from her shoulders up to the top of her hair). This zoom both emphasises the progression of the argument and foregrounds Piper's emphatically bourgeois costume, with white pearl earrings and a white pearl necklace, and potentially, her visually racially ambiguous or "passing" appearance. Beginning by stating Piper's racial identity, the video progresses with a deep meditation on the meaning of self-identification. The continuous visual flow of the video through the continuity of editing puts extended emphasis on the meaning of the face as display of the self, in addition to the display of the controlled, balanced, and unirritated manner in which Piper's monologue, despite its argumentative complexity, flows in an almost singular unstoppable thread of evocation. The only moments of suspension of the flow of speech are physically necessary brief breathing interruptions, and pauses of suspense and suspension in the rhetoric of questioning.

Cornered addresses the question of the meaning of selfhood and the location of this meaning in the axis of self and other. The sense of selfhood of Piper, as articulated by the voice, is to be located and found in the conversational encounter with the other, the viewer, who, however, is implicated in the process of its construction. Through the rhetoric of cornering herself, Piper frames the viewer as the receiver of her verbal address and confrontation. Although the prose of *Cornered* is written from Adrian Piper's perspective, and written towards or stemming from that perspective, this perspective is hegemonically imposed upon, and thus not a desirable perspective, although rhetorically defended by Piper to a certain degree, but the perspective is one of disarray. The tone defines the elaborate address of the video, confrontational through its seemingly endlessly questioning voice. Piper announces while looking into the camera in the beginning of the video: 'I'm black. Now, let's deal with this social fact, and the fact of my stating it, together' (2005: 182). Already here, the use of 'social fact' bound with 'together' as the form in which this

sentence is spoken, while eye contact is made, indicates the inescapability of the speech act situation: we, meaning you, the viewer, and me, Adrian Piper, are in this situation as an ensemble, a situation, defined by its togetherness. The other sense in which 'together' is used here, goes back to the question of perspective: stating a social fact and dealing with it, at the same time, acknowledging a fact by virtue of repeating it.

This rhetoric of responsibility of the viewer-as-listener effectively silences opposition and dispute, as it relies on the power of moderation and agreeability paired with the authority of elegance, as a characteristic of the argumentative flow. Piper creates intimacy in this address by speaking of oneself as the impersonal other – 'a social fact' (2005: 182). Thereby, Piper uses the thought and stigma of the other as the inner thought which indeed, as desired by the other, gives meaning to the self, rather than attempting to dispute it. This element of appropriation and re-appropriation of the dominating language or discourse is the rhetorical and performative cornering of her self. It is not a narcissistic relation to the self that Piper advocates or "un-corners" in *Cornered* but a relation of the self to the other and the other to the self. The loop rather than impasse of the self is accomplished through the othering, which, however, is embedded in the function of the text: who is it who I am, and how is it defined by you, the white viewer, the self that is the other which decides upon my own self, as the dominating giver of meaning? Or, to use Piper's own words with respect to the meaning of her address, 'why does my telling you who I am have that effect? Do you feel affronted? Or embarrassed? Or accused?' (2005: 183).

Cornered is an address of the self as other, and non-paradoxically, addressing the other as a form of self. The video builds a relationship between Piper's self and the selfhood of the viewer, and renegotiates power dynamics of orientation in the space of

society and the perception of embeddedness in time outside itself, outside the work. While

the video addresses the viewer's selfhood and self of Piper within the work, all it addresses

is meaningful outside the video work. The video encapsulates a representational

arrangement, a speech-act situation, and a confrontation of a face that becomes what it is

through the viewer's dialogical apprehension thereof. *Cornered* is an important video work

that exposes the self twofold. On the one hand, it extends the mirroring function of

photography, the act of viewership of photography that I have argumentatively established

earlier in this section. In *Self in the Mirror* the viewer looks – alongside – into the mirror,

while the photograph itself is a mirror of the gaze of the photographer. In *Las Meninas*, the

viewer is observed – via the mirror of the painter/painting of him or herself painting the

scene of painting. On the other hand, *Cornered* exemplifies that the mirror that video art can

present, can be both of the self of the filmmaker and the viewer at the same time. Piper

explicitly turns self-consciousness from herself back onto the viewer, emotionally

questioning by asking the viewer about their feeling concerning the constitution of class,

gender, and race within their conception of selfhood. This point is an important remark

concerning the presentation of the self in the manner of twofoldness: the mirror goes into

both directions, into the self on screen, and the self of the viewer and listener. Thus with

the auditory exposition of text that *Cornered* offers accompanying the militant yet formal

confrontation through Piper as a visual self, as argued above, introspection of the self

through the verbal excavation achieves a manifold presentation of the self, which, however,

is accomplished in its speech act through the resonance of the cognisant viewer, and the

placement of meaning outside the representational dimensions of the work.

  Cornered offers two further implications for the argument of my study. Firstly, as a

work of video art, the cinematographic arrangement of the work paired with the sound or

the verbal text of the video achieves an exposition of selfhood. Thinking again of Foucault's *Technologies of the Self*, this presentation of selfhood is indeed an exposition of a 'plateau' of subjectivity and identification (1988: 24). The plateau of subjectivity, however, here is the politicisation of the body through the institution of race: binary, immobile, assigned, valorised. Indeed, as I have argued earlier in *Self in the Mirror*, as form of relationship between the self of the viewer and the self on screen, the exposition of the plateau of subjectivity offers an understanding of the mechanics at work in the constitution of a fixation of selfhood. However, rather than on the basis of a photographic bracketing of time into a distilled perspective, *Cornered* uses an inflexible bracketing of subjectivity, and in this cornered position explores the flexibility of stretching this position performatively. The invasive demand for resonance of the viewer and listener (and of society at large) to assert the validity of its argument is addressed through the questioning of race linked to the judgment thereof in terms of the foundation of the social institution of race in the first place – or indeed, as plateau of subjectivity.

Piper advocates that '[b]ecause if someone can look and sound like me and still be black, then no one is safely, unquestionably white. No one.' (2005: 184). I understand this intrusive reflexivity of Piper's argument, evolving in the realm of selfhood of the viewer and listener as an assertion of the importance of resonance in the expositional meaning of the work. This means that ignorance, arguably the most conventional response to undesired societal or personal confrontation, is thematised towards the end of the video to prevent the selfhood of the viewer to remain untouched by the representational exposition. Indeed, the closing of the video goes back to the beginning of the verbal text by thematising the 'social fact' of the politicisation of Piper's body by virtue of the institution of race, evoking thoughts of an adequate response of both viewer and herself (182). The video closes with

the words, '[w]hat are you going to do' (186), after which a fifteen second pause and a fade out to black follows, and the white lettering on black ground appears 'WELCOME TO THE STRUGGLE!' (186).

In addition to the exposition of a 'plateau' of subjectivity through the politicisation of the body as harbour of selfhood (Foucault 1988: 24), *Cornered* secondly uses time-space to advance orientation and address. Analogously to the earlier discussion of *Self in the Mirror*, Richter's notion of time-space is helpful here, as a 'temporal space' that brings forward a collision with a conceptual perspective (2011: 125). This conceptual perspective, however, stretches over time, is of and with time: a moving photograph, a moving address, and a moving position of the self. However, there is more than a simple enumeration of time, or prolongation of a singular position in time at work in the video. The position of the self of Piper is a relation in difference, and in suspension of itself and its proper conclusion, which is in the response of the other. The repetitive iteration of the argument and the posture of the body in the video of Piper as a performance invests energy in the collision of the inhabitance of potentially inseparable bodies. While the time-space of the video of the of the viewer and Piper's self on screen is shared, the intimacy is one of spacing, deferral, suspension and non-identity, indeed a Nancean relationality of contact through the from of 'skin-show' or 'expeausition' (2008: 33-36). *Cornered* is the application of a conceptual perspective of time-space into a personal yet impersonal positionality, orientation, and address, stretching itself into conceptual collision.

In *Cornered* the notion of epistemic scene is extended to encompass the medium of video, by virtue of its treatment, as a whole. As anticipated by the earlier video work mentioned and discussed via Krauss's essay, most notably Holt's *Boomerang*, video art manages to encircle the self via the mirror of the camera, and the presentation of self to the

mirror, and the camera. Thus, video art engages in the projection of the self onto a sense of the other. In *Cornered* the epistemic scene the video presents is the engagement with the camera as mirror, as a presentation of the self towards the other, a sense of self as I, towards a sense of self as you, and the communicative exchange this situational and relational aesthetics can offer. By virtue of the establishment of a textual, verbal, and situational technique of the self through the address of Adrian Piper, the flickering of the momentary image, as introduced earlier with photography and painting, here is shifted to the sense of selfhood of the viewer. The viewer, by the technique of the self of Piper being mobilised into the space of the address of the other, mirrors itself through the invitation to the semantic ellipsis Piper offers in *Cornered.* The technique of the self of *Cornered* is the flickering of subject and self in the shell of representation of the durational image and the form of the epistemic scene as dialogue of self on screen, and self of viewer. Ultimately, my argumentative interest is in the concrete presentation of the self *Cornered* and Adrian Piper offer. My conclusions concerning *Cornered* that will carry the argument further into the analysis of film are thus reflections on the questions of inhabiting a self, and collecting an other to relate the other to that self.

There are two main conclusions that I draw from the engagement with *Cornered* and my interpretation of its epistemic scene, technique of the self, and presentation of self in this study before moving on to the analysis of cinema. *Cornered* is composed in the rhetorics of "I", "you", "we", personal pronouns Nancy explicitly pays extended attention to in the essay 'Nous Autres' (2005: 100-107). Those words are pronounced to enact not only a sense of shared intimacy, but to enact the presentation of the representational situation itself. I propose that the meaning of *nous autres*, in Nancy's previously introduced sense, as a superimposition of viewer and photographer is extended in *Cornered* (cf. 2005: 105).

Cornered's address as text strongly evokes a passage of Nancy's argument, in which he declares, "'[w]e" is always in *statu nascendi*, and it is precisely this that *nous autres* designates: a distinctive alterity aimed at, desired, held at a distance' (2005: 103; original emphasis). It is the immersive aesthetics of video that epitomises the meaning of relationality of *nous autres* in *Cornered*: the looping of "I" and "You" in the communicative structure of the ellipsis of the video into a formation of a momentary *nous autres*. This is felt as an act of orientation in the physical realm of orientation in space and time for the viewer, and this embodied response towards the video is made possible through the continued contact and spacing that the durational medium of video allows.

Further to this, the relationality of *Cornered* is based on the production of another within the construction of a presentation of a self. It is not only that the perspective of the photographer or video artist is shared, like in *Self in the Mirror*, but also rather the position of the viewer is invoked in the aesthetics of the piece or situation. The expression of the self-consciousness of the performer and self on screen is the self-expression of an other through the verbal address, and through these performative and situational aesthetics, the aspect of *nous autres* is indeed relational to the body, rather than just to the materiality of the medium of the artwork (such as photography). *Cornered* uses duration as prolongation and extension of the epistemic force and tonality of the momentary blink of an eye moment of photography (earlier associated with time-space) into an extensive mirroring sequencing thereof in the duration of sixteen minutes. In other words, *Cornered* develops the momentary sense of the spiral shell attributed to the situation of the Nancean exposing the self/the self exposed into another additional realm of exposing the other/the other exposed. To use another figure that approximates the French *coquille en hélice*, the spiral shell in which the viewer is ingrained in *Las Meninas* moves into a spiral shelling, an

involution into the mirror mechanics of production and consuming the temporal image (cf. Foucault 2005:12; Foucault 1966, 27).

SECTION II. The Cinematic Self: Selfhood as Collection and Dispersion

Film is a medium that uses and produces time and space. Through its aesthetics of duration, cinema is an account of time. With the introduction of narrative, the question of the selection of visual material becomes further complicated with respect to the attention given to specific sequences and scenes. This material, on the other hand, is itself subject to a choice. In my study "the cinematic self" is the term I use to describe my frame of looking at films: what is the specificity of time and space with respect to the self in the selected films? Looking at Ari Folman's *The Congress* (2013), and Richard Linklater's *Boyhood* (2014), I emphasise time over space, and collection over dispersion, as forces that act upon the self, constitute the self. In the latter part of my theoretical interpretation of *The Cinematic Self*, I briefly turn away from film to a perfume concert and its re-enactment *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes* (1902) by Sadakichi Hartmann and *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited* (2013) by the Institute for Art and Olfaction. I flip the earlier arrangement of emphasising time over space, and thereby thematise space over time, in a blindfolded viewerly experience: the viewer here becomes a cinematic self, dispersed in space, in an intrusive cinematic experience. This enactment of dispersion of space rather than the collection of time is further emphasised with my reading of Ralph Bakshi's *Cool World* (1992), in which a singular sense of self for the viewer is in constant negotiation of inside and outside, absence and presence, and live-action and animation. *Cool World*

culminates in the presentation of this dialogue through the aesthetics of the hybrid assemblage of live-action and animation image as a "hyper-film". My reading of this visual and sensory material is motivated by a specific methodology that builds upon Section I, while continuing to nuance the notion and particularity of selfhood as encountered through cinema and art.

The conception of selfhood is built through the analysis in which the cinematic self is understood to emerge qua encounter by the viewer as aesthetical-ontological set of relations. Rather than pointing towards the set of relations within selfhood that are "of" time and "of" space, I interpret the self as embedded in "time & space", while also relating to a specific time, and to a specific viewerly and worldly space. This, in turn, means that there is both the attempt in my analysis to speak about the specificity of the filmic material, while also taking into account the implications for both cinema and the society in which cinema is produced, screened, and consumed by the viewer: the current 21st century neoliberal age. With my analysis I aim to excavate specific scenes – as introduced in Section I, indeed, epistemic scenes – of the selected films and durational artworks that contribute to understanding, in my singular interpretation, a broader climate of screen studies, digital culture, theory of film, philosophy, and cultural criticism. Suggestively, I aim to understand the self in its postmodern, neoliberal, or simply twenty-first century condition. Time and space, as current as ever in this age of the now, are the main conceptual forces that inform my understanding of selfhood. I postulate that spatio-temporal analysis of the self, within the cinematic form and outside it, within the frames of its constitution in time and space and beyond, in the world and society that it is taken from and a communicative object in, is key to an interpretation of a contemporary aesthetic-ontological condition.

Within my interpretation of time and space, I analyse and conceptualise the cinematic self through a methodology of close readings. Using the concept of epistemic scenes developed earlier, I focus attention on the key moments of expositional force and power in the films, together with observations on the specificity of the ontological characteristics of the individual work analysed. The epistemic scenes of my selected material serve to speak beyond their bounds in time and space towards a broader sense of understanding the presentation and exposition of selfhood outside the frames of film analysis. What is the self in the 21st century? What is the role of the figure of the mirror and duration, as earlier developed, in the cinematic self? How does duration inflict and impede the relationships between the self and the viewer? What is the role of the mirror in the durational aesthetics of cinema? Which forms of difference, suspension, exposition, and afterness are suggested by the selves on screen, and what is the effect of the encounter with those forms of cinematic art on the viewer? What is the relationship between photographability and the potential for exposition of selfhood? What are the forms in which collection and dispersion work on the self? These questions will lead the argument and show that collection and dispersion play a crucial role in the comprehension and indeed interpretation of the self in its condition as force of cinematic and philosophical relationality.

I move beyond analysing the singularity of the durational moment of photography, painting, and video, as a bracketing of time with the introduction of feature-length film. With respect to the individuality or singularity of the scene of depiction, the act of mirroring of selfhood although of and in duration, appeared to be stable in the earlier examples from photography and video. In the analysis of cinematic works, the mirroring is of another nature concerning the ability to fixate the observation of a self in a particular

time and space. Directorial cinema through the use of editing – absent in my earlier analysis –complicates the aesthetic forces that sculpt a visual self. Yet, I argue, there is a continuation of the presentation and exposition of the self within the earlier introduced structures. With the introduction of narrative into the evolvement and treatment of time, the viewer finds themselves in the interpretation of an arrangement of selves. My analysis turns and concludes its theoretical foundation with film as the medium of recording and unfolding, mirroring, and presenting the self. The durational aesthetics, established through the locus on the self in my earlier reading of video art, increase their force of relationality in the cinema of the self. Rather than as simplified narcissistic mirror, this cinema establishes the durational unfolding and the exposition of the self, and in particular in the epistemic scenes, introduces the force of a collection of selfhood.

As a close reading of the durational aspects of the cinema of the self, I unbracket the earlier readings of stilled imagery to my methodology of a scene or sequence analysis. By focussing on specific selves that are presented in the following films, my method moves to the interpretation of specific scenes in close readings as a way to interpret those scenes as inherently epistemic, with respect to the argument earlier developed. What are the ways in which time and space are employed non-conventionally, both within the cinematographic and the narrative realm? What is the collection, respectively dispersion of the self that we can see in these films? How does the collection and dispersion change the relationality between viewer and self on screen? How does the viewer relate to the world? The preceding questions provide the guidelines in the analysis of two films concerning the collection of selves on screen. The collection of the self occurs within the framework of time and space. However, the selected films, further to the collection of selfhood, simultaneously problematise key moments of selfhood.

This occurs in *The Congress*, as an ontological change to the status of the self occurs in the moments of loss of selfhood, enacted through the copy of the self, which can endlessly reproduce itself, irrespectively of the selfhood of its original bearer. This self is collected (through and via the copy), doubles, and vanishes, or melts into spheres of selfhood of a non-identitarian dimensionality to its bearer and world beyond any neo-realist understanding of time. The loss of the self is portrayed in the simultaneous loss of the world, through the total collection of selfhood and immersion of a world in which nothing but the self is encountered, so that there is no othering, no world left.

Another cinematic experiment engaging in the exposition of selfhood through the collection of a self is *Boyhood*. As an epistemic sequencing, *Boyhood* continuously embalms, and produces a self, in a flow of time suggesting a force of embalmment, and in a temporal narrative collage edited by temporal cuts that seamlessly spiral into one another. Thus to summarise, *The Congress* displays an example of the loss of the self in the mirroring collection of Robin Wright as Robin Wright or as a copy yet collection thereof, as the production of a reproduction of her self. This reading is supplemented with an interpretation of *Boyhood*. The mirror of the self finds its continuous embalmment in *Boyhood*, and in the unfolding of the self of Mason, through the reproduction of the production of his selfhood.

The friction of the simultaneous use of live action and animation images in *The Congress*, and the friction of the use of fictional and non-fictional storytelling in *Boyhood* invites regarding these films in an innovative manner. Their somewhat overall queer appearance is not with respect to genre genealogy, but has to do with the complications of narrative employments of cinematic technology and durational time mirrored in the presentation of selves. I propose to use the term "hybrid films" for those two

films precisely for the particularity of their narratives, ontologies, and styles. The films, through their use of the future as one of the points of temporal orientation, and anchor, and indeed horizon are not critically received to break with the current cultural tendency to understand reality bound in the brackets of the closed 'horizons of the thinkable' future – late (internet surveillance) capitalism (Fisher 2010: 9). Obscuring the actual meaning of the films, the insistence on genre tags such as scientific-fiction, or biographical film distract both criticism and interpretation from the presentation of selves centering the orbiting narratives. Both films are rooted in the tradition of cinematic realism, through an emphasis on reality, location, style, acting, and costume, to record, document, present, and unfold a self. On the other hand, both films radically evacuate themselves from any interventionist film historical tradition, and in their avant-gardism pose foundational questions of the aesthetics of this cinema of the self: relocating the space of the human experience into a temporal realm of collection.

In this study of "the cinematic self", I further complicate the sensual aspects in which the self on screen is understood. The self as encountered through cinematic forms of exposition is seen or lost in space in the visual mirror of cinema: in distance, in a process in which the interiority of selfhood is exposed, or folded into space. On the opposite side of the mirror, in the negotiation of the viewer's sense of selfhood in the encounter of the presentation of the self on screen, the sense of selfhood disperses by confrontation, as earlier proposed by my reading of *Cornered* (1988). Outside the intimacy of contact that is established through the exposition of selfhood, forces of space, articulated in the experience of distancing and dispersion, work to change the durational aesthetics in the matrix of manifesting yet destabilising relationality. While *Self in the Mirror* and *Las Meninas* serve as prototype forms of difference and recording of selves, I complicate the

relational aesthetics of cinematic theory, and propose with the dispersion of selves, through the relationality of the senses unbound of vision, in concluding effect to be of a dispersing nature for the viewer's sense of selfhood. It is here that I draw on the olfactory, as the sense besides the auditory, and the visual, in which experimentation in the aesthetics of time in a cinematic framing have historically taken place in (modernity understood as) the cinematic age. Through the ritualistic cinematic presentation of smell, a relocation and dispersion of self for the viewer is suggested, in my reading of *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes* and *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited.*

The 1902 *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes* performed in New York failed, what the 2013 Los Angeles re-enactment paired with sound effectuated: a presentation of a representation, the unfolding of meaning through clouds of smell. The ontology of transgressing the ontological realm in the aesthetic sensual experience here digresses into a logic of fluid boundaries of selfhood, of looking at a self and looking into, renegotiating the self of the viewer. This suggests complicated ontologies for the viewer's sense of selfhood: continuously re-territorialised and reterritorialising, and fragmented and fragmenting – dispersing durational realms and spatial spheres of time, and collecting a self in the loss and in the losing and dispersal of one's self. As a second interpretation of dispersion, my subsequent reading of Ralph Bakshi's *Cool World* suggests another radical intervention into the relation to the self on screen. Compared to *The Congress*, the previously discussed epistemic condition of the film presenting a copying collector of a self, *Cool World* uproots the canonised, rigid, exclusionary ontological aesthetics of the live-action colour image, the black and white image, and the animation image. As I will establish in my reading, the spatial here and there amalgamate in a wretchedness of the self, dispersed in narrative spatial anxiety, in a fragmentary, amalgamate, cartographic realm of hyperreality, and the

relocation of selfhood in multi-dimensionality. While the loss of self of Robin Wright in *The Congress* provides a singular thread of dislocation, on a vertical temporal axis of selfhood, *A Trip to Japan* in its revisitation disperses horizontally in space. In my reading of *Cool World*, on the other hand, the ontological re-locations and queerings of reality completely and totally disperse the self of the viewer as a form of loss in loosing oneself. In this viewerly dispersion of the self, the viewer's self confronts the disintegration of space in a form of contact: the materialist ontological spheres of existence disintegrate and form and reform anew. Through death and afterness thereof, allegorised by the intrusion into a comic, artistically self-induced world – the "cool world" – a hallucinatory synthetic excess of the real is suggested, amending the viewer's self in its own "trip-to-the-self"-like function.

The analysis conclusively suggests complicated cinematic spatio-temporal aesthetics in this cinema of the self. Selfhood is in its continuous cinematic production, or loss and destruction, in an anchored now within a set of spatio-temporal relational experiences in which the account of self is presented. Through intrusive yet transcending aesthetics, the radical explorations of the lost self are in collection, or dispersion. I extend this interpretation of the self via excavating the self outside its aesthetic-ontological relational foundation, in my subsequent interpretation in the political-societal realm.

Chapter 6: Copying Yourself / Selling Inside Out – *The Congress*

The first section *Towards A Theory of the Cinematic Self* established selfhood as a collection of differences of time and space. Via photography, painting, and video, cinema is understood as collection of those differences into an image of selfhood. *The Congress*, a 2013 film by Ari

Folman is the first film of this study to present this process of exposition of selfhood. In *The Congress* selfhood is unfolded from inside onto an outside, and recorded, indeed, collected in its entirety: digitally, as a copy, infinitely reproducible. In a sequence of the film, Robin Wright, who acts as the female protagonist of the film – herself as Robin Wright – gets her self collected through the use of the *Light Stage*, in short, an innovative photographic technology capturing the core of a person by recording an all-encompassing multi-dimensional archive-like image that allows for endless alterations, duplications, and projections of itself. Indeed, it is her self that is being collected in *The Congress*, not certain characteristics of her self, but simply "everything" that she is, her stripped-down self, including the unrealised potentiality of her selfhood. This technology that is being shown and then used within the film, more than just constituting a sum of the photographic enumerative collection of Robin Wright's self, reproduces this collection of photographs as icon in the narrative realm of the film. As I will analyse in depth in the next chapter, in this Light Stage sequence where Robin's self is collected in the first instance, the collection produces a total image of a self that is a copy and thus distinct yet identical with the self that has given birth and presence to it. Robin Wright is Robin Wright, a self, an other, a *doppelgänger*, original, simulation, and index: more than just of the visual or bodily self, the recording inhabits the totality of her selfhood and potentiality thereof, freed from the former referent. While this selfhood is recorded in a specific time and space, it is unbound of temporal and spatial forces, and gravitates in its status freely within the pictorial realm of representation into animation that is – analogously to Robin Wright's collection – established as an ontology in and of itself in the film.

Figure 7. The collection of Robin Wright in *The Congress.*

Robin Wright's self is lost on a singular loop-like point in time, a vertical bar, in the

temporally linear, horizontal progression of the running time of the film. Within the model

of *Figure* 7, the vertical bar designates the figure of the mirror, itself represented in the Light

Stage sequence. While the film progresses in time after the loss of Robin's self, on the right-

hand side of the vertical bar, the expositions of Robin's selfhood are taken from the left-

hand side of the vertical bar, from the past running time of the film, and from her past life

time. As a function of mirroring, the productions of Robin's self are thus a

panoramic construction of a collected image of selfhood projected into the filmic future

after its collection. As a representational ensemble, this suggests different spheres of

different times and temporal realities of her self as a continuous epistemic scene proceeding

her loss. Thus, the second epistemic scene here is an episode of sequences that all relate to

the first epistemic scene of the *Light Stage*. The verticality of the loss of the self indicates that Robin Wright encircles her self in the film, and is unable to get out of this particular point in time, paradigmatically and metaphorically of an epistemic scene as the continuous encounter with herself as copy of her self. This means that the suspense that motivates the narrative is the attempt to break out of these brackets of time, yet, nevertheless this is not achieved, as the encounters in 'the Congress' are loops of images and plot circumscribing the vertical axis. Through those overall two epistemic scenes, *The Congress'* technique of the self uses the scanning technology to complicate relations of reality, self and collection, and reproduces an image of the past as a means to project countless images thereof in the future. Before looking at this total collection of time in the next chapter, in the following chapter the total collection of the self in *The Congress* remains to be established.

The Congress is a 2013 film by Ari Folman based on the 1971 scientific-educational novel (to keep the Polish term in proper translation) *The Futurological Congress* by Stanisław Lem. The film consists of multiple imageries: colour live-action, black-and-white, and animation, to suggest different genre genealogies and temporalities. The narrative of the film is a fragmented collage of these imageries: in the nested running time of the film, there are selves within selves, and films within films, and videotape-like accounts of an orbiting of the self. Nevertheless, a self-centred narrative thread evolves around traversing these distinct spheres with the focus on one self: Robin Wright as the protagonist of the film. In the film the actress Robin Wright is introduced as herself: an actress. Robin Wright thus performs or is an authentic character. The viewer here encounters a quasi-documentary exposition of a popular and recognisable figure of the contemporary cultural landscape, as many viewers know Robin Wright from the Netflix series *House of Cards*, or other landmark

roles. In the Light Stage sequence, which I analyse in depth in the next chapter, this self is unfolded from inside onto an outside, and recorded in its entirety to produce a total image of oneself that is a copy and thus distinct yet identitarian with the self that has given birth and presence to it. While this self (Robin Wright) that is being presented throughout the running time of the film is recorded in a specific time and space (colour live-action), it is also unbound of temporal and spatial forces in its presentation as animation. The self of Robin can secondarily, in what seems as another realm suggested by the animation, gravitate in its status as a copy freely within this realm to additional non-authentic representations, and self-presentations. In other words, Robin Wright is corporeally alive 'at the same time' that a ruin of her self in another ontological imagery yet embedded within the same temporal and ontological realm presents itself (black and white, colour live-action). This queering construction of multiplicity of selves establishes a collection of temporal cinematic ontology through the narrative as the presentation of the panoramic plasticity of this self.

The Congress explores the passage of different senses of selfhood, through the employment of different realities, or ontologies of self. The journey is employed, following a singular self and its surrounding orbiting worlds over time. These different worlds are explored alongside the journey of the female main protagonist: Robin Wright. The film uses the 1971 memoir and novel of Stanisław Lem, an auto-ethnographic narrative account of male protagonist Ijon Tichy, who loses himself in the narrative of the novel within what appears as an endless maelstrom of an amalgamate of the imaginary and the worldly realm. There is confusion for the reader alongside Ijon's over the most fundamental orientational and ontological questions of time and space, through the inability to differentiate thoughts and perceptions from hallucinations and delusions. In an interview, Folman evokes Ijon's

visit of the fictitious academic *Eighth World Futurological Congress* at the Hilton Hotel, Costa Rica as an 'inspiration' for a re-employment of the theme of the loss of selfhood in the imagined future (Folman: 2011). In Lem's novel, the congress is historically placed in a post-democratic society that emerged after a catastrophic cycle of events, chiefly characterised by spontaneous use of power through violence. In this narrative realm, the social life is an inner life fostered by Orwellian Soma-like drugs to attain a sense of harmony in one's self. Through that opiate which artificially harmonises social dissonance for the consumer, the loss of the ability to question the social order manifests itself. In the novel, the self and the world appear to be in an intertwined relationship that merges classic ontological boundaries of self and other, into which mind, body, and society intrusively amalgamate. In the film, the presentation of this kind of "neurological age" is the haunting allegorical foreshadower of our current postmodern late-capitalist society throughout the film's narrative structure. The neurological human condition here is characterised by the restructuring of the sensual apparatus through the intruding transgression of the outside into the inside and the undifferentiated interconnectedness of these formerly distinct realms. In Lem's fictitious neurological age and spectral future, the sense of selfhood and identity is thus mainly a dramaturgically composed reaction towards psychoactive and reactive supplements and synthetic substances. As Professor Trottelreiner proclaims in the novel *The Futurological Congress*:

> A plurality of minds in a single body. And there are *am*plifiers [sic] to intensify the inner life and give it precedence over the objective, outside world. Yes, such are the times we live in, my boy! *Omnis est Pillula*! (Lem 1985: 124)

The re-imagined and re-enacted narrative of *The Congress* as film pays tribute to Lem's narrative exposition of how selfhood is composed and articulated. This narrative authorial and directorial motivation resonates with current cultural tendencies and imaginations fostered by, for instance, discussions of augmented reality, virtuality, and post-humanity, as well as post-apocalyptic societal imaginaries. The 'plurality of minds in a single body' sketched in the novel is explored in the film through the collection of Robin Wright and the unbound panoramic plasticity allowing the free floating and drifting of Robin Wright as signifier in the amplified space of the film (Lem 1985: 124). On the other hand, the existence of plural selves, such as Robin Wright, stands in a relation to their bearer, their producer, and their indexicality. Unlike the mystical pupula duplex, in which a singular eye forms two pupils or two perceptions and consciousnesses in a singular body, the '*Omnis est Pillula*' is the invention of a double self, a peeled-off self, a non-identitarian self, a derivate (Lem 1985: 124). The plurality of the self is disembodied, as there is a copy of Robin Wright's self, owned and distributed across the narrative worlds, while also her original self continues in the narrative realms. The encounter of the copies for the authentic Robin Wright within the film manifests the particular neurological condition of her existence: she perceives herself while being herself, however, crucially this perception is unlike a usual recording of herself which would be per definition of a temporal past, as the recording unfolds as projection yet presentation of herself. In addition to questions of authenticity and ontology, the cinematic forms in which this narrative is presented, is in excess of its proper condition and heritage. The interventionist aesthetics problematise the politics of temporal attention, slowness, and focus through the loss and drowning in instantaneous excess of communication. The process of scanning and reproducing her self does not provide the ultimate self-fulfilment associated with the rebirth and death of one

self in one's professional career, as suggested by dialogue in the film. Rather there is the process of an unfolded collection of a singular self into a pluralising afterlife, which co-exists, shapes, and coalesces life into a state of being singular plural – non-contradictory with one's self – in the experienced reality of the now. In a Deleuzian sense, there is a melting of the virtual into the actual image (cf. Deleuze 1989). The distinctions necessary to disintegrate the realities in which the self is collected and presented become an overwhelming task and fight for a true self, lost in the process of its proper collection, and thus, corruption.

The job offered to Robin Wright, the recording, copying and distribution of herself appears as liberation, but is later exposed as tragic negativity of liberation into another sense of world and self. The scanning offers the re-location and re-orientation of a sense of the self from the nostalgia of the present time associated with pictorial representation as of the past into the potentiality of presentation of a digital future. However, in the production of an icon of her self, the collection of Robin is subsequently completely removed from the consent of its bearer of resemblance: the autonomy of the reproduction as a means of production of selfhood epitomises through the narrative a loss of the self, rather than the embodied sense of freedom a liberation of her selfhood would entail. As it will be shown in the next chapter, this problem of loss on the other hand also becomes a problem of the self of the viewer, implicated into an imaginative neurological age and a loss of selfhood through the complications experienced in the viewerly consciousness of a world exposed through the film. While the corporate commercial world of data desire finds a singular image, something like a "re-icon" of Robin-Wright, the re-indivisualising re-productions and bifurcations of the narrative

following Robin Wright take place in different realities, which all suggest different temporalities, and senses of self.

The peculiar construction of the filmic reality and viewerly experience reminds me of understandings concerning ontology and selfhood in broader terms within critical theory. The main problem of judging difference and representation in this temporal, vertical axis of self-experience of the viewer in *The Congress* arises from the grown complexity, and gestalt-changing nature of the inability to '[d]istinguish clearly between inside and outside, friend and foe, self and other' (Han 2015a: 1). This is experienced as a loss of consciousness, as a loss of viewerly selfhood. As further sketched by philosopher Byung-Chul Han, reality is decreasingly subjectified in terms of otherness in the paradigmatic change in which 'Otherness is being replaced with *difference*' (Han 2015a: 2). This epistemic contemporary dispositif, in which the status of appearances becomes increasingly difficult to discern ontologically and communicatively, is also a key aesthetic distinction between Lem's prose and Folman's film. The solidity of prose anchors text with a singularity of ontological form, a linear language in which the reader distinguishes worlds, spheres, and realities through semantics and interpretation as grammar, and in the meaning of words traces differences back to otherness in a stylistically coherent flow of text. This readerly engagement as self constituting selfhood is much more difficult for the visual viewer of *The Congress*, as the pictorial language of a worldview appears lost. In the film, there is a melted, more liquid state of the literary linear form: even though temporal anchors of reality are produced through the use of live-action, black and white, and animation, those ontological distinctions are melted, decomposed, and encountered as liquid ruin into a visual and narrative flow of realities and a sense of 'terror of immanence' (Han 2015a: 6). However, this realm of constant communication of the mirroring of the self via the encounter of its

immanent data collection builds a relationality of the self into a transcendence of the desire to collect oneself, completely, in the mirror. The world within this cinema as space and place has disappeared, and with it the self, other, friend, foe, fake, and real (cf. Han 2015a: 1). There is no apparent reality whatsoever, but interpersonal reality in this condition is a space of *difference* – projection, absence, exchange, and in total instantaneous temporal communication.

Chapter 7: A Total Collection of a Self – Robin Wright in the *Light Stage*

A singular self is followed in the *Congress*' narrative through different enactments of their selfhood. *The Congress* presents the different spheres of selfhood in the narrative following actress Robin Wright. As earlier mentioned, Robin Wright is played by the (real) Robin Wright following her vocation as an actress, and through her private life as single mother. It is through this narrative that the style of the film merges fiction and documentary by focussing on a singular person and selfhood. Rather than being involved in jobs as an actress, as expected from this narrative exposition, Robin's career has peaked already and the commercial demand for her self in her vocation declines. Robin Wright in *The Congress* is shown as an icon embodying the past, the 'old' Hollywood, and analogue film. Through the death of cinema, the birth of the digital, computer generated imagery, and the potentiality of animation, the ontology of the image changes within the structures of production of mainstream cinema in the film. Robin Wright as a trace of modern cinema embodies the cinema of the celebrity, the down-to-earth star, a somewhat hippie Hollywood icon. In a Lynchian realist yet fairy-tale-like dialogue sequence her (as it is surreally called) 'last job

ever' is offered, in a modernist setting. Robin Wright accepts this enigmatic calling, without fully fathoming the exposure of this intrusion and imminent reproduction of her inner self, as a language, a system, as a dictionary of selfhood. While walking through the Miramount studio's hallway (looking back at her self as icon), she halts her walking pace, and looks back at her already in-the-process-of-becoming lost identity and the capitalisation of her self as former movie star, and mentally prepares for the digital scan of herself. The sense of loss and past suggested in this exposition of storytelling provokes a feeling of melancholia for the viewer. I understand this melancholia paving the way for the viewer's apprehension of the actual loss of Robin Wright in the digital scan as, in theoretical terms 'a mourning for the lost self', in its state of enactment (Radden 2000: 335).

The notion of a 'digital scan' evokes medical technologies such as X-rays and Magnetic resonance imaging, and images that excavate, cut through to a corporeal inside, a self below the visual surface of skin. In *The Congress,* the scan is not concerned with an image of Robin's otherwise invisible inner architecture, but solely with the surface and skin of her body. Yet, no sense of tactility is evoked through the focus on skin in its voyeuristic, yet simplistically touristic recording, it is just Robin Wright as a prototype that appears confronting the viewer. The ritualistic collection functions through one temporal durational fixation, collection, or scan of her computationally cutting through the visual alikeness of her presentation. This, as it is later tragically exposed through the storytelling, suffices for the production of unlimited virtual computationally reproduced visual selves. The deeper inside of her body, the inner core, is uninteresting, unnecessary, unwanted, and not needed: it can be reproduced. With indifference towards the realness of this production of a self, the differences of selfhood can be composed. The studio owns the language of the self, the self as own capital, does not need the labour of acting. As the agent of the Miramount

production studio Jeff Green declares 'we want to own this thing called Robin Wright', her self as capital construction, the sum of potential imaginary productions to be enacted: acted out, in the future, are already owned by the studio. The self is a product and object: labour, such as acting, is thus off the market – passé. The scan of 'this thing' – the former non-ownable subject – offers to create a copy: an object, and also a virtual entity of Robin Wright as Robin Wright, enslaved in the code of her self as capital construction. The scan is a complete archive and repertoire of herself. It is thus commercially used by the studio for the display of her as her. The theatrical ambition of the scan is nothing less than the cloning and recodifiying recreation of the self as a mechanical and electronic reproduction – a technically duplicated entity of images, controlled and manipulated by the Miramount corporation. In my interpretation this foreshadows the end of work and life, and the enslavement of selfhood for the viewer visually exposed to non-proper identifications of their self, as then subsequently suggested by the fading sensation by use of live-action, black and white, and animation. The question of reproduction is asked here by means of the representation of selfhood, and questions of recording inherent in the temporal medium of cinema are relocated to the focus on the self. Thus, questions of death, finitude and excess are responded to by the hybrid imagery presenting different lost senses of selfhood in contingent temporalities and dramatic scenes of excess.

Figure 8. The Light Stage Sequence.

In the Light Stage sequence in which this reproduction of her selfhood is theatrically enacted, as seen in *Figure 8*, Robin Wright enters the dark space of the image, and the viewer observes her march into the centre position within the globe-like environment, an installation of the figure of representational space as globe. The sequence begins with this entrance and the intrusion into the interiority of the globe. Through this shot the *Light Stage* presents itself stretching across the dimensions of the cinematographically held space in perspective of exteriority, in perspective of its tangible outside. The *Light Stage* appears to be both an architectural arrangement and a high-technology machine, principally a construction of a starlight web of sources of light, as a layerlike web-like round geometrical figure. In the beginning of the sequence, the establishing shot displays the planetary shape of this exterior. On the surface of the structure, the individual cameras begin to boot in a movement from low to high latitude. The hexagonical round LED lights encircling the individual camera lenses light up accumulatively, forming the globe-like shape, like an illusionary supplementary image, this

invisbible room-like structure, as a pictorial space enters the image. Further in this image in the foreground, a screen as additional frame implicates a computer or computational device to which this screen is connected, and the time of the visual feed of the screens displays as an algorithmic exchange of the data of the exterior light sources, which are in fact cameras.

The foreground structure re-displays the structure in the wide background, through encirclement Robin appears in the center of the dimension of the illusionary space. The extensions of the space of the establishing shot, the actual studio, are fading into darkness, and underline the transitional appearance of this space. In the continuation of the Light stage sequence, a mid-size shot of Robin Wright appears. Robin sports a white unitard, which she changed into in the previous scene in a cubicle outside of the actual *Light Stage*, which Christopher (Christopher B. Duncan) handed to her. Robin's hair is collected, disciplined into a bun. Robin Wright is now here, simply herself. A dressed yet undressed Robin here presents herself, with her arms outstretched and her fingers pointing down. The body tension suggests preparedness and confidence of the acting to come, the transcending of thoughts of character into a display of being a self. The sequence continues as a sequence of close-ups in which the voice of instruction of Christopher and then Al is heard. A shot reverse shot sequence follows, as a dialogue between Christopher, Al and Robin, who acts out the instructions and directions. Robin Wright speaks, listens, talks, and repeats. The close-ups in the sequence, the shots from inside the *Planet Robin Wright* are accompanied by shots of a tangential distance to the surface of the *Light Stage* camera structure in which the camera lights confront the image. The division of the difference between exteriority and interiority, the layer of selfhood suggested by this structure is emphasised by this sequencing of shots.

Continuing the theoretical discussion of the film, I interpret the sequence of Robin Wright's body scan illustrated by *Figure* 8. The scan is performed in a planetarium-like encircling structure of starlight cameras, and cameras of light: The *Light Stage*. On its surface are individual cameras on all vertical and horizontal axes for a full encirclement of the centre stage. The cameras take successive photographs in monstrous, instantaneous, spotlight flashes of light according to algorithmic logic. Robin Wright in the centre in a form of stage is embraced by this planetary surface structure of cameras. She wears a unitard and performs acted reactions towards the commanding voice of Al and Christopher. Christopher and Al voice certain desires and so call acting, gestures, mimicry, and ultimately emotions into being.

There are four main camera angles used in the sequence (as seen in *Figure 8*). Suggesting mobility, and the flow of information and communication, the camera consistently tracks the three actors involved in the sequence. This triangulation, this tracking is achieved via an orbital encirclement from left to right in a dialogue shot/reverse shot arrangement. The cinematography consists of over the shoulder shots of Chris and Al and a tracking shot in tangible proximity to the structure of the machine's exterior, bound with medium long shots, and close ups of Robin. The technology used in the sequence exists and is real and realises representations; The *Light Stage* is based at the Stevens Institute for Innovation at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles. However, the 'Light Stage 5' in which the digital body scan is performed in the film is already outdated and passé, as the seventh generation is currently in use. The original research for the *Light Stage* was conducted at Berkeley under computer scientist Paul Debevec. The technology has recorded Holocaust survivors and for commercial reasons created hybrid human selves or selves with extending non-human features, for films

such as Sam Raimi's *Spider-Man 2* (2004) or James Cameron's *Avatar* (2009). In *The Congress* the scan collects what makes Robin Wright 'Robin Wright', the language of her self as a capital construction of representations of likenesses.

The self is collected in an autopsy of the forces of representation that constitute the image of selfhood as enactments of iconisations that follow within the imagery of the film. In the *Light Stage* Robin Wright is encountered in a transitional space and a situational sequence. Like in the shorter durational expositions of selfhood in video, comparable to *Boomerang*, and *Cornered*, there is an other – a voice emerges out of the body, an auditory self constructs feelings of interiority, as the selfhood of Robin echoes in voice throughout the sequence. Also, the use of the voice is in a dialogic-monologue style suggesting a confessional character, relationally accompanying the gestures and performance of the body in the acting out thereof. In the making-of style of video art, there is an emphasis on process, improvisation, on simply being there as body, and on the repetition-like sameness of rehearsal as an end in and of itself. Compared to *The Congress,* naturally, there is no "product" of the recording in video art technologically and representationally thinkable, no re-iconising possible "out" of the material as a reproduction of a derivate and illusionary captured inner code or language of herself. In *The Congress*, however, the copy of this process, the capital construction is precisely the use and exchange value of the rehearsal. This master copy of selfhood allows for the infinite re-edits of Robin Wright's self in another realm of iconic representational enactments of her self. The imagery of the body is used in panoramic plasticity in the plural and pluralising copies, where infinitely possible reproductions are manifesting through variations of the body.

This use and abuse of imagery visually displays the seemingly unthinkable loss of agency, and fidelity, to an actual image of oneself in singularity. The photographic umbilical

cord is interrupted by the ability to use the bracketing of time, as a means of virtualisation and manipulation of the past into the future, however, not as a past, but as an eternal presence, reproduced and reproducing, real and realising. Visual and ontological fidelity to photography in these projections of the capital construction is interrupted, and by the use of animation another layer of alterations, differences, and othering introduced. The particular afterness of the *Light Stage* ritual for Robin Wright's self, however, is not in a controllable realm of remembrance, projection, and desire. In the alienating look onto oneself through the force of infinite mirroring of the mirror in the *a posteriori* encountered selves, the traumatic experience of the loss of the self occurs for Robin Wright and the viewer as the encounter with a capitalist, profitable, iconic institution, and the loss of a sense of authority over the language of selfhood.

Robin Wright performs a dress rehearsal of laying bare selfhood with movement, difference, and repetition – the Charlie Chaplin-like inherited gestural, iconisable expression of selfhood through successive significations through time: dancing herself (cf. Benjamin 2008: 340-41). The sequence exposes selfhood as event, as performance piece, as something to be seen, in the sense of 'laying bare' for the other. The white unitard as epistemic costume emphasises the nudity of Robin Wright's self with respect to appearing not quite dressed. The scan files the surface of the visible and does not attempt to uncover an otherwise hidden appearance. As it is apparent from the screens visually displaying the output of the gathered camera data, the costume veils the corporeal appearance, and presents a skin-like layered vision of the body without transgressing to the sense of skin or underneath the skin. Through its opacity the unitard makes Robin Wright appear neither naked nor dressed, rather Robin appears in this seminal transitional state. As philosopher Giorgio Agamben remarks for corporeal performances in *Nudities* (2011: 55-90), the

existence and gaze of the other brings nudity into being. Here Robin Wright's specific form

of nudity is enacted as event not as a corporeal state in and of itself for and in the eyes of

the other: the other who is at once the film's viewer, Al and Christopher as the spectator

within the scene, and the future spectators of the collection. As suggestive *robe de lumière*,

a slippery, silky, robe-like-cloth, a clothing of light, the unitard as full-body suit, as dress,

gracefully suggests the presence of absence of clothing, yet without the presence of

nakedness as a state. However, the recording uses the art historical concept of a

photographic nude not as the excavation, temporarily, of a flicker of the self, as a Nancean

exposing and exposed. Rather, the nudity suggested here is used to record the self in

totality, collected, and re-producible, and thus eternally present as archive.

The collection of the instantaneous is non-paradoxically the enduring system of the

archive of selfhood. Although linearly composed in time in the making of sequence, the

means of production of the recording as copy are not bound to any apparent limits, but the

power of the archive is the ownership of data and code of selfhood. Nudity, as Agamben

remarks, belongs to time, and yet, although the nudity is of a time, it is a total sense of

nudity that is being captured, a nudity of form and being, a transgression into the recording

of selfhood (2010: 67). Through the subsequent use of the recorded self in *The Congress* a

form of allegorising the unbound potential of reconstructions of selfhood occurs: replaying,

doubling, cloning, and manipulating the what-has-been-there. In the Light Stage

sequence, the photographic capturing of Robin Wright is a form of nascent death dance, an

account of both 'dancing herself', and loss of the self in the encirclement of the mirror as a

planetary, cocoon-like structure. Relocated into the realm of recording and representation,

the representation of Robin Wright as actress in the Miramount world to follow in

the storytelling of the film is unbound from her selfhood. Thus compared to *Self in the*

Mirror as an image of a fixation of the self, here a complete collection of the self as capital construction takes place through the encirclement and peeling off, and ultimately detachment and loss of the self.

This reproduction of a female self echoes earlier cinematic moments in which bodies are reproduced for the sake of their independent coexistence. Famously, one of the first cinematic depictions of a robot, cyborg, or android, is in Fritz Lang's (1927) *Metropolis*. In the visionary city within *Metropolis*, the scientist Rotwang reproduces the protagonist Maria as double or machine-human [Maschinenmensch]. In *Metropolis* the differentiation between the double [Doppelgänger] and real Maria becomes one narrative thread. Both Marias have an 'identity', both exist parallel in the same physical world and within clearly demarcated dimensions, in difference to one anonther. The metropolitans dramatically mislead by aspirations of emancipation, believe in their structural ability to differentiate, control, police, and verify Maria's ontology and being. This stands in clear contrast to the copy of Robin Wright, which in its afterness to its bearer bears a different relationship to authenticity and identity. As a digital file, rather than a physical, singular, fingerprint-like copy, Robin Wright's copy-appearance is restless, nomadic, transparent, and the production of a selfless, tracing machine-like chameleon-automaton as an image.

In the Light Stage sequence, the computer linked to the cameras is conceived as the controlling instance of this collection of selfhood. The nature of the reproduction of the self is not by singularly fixated machinery, compared to the proto-modernist pseudo-scientific surgical laboratory, as envisioned in *Metropolis*. Also, it is not conceived of as a machine human, like in *Metropolis*, or as an android human replicant such as Rachael in Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982) or Bobbie in Bryan Forbes's *The Stepford Wives* (1975), or as a form of programmed machine with a software or consciousness, such as Ava in Alex

Garland's *ex_machina* (2015), or a complete software simulation, such as Simone in Andrew Niccol's *S1MØNE* (2002). Through the use of soft sculpting into electronic data, in other words software rather than hardware, the scan of Robin Wright as identity of a self includes the use of this self as (collected into) data, and thus cloning possibilities of consentless change. Compared to the Frankensteinian Rotwang and the embodiment of a mad scientist trope, there is a distinctively post-fordist surveillant arrangement of labour within the scene of Robin Wright's immaculate conception. Human labour, although performed, is auxiliary to the gigantic recording power of the machine, and consists of elegant emotional labour, and the operation and control of the function of the machine.

The electronic body scan for the digital file is performed in a distinctively post-industrial and post-human arrangement. Chris and Al sit in front of a horizontal desk filled with microphones and computers that offer a simulated view of the inner core of the computer program and technology. Although these humans control the computers and recording, the algorithm manufactures the file of Robin Wright. Thus, the final data is produced by post-human means, and in post-human control of production. The voice of Chris calls for a panorama of emotions: a smile, a wide smile, happiness, laughter, sounds of laughter, a laughter that slowly turns into emptiness, blankness and sadness. The use of the two voices here is reminiscent for me of Derrida's claim in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other* that '[t]he call of the other is a call to come, and that happens only in multiple voices' (2007: 47). Thereby, as reacted to accordingly by Robin Wright, a panoramic scan of Robin's body, face, emotions, laughter and tears takes place. During the recording of sadness Robin interrupts the performance in a stage of agitation, contempt and sorrow. As dramatic and corrective reaction, Al takes control over Chris' microphone. Al's personal and emotional appeal produces the desired reactions from Robin as the flashing and scanning

recommences after the suspension through this dramatic break. The other(s) through the voice call a self, here Robin Wright, into being. However, this other, so the crying foreshadows, is unbound from her self. At the end of the overall nine-minute sequence Robin expresses deep sorrow, and touches her face with both hands to hide tears and cries. The frame then fades out into darkness. A black screen follows with the intertitle in French "20 Ans Plus Tard" – also reminding the viewer through the slow and soft fading into animation in the sequence. The forces of self-presentation and representation are moving from the moment as momentary and embodied, to the creation of this moment as lasting, continuous and reproducible. This stands in contrast to *Las Meninas*' moment of construction of a self as cutting in time. Compared to the non-identitarian and contingent scan of Robin Wright, *Las Meninas* and *Self in the Mirror*'s construction are bound to the temporal singularity of the self.

The Light Stage sequence recalls characteristics *Self in the Mirror* and *Las Meninas* while also extending the discussion in Section I. The walk-through room in which the other two epistemic presentations of these two selves are staged has developed through the *Light Stage* into an overarching liminal stage of a globe-like planet, an empty surface structure whose architecture is constituted by the photographic cameras themselves, and the core of the self to be photographed inside it. Out of darkness shatters light, and the shattering evokes the collection of selfhood. The flickering thunderstorm that collects Robin Wright approximates as a figure a complete spiral shelling around the outside of the body. This simultaneously evokes a figure of a perfect, complete return into the formation of an umbilical cord towards the inside of the *Light Stage*'s structure. The panoramic plasticity created here, through the body as the display of selfhood culminates in its complete total recording. The *Light Stage* records selfhood as a capital construction, the measurement of a

totality, and thus a biometrics of selfhood is constructed through photography as scanning. However, like in *Self in the Mirror* and *Las Meninas* as spaces of a making-of, the actual entity produced in this epistemological scene is invisible, is inside or behind the computer screen. The recording serves as the infinitesimal recorder of everything that is: the being of Robin Wright itself is recorded. Robin acts out herself as herself, yet the constitution of her self is entirely based as the response towards the other. Whereas Foucault emphasises the relationship of the viewer in *Las Meninas* as seeing and being seen, and existing via the gaze of the other, selfhood here articulates as a set of protocols, gestures and emotions performed for the other, and for us, the viewer. Selfhood is enacted in relationality and in the performance of emotionality. The range and panorama of the emotions of the self are the plasticity that the data as archive projects in the subsequent imagery of the film, in its bending illustrations, screenings, and projections of Robin Wright.

Chapter 8: The World as Vertical Panorama – Robin Wright's Loss in Total Self-Collection

There is a breaking of the self of Robin Wright in the sequences following the *Light Stage*, the remaining three quarters running time of *The Congress*. The notion of breaking refers to the breaking of the unique harbour of Robin's self being within herself, meaning that the self, now being collected, loses its interiority. The self appears as extrapolated conception, vision, and form of hallucination within the narrative world's exposition. I interpret the breaking down of Robin Wright during the collection of her self in the Light Stage sequence as foreshadowed emotional reaction towards the problematic value of

exchange. The emotional breakdown anticipates the unfolding of the sense of selfhood from an interiority to a deunified exteriority, principally within a relationship of infidelity to its former bearer and continuous inhabitant. This overarching nature of the 'spiral shell' of the *Light Stage*, in both representational form shown as a sequence and within the sequence as material exchange that qua capturing transubstantiates the locale (or shell) of selfhood into a file, also recalls Derrida's concept of *brisure* from *Of Grammatology* (1978: 65-70). While the hinge is a form a joint, as it is commonly translated, within my interpretation of Derrida's phonetic concept it is indeed a bridging between representational realms, such as nature and culture. In *The Congress* this bridging occurs in pictorial form between representation and presentation, between a temporal recording as representation (of Robin Wright), and a temporal re-projection of the representation (of Robin Wright), which appears as a presentation (of Robin Wright). The exploration of this deunified locale of the self within the continuation of *The Congress* is the commercial interest of the collection, indeed the product of the capital construction made of Robin Wright's selfhood.

'This thing called Robin Wright' (to recite Miramount agent Jeff Green) is thus a collection that occurs both as a breaking and joining, a deconstruction, and re-occuring recomposition of a deconstruction of Robin Wright's selfhood. The *brisure* is hence here further interpretable as breaking-joining, at once understood as both entrance and exit, as conception of exchange and movement, and here and there, both ending and beginning, through which the visual presentation of selfhood can be understood as an act of disidentification. The opportunity for this collection to occur within *The Congress* arises from the intersection of two motivations, the desire of Robin Wright to act out herself for financial reasons, and the desire of the Miramount studio to have the thing, the icon, and use it anew. The root of the act of disidentification is thus within this instrumental

communicative logic – the bridge and bridging – of exchange: the entrance for the collection is rooted in desire, in remuneration, and the exit is in desire, in the permeable construction of a form of capital with interest. The exchange of desire informs the potentiality of the encounter to occur: the desire to collect the self, in a point in time, remunerated for, is thus exchanged with the desire of the studio, to have this point in time be permeable. Crucially, however, the studio comes into ownership of a permeable means of production, of a means of mirroring anew, of ownership of a mirror of projections of Robin Wright's self. The exchange thereby turns out to be like a one-way street bridge, the exchange is instrumental, but impermanent and without a closure in terms of the exchanged product, which is continuously in the flow and making. Thus the loss of Robin Wright's selfhood through the collection is by indebtedness of the visual image of oneself being delocalised from one's power of mirroring to another bearer of this power. There is more at force in this sequence than the mere constitution of a self through this *brisure* via the spiral force of the other as the *Light Stage*. The conception of the groundlessness of the spiral shell earlier noted in *Las Meninas* according to Foucault is extended here.

It is not the viewer who finishes, assembles the full cycle of representation through the witnessing act of the Light Stage sequence. Recalling Foucault's argument on the mirror as both reflecting and epistemic access to an elsewhere, the *Light Stage* reinvents this mirror function in a representational machine, almost like an entrance into the logic of the mirror function itself and a renegotiation thereof. The machine collects, and with the projections of Robin in the narrative inserts a new representational realm into the narrative world by the use of a construction of a reflection or recollection of a past that holds no fidelity to its pastness. What follows through diverging storylines in algorithmic logic is an encounter with fragmentary and deconstructed recollections of mirroring. The concept of

brisure is here thus also a form of exchange of a fundamental perspective onto

the mirroring function itself, the giving up of the authority over the gaze of the other which

constitutes oneself, and the permeability of the other to constitute an image of oneself in

the first place. Selfhood as enacted in the sequence, together with Robin's breakdown

during the enactment itself, thus also points towards *brisure* understood here as a fracture of

selfhood in the break between seeing and being-seen, as the function of the mirror

transforms.

The relationality or the directionality of the gaze transforms, as the system

of mirroring transforms. The viewer in the remaining sequences of *The Congress* is thus both

overall witness and passerby of the complicit enactment of selfhood in recollection of a

capital construction as a "commodity of the self". The self is produced in this exchange as

commodity, yet the commodity as form of iconic mirroring is breaking the collection, the

capital construction of selfhood of the studio breaks unified selfhood into de-unified and

de-unifying vertical disintegrations and fragmentations, or redirections. Elsewhere thus

embodied pictorially returns as visual otherhood – or rather "elsehood", to nuance the

element of difference rather than otherness – of the former yet reappearing mirroring. The

former subjectivity of selfhood is broken into iconic clusters of projections of materialised

desires of the self-as-it-has-been, into selfhood-as-reappearing-now, not only conflicting in

time within the running time of the film, but conflicting with the sense of self. The self

disintegrates, is lost in a non-united, non-identitarian manner with itself in this narrative

world of bifurcating recollections, and re-enacting exchanges.

The intervention into the structure of the spiral and the constitution of selfhood not

merely as an object of the other, but as breaking of the unified sense of self within oneself,

also recalls an intervention of Barthes concerning the phonetic locale of a collected self. Barthes writes in *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*:

> ...today the subject approaches himself [herself] *elsewhere*, and "subjectivity" can return at another place on the spiral: deconstructed, taken apart, shifted, without anchorage: why should I not speak of "myself" since this "my" is no longer "the self" [soi] ? (1977, 168)

While verbal language of selfhood here is explored through the potential of language to articulate a positionality within the language system, the language of selfhood is transformed through the fracture of the reappearing self. The fracture of self as another anesthetisation of fragmentation and pictorial dislocation of self, is reproduced, or 'taken apart', or disunified through the archivised commercial production of successive narrative gestures and images. I interpret or transfer the sense of dislocations of speech-acts of "I", the returns into the third-person perspective within a visual realm as the effect of mirroring in perspective of an "elsehood" of selfhood. Not representation, in the philosophically classical sense of the term takes place, but a return of a confusion of mirroring over the exposing and the exposed, at the same time. "Deconstructed, taken apart, shifted, without anchorage", to use Barthes's formulation, yet completed, integrated, iconicised, the sense of self here is reconfigured in this loss of permanence through permeability (1977, 168).

It appears, in the continuation of *The Congress*, that the self is everywhere, in every image the narrative suggests different locales, sites or temporal visions of the self. This temporally confusing reconfiguration of a recollection is what I would according to Nancy term re-production: deconstructive reconfigurations of recollections of a self. With this I mean that the body is produced, however, not in resemblance to its bearer, but in the representational realm of the film disunified and assembled anew, brought into appearance

of likeness, not identity. This is the sense in which panoramic plasticity can be conceived: the extension of a point in time, the permeability of a point in time as a form of plasticity of selfhood. This production is the vertical co-existence of the "collective" plastic re-productions of the self in different narrative bifurcations and spaces through time. Those sculptures of selfhood are temporalised or plasticised, yet collectively panoramically instantaneous, as they occur within a present now of the narrative.

Figure 9. The three realms of vertical loss of the self in *The Congress*.

A closer examination of the narrative of *The Congress* helps to exemplify and illustrate more concretely the loss of the self described in theoretical terms. Through *Figure 9*, I have chosen three images here as snapshots of the film to orchestrate a three-dimensional overview of the epistemic scene of the remaining narrative. The narrative is principally anchored within three ontologies of the image: live-action, black and white, and animation. However, as earlier indicated, the major innovation of the film in terms of both cinematic history, and the ontology of the cinematic image, is that the singular ontological realms suggested by the properties of the image are transgressed. The image's ontology, and therewith narrative ontology cannot simply be considered alone through the perceived ontology of the image, but is hybrid and more plural and thus puzzling for the viewer, and moreover confuses the narrative exposition as a whole. The puzzling nature of the viewerly experience arises through the hybridisation, pluralisation, and superimposition of multiple ontologies of imagery within one frame, and continuously confuses the anchoring of the viewer within a distinct narrative realm alone. Nevertheless, through an analysis of the overall narrative of *The Congress*, as seen in *Figure 9*, three principal narrative realms can be identified, in which a vertical loss of the self of Robin Wright is exposed.

The three chosen images here represent the entrance into the Miramount world (image one), the unfolding of narrative within the Miramount world (image two), and the exit and dissolving of the Miramount world (image three). All three images, as presentations of these particular senses of loss of selfhood, stand in direct conceptual relation of the collection of selfhood in the *Light Stage*. Recalling the model of the vertical bar of *Figure 7,* the images and individual narrative worlds build their relation durationally not only to the overall narrative, and to the past that builds the sense of the presence of the narrative at the

moment of the now of the running time, but the images stand in a relation of the collection

of Robin Wright's selfhood, as this marks a moment of reference to the old non-

hybridised world, the world of clear binaries and distinctions, the narrative world before the

collection. This non-hybridised world with ontological clarity of demarcations is lost in

The Congress, and instead there is the hybrid presentation of supplementary constructions of

images, a renegotiation of selfhood, and a reconfiguration of relationality.

The first image of *Figure 9* is an over-the-shoulder shot of Robin Wright, the

first frame of the film that contains the hybrid technique of both cinematographically

realist live-action imagery and animation. This frame is taken from a sequence, which serves

as an extended durational crossing and entrance into the new narrative world, the

Miramount world. Before the animation intrudes into the imagery in this frame, visually

initiating the intrusion of the new representational regime of the Miramount world, the

cinematographically realist sequence of the drive illustrates the departure from the old

world and representational system into the new realm. Robin Wright drives a convertible

Porsche car in the first person perspective, anchored in a principally realist cinematic

convention. The long take of a curve in which the car moves on hot asphalt into the

foreground, the direction of the camera, serves as an establishing shot and confronts the

viewer. There are juxtaposing third person perspective shots (in a reverse shot convention)

accompanying the sequence to a flow, an experience of a transcending fast passage in

time through space. Then, there is the close-up display of the separating vertical road

markings in daylight as an allusion or homage to this iconic reference of David Lynch's *Lost

Highway* (1997). The vertical markings on the asphalt are suddenly replaced by a set of

horizontal markings, further underscoring the voyage's function of transgression. Through

diegetic sound, the abrupt halt of the car is signified, which is accompanied by a change of

visual perspective displaying the exhaust pipe in detail. The camera tilts upward to frame

the car and Robin's head, to reveal the cause of the halt: a human-sized booth with a guard

and gatekeeper. Affirming the initial viewerly intuition, both the booth and the costume of

gatekeeper, specifically the baseball hat, include Miramount logos. The guard scans the

license plate of the car, a bar code indicating 2030 as the year of issue, and confirms

Robin's invitation to the Miramount Abrahama Hotel in the so-called 'restricted animated

zone' to be entered. While the guard reminds Robin Wright that the only way that any

return or exit from the Congress can occur is by way of encountering him again, Robin

inhales an ampule offered by the guard to then forcefully accelerate the convertible, and

thereby cross the checkpoint and continue the drive. The first hybrid frame of *Figure

9* that contains the distorted reflection of herself in the rear view mirror follows shortly

thereafter.

The departure sequence of Robin Wright from the conventional narrative

world into the complete immersion of the Miramount world demonstrates the loss of

selfhood through the use of hybrid imagery. In the first frame of *Figure 9*, the pictorial space

of the ellipsis-shaped rear-view mirror is intruded by a non-fixated image, a fluid and liquid

animation of Robin Wright. Departing from a realist mirroring function, and mending the

consistency of Robin's representation through the intrusion of a new persona,

here a hallucinatory avatar-like image emerges as a new bearer of Robin's selfhood. This

first encounter of another self as herself through the intrusion of animation as a juxtaposing

visual and material ontology realises a sense of reconfiguration of subjectivity. In a shell

shock-like othering or queering of perspective and relationality, the gaze of an elsehood

meets the eye of the viewer, from the point of view of Robin Wright. Through the rear

view mirror, here the gesture of the look backwards, the look into the distance of the past,

becomes a look that has lost its temporal and spatial function of reflecting the stability of

directionality. The vehicle is used here as a medium, as a vessel to visualise the

holistic change in relational perspective by its functional and representational bridging of

selfhood and environment. The circle of representation through this hybrid frame extends

the function of mirroring to the inclusion of the new animated realm. The intrusion of

this othering into the sense of self is further extended as, a couple of seconds later, the

whole environment appears in animation, completing the entrance into the new

representational realm. Here the imagery presents an amalgam of ontological realms, and a

new hybrid relationality of environment or space, temporality, and the self. While the

horizon of the rear view-mirror encapsulates the new sense of relationality in a single frame,

which extends to the complete environment shortly thereafter, the transportation of

Robin's body into the Miramount world signifies the loss of selfhood within the narrative.

The second frame of *Figure 9* is an animation image that displays the interior of

the Miramount Congress in which Robin Wright encounters a re-enactment of herself as

live-action image. After the sequence leading to the Miramount Abrahama is completed in

an animated hallucinogenic rollercoaster-like ride, Robin finds herself in the theme park like

insular landscape in which the Congress is staged. Upon arrival with the former car on the

island landscape embedded in what resembles a layer of clouds, Robin leaves the

vehicle, which now in animation transformed into a boat, and enters the Congress

environment from the driveway. Upon entrance to the Miramount Alhambra hotel in an

over the shoulder animated shot, the Congress is revealed to take place in an elliptically

shaped ground floor lobby of a Las Vegas-style hotel. In this recreational lounge

environment animated human-like figures in festive attire appear to entertain themselves

through conversation throughout the environment, catered to with drinks by miniature

half-human sized android-like butler figures. Robin's gaze and with it the camera casually follows the stroll of one male animated figure that catches her attention, and after her face is displayed in a close-up as animated image, this figure completely transforms its appearance, while another second figure is then undergoing the same transformation.

In the establishing shot, the Congress space initially appears endless and without a demarcated horizon, but the camera angles following Robin's stroll reveal that all ends of the lobby environment have storefronts, like in a shopping mall environment. The upper floors of the elliptical tower seen from the lobby above appear to be cabins or rooms, suggested by the portholes, separated however, by a strip of screens or projections on which moving images appear, which reveal to include imagery of Robin Wright. Within the lobby environment other TV-like hanging screens with the same imagery like the wall projections numerously and continuously flank the lobby on various heights along the red carpet on which Robin proceeds her flânerie further into the interior of the space. The camera then follows Robin's gaze and the second frame of *Figure 9* appears, in which Robin Wright is seen on screen in a live-action performance as heroine who holds a stick that emits lightning or electricity, stamped by a red "R" marking the screen.

The encounter of Robin Wright with the display of another screened Miramount studio version of herself in the second frame of *Figure 9* presents the first re-collected display of Robin Wright's self, as collected through the Light Stage sequence. In the earlier first frame of *Figure 9*, the rear-view mirror image displays the liquidisation of a stable selfhood. In this second frame of *Figure 9*, the encounter of Robin Wright with Robin Wright on the multiple screens in the Congress environment does not only present a mirror image of herself in othered form. Further than that, the imagery that Robin confronts in the frame at hand, and moreover in the sequence, in multiple instances on the

various screens, is both an ecstatic and an extracted image of herself. The clip-like imagery

is taken or rather reproduced from the *Light Stage* collection of herself, and in excess of a

static or re-mirroring perspective of this collection, while also extracting and sculpting her

self into the screened heroine. The reproduction of an image of herself is here produced on

the basis of an image of herself. The imagery is a derivate of herself, it is a detached

presentation of herself, it is an impossible image of herself, an artificially constructed

temporally uncertain and destabilising image, as it holds no reference to having a root in a

recording or a capturing of what is seen as photographic image. Rather the image and clip-

like sequence on the screens are here an algorithmic assemblage conceived, formed, and

sculpted, indeed extracted out of the data archive, the inventory of selfhood collected in the

Light Stage.

The previous narrative display, the making-of of the collection of a situational

collected self in the Light Stage sequence is here brought to a display of its product, its

commodity. The self of Robin displayed here is an image of likeness and aliveness of Robin

through the staged re-enactment of acting rooted not in the event and occurrence of acting

but unbound of the spatio-temporal singularity and uniqueness thereof. Acting which

previously required per common definition the labour and indeed the enactment of acting is

disentangled from its means of production, it is as a set of imagery disassembled of its

defining facticity: as a visual display of the interest of the capital of the commodity of

selfhood acting appears as enactment of the simulation of acting, by virtue of the

potentiality of the archive.

Robin Wright continues to be exposed to presentations of herself, throughout the

narrative of *The Congress* and the continuation of the narrative loss of selfhood. The

animated Miramount world includes the presence of oneself within the perceived reality, as

the augmented reality in which Robin finds herself includes reproduced visual imagery and figures that resemble herself. This means that she appears in other films-within-the-film within the Congress' environment: such as a re-enactment of the iconic bomb ride of Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove* (1964), including Robin Wright riding the bomb in black and white imagery. The confrontation of the viewer with the loss of temporal certainty in a spatially uncertain environment, and the anxiety induced through the loss of demarcations between self and other is balanced in the narrative by the quest for love and escape out of this situation for Robin Wright. The loss of selfhood continues as a voyage throughout multiple layers of dream-like animated environments in the film, which moves from the entanglement of Robin into the show of mass leadership figures in a stadium-like environment, to a cruise in a garden of Eden-styled landscape, eventually to a bar, through which the animated Miramount world is exited by Robin. Thereby, Robin's frame of view re-emerges into a realist cinematic live-action image by virtue of swallowing a pill and passing the gatekeeper (known from the first frame of *Figure 9*), who re-emerges within the animated Miramount world in this sequence as a barkeeper. In a sudden fading-out of animation into live-action in a POV shot of Robin's perspective, the imagery of the frame completely transsubstantiates in a slow movement from one ontological quality to the other: animated faces transform into photographed ones. The animation image as harbour of a virtual reality transforms back into a reality of human vision within the realm of the photographable, the carnival-like masquerade wall of faces fades into a viewpoint of gazing upon the displayed misery of the masses. However, re-entering this seemingly old narrative world further unveils a sequence in which a dystopian or post-apocalyptic ruin-like landscape is encountered, in which humans are gathered in public spaces in groups in that resemble crowds of refugee-like masses, humans extracted of their livelihood.

In the third frame of *Figure 9*, Robin re-appears and re-emerges in a spatio-temporal realm that is seemingly in continuation of the previously exited live-action realm, in which however the order of the old world is reconfigured. While the live-action frame suggests a continuation within a realist experience of the narrative, the sequence here unfolds with a sense of afterness towards the realist world and time that was previously veiled through the narrative within the animated world. The experience of selfhood is brought back to the subjectivity of reality, as experience in relation to a fully owned conception of selfhood in the encounter of the experience of the narrative universe, suggesting an experience of life and aliveness for the viewer. This continuation of the earlier live-action world in which the film has begun, takes place after the Light Stage sequence, incorporating an experience of afterness towards the commercial collection of the selfhood of Robin Wright. The third frame of *Figure 9* displays the interconnection of the animated narrative environment and the non-animated environment, and the non-animated remainder of the live-action world, which however, is embedded in the overall structure of control over the narrative. While the transformation of selfhood was presented in the animated experience of the Miramount world, through the sequence at hand the Miramount Corporation is also portrayed as principal ruler of the live-action world.

In the sequence Robin enters an airport area, on the grounds of a round-shaped terminal building, to which through a Montgolfier-like line Robin is transported to the inside of a Zeppelin, to re-encounter the Miramount world through the operators of the Miramount universe, who surveil their creation from the elegant interiority of the Zeppelin that flies over the material live-action world. As the Miramount studio appears as principal elitist circle of totalitarian governance through enactments of embodied power, the structural power of worldbuilding appears to be within the haywire hands of the Miramount

Corporation. A narrative temporal loop is suggested here to the earlier narrative exposition of the film through the reuse of principally live-action imagery. This renewed filmic exposition confronts Robin and the viewer with the full consequences of the Miramount world and its rule, their governed regime of the material world. The ruling class is portrayed as evacuated from the earthly terrain by virtue of the Zeppelin, which floats unbound of the forces of the ground-floor human lost existences Robin has previously encountered in despair. The encounter with the medical doctor in the sequence, known from the beginning of the film, serves to further strengthen the display of Robin Wright as lost self. Robin as lost self is both in dispossession of herself, and without a memory of an experience of pastness as an experience of herself, remaining instead indeed lost, as Robin forcefully re-enters the Miramount animated world, towards the ending of the film.

As an overall model, the three different frames and sequences of *Figure 9* help to problematise the temporal dimension of vertical loss of the self, with respect to the collection of the self in the Light Stage sequence. The multiple encounter with oneself within the animated Miramount world, and the experience of the transformation of the narrative reality as additionally also controlled by the Miramount studio, propose the loss of a consistent sense of selfhood that can be conceived of as autonomous. Instead, the principal force of relationality of the self is towards the new temporal horizon of time in the past, the initial point of collection of selfhood through which the reconfiguration of the self as lost is initiated. To thus come back to an overall analysis of the narrative of *The Congress*, in the epistemic scene of sequences following the *Light Stage*, it appears that the narrative is structured and controlled as dream-like experience of a mirror world or realm by the Miramount studio. The narrative world of *The Congress* is owned and managed by the studio of Miramount, the experience of the relationship towards selfhood is shaped by the

influence of production of selves within the experience within this reality. It appears that this narrative world is an aesthetic-ontological platform, or studio, projection, or place of excess, containing reproductions, forms of mirroring of oneself, through the production of reproductions of Robin Wright. This excess is the obscenity of the reproductions of Robin Wright's selves, anew and let loose from the authentic subjective experience through which such a display would occur without the collection of selfhood as its origin.

The self-displays of Robin Wright testify to the viewer a co-existence of different times of the self in one continuous narrative real time. This is a representational arrangement of selfhood in what I term a "plasticity of the now", vertical extensions of the now in bifurcating narrative realms. In this narcissistic mirror-world, controlled and induced by the Miramount world, Robin Wright's sense of selfhood is lost. The experienced reality contains as objects, reminiscent of an encounter of mirroring, representations of herself, which are not of her proper self, which are outside of Robin's embodied memory – yet a part of the objective narrative reality. In all that can be aesthetically experienced in this narrative world, there is always the encounter with oneself as a form of mirroring of elsehood.

The close reading and examination of both the *Light Stage* sequence, and the following set of sequences of the Miramount world shows the complications of the presentation of selfhood in *The Congress*. In comparison to the previously discussed visual material of this study, the narrative of *The Congress* incorporates the figure of the mirror into the durational exposition of the film, as a medium and technology of collection. The afterness of the experience of mirroring selfhood, together with the encounter of oneself in a narrative world in which the self is objectified as commodity becomes one of the main narrative elements of the film. I am hereby moving to an overall interpretation of the

ontology and status of the imagery of the film, and the status of selfhood within the reconfigurations of subjectivity as experienced within the narrative. While there has been already extensive attention paid to the interpretation of the film, I draw an overall critical conclusion from *The Congress* in my engagement with both epistemic sequences that are within a broader interpretational paradigm of representational and cultural studies. I argue that *The Congress* problematises the conception of selfhood as autonomous by the narrative experience of a loss of selfhood through the collection of the self, and the subsequent experience of its recollections. I intervene into a reductionist dismissal of *The Congress* as a confusingly 'weird' (Dargis 2014b), or 'existential fog' film (Lumenick 2014), by proposing that the film inhabits and makes visible for the viewer a complicated relational ontology of the image, which arises through the durational relationality towards the collection of an image of oneself. Thus, both the relationality of selfhood, and the relationality of the ontology of the image are interpreted here from a temporal and durational perspective concerning the implications of viewerly engagement therewith.

There is a loss in the excess of the encounter of the mirror through the self. This is the overall aesthetic presentation of a representational episteme of the neurological age of the self. In other words, the existence of the self as self-ruin produces an experience of loss of selfhood, through the death of autonomy over a sense of selfhood in the encounter with the self in self-recollections. Analogously to the contemporary neoliberal desire to become a social-medium, or to become a commodity (fulfilled through self-presentation platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and others), the collection of the self of Robin Wright relocates her display into a product. While Robin is authentically experiencing herself, the autonomy over the act of appearing mirrored has vanished, through the production of herself as commodity. The appearance of the mirror within the landscape of subjective

experience in *The Congress* leads to the construction of the narrative world as a realm in which the experience of differentiation between subjectivity and objectivity of selfhood becomes problematised. Analysing the temporal ontology of the internet, and the relationality of the internet user, cultural critic Rob Horning argues in 'The Silence of the Masses could be Social Media' that this state of the self is 'post-authenticity' (2016: 61). Through the stage of the self that Robin Wright enters in the Miramount world, a comparable form of the post-authentic display of the self unfolds. My interpretation of this in critical terms suggests the film as an exploration of the idea of the loss of the self in complete re-collection as a medium thereof. Although this temporal archival process of the recording of the self appears like a trace, it is actually a selfless re-collection of the archive of data. The viewer is lost in a narrative extensive presentation yet looping enumerative now-encirclements of Robin Wright's self-displays. Miramount is the institution of this projected world to which the profit, emotional and ontological, of the viewer's attention to the now, goes: the viewer is lost in Miramount.

What I term "loss of the self" occurs for Robin Wright, which the viewer experiences. The viewer acts as a relational form of passerby towards this narrative exposure of selfhood, within the viewer's sense of reality and self. The experience of *The Congress* as a film is a pleasurable series of *brisures*, ontologically binary, differential corruptions of stability, movements of dislocations of the self. The self of Robin Wright is lost, in the properly endlessly unfinished constructions of itself in the experience of a sense of plasticity of the now, in which the self as medium can be principally encountered over and over again, without a sense of belonging. This is what I term, after Horning, the neoliberal human condition 'post-authenticity', the loss of selfhood (2016: 61). While the self appears in its photographic qualities, the self that is left outside the photographic

collection points to the remaining autonomous self to be found within the realm of

the unphotographable. As Horning explains for the broader collection of selfhood

through the usage of internet-based media, '[s]urveillance and quantification produce the

self as a set of statistics, a manipulatable data object' (61). While the manipulations of a

recorded and collected self are requirements for the presentation of the non-authentic self,

as experienced in *The Congress*, the conception of the autonomous self thus remains within

the realm of the unquantifiable. Further, according to Horning, 'the idea of an "authentic"

self that precedes algorithmic modeling disappears', as the act of recording, quantification,

and tracing appears at the core of the systematic excavation and extraction of selfhood as

production (61). There is no self found anymore, in the untraceable, in any interiority of

a selfhood that is not embedded within these exterior relations that move to the forefront

of any conception of selfhood in the first place. The non-lost self, the self that cannot be

lost becomes unthinkable in this state of thinking of the relationality of selfhood

towards the world. This mirroring state of disavowal of the self is paired with what Jean

Baudrillard considers in *The Ecstasy of Communication* (2012) the modus operandi of 21st

century reality, the excess of the self in instantaneous total complete collective

communication, an experience of a web of interconnected subjective reality. Returning to

my reading of Horning who incorporates Baudrillard's ontological turn to the self, for the

viewer the societal realm has moved from modernity, as presented within *The Congress*

through the "old Hollywood", to a different distinctively non-modern sense and

experience of temporality. Analogously to the algorithmic bracketing of digital data

into mathematical Markov chains, the relationality to time is through the apparent chain

of the self to the now.

My reading however, builds on Horning's argument, by considering communication as the emptying of meaning *through* the self. This reminds me of the climatic self of the group of authors named The Invisible Committee, in the dystopian doomsday sketched as the neoliberal today, in which the self as 'a being without interiority' is indeed conceptualised by 'its exteriority, by its relations' (The Invisible Committee 2015: 110). However, rather in climate in relationality to exteriority as spatial, the self is in time, in relationality towards a temporal and durational experience of selfhood. My interpretation of *The Congress* thus suggests, there are no boundaries, no limits of the self, and there is no core of the self. There is only immanence, indeed a Baudrillardian ecstasy of time, as the only transcendental pseudo-rational relation for the self. Something is *off*, somewhat stolen: in this liminal state there is no mirror. Indeed, as sketch this awkwardly limping self in a liminal state appears to perpetuate the present, a disciplinatory existence. The self is totally connected, golden-caged in the spiral shell of excess of communication, and also, to add with Baudrillard, as a medium itself, surface, thin, bland, a reflective object of total connection: "pure screen" (2012: 30). Through the Congress, indeed, as Horning suggests, my reading of the film as scientific-educational cinema points towards the emptying of the meaning of the self beyond an illustration of the post-climatic nature of the self. In the neurological age, as I suggest here, the self is a data-based medium. Conclusively, my reading of *The Congress* suggests – as an interpretation of a vision of the neoliberal 21st century and ontological-aesthetical age – there is no "self" whatsoever left, which is not ruined and in ruins. Before death, or the complete closure of the dystopian horizon, rolling into its ruin, the self-in-loss is encapsulated in a plastic realm of the now. The plastic now, "#-life" – read as numerical and hashtag life – is a temporal set of exchange relations

self-displayed in time. In #-life, real time contracts. In its accomplished state, the total post-self is the collection of self-displays, a figure in time.

Chapter 9: *Boyhood* – Continuous Self-Embalmment

Figure 10. Ellar Coltrane as Mason Evans, Jr. in *Boyhood*.

Boyhood is a 2014 film directed by Richard Linklater with a running time of 165 minutes. It stars Patricia Arquette, Ellar Coltrane (see *Figure 10*), Lorelei Linklater, Ethan Hawke, and Marco Perella as the central cast. The film was shot in Texas, in the United States of America over twelve years. The film is based on an unfinished script of the director. The script served as the basis for the filming, in addition to the improvisational responding of the actors to the real-life development of Mason (Ellar Coltrane). The film was shot on thirty nine shooting days (over a duration of twelve years) with a four-million US-Dollar budget (cf. Chang 2014). IFC Productions kept the project in secrecy, due to the

unconventional length of the production and the production schedule stretching over monthly periods of time (cf. Chang 2014). As the title *Boyhood* alludes to, Mason is the focus of attention of the film. He has a sister Samantha (Lorelei Linklater), and Olivia (Patricia Arquette) is the single stable parent of both children. In the exposition of the film, Olivia takes care of both Samantha and Mason by herself. Mason Senior (Ethan Hawke), the non-nourishing father, makes an unexpected appearance and takes the children bowling, and throughout the film re-establishes a relationship to Mason and Samantha. The main running time frames Mason in his upbringing around Olivia's family constellations, that move from a marriage with Bill (Marco Perella), a former professor, to a relationship with Jim (Brad Hawkins), a former student. The ending sequences of the film display Mason's transition from childhood and puberty into adolescence, in the surroundings of entering University. The drama of the film arises out of the experiences of everyday life. The human condition is explored through the film by the conflicts of intentions, luck, and the role of the passage of time in ageing. The accelerated stream of events, the growing up of a boy, results in the obvious: Olivia, one more time, is left alone by a male – this time not a boy and not yet a man.

With my analysis of Richard Linklater's *Boyhood*, I return to the core interpretation of the collection of the self. I offer a second arrangement of collection, in my argument to follow. As conceived of in the introduction of this section, *The Cinematic Self*, the specificities of time and space frame my reading. This spatio-temporal reading is suggested as one of the most overarching senses of the term collection for an analysis of selfhood in contemporary cinema. However, while *The Congress* serves as the first pillar of my interpretation of the collection of the self, this reading will be balanced through my second suggested interpretation of the term collection. The second collection that I present in the

following is of a fundamentally changed spatio-temporal arrangement. Via my previous

engagement in Section I, I relate the treatment of time in *Boyhood* to the bracketing of time

and temporality more broadly. This, however, not only redefines the possibility in which

collection relates to a self theoretically, but also implies conclusive suggestions for a broader

meaning of the treatment of selfhood and interpretation of the relationship of temporality

to selfhood. To summarise this comparatively: *The Congress* uses the fixation of Robin

Wright for the production of an archive into the future, while *Boyhood* uses an archive of the

past for the presentation of itself. The use of archive with respect to both past and present

points towards the crucial role of this terminology in this comparative analysis of *Boyhood* in

the frame of my analysis.

The fixated image, the iconising of the self in a moment, in a specific self in time

and space, is further deconstructively interpreted here. In addition to this, the collection of

selfhood occurs not only in time, but also over time. The first section *Towards a Theory of the*

Cinematic Self analysed the temporal dynamics of stilled live images, or still life

images through my reading of *Self in the Mirror* and *Las Meninas*. In these dynamics the

viewer constructs their presentation of selfhood in the temporal dynamics of the

representational arrangement, through fixation and suspension. However, with *Boyhood* the

sense of the moment in time and space moves further to a durational realm, with short

home-video style rewinding tapes, yet professional cinematic pieces of durational works. In

my understanding, a classical Bazinian realist ontology of the photographic image is

complicated here (Bazin 1967, Bazin 1971). The image, through presentation in time and

instantaneous cuts of afterness into the forwarding in time in *Boyhood*, extends into another

durational plastic sphere. Building on my earlier reading of *Cornered,* the film presents a self

in re-collections, confronting the viewer in "video bits", and confronting itself. The film

constitutes a presentation of Mason, a self collecting itself through its proper constitution of itself, as an unfolding and accumulation of time, as a presentation of an account of time, in video-like snippets of itself, in temporal suspension of itself. Further, in my argument concerning the collection of selfhood in *Boyhood*, the film *Boyhood* is "a self" as a film, an object, a medium, a cinema of the self, and thus, indeed, a "selfie film". The term selfie film aims to link the notion of the selfie as defined by the OED as 'a photograph that one has taken of oneself' with the notion of film as mediation of directorial perspective and the aesthetics of a durational stream. Non-paradoxically *Boyhood* epitomises the capability of the collection of selfhood in a durational photographic stream of oneself through the aesthetics of directorial cinema. To suggest this treatment of the self of *Boyhood*, I analyse the spatio-temporal arrangements of the film with a focus on the aesthetic-ontological depth and simultaneous groundlessness of the self.

Following the section *Towards a Theory of the Cinematic Self*, I continue the argument with a focus on the notion of time as duration. Like in the earlier analysis of *The Congress*, the focus is on the relationship of recording and selfhood, and the medium of film. With *Boyhood*, further complications arise with respect to the visual presentation of selfhood, through the employment of time in the film. The relationships of past, present time or now, and future, in different fragmented temporal images relate time to one another in cinematically unprecedented ways. Compared to other childhood-focused films, such as François Truffaut's début *The 400 Blows* (1959), Hou Hsiao-Hsien's *The Time to Live and the Time to Die* (1985), or Linklater's own *Dazed and Confused* (1993), *Boyhood* radically rethinks the employment of time as duration in cinema. In *Boyhood,* there is an unequivocal sense of presence in the now, a plasticity.

In my aesthetic-ontological analysis, the film's radical narrative endeavour in realism points towards the function of this cinema of the self, as a form of mirror. For the viewer questions arise, intuitively, out of this suggested narrative culture, the temporal culture of the film: What is being presented here, in this film? What form of realist image does *Boyhood* present? Why is time passing by, so fast and so slow, at the same time? Why do most cinematographic arrangements in film revolve around a boy? What is this self of the boy Mason we experience, we are strangely *mis en scène* as a viewer by observing and encircling the intimate presentation of his self? Other questions arise, through the editing. What forms of difference, suspension, and concepts of before and afterness are seen? What is the process of bracketing of time of the film? What relationships to duration are suggested by the employment of time by the film? Further to the questions concerning the aspects of storytelling, I postulate there is a mirror implied in *Boyhood* through the relationship of the self to time: in its collection. On the one hand, the self is collected, and vanishes, over and over again. It somehow melts into short spheres of selfhood, beyond the classical neo-realist use of time in unison with space and purpose. There is some magic in the narrative of a childhood following the progression out of it. The viewer confronts an endless epistemic scene. On the other hand, through this cinematic experiment a collection of a self in *Boyhood* is suggested in the representation of the past as cinematically happening in the now of both the world on screen and the viewing experience. It is in this reflowing of time as duration in which the force of embalmment in *Boyhood*, as an epistemic scene of this film, serves to continuously embalm: to produce a self.

The mirror of the self finds its continuous embalming in *The Cinematic Self* via *Boyhood* through the unfolding of the self of Mason over time. With *Boyhood*, my discussion moves from a momentary fixation in time, and an epistemological scene of a total fixation

of a self and collection in *The Congress*, to a continuous process of embalming. However, this process of sculpting of time or embalming is itself the product of particular moments and epistemological scenes of self-formation. *Boyhood* continuously uses the fixation of the moment within scenes as a form of *brise vue*, continuous momentary scenes of confrontations of selfhood, and these individual scenes in turn embalm selfhood as a durational process. While Mason is presented through schooling, play, and interaction to family and friends, concrete details of these relations change: lying on the lawn becomes playing Gameboy, which becomes playing with a Macbook laptop, which then becomes playing with an iPhone. These relations are explored through the particular use of durational time in the film, through the exploration of work and play. With the aesthetics of the moment as *brise vue* (in which Mason for instance interacts with the Gameboy, Macbook, and iPhone), the *brisure* fixates itself into a form of collection, as the communication of the network of the durational relations, of the summation of all individual scenes. This means that all differences in time are located, or temporised, and in summation a collection of time. The temporal horizon continuously alters anew, as the *brisure* as joint-in-time confronts itself with the *brise vue* as break-in-time, with the concrete individual flickers of scenes blocking off the overall durational relations in time, which then further unfold through the real time of the film. While Mason's horizon expands continuously through personal growth of reaching milestones of adolescence, for the viewer the horizons of the respective scenes or known phases of adolescence – and indeed the durational experience of time – are continuously redrawn. *Boyhood* presents selfhood as the exposition of "milestone moments" – ordinary yet formative relational experiences of subjectivisation – brackets of fragmented fixations of identification.

Milestone moments serve as anchors of the experience of relationality of the self towards the world. While the formative moments of boyhood appear highly personal, they are at the same time somewhat universal. The legibility of the series of events of the film is achieved through the use of American culture, the common popular culture of the late 20th and early 21st century as hegemonic dominant culture, to which the viewer can relate. The viewer of *Boyhood* easily (and perhaps involuntarily) remembers the global commercial pop culture dominated by American celebrities, such as Britney Spears, which appear as referential subjects and markers of time within the film. The film achieves in moments, such as Mason being woken up by Samantha singing '*Oops!…I did it again*' an opening, a touch of relationality to the materiality of time as experience of selfhood. Strangely, this relationality works on the local or Texan state level, the American national level, and the hegemonic Western and global level. This iconisation of the passage of culture is here epitomised through the focus on the self-formatting time, or self-formative time of adolescence. In adolescence events are somewhat naturally hyphenated and exciting, as they happen for the first time and provide a signature, an influence, a path for the self. This is emphasised in the film by the emergence of Mason's sexual identity and the presentation of dating culture through his relationship to Sheena (Zoe Graham).

Whereas I defined through *Las Meninas* the viewer through the mirror as epistemic scene of representation, *Boyhood* complicates this form of mirroring. The viewer is offered a continuous, complicated passage of time and the over-the-shoulder perspective of a "lifetime" of boyhood. The exposition of the self here is achieved through the congruence of the self of Mason and Ellar Coltrane: chiefly due to the parallel duration of Mason's and Ellar Coltrane's boyhoods and similar life paths. In the film, there is a continuous re-drawing of the borderlines of fixations of the pluralising and continuations of *brise vues*. For

instance, the graduation from high school is presented through the social ritual of a party, and with it a new frame, view, or *vue* of horizon is introduced for the viewer. Also, the mirroring force of moments continues, through the editing in some rupture, and breaks, as milestone moments seamlessly melt into the next moment: after the graduation party from high school, the move to college follows.

Boyhood's narrative is not the presentation of a dislocation of the self, no self-doubling either, but an endless rolling production of a self. *Boyhood* is a flow of brackets of time, collecting over time, as a cinematic form forming a long take: twelve years of boyhood and twelve years of making of the film shaped into watching 165 minutes. The film is an epistemological long take and the durational experiment of a rewound tape recording of a singular unfolding self over the course of a boyish adolescence. This is a photo-album-like past, a personal past of the private realm. There is a sense of orientation, rather than a loss, suggested for the viewer into this redrawing, recollecting, that is nevertheless, through the use of temporal cuts of time, moving into the future. This recollection of the past that rolls into the future, however, focuses on one singular identity and self, namely Mason's, and collects through the multiplicity of the presentation of itself. The selves of Mason that are seen in the film are multiple and one, non-paradoxically non-identiarian yet identitarian: in difference, identity, suspension, and fixation to time. I thus propose *Boyhood* as a film offers a transitional space of the collection of selfhood, as it offers no actual and singular space of transition to be localised, but only time itself as transition in time and space, collected through the flow of fixations of time over time.

The transition of time is spread over the whole film. There is no *Light Stage*-like collection, no collected archive to be drawn from, but the film itself is the archival playback of a remix, and an edit of a collection of time. The Best-Of production of a self, an edited

version, as a document of twelve years and yet essay of twelve years, a narrative as curated collectors edit – indeed a director's cut – is presented as a film. There is a certain involution or inversion of the previously analysed arrangement of collection: whereas *The Congress* uses one image – or one sequential series of images – to produce an endless flickering of the self in the future, *Boyhood* uses all flickering images of itself to edit, produce, and collect a singular self over time.

I also understand *Boyhood* as philosophical inquiry into the lifetime of adolescence through everyday-life in historical time. The film is the collection of the self: the account of a boyhood. The film, as a function of this editing is a documenting collection of a self, a collection of directorial choices. *Boyhood* is a making-of of the experimental collection of the self, while also being a realist narrative tale of a boy growing up. The viewer here is a tourist of twelve years of lifetime. The self of Mason is in a continuous recording, unfolding, and suspension, while the film is the video-tape-like record thereof, a cinema of this self. However, thinking about the editing more expansively: there are numerous temporal cuts or edits, over the twelve years, as time goes on within the feature-length film of thirty-nine recording days. The recorded time is a "plastic project" of the film as an essay to sculpt a self. The use of plastic project refers to the film as an experiment in plastic arts, rather than suggesting the dubious physicality of a malleable material. The project, the directorial ambition is clearly indicated through the title of the film, and the linearity of the unfolding of the plot. The plasticity is temporal. Rather than unfolding as panoramic plasticity, as suggested in my reading of *The Congress*, the plasticity is in contemporaneity. The brackets of the cinematic narrative suggest the plasticity of this contemporaneous "porous plasticity". Most of the events, rituals, and moments in *Boyhood* the viewer (and also otherly gendered viewer) has experienced – or can imaginatively relate to. Porosity is relational.

Time is relationally porous, as the sequences and scenes are edited in a process that resembles them melting into one another. This experience of a manufactured porous time sculpts the running time of the film into a plastic, while this plastic as a figure forms and indeed sculpts the self of Mason. Mason's self is subject to time, and time as durational experience in *Boyhood* is presented as gravitational or inescapable force. As indicated earlier, many experiences of the film are down-to-earth trivialities: the world as backdrop is characterised by the emissions of pop culture through media, the formations and reformations of family groups, and the various stages of schooling. This porous plasticity of time, this particular relationality suggests a sense of a mirroring cut through a prototypical human condition during the historical time of the film. Most of the events are globally understood (if not personally experienced) *Augenblicke,* moments embedded in news, and cultural references, refreshing a sense of self for the viewer in the viewer's personal memory. *Figure 10* is an image (not taken from the film itself) that to a certain extent does justice to the overall film by consisting of a photographic album-like grid of *Boyhood* that presents eight different frames of view or portraits, as a collection or catalogue of Mason's self or selves. As seen through the spacings of time in this grid-like image, the cuts of time, Mason inevitably grows up and grows into adolescence. *Figure 10* exemplifies the simplicity and complexity of the film in a single documentary-style shot, as it displays the sameness and difference of the body of Mason in this catalogue-like display. Indeed, in the film, there is clear cinematographic focus on the growing-up of the body, established from the first shot of the film onwards (which also serves as one of the main promotional posters of the film), in which Mason's face is framed in a high-angle close-up looking up towards the cloudy blue sky, while the camera zooms out and reveals Mason as lying in the grass of his elementary school. The mise-en-scène complements this focus on

the self by the increasing plasticity of the porous body and mind through a dramatic exposé and exposition of a self, collected in an ever-growing world of complexity. The self of Mason is collected in repetitions, and differences, while itself as a self – 'Mason' as a character in the film – attempts to locate and produce a self within this process of becoming and adolescence.

The self of Mason is excavated in drama through the porosity of time. The editing of the film consists of interstices of temporal brackets, concrete individual horizons that merge into one another, through the use of editing. Consider the use of night and day in the exposition of the film: Mason goes to bed in the temporal bracket alpha (the first of thirty-nine shooting days), and after a cut, wakes up in the temporal bracket beta (the second of thirty-nine shooting days). The passage of time occurring through the human daytime and night-time cycle, and the connecting narrative tissue of sleep as bridge of time, is amplified in its temporal effect in the film here, by the insertion of an extended duration of time into the perceived divisional effect of day and night. To continue the previous example of the passage of time, another prominent example of the porosity of time is the use of cars in the Texan everyday life experience. Olivia drives a car in the temporal bracket gamma, while after a cut and the subsequent arrival at the destination of the move, the narrative continues to take place in the temporal bracket delta.

Mason's display, the display of his self in the film is a signature of time. The signature of time, on the other hand, produces the effect of Mason being seen in difference to his earlier display as a function of time. The porosity achieved through the described form of editing effectuates a radically hyphenated display of time. Time in the individual temporal brackets of the film is not self-contained, and although occurrences take place in an individual time in relation to the establishment of the situation, oftentimes this

occurs due to the past of another temporal bracket influencing the now of the current temporal bracket - such as in the earlier examples. Time is oozing, leaking, seeping from one sequence into another, and achieving a sense of a fluid non-fixated identity of Mason. In every temporal bracket of each shooting day anew, the viewer is in a process of captivating afterness of the preceding temporal bracket, in a chase of time, apprehending the cuts into new times retroactively as they have occurred already, yet are still happening in the now of the respective bracket. The cuts technically skip and jump large amounts of time, yet harmonically reorient the viewer through the swift Fellini-like temporal mending and charging of the plot (such as in Fellini's 1963 film *8 ½*), elegantly moving from one temporal bracket and environment into another.

A sense of magical realism of this cinema of the self stems from this porous plasticity of time, and the collection of the self in this nevertheless extending durational passage of plasticity. There is a post-haptocentric focus on the body, which does not privilege the exclusively sensuous realm of the figure of touch, even if this might be suggested by the materiality of surface and skin through the terminology of porous. Instead the film presents a plasticity of time, an iconised now in the process of continuous spiral shelling in suspension (rather than accomplishment) of a fixation of the body of Mason. This non-fixating exposition of a self, in its passage-like presentation, is a mirroring, relational invitation towards the viewer's own self and past, and the sense in which the pastness haunts the viewer's sense of self. Particularly for the millennial viewer, whose autobiography is closely aligned to Mason's, the sense of self is an archived curriculum vitae, a film, an object, a DVD.

As it appears through the experience of watching *Boyhood*, the self is displayed as a collection, an edit of the archive of real memories of one's existence, pulled together onto a

collecting timeline of events. Through the use of collective cultural and historical memories *Boyhood* is, indeed, happening in the viewer's own millennial past. As a form of a compressed travel in time, the soundtrack in tandem with historical events inserts further factual atmosphere into the temporal brackets of the film. Through the triggering of collective memories, the viewer thereby experiences a relationality to the phenomenon of the passage of time in their own life. Mason is presented around snapshots of American cultural memorabilia: Volvo 240 station wagons, television sets, 9/11, Obama elections, the iPhone, and the College campus, and concludes with Arcade Fire's song *Deep Blue* and accompanying the credits, the viewer hears 'and here in my own skin, I can finally begin'. Then the film stops, ends, and the viewer just stands up and leaves the cinema, shuts down the TV, or closes their Macbook – or lets it all continue. The film discontinues with a sense of contemporaneity, yet has just reached a point in time, and no end. There is a passage in this process of a travel, a tour of a self – which continues to grow, as Mason and Ellar Coltrane's body continues to grow, after the film ends, in another now. A sense of passage evolves for the viewer, of a relationality to a self, and to time, to memory, and to the archive of the self as collection.

Chapter 10: Collecting Crystallisation – Mason's Self in Temporal Relations

The collection of self is a form of crystallisation, of images, and sequences, and scenes into a film. From the isolation of one image, to the meaning of a sequence, to the meaning of the film as a whole, intuitively, *Boyhood* exemplifies the property of time as a quality of the

cinematic image. In its most basic, often overlooked property, the ontology of the photographic image, famously after André Bazin, is temporal. Reminded here of my discussion of realism in *Self in the Mirror* and *Las Meninas*, I extend the observation to the cinematic image. As developed in the section *Towards a Theory of the Cinematic Self,* photographic realism is a temporally defined ontology. Informing my argument with respect to the relationship of time and the image, in 1958 Bazin famously asks the ontological question 'What is Cinema?' in deeply ingrained temporal terms. I am thus following this lead, and looking at the collection of the self in the collection of time, by a suggestive closer reading of time as durational, and the aesthetic-ontological pictorial properties of time in *Boyhood.* This technique of the self as collection in *Boyhood* is thereby demonstrated in this chapter in three steps. First, as already anticipated, I analyse the unique treatment of temporality in the film through a reading of Bazin. Second, I provide two direct examples from the film as isolated epistemic scenes in which an additional layer of materiality of time is present through the plot of the film. Third, I conclude by means of a further interpretation of Bazin and the relationship of temporality to realism and suggest implications of *Boyhood* concerning cinematic forms of storytelling more broadly.

Bazin writes in the classic essay 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image' on the relationship of ontology to time in the photographic and cinematic image (in Bazin 1967). Central to this question is the passage of time and the concept of collecting, or recollecting time – put differently, understanding time as durational. Bazin argues cinema is the answer to a human desire, a desire to collect what I term a self, and this desire of cinema answers to what he terms the mummification complex. He writes (1967:9):

If the plastic arts were put under psychoanalysis, the practice of embalming the dead might

turn out to be a fundamental factor in their creation. The process might reveal that at the

origin of painting and sculpture there lies a mummy complex. The religion of ancient

Egypt, aimed against death, saw survival as depending on the continued existence of the

corporeal body. Thus, by providing a defense against the passage of time it satisfied a basic

psychological need in man, for death is but the victory of time.

Bazin considers the role of embaling of the dead into icons, a genesis of selfhood, by a

reading of the self in plastic and temporal, durational terms. Paradoxically, the viewer

encounters a self, in what is not a fixation, but essentially a suspension in time, an

"embalmment" in durational terms. The image offers, as does my reading of Bazin, a

collection of a singular self in time, encapsulated, like in ancient Egypt, in a monumental

account of a self in time in the appearance of the pictorial image.

To recollect my earlier reading of *Cornered,* indeed like *Cornered* this poses questions

of this ontological encounter of what is not alive, yet is somewhat a self. The

mummification complex, according to Bazin, is the mechanism of coping with this

human desire, of the production of objects, of communicative structures – of what I earlier

in Section I termed cinematic selves. Further, Bazin's strange yet conclusive statement, '[t]o

preserve, artificially, his [or her] bodily appearance is to snatch it from the flow of time, to

stow it away neatly, so to speak, in the hold of life' is interesting within this context (1967:

9). The use of 'charnelles' in French (for bodily) is evocative of the carnal structure of the

cinematic encounter earlier developed after Barthes (1981:10). Here, however,

Bazin concretely thematises the temporal dimension of the experience of film, by the use of

flow and duration. There is in *Boyhood*, I argue, a fixation, an odd unity of an image

of durational time. As earlier suggested through my reading of *Figure 10*, the images of time

that the film consists of are in and of a specific and unique time, yet the images

are embedded in the spiral shelling environment of a film, endlessly ageing within the

framing limitations of the running time of the film. The term mummification, as suggested

by Bazin, intuitively invites me here to think about the relationship of the image to the self.

The image, in my reading of Bazin, is the presentation of a self. In *Boyhood* this is a complex

process, a presentation of a self in crystallisation.

Accepting Bazin's classification of film into the plastic arts, I argue that *Boyhood*, as a

magical form of realism, presents what he calls a 'flow of time' through the presentation of

a self (1967: 9). The use of the archive of time, of a self, in terms of collection is asked

through the film differently than in *The Congress*. In contrast to the *Light Stage* copy of Robin

Wright, and the copying sequence of Robin Wright in *The Congress*, the viewer here

confronts a self in continuous crystallisations. An embalmment of a self through and with

and over time, is the gestural suggestion of the film to collect a self. This flow of time is the

film as a series of sequences of a boyhood, in its summation an abstract figure, an episteme

of a film as cinematic long take, yet somewhat strangely cutting in time sequentially. *Boyhood*

suggests a realism of a plasticity, a stretch, a tape-like quality of an extended "now" in its

long-take-like sequentiality. The indexicality of the image is temporally fixated, anchored in

the presentation and preservation of the self, as the function, the apprehension of time in

its pictorial collection. This phenomenon of an archival indexicality of the film, rather than

indexicality of an individual image alone, arises from the employment of time as a temporal

ontology in this technique of the self. The presentation of Mason is achieved by

Barthesian umbilical cordings, iconising images, a continuous spiral shelling of a self: indeed

a collection as a crystallisation. Thinking again of the temporal bracketing and the examples

of the exposition of the film suggested earlier, this dynamic of temporality is achieved

by flows of time into another time, achieving this sense of crystallisation. Yet, there is a non-fixating sense of continuous spontaneous evolvement in this flow of fixed points in time into a temporal experience of holistic unity in the compressed account of a self over the running time of the film. I see in *Boyhood* a continuous form of non-singular embalmments, of reoccurring, and thus pluralising mummifications that crystallise a sense of time. *Boyhood* is a Bazinian durational complex form, neatly stowed away, a plastic, a project, an object, a stream as a 'hold of life' (1967: 9, 1981: 10).

The origin of plastic artworks, to recall Bazin's argument, is the desire to counteract death and the passage of time. All plastic arts, for Bazin, come into form from a desire to produce artifacts as a reaction to the mummy complex. Film has the function – in and as its ontology within the realm of reality – to feed this human desire of mummification. As Bazin further writes, 'photography does not create eternity as art does [here understood as for instance sculpture], it embalms time, rescuing it simply from its own proper corruption' (1967: 14). As Laura Mulvey formulates in the discussion of Bazin in *Death 24x a Second*, this rescuing means that '[o]nce time is 'embalmed' in the photograph, it persists, carrying the past across to innumerable futures as they become the present' (2006: 56). I take Mulvey's argument concerning the employment of time within the mechanics of the ontology of the image, here suggestively as supportive of my argument for *Boyhood*. In *Boyhood*, the self is toured, through time, through cinematic images carried across to the future, as the self, Mason, becomes innumerable, yet crystallises into "one" self through the passage, the tour in linearly developing durational time. Whereas, on the one hand Mulvey's analysis echoes and recalls *The Congress* and the ability to indeed capture and carry the image across to the future, in a wholly mummified way, on the other hand it testifies to the ability of the image to carry time itself across itself to the future, which occurs in *Boyhood*. However, to make

time visible, the image has to have a marker to have its signature on, which is the unfolding or continuous marking of time onto the momentary self of Mason in *Boyhood*, through which Mason's self is constructed and collected over time. This means that indeed, as Bazin further stated in the ontology essay, '[t]he aesthetic qualities of photography are to be sought in its power to lay bare the realities', or in French '[l]es virtualités esthétiques de la photographie résident dans la *révélation* du réel' (1967: 15, 1981: 16, my emphasis). In the case of *Boyhood*, there is a sense in which a revelation of reality (to use a more literal reading of Bazin) occurs through the aesthetic quality of the image as deeply temporal experience: the collection of the selfhood of Mason over durational time, which is produced through the continuous process of mummification.

There are numerous examples in the film where the embalmment as collection of the self of Mason is presented, or presents itself. However, the embalmments of Mason's self in *Boyhood* do not occur without the use of a cinematographic visual perspective, the use of a presentation from a particular point of view. Primarily, perspective is used to present Mason within the social and family relations he is embedded in. Also, there is the faithful use of a child's perspective upon the world throughout the entirety of the film, as a narrative element of how the storyline is constructed. For instance, the first and second divorce of Olivia does not happen as event for Mason and Samantha, but visually outside their radius. The revelation of reality occurs thus in a somewhat magical and childish manner for the viewer, as there is the process of puzzling together the relations between the different and changing members of what is presented as the intimate family circle. Cinematographically, for instance, there is a point-of-view and over-the-shoulder technique used to amplify the effect of experiencing the situation from the children's perspective. This technique provides for a particular piercing quality of the intimate family sequences that

reveal conflict, for instance when Bill, the psychology lecturer and first stepfather of Mason and Samantha collects their mobile phones against their will, to cut off their possibilities of communication with Olivia and the outside world. The children's perspective here confronts the viewer with the inescapability of the situation, and the power relations in which the children find themselves without their consent. To continue the storyline of the struggle of Olivia's relationship with Bill, another highly emotional example of this child's perspective is the sequence in which Mason and Samantha are rescued from Bill's house. While the cinematography here takes on their point-of-view, the adult viewer understands their situation from a more omniscient point-of-view incorporating the life experience that they lack. The mummification of Mason occurs within the passage of time, and the relational transformations concerning his perspective onto the world in which his ageing self is implicated in.

The plot of the film in which the mummifications and relational constellations occur is narrated in brackets (or moments) of time, earlier named *brise vues*, and understood as epistemic sequences. In each of those bracketing sequences a slice of narrative and real time reveals both a moment in time in Mason's life, a particular slice of his selfhood, and a relational diagram of forces towards the constellations of the family he finds himself in. These fixations of time into durational bits are themselves ephemeral points of fixation due to their instability, their fragility, their relentless ever-moving and slipping nature, their ability to be different and divergent, to also possibly having been completely different. *Boyhood* exemplifies, with the form of the cuts, as discussed above, the nature of time not as fixed, immobile and anchored or 'set', but essentially as mobile, fluid, holistically ephemeral. *Boyhood* thereby indeed 'channels the flow of real life', as critic Morgenstern points out (2014). This means that the way the cut works in the film is comparable to Deleuze's

reading of Bergson's conception of time within the discussion of the movement-image (1986a: 56-70). The ontology of *Boyhood*'s images is close to the movement-image after Deleuze: a spiral-esque, slender narrative of transformation of its relations to 'the Whole' (Deleuze 1986a: 8-11). The presentation of time occurs within the 'coupe mobile' or mobile cut structure of elements (Deleuze 1983: 12). There is not a regulated passage of time (understood as frames) from one frame to another but transformative passage of relations through time: identities and relations of the protagonists to each other and the viewer undergo substantial transformations. This is linked to the important idea of 'the Whole' (Deleuze 1986a: 8-11). Analogously to images normatively understood as documentary, it is always a "slice of life" – in a huge framing of 'the Whole' – that is presented and treated as such in *Boyhood* (Ibid). The shot is thus a 'temporal perspective or a modulation' including its own past-future (Deleuze 1986a: 24). The relation to the image for the viewer is thus a relation to this form of passage of time, to the image as changing-in-nature, and also as response to the interpersonal relations presented in the particular image and sequence.

The mechanics of temporal collection of *Boyhood* work on two simultaneous layers, in the moment itself and as a collection of moments. *Boyhood* preserves a passage of time both through the indexicality of individual images, and the framing of the running time of the film as indexicality in and of itself. This holistic indexicality, however, also spans over time within the film's individual scenes or sequences, itself being process of a passage of time. This process that the film engages in produces a fluid, non-permanent mummification – a continued existence of the corporeal body – that is seen as sculpture/sculpted with and over a time span. This temporal aesthetics, the ontology of the image works in *Boyhood* in a Nancean dynamic of exposed and exposing rather than belonging to an embalmed point in time. In other words, the film complicates the traditional Bazinian realist conception, as

there is this double indexicality: an embalmed indexicality that further embalms itself over time. This double indexicality is most strongly perceived in the film through the passage of historical time engrained through the use of technology. While Mason Sr.'s black 1968 Pontiac GTO convertible tours Texas throughout the running time of the film encapsulating a sense of stability – exposing a singular temporal archival reference to reality – the home entertainment technology displayed in the film drastically skips chunks of time. Through its continued process of embalming, *Boyhood* thus produces a new ontology of passing of the photographic image.

The film is a passage/passing, *Boyhood* is the mirror and the *brise vue*, at the same time, standing still, a fixation, yet a skipping, a fast-forward non-fixation in time. In other words, or to adapt to a Nancean terminology or the film presents collection/collecting through *a* collection/collecting. There is a continuous embalmment of passage and passing in the image. However, to recall the foundational Nancean dynamics of presentation, rather than representation, not strictly speaking a likeness is suggested, not an aboutness of the self, but a somewhat naked self. As the film displays the body of Mason, the collection/collecting implies there is the presentation of a body with and through its durational materiality. For instance, while the *Dragon Ball Z* cartoon (1989-1996) makes Mason's curious kindergarten-aged face shine, the *Nintendo Wii* home video game console (2006-2011) used in a later sequence of the film exposes Mason's teenager hands moving awkwardly up and down in front of a television set. The viewer here experiences the crystallisation of collection through a unique exposure of a body that is sculpted through time. Through the display of durational difference of time within the same corporeal self a pioneering sense of passage evolves for the viewer. *Boyhood* is not a representation, but rather, with a sense of tracing as documentation, the exposition of a presentation, indeed

with Nancy a 'skin-show', an embalmed "striptease" into the future, a realist presentation of a self (2008: 3).

The invention of an unprecedented realism is the chief artistic merit of the film, reflected in and by the universal critical acclaim (such as the 100 Metacritic rating). Although the direction of leaps in time linearly progresses into the temporal future of their respective former shots throughout the film, a sense of con-temporality (of past, present, and future) comparable to the Deleuzian time-image haunts the film (cf. Deleuze 1989). Nevertheless, despite the unidirectional unfolding of time the film innovates a 'magical' realism of time, in a contemporaneous conception of time that works through its construction of presence (Dargis 2014a). Thinking of the relationality of time and the temporal nature of the photographic image in realism, Bazin writes on the use of symbolism in Jean Renoir's work (1974: 85):

> The word "realism" as it is commonly used does not have an absolute and clear meaning, so much as it indicates a certain tendency toward the faithful rendering of reality on film. Given the fact that this movement toward the real can take a thousand different routes, the apologia for "realism" *per se,* strictly speaking, means nothing at all. The movement is valuable only insofar as it brings increased meaning (itself an abstraction) to what is created.

Bazin here suggests that there is no clear meaning in realism as a term, and indeed the meaning of realism cannot be sought in its relationship to temporal fixation. In my reading, Bazin reminds the theoretical reader and/or cinematic viewer of the limitations of a focus on the temporal indexicality of the image. Thinking of a Derridean intervention into the cinematic archive of the image understood as mere still life, the cinematic image is also a

trace, while tracing in duration. The viewer, on the other hand, in realism, epitomised by

Bazin in Renoir, is facing the cinematographic moving image through 'continuity in time

and its vanishing point in space' (1974: 88). The indexicality of the realist image, is always

also at the same time an index of technology of its construction. Embalmment and

mummification are intricately linked, temporally, and in the aesthetics of the image. There is

a form of Derridean *arche-traceing* in the ontology of the moving image constructed in the

film, something like a tracing of original presence (cf. 1978: 61-62, Spivak in Derrida 1978:

xvii-xviii). With respect to *Boyhood*, the camera's view, the *brise vue* of the camera, is in a

direct, directional, and directing relationship to the archive – the duration of twelve years of

recording the film. Faithfulness to the Bazinian 'real' is not a value per se, of a recording

machine, but of the subjective rendering of the embalmment of a reality. Being reminded of

the figure of the Barthesian *umbilical cord*, the machine and the camera operator record,

produce the image, and with it this plasticity of time. This means that the technology in

which realist film is created, with recordings and edits in time, is always in relation to an

idea of indexicality as plasticity, as a form of sculpting in time.

The use of editing in *Boyhood* allows for the sculpting in time to take place that

builds a sense of crystallisation through the compression of time. Thinking of one of the

first examples in which the sense of a compression of time is achieved through a jump cut,

through which then a bridging of real time occurs, I am reminded of Olivia driving Mason

and Samantha to Houston, to move to this destination and resettle there. While the first

time that Olivia's Volvo 240 is used, in the exposition of the film to pick up Mason from

elementary school, there is a continuation in narrative and durational time, in the second

use of the car as vehicle of transportation, the arrival to the destination, as earlier suggested,

is combined with the editing technique of the cut to the next image to relocate the viewer

not only in a new destination, but also in a new real time. Although the destination is reached in the evening, and the next shot displays the unfolding of a new day, this form of continuity editing here is in fact the first example in which the cut bridges temporal distance of real time.

From one shot to the other, another sense of time, another sense of now is being bridged by the cut. Nevertheless, a sense of faithfulness to time is suggested through the use of travel, and indeed the move to re-establish a new narrative and spatio-temporal environment. The sculpting of time as a compression of time occurs analogously to the natural change of day and night, and the cultural change of the actors of the film wearing different clothes than on the previous day. Rather than constituting a jump cut, the temporal break is intended to happen in cinematographically almost invisible, or barely perceptible ways to allow for a sense of narrative realism. However, it is exactly this strategic use of the skipping of chunks of real time that produces the sense of magical realism of the film and plasticity of time, as one *brise vue* cuts to another. The plasticity of the sculpting in time is thus introduced here almost in invisible ways, only perceptible for the viewer in the first instance by taking a closer look at the faces of all three actors as the signs of ageing in this form of a skin-show seem to manifest themselves as a marker of time. Further to the body as a marker of time the film uses temporality within the plot to produce a sense of crystallisation of time. In those scenes in which the materiality of time is explored within the plot, the viewer witnesses the dynamics of personal development, such as the rearrangement of family constellations and rituals of adolescence as markers of time.

Figure 11. The Lunch Sequence.

Thinking of one particularly strong epistemic scene to provide support for my overall argument of the crystallization of time as collection, I am reminded again of ways in which Mason's sense of selfhood is implicated within other relationships that frame his life. The plot of the film offers numerous examples of the punctuating force of emotional conflicts that rearrange the experience of reality for Mason, and thereby progress the temporal experience of growing-up as growing out of (and thereby growing into other) spatio-temporal configurations. The personal experience of childhood is excavated in *Boyhood* through the presentation of the self of Mason being a non-autonomous agent, within the web of relations of the adults he is surrounded by without his consent. Mason's childhood development is characterised by the different stages and phases of Olivia's relationships. One of the strongest emotional situations the viewer experiences is the way in which Mason suffers under the abusive relationship towards Bill, and the decay in the harmony of the overall relations of Mason, Samantha, and Olivia towards Bill. The viewer here witnesses the situation from a perspective within and surrounding Bill's house, and

through the point-of-view of Mason. The scene that I am referring to here, the last lunch

that the two families have together, as seen in *Figure 11*, occurs just before the earlier

mentioned break-up and altogether rushed departure from Bill's house.

Mason returns together with Randy, Bill's son, on their bikes to Bill's house where

the two families live together. While entering the premises of the house and leaving the

bikes in front of one of the garages of the house, to enter the house through the garage,

both children see Olivia unexpectedly lying on the ground of the garage screaming and

crying. The camera here pauses in front of the half shuttered garage gate, and Olivia reacts

in panic to Mason's question of what happened, and asks the children to return to the

house, while Bill has entered, or presumably re-entered the garage through the doorway that

connects it to the house, with a glass in his hand. The adult viewer here apprehends Bill

holding a glass in his hand as a signifier for the alcoholism that has lead to the physical

abuse that occurred before the children returned for lunch. The two children, avoiding

physical proximity with Bill, swiftly return outside the garage to leave the frame again, while

the camera continues to give justice to Olivia's breakdown within the garage, before it cuts

to the lunch sequence.

The social and family ritual of the lunch presents the faux intimacy of the two

families as one, while they dine together. The scene has a particularly ingrained piercing

character as it displays the separation of the families while being together. Emotionally

charged by the incident in the garage, the scene portrays the climax of Bill's emotionally

abusive patterns towards Olivia and Mason, due to the decay of the constitution as a

husband and parent. In the establishing shot of this lunch scene, the camera takes on a

position adjacent to Bill's empty chair, while the four children face each other, and Olivia

sits at the other end of the round table. A sound is being heard, which appears to come

from the kitchen, as the alerted facial reactions towards this noise indicate, the camera cuts towards the open kitchen and Bill appears in a mid shot. After a reverse shot in which the lunch table is seen again, the camera tracks backwards accompanying Bill's movement towards his chair while simultaneously the entrance out of the kitchen area reveals Bill holding an almost empty bottle of whiskey, besides a glass in his left hand that he picked up in the kitchen. While the camera moves behind Olivia, Bill forcefully lowers both the glass and the bottle and establishes fierce eye contact with Olivia, and from the perspective of *Figure 11* announces having a drink with his dinner.

In the next shot, Olivia's face is seen in a medium close up shot, and her reaction reveals anxiety. It is in this intense exchange of eye contact that the viewer feels the emotional distance, coldness, anger, and anguish that have crept into the relationship. Bill turns to Samantha, and then Mindy to ask whether they have 'a problem' with him having a drink, to which they in a reverse shot convention both reply no to. Continuing the round, Bill then turns to Mason to confront him with his impression that Mason does not like him very much, to which he adds that he does not like himself either, and while he further asks whether that is funny, he throws his glass on Mason's plate. In the perspective of *Figure 11*, the glass smashes on the plate missing both the camera and Mason's face and body by an inch/a couple of centimetres. Olivia's scream foreshadows the cut towards her hands protecting her face in mid close up from Mason's perspective. Bill continues the rage from the perspective of *Figure 11* and after asking Randy whether he feels left out throws the whiskey bottle on the ground next to him, to then push him out of his chair, and ostentatiously throw his plate on the ground. A jump cut to a ceiling fan in low-angle close up ends this two-minute dinner sequence that smashed and crushed the relationship and family constellation. The forceful rearrangement of family constellations is one of the

main devices of the plot to produce a sense of crystallisation of time throughout the film. The lunch scene provides a prime example of the punctuation of trauma as both a mental cut and a construction of involuntary memory that the viewer witnesses in its moment of collection, and while it is collecting. The scene presents the emotional event in a flash-like perspective, and the viewer is here confronting the piercing experience from the inner perspective of the family.

At the dining table where Bill throws a glass at Mason that smashes and breaks, the viewer finds themselves attacked by the shattered substance, thrown in the camera's and Mason's direction. The viewer faces Bill through the camera placed between Mason and Olivia. Through this shot perspective, the viewer is implicated into the dynamics of their relationship to each other, and partaking through the over-the-shoulder perspective in the space in-between both Mason and Olivia in a relation towards Bill. A couple of viewerly real-life minutes ago, and filmic running time minutes ago, Olivia and Bill reported from their honeymoon travels. The viewer is thrown into a fast-forwarding durational experience of a passage of a relationship, in the experience of a tragic decay, unfathomable in its depth of experience for the viewer, but rather presented as piercing through the brevity and intensity of the shock-like duration of the unfolding of event. This is one of the senses of crystallisation the viewer experiences, the breaking of a collection of time that leads to a recollection of time, and a recollecting anew of the social roles and experiences. The milestone moments portrayed in a framing of rituals that compress and extrapolate meaning provoke the feeling of common and shared experience that enables a relationality to be enacted.

Relating to the passage of time, and the conception of 'the Whole' (Deleuze 1986a: 8-11), one fantasy *Boyhood* plays with is the arrangement of characters. The viewer tries to

understand the aspect of randomness of life and the bifurcations this produces, and thus traces developments, changes, fulfilments and disappointments. Olivia does not make grand mistakes, 'just poor life decisions' as she proclaims herself that direct the plot's path and Mason's life journey. However, as the viewer hopes for a good life for her, as empathy demands, and tragedy although anticipated, is not desired, the viewer finds themselves arranging characters. For instance in the lunch scene at the table the viewer looks at the characters like Leibnizian monads, not quite like in Alain Resnais's *Last Year in Marienbad* (1961) through different Deleuzian 'sheets of past' and 'peaks', but rather through emotional memories built or collected within the recent span of the film (1989: 101). The viewer here, with the example of Bill, wishes him some strength and character, demands exceptionality and purpose from him, if not passion for life, rather than being a caricature and cliché of himself as an alcoholic and abusive parent. Indeed the viewer wishes for another slice of 'the Whole', and it appears that with the shattered glass a crystalline cocoon of memory of their happy days is destroyed (Deleuze 1986a: 8-11). It is in this moment where life itself through its scripted possibilities becomes more real than just imaginable, where developments appear guided by those moments of intuition that have appeared as indecision in the very first moment Bill crossed the viewer's eye on screen, and he seemed just a bit 'off'. A piercing relation was built and it is in these moments of fission where character learning comes at a small price for the viewer, and a big one for Olivia, Mason, and Samantha: trauma as the cut producing a sense of crystallisation of time.

Figure 12. The marking of time in *Boyhood.*

Besides the trauma as mental cut of relationality, the film also makes use of a more subtle sense of marking of time to produce crystallisation. One of the ways in which the marking of time occurs in *Boyhood* outside the use of editing is through the direct role it plays in the narrative itself. There is a direct marking of time within the plot to present the collecting that takes places as such, thereby the plot almost self-reflexively emphasises the passage of time as a product and production of collection. In fact, the different rituals, travels, and milestone moments of the film are all storytelling devices in which the role of temporality within the depicted society is negotiated. However, while the different relocations in the film begin as involuntary movements of Mason alongside Olivia and her relationships, the sequence in which Mason moves out of Olivia's apartment is changing or swapping the force of this relation – as now Mason leaves the direct physical relationship of sharing space with Olivia. This subtle difference appears as major break of the dynamics of the relationship, displayed through the scene and thereby initiating the passage into

adulthood through the physical and relational emancipation from the parent. In the three-minute sequence in which the shot of *Figure 12* is featured, there is a dialogue filmed in shot-reverse-shot convention with no shot of both Mason and Olivia in the same frame, foreshadowing their separation to come. Mason enters and leaves Olivia's apartment, and both his and her facial expressions throughout the dialogue are emphasised through the use of close-ups. Mason discusses the role of computers and technology in our everyday life, and the increasing role of computers – understood as a decision-making machine or artificial intelligence rather than just calculating and computing machine – to influence physical and human reality. In this discussion Mason refers to the computerised roommate assignment software as 'spooky', as the software-based allocation somewhat paranormally increased the freshmen roommate satisfaction rate from 60% to 100%. The broader topic of the conversation is the 'programming of life' by virtue of decision-making of algorithms and surveillance, and the future outlook presented by Mason: 'soon they won't even need a questionnaire, 'cause they'll just let the NSA scan your digital ghost and they'll tell you who your roommate is, based on everything you ever said, written, or clicked'.

In this scene the evolution of electronic consumer industry and the overarching and increasing role of technology in everyday lives is discussed. Yesterday, it seems, there was no mobile phone and no iPhone, somehow, these devices appeared and they become common and became increasingly invisible. Moore's law, the doubling of technological power over the passing of two years, is felt throughout the apparently accelerated speed of technological intrusion into *Boyhood*'s narrative, reaching its concluding point in our contemporary moment, echoing the conclusions drawn from Laura Poitras's (2014) *Citizenfour*. Like many viewers might have experienced in their own lives, there is a sense of naiveté or unawareness of Mason of the uniqueness and singularity of the moment and

situation he is in: the only time he moves or – is moving out – of his mother's apartment to go to college. At the same time, however, a discussion of uniqueness and individuality takes place, and the dialogue emphasises the uniqueness of the situation through its commonplace character. The situation as ritual is important as one 'milestone' and here capstone of adolescence as individual and cultural experience, legible in its importance and passage-character for the viewer. Also, there is a temporal bridge built to another anchor in time, the request or insinuation of Olivia to take Mason's first photograph, a frame of a skateboarding scene, with him alongside to his dormitory room. As seen in *Figure 12*, Mason inspects this photograph with his own hands on top of the box, which he packs to leave the apartment. There is an emotional response of Olivia concerning this moment, a Proustian reflection on time, inspired by the madeleine-like nature of the framed photo: 'This is the worst day of my life…I didn't know you would be so fucking happy to be leaving...I just thought there would be more'.

From the passage of technology, to the passage of Mason to college, to the passage of time with respect to the first photograph the sequence concludes with Olivia's breakdown and the disillusionment about the passage of life as such. This sequence is an example (such as the dining table sequence) of the fluid borderlines of fixations culminating in the arrangement of these passing moments into one another in the building of a cinematic scene of passing. The collecting and collection of time within the plot of passage of *Boyhood* does produce a sense of crystallisation that includes a social critique of how the self is sculpted in society over time. A radical and innovative neo-realist aesthetic is visible in sequences like these, and I am reminded of two convincing evaluations of Bazin concerning Vittorio De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* (1948) that seem to apply to *Boyhood*. First, the

'limpidity of the event [is raised] to a maximum, while keeping the index of refraction from the style to a minimum' (Bazin 1971: 57). Second, Bazin assesses:

> events and people are never introduced in support of a social thesis – but the thesis emerges fully armed and the more irrefutable because it is presented to us as something thrown into the bargain. It is our intelligence that discerns and shapes it, not the film. (1971: 52-53)

The social thesis of *Boyhood* relates to the subjection (and subjectification) of the self to time and its passage, and, like in *Bicycle Thieves* it is transparent that the power over one's own life is out of one's hands. Olivia is astounded at how fast life has and is passing, while it passes. The statement 'I just thought there would be more' epitomises the disillusionment – understood as a form of discovery of oneself – through the passage of growing (or ageing) herself. The person (with the hopes, beliefs, and dreams) she has once been has disappeared and there is the discovery and process of 'awakening' through the assembling of a portrait of herself. The photograph she wants Mason to keep seen in *Figure 12* serves here as a memento mori, of Mason's childhood that passes into adolescence, and her purpose of life which centered around her children growing up. Olivia laments the discovery of life being an endless to-do list, a given script filled with selves around it that are principally interchangeable. The melancholia of the situation arises through another "mummy complex", Olivia's sense and articulation of loss of life displayed through this scene, which serves as an epistemological long take spanning Olivia's and Mason's lifetime through the compression of topics, problems, and feelings within the scene.

The discussion of the two scenes of *Boyhood* that produce a further sense of collection as crystallisation brings me to conclude the discussion of realism and the nature of duration suggested in the film. With film theorist Daniel Morgan, and the interventionist 2006 essay 'Rethinking Bazin: Ontology and Realist Aesthetics', I conclude by more broadly rethinking the ontology of the cinematic image employed in and by *Boyhood*. As Morgan suggests with Bazin, the cinematic form, the editing process that constitutes a film, is a 'reproduction of an antecedent reality' (2006: 445). This reality, at the core of a form of realism, presents itself in the film through the production of moments in time. The antecedent reality turns into presence, into "nows", to then be suspended anew, into another new reality, a new now. The Bazinian 'faithful rendering of reality' moves into the photographic core terrain with *Boyhood* (1974: 85). There is a rendering, a sculpting of memory, of a life, in photo-album-like aesthetics. Rather than in a strict congruence of running time of the film and real time, suggested through one-shot cinematography, such as in Alexander Sokurov's *Russian Ark* (2002), or in Sebastian Schipper's *Victoria* (2016), *Boyhood* epitomises the aesthetic of a hyphenated, momentary real – what I have described as the collection and collecting of the film. This aesthetic is embedded in the viewer's desire to understand the self of Mason, in a formation of the real, Mason's world, as the narrative of the film suggests. However, I reform the sense of realism with Bazin, radically as a rethinking of the relationship of the trace and the archive. The self is in difference, suspension, fixation, and momentarisation of itself. As Bazin remarks regarding Renoir, there is the relationship of 'the vital richness of form' towards 'the simple cloak of reality', which in *Boyhood* results through the 'draping' of time onto the self (1974: 91). Indeed, in *Boyhood* there is what Bazin considers an 'increased meaning (itself an abstraction)' (1974: 85), an ingrained relationship to the archive, what could be termed a "hyperrealism"

through the employment of collection while collecting, and the production of a sense of

passage through the plot. As an increase of meaning this gesture of abstraction of meaning

as a form of mummification, as an iconisation, as an endless tracing, means that *Boyhood* is

an epistemic scene – as an enumeration of realist images that in their sequentiality turn into

more than just a sum thereof: hyperreal images. To indeed rethink Bazin, I argue for a form

of contemporaneous concrete monumentality in *Boyhood*.

This means for the self in *Boyhood*, that there is the first person narrative of Mason

presented in the form of a Nancean exposing/exposed. The film exposes a self for the

viewer, in sense of the Derridean mirror image of seeing while being seen. As Morgan

further suggests, Bazin is interested in 'the ontological identity of model and image', or

'l'identité ontologique du modèle et du portrait' (to use the French original) within the

notion of realism (1967: 10, 1981: 10). Indeed, there is no strict sense of ontological identity

between model and portrait needed, as Bazin further suggests, the image is liberated from

this sense of faithfulness, through this post-identical relation perhaps a more meaningful

sense of self is suggested through the image (cf. 1967: 10, 1981: 10). However, inherently,

Bazin is interested, in my own reading, in the sense of 'magic' understood as a sense of

spherical perception of the image. To avoid the complicated term aura with its Benjaminian

trace, indeed a sense of "porous plasticity" evolves through the viewerly construction of a

durational temporality. The image, argues Morgan, who correctly rethinks Bazin, is

'something more than a mere approximation, a decal or approximate tracing' (Morgan 2006:

448, Bazin 1967: 14). Thinking again of the photographic sense of presentation of *Self in the

Mirror* and the sense of formation of viewerly subjectivity of *Las Meninas*, in *Boyhood* there is

the production of a trace of the now, which forms the force of presentation of a self, into a

stream of the now, the continuous re-tracing of the image. There is a porous plasticity in

this presentation of Mason's self, as the viewer completes or unifies a sense of synchronicity in and of time, merges the divergent time that lies between the cut from one image to the other in which time is being melted together. The performative plastic form of embalmment is suggested by the rolling sense of the now, the cinematic temporality, the materiality of the film, the real time of the film. The term mummification, however, points to its proper paradox: death and life as an icon, from the past carried or rolled to the present, as the present time, in its death-yet-alive image. This image is not, as the term mummification might suggest, of a God-like figure, but, quite the contrary, as suggested by the norm of realism, an image of the quotidian, which as an idea is sought to be excavated as the collected, embalmed self.

There are broader implications of porous plasticity of the image with respect to understanding the film as a holistic durational piece. *Boyhood* re-invented the cinematic medium's relationship to the self and realism through its use of editing as stretching and accelerating in time and thereby developing the sense of collection as crystallisation. *Boyhood* is an "epistemological long take" of episodic following and into-one-another-flowing epistemological scenes: considered as a piece, a film, its temporal space forms a transitional space. Time itself is the film's ontological materiality and a force and sculptor of selfhood: the film presents life as periodical series of transitions or momentary fixations that suspend themselves anew and anew. This porous plasticity is explored in this aesthetics of the now. *Boyhood* is a film of the presentation of a collection of selfhood, or the adolescence of selfhood as film. Twelve years as the recording time of the film shot over thirty-nine days is the concrete temporal space, to recollect Richter's previously introduced notion of *Zeit-raum* or *time-space* (2011: 25). This is the real time in which the film has been produced, and it is thus through the afterness of those twelve years in the real time

of the film that this lifetime is presented. As a collection of loss, it is presented in the gesture of retrospectivity as a continual Barthesian advancement and suspension of itself. However, yet again I am reminded of the notion of magic in realism, to which I suggest a closer observance of the grammar of the exposition of the mummification, in the forms in which the images relate to one another, compressing, yet extending in time. The rupture of this arrangement of images, the narrative, through the editing, unfolds, into "nows", as a form of temporal montage. I return thus to a deconstructive reading of the term magic, in the language of the cinematic image, in its enumerative ontology. I again take Bazin, and the closure of the ontology essay as an invitation of a rethinking, and update, as a suggestion to the assertion of Bazin, that the cinematic image is a 'langage' (1981: 17).

The rolling of the now, the temporal space in *Boyhood* is the recollection of the self of Mason that occurs through a new form of cinematic langage. Whereas in *The Congress* the technique of the self produces a technology of an image of the past as means to project countless images thereof in the future, the images of *Boyhood* are collections of a proto-language. This protolanguage articulates itself particularly strongly in *Boyhood* through a cinematic sense of contact with the self, a relational, Nancean 'nous autres' (2005: 105). I offer here to rethink what Bazin means by a langage, and indeed, ask, what can be a cinematic langage. I suggest that the language of *Boyhood* is in the Nancean *nous autres* of visual language. As a semiotic analogy to understand the film as a cinema of the self, I suggest an emoticon-like aesthetic, grammar, and logic of nows as signifiers of porous plasticity. The ontology of the cinematic image of *Boyhood* is shaped by the linear writerly grammar of time as duration in complete linearity of duration, with innumerable breaks, cuts, as the grammatical bubble of nows as they move into the future. The film is the collection of a self, through atomised, fixated sequential images of a self. Rather than a

strictly semiotic reading of singular icons, the transcendental logic is the immanent grammar within the aesthetics of the enumerative durational collection of the self. On all image and durational levels, there is a sense of iconography of selfhood. The iconicity of the self is explored in an aesthetics of tapes, a home-video aesthetics, into a film. The meaning of those nows, is in their attributive and performative exposition of "milestone moments", data of "video bits", that suggests a narrative presence of the viewer in a session of now. This sense of presence of the porous plasticity is "emoticonality".

Figure 13. Page 1 & 2. From: *Une histoire sans mots*. Xu Bing, 2013. Paris: Grasset.

Analogously to Xu Bing's 24h first-person chasing sequentiality of a collection of a self in the 2013 *Une histoire sans mots*, Mason in *Boyhood* goes from point to point. A sense of Griffith-like continuity of editing of seemingly irrelevant ruptures in time, as suggested by

the logic of Bing's illustrative chase-like narrational form exemplified through *Figure 13*, also creeps into the durational ontology of *Boyhood*. Bing's artwork here serves as indicative for the iconisation of the "milestone moments" and "video bits" that I read in *Boyhood*. I see a sense of groundlessness of time, of duration in an aesthetics of presence, in collection, in the pleasure of the archive of building a life, having a mirroring image of a self formation over time in the durational aesthetics of cinema. To further illustrate my reasoning for this rethinking of the cinematic ontology in "emoticonality", I more closely observe the emoticon and interpret its suggestive meaning. In its durational form, the emoticon, as a sign and grammar, is in equal right an image or graphic. The meaning of its singularity as image or graphic is depending on the use, the numbering, the plural, the writerly enumeration of itself into chains of meaning by editing, and montage. This function of magic as a Bazinian flow of time is paired with the unison of a self as a mummification, yet at the same time the formation of a narrative of a self, into an image of a self. Emoticonality is a collection of a self in porous plasticity, in individual plastic "bracket signature" forms of a now. The rolling now is a response to the Bazinian imperative and indeed approximates, simplifies cinema as langage, as a figure of temporality. As suggested with *Boyhood*, narrative moves continuously into afterness in these aesthetics of this cinema of the self, in the collection of the self.

Chapter 11: Blind Viewership in *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited*

The analysis of *The Congress* and *Boyhood* revealed the formations and collections of selves within a durational realm. In these films, the world exists as backdrop to the self. *The Congress* problematises a collection of selfhood within the cinematic realm of the film

through the recollecting production of a self as a product therein. *Boyhood* produces a self

through the durational technique of embalming paired with the cinematographic framing of

the film. Within both films, the collection of selfhood the viewer observes, witnesses, and

partakes in, is with respect to the selves on screen and within the cinematic realm and

medium of film. The presentation of these collections occurs for the viewer in the

cinematic realm as an experience on screen. The durational unfolding of the material is

brought to the attention of the viewer in a confrontational arrangement; the viewer is

looking at, with, and through the cinematic works. In the following analysis, this

relationship is rethought, and further complicated. I suggest for this endeavour a rethinking

of the boundaries of cinematic space with respect to the body, the self, and the viewer in

cinema more broadly. Problematising the temporal relationship of collection of selfhood as

informed by the past, or working through the past to construct a present moment, I return

to the continuous construction and reconstruction of viewerly selfhood in the encounter

with a durational artwork. Thereby I understand the aesthetic experience of participant as

viewer here as an exercise in projection of the cinematic experience. In other words, the

construction of meaning within the cinematic experience is performed by the aesthetic

engagement of the viewer's self, which in turn is renegotiated through the encounter with

the artwork. In the following analysis the relationship of the observational core in which

selfhood is conventionally encountered in cinema is inverted, as the artwork principally

does not form an image, but allows for an image to be formed by the viewer.

      With the following introduction of Sadakichi Hartmann's perfume concert *A Trip to

Japan in Sixteen Minutes* (1902), and its re-enactment in 2013 by The Institute for Art and

Olfaction, entitled *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited*, the collection that is conducted

through this cinematic experience is one of the (blind) viewer, rather than on view for the

viewer. *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited* thus presents a state of passing for the viewer, in which the sensory experience is unstable, and with it the signification of this cinematic experience. The principal aesthetic function of the work is the construction of a sense of selfhood of the viewer within and alongside the experience of a narrative trip in space over time. The viewer as partaker and performer of the experience is subjugated to the aesthetics of space and time as the subject of the trip. Thus, the viewer actively performs the work of art in the relationality towards the narrative, brought into being through the operation of scent and sound. This means that the artwork creates the intrusion of "a world" into the spatio-temporal experience of the viewer, in which and through which the viewerly sense of selfhood is negotiated in the compressed sixteen minutes video-like duration of the piece. Within the 2013 re-enactment that I analyse, the viewer experiences a multi-layered durational performance. As the title indicates, a trip to Japan is suggested principally through the sensory realm of olfaction. Thereby the sense of what I term "dispersion" through the trip constitutes the narrative experience that leads to a refashioning of the viewer's experience of selfhood. In contrast to collecting, or working towards collecting a self, the technique of the self the artwork engages in is one of continuous reconstitution of selfhood – thereby indeed dispersing anew and anew the sense of self – instead of anchoring selfhood like in collection. This means that there is a different relationship of the self and the image than in the previous analysis, namely a topographical one of continuous evolving elsehoods.

Before coming to a closer description and examination of the re-enactment of the 2013 artwork that will serve as the foundation for my argument, I introduce the historical background of the work. Stepping back in time, the first or original *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes* was performed at the New York Theatre on 30th November 1902. Sadakichi

Hartmann, the pioneering inventor of the perfume concert technique, at that time

introduced that the perfumes of Japan will be worked into a song. However, as a *New York*

Times article also adds, for the untrained nose, soft Japanese airs and a dancing geisha girl

are necessary for the 'proper appreciation of the smell music' (1902: 32). The viewer at the

time thus expected to be confronted with a multi-layered rhythmic unfolding of sensations.

At the time the work was seen distinctively within the context of the new inventions of the

photographic arts; also by placing the work within a theatre, the viewer expected a

performative dimension of the piece. *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes* intended to produce

narrative pieces of a manufactured sense of reality composed through the dramatic

assemblage of visual, auditory, and olfactory sensations. The promised magic and desire of

A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes is what historian Christina Bradstreet calls a production of

a 'fantasy mode of instant air travel, a magic carpet ride of memory in which gusts of scent

would waft the audience across vast tracts of mental landscape' (2010: 51). As the aesthetic

experience of the piece, the viewer produces an account of a travel of a 'mental landscape'

crafted together by the effect of the sensations upon the viewer's imagination (Bradstreet

2010: 51). To achieve this rich sensation, Hartmann's carpet ride consisted in addition to

the dramatic performance and musical part of the following six perfumes. Hartmann

describes the aesthetic concept and experience as follows:

> I endeavored to suggest the journey by a recitation accompanied by eight perfumes, of
>
> decided contrast, which I used in the following succession :   White Rose to suggest the
>
> departure from New York, [...] Violet [to tell] of a sojourn on the Rhine, Almond of
>
> Southern France, Bergamot of Italy, Cinnamon of the Orient, Cedarwood of India and
>
> Carnation of the arrival in Japan. (1913: 224)

During the same month in 1902 that the vastly celebrated journey film *A Trip to the Moon* (in ten minutes) by Georges Méliès was shown in New York, the perfume concert despairingly failed. The fascination of Hartmann to create an artistic representation in smell, another unfolding narrative through time, like film, was unsuccessful. Unfortunately, the durational experience could not provide the aesthetic experience as intended for the viewer, as the smells did not produce the suggested effect for the audience in a satisfactory manner. The narrative pieces of perfume that intended to suggest different locations of the viewer over time could not provide this sensation as effectively as desired by Hartmann. The travel around the world the perfume concert intended to evoke for the viewer was too ambitious of an aim to be accomplished. After four minutes in which an electric fan blew the first perfume of white rose over the audience, the performance was cancelled – audience members (some of whom smoked tobacco during the performance) furiously left finding it extremely dissatisfying (New York Times 1902: 32). In retrospect, Hartmann evaluated that 'the sensation of smell was not produced instantaneously enough' in *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes* , leading to the 'complete failure' (1913: 225). He insisted, however, 'the sense of smell [is] capable of artistic and intellectual functions', deferring rather than abandoning his project (1913: 217).

Hartmann developed the olfactory-based technique of the perfume concert in tandem with his interest and involvement in photography – the perfume concert technique is invented analogously to visual art. The Japanese-German-American inventor Hartmann produced visionary work at the edge of the 19th century, among more than hundreds of essays and reviews in English and German, as well as drama and narrative fiction, and the well-respected monograph *A History of American Art* (1901), and *Japanese Art* (1904). A

largely forgotten figure in cultural history of photography, Hartmann was one of the earliest

pioneers of proposing camera work as art, treating photography similarly to paints.[2]

Hartmann's idea with *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes* was to melt the solid representations

of the new visual arts that were evolving at that time – photography and film – into air,

sublimate meaning, and produce an original artistic medium out of the art of olfaction: a

perfume concert, and with that, in a modernist avant-garde spirit, revolutionise the

expression and ability of art. Around the same time that Hartmann's friend, Alfred Stieglitz,

published some of his first photographs in Hartmann's magazine *Camera Work* – such as

the famous 1907 travel photograph *The Steerage*, some of the first major successful

experiments with motion pictures were conducted and presented, such as Meliès's 1902 *A*

Trip to the Moon. I mention both Stieglitz and Méliès here, as Méliès provides a window to an

imaginative world and to the moon, and Stieglitz a recording of ordinary reality. Hartmann,

on the other hand, aspired to combine and transgress both: the beauty of the magic that

temporally unfolds through Méliès *A Trip to the Moon* combined within an urban reality of

entering and observing a voyage, like in Stieglitz *The Steerage*.

The modern age of the twentieth century spans between Hartmann's inventive

experiment of *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes* and its postmodern re-enactment. In this

century, since Hartmann's early steps, smell-inducing technology – chiefly used as an add-

on to audio-visual stimuli – shares a commercial history of failure, with technological

experiments occurring up to date. For instance, Scent of Mystery (1960) by William Castle

used a smell-inducing technology called Smell-O-Vision. Other major smell-inducing film

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[2] For the Archive and Nachlass see John Batchelor, Harry Lawton, and Clifford Wurfel, 'The Sadakichi Hartmann Papers: A Descriptive Inventory of the Collection in the University of California, Riverside, Library' (Riverside: University of California, 1980). See also Sadakichi Hartmann, *Critical Modernist: Collected Art Writings*, ed. by Jane C. Weaver (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), and Sadakichi Hartmann, *The Valiant Knights of Daguerre: Selected Critical Essays on Photography and Profiles of Photographic Pioneers*, ed by Harry W. Lawton and George Knox (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978).

productions were John Water's *Polyester* (1981) that used a scratch ticket technique comparable to lottery scratch-cards called Odorama. Another technique called Aroma-Scope was also used in Norton Virgien and John Eng's *Rugrats Go Wild* (2003), and Tommy Wirkola's (2010*) Kurt Josef Wagle And The Legend of the Fjord Witch*, while in Robert Rodriguez's *Spy Kids: All the Time in the World* (2011) the technique was called 4D Aroma-Scope. Also, various enterprises developed television 'smelling screens' in the 2010's, and USB-Stick devices such as iSmell that emit smell while using a computer. In 2013 a prototype of a 'smelling screen' was presented at the IEEE Virtual Reality Conference in Orlando, Florida by a group of researchers from Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology (cf. Ishida, Matsukura and Yoneda 2013). While adequate smell technology is still being invented for a mass consumer market scale, Hartmann's original experimental setup of *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes* sparked the curiosity of contemporary artists to achieve its original aim of aesthetic success.

 A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes was revisited, as the artists in the title of the piece call it, and thereby reproduced and re-enacted with the crucial variation of including viewerly blindness as a technique. The revisiting of the 1902 experiment in 2013 by the artist collective The Institute for Art and Olfaction points at the idea of modifying and concluding the unaccomplished projects of a time passed. Accompanying Hartmann's life journey, the contemporary scent machine moved and relocated from New York to the cinematic dream factory of Los Angeles. The completion of Hartmann's vision of a perfume concert also marks a resurrection of the 1902 groundwork and mission: an expansion of the senses in temporally unfolding art towards the olfactory. Another way to conceptualise it is offered by Bradstreet: '[i]n creating a series of simulation smellscapes that replicated the scents of place, Hartmann aspired to a level of fidelity that would blur the

boundaries between reality and its representation' (2010: 59). While the earlier 1902 experiment was unable to effectively achieve this blurring of boundaries, the 2013 revisiting of the project produces the desired original effect through its arrangement of aesthetic forces of scent and sound, within the environment of blindness. The use of a blindfolded arrangement for the viewer is crucial in the effective and successful enactment of the aesthetic blurring of boundaries: the viewer is in a visual situation of complete darkness invited to form a multi-sensuous impression of the piece.

To provide an auto-ethnographic account of the experience:

A 2014 January Sunday afternoon, a casual Los Angeles art and museum crowd waits in the sunny outdoor lobby of the Hammer Museum on Wilshire Boulevard in Westwood. Some people read cultural press; others engage in chats, waiting for the doors to open. Walking inside the white cube exhibition space, the visitor sits down in a vast room more like a machine, in a space that looks as if something is tested here – a lot of wires, cables, unidentifiable apparatuses – an experimental laboratory. The seating arrangement is reminiscent of a small theatre with about 80 seats, including an airplane-like middle corridor. After a moment of seated waiting, the visitor is asked to blindfold their eyes with the sleeping mask provided...

Figure 14. A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited.

As an introduction to the embodied viewerly experience of *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited*, the above paragraph describes the initial experience of encountering the artwork in person. *Figure 14* further illustrates the setup in which the viewer is placed before the work itself begins. As a durational performance, *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited* is structured by the interplay of the scent, sound, and stage performers in the theatrical museum space. Like in video or cinema, the three different sources of stimulation build a composite effect and interact as an ensemble on the viewer. Also similarly as in video and cinema there are sequences of scenes constructed through the different stages of the trip. However, in contrast to the so-called visual arts, the viewer here constructs a coherent and consistent "image" through their force of imagination. Rather than being offered an image, the viewer does not encounter a completed representational ensemble,

but is implicated within one. The distinctive technique of the self that *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited* offers is the relocation of the image-building capacity from the camera to the viewer. Throughout the sixteen minutes of the piece, it is the viewer as performative participant who assembles in and through time their account of the interaction played upon their senses. The viewer's self articulates in the visual blindness of the piece in relation and in response to the stimulation offered by the perfume concert. Starting within the groundlessness of blindness, the viewer confronts a representational arrangement, rather than a representation as such, in which a presentation is enacted. The viewer here faces the inclusion into a representational cycle, in which the viewer actively produces the cinematic experience. As a representational arrangement, the artwork offers the viewer a space of projection through which the cycle of representation is completed.

The viewer immerses themselves into *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited* through the encounter of six different stages through the length of sixteen minutes. In contrast to the 1902 Atlantic and land route, the revisitation materialises as a transpacific flight, and thus follows the route of a conventional contemporary traveller who aims to reach Japan as quickly as possible. In the presentation of the representation of the trip, the viewer immerses thus actively into the dynamics of travel through the aesthetics of successive changes of space. The narrative exposes the viewer to the six following stages: *SuperShuttle* to LAX [Los Angeles International Airport], Airplane, Narita [Tokyo International Airport], Tokyo, Hotel, and Dreamscape. As a principal mechanism of sequential order, the narrative of the trip linearly follows the conventional parts of airplane travel from Los Angeles to Tokyo, concluding in a stage of sleep upon the jet-lagged arrival at a hotel. Through this storytelling structured in the form of travel, there is an emphasis on the presentation of the experience of traversing space. While the scents in general escape

descriptive verbalisation, they trigger momentary relational impressions of space, which through the blindfolded arrangement overwhelm in their suggestive presence the viewer's sense of belonging. The different modes of transportation such as the *SuperShuttle* (shared taxi) and airplane are evoked by the use of characteristic and associated sounds and noises. Environments such as the two airports are characterised by their dominant loudness, while the hotel environment is suggested through ambient silence. The traffic noises of both Los Angeles and Tokyo are used as a backdrop to the experience to manufacture a sense of placement within this physical landscape. The Los Angeles International Airport and Narita Airport frame the airplane travel, and the hotel stage in Tokyo induces a sense of arrival, while the Dreamscape stage further invites a zooming out from the stages of travel for the viewer and an inner space for reorientation, and an overall cooling down of the performance and experience.

 A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited is composed through an alignment of cinematography, editing, sound, and mise-en-scène into an overall piece resembling a cinematic experience – a "cinematic concert". The individual six stages mentioned above are primarily evoked by the sound, which works most directly onto the sensual apparatus of the viewer. By initiating the individual stages of the performance, and dramatically guiding the viewer through the piece, the sound structures the cinematic concert. The viewer is lead through the cinematic concert in a continuous flow by virtue of the immediate and direct apprehension of the sound. While the viewer is cognisant of the sound, the waves of perfume that are lead into the viewer's vicinity juxtapose the impressions of the sound, and complement the sensual impression to a multi-dimensional ensemble. Comparable to an interaction between sound and image, the sound intertwines with the scent to create a holistic situational ensemble. In harmony with the sound, which builds the background of

atmosphere in the piece, most redolently through the iconic sounds of transportation such as traffic noises and inflight passenger announcements, the scent reconfigures the viewer's sense of location and travel by the confrontational nature in which the scent infiltrates the viewer's sensual apparatus. Further to that, there are the movements of performers within the theatrical setting, although invisible, noticeable for the viewer, most vividly in the airplane stage, where an airplane trolley is used to simulate the flight experience. The scent is "read" by the viewer supplementing the continuous atmospheric soundscapes, and thus the viewer thereby composes scent and sound into a holistic situational experience, together with the tangential impressions of the performers.

In *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited* the viewer negotiates a conception of self in time and space through the relation towards the work. The viewer collages and puzzles together the experience of travel from the fragmented sources of released scent, recorded sound, and the sensed movement of stage performers. The blindness in which one apprehends the artwork invites the sense impressions to conclude in a novel multi-sensuous production, which ultimately disrupts the representational coherence of an image altogether. Thereby the work of art potentially offers the production of an image for the viewer through the engagement with it over time, however, without the primary power of fixation that an image gives through the freezing of a moment in time. Thus, the viewer is in a constant enactment of their position in space within the artwork's flow in time. The moment is in continuous suspension of its photographable nature as a moment in time by the impossibility of its recordability. While the viewer engages in the mirroring function of the work of art, the viewer completes the cycle of representation, and with that embodied relational response completes the performance. In more abstract and interpretative terms, the viewer here is implicated in the technological arrangement of what in the analysis of *Self*

in the Mirror emerges as the concept of the umbilical cord. In the carnal medium that the cinematic concert produces parallel to the forces of a self-photographing fixation by means of a camera, it is as if the viewer is photographing their sensual impressions to a visual experience. In further comparison to the earlier analysis, the representational situation is similarly to *Self in the Mirror* and *Las Meninas* a making-of, a presentation of a representation. Nevertheless, the viewer cannot produce a recording thereof, cannot fixate the unphotographable experience of this performance outside the interiority of this carnal medium, cannot collect the experience to an outside of themselves such as an image thereof.

In pictorial cinematic techniques the image and sound interact together, and thereby compose the cinematic experience as audio-visual working on the senses. This convention of meaningful sensuous interaction is analogously used in *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited*, however, the iconic difference is that there is no commonplace sense of a cinematic experience composed entirely by scent and sound. In other words, while the distinctive elements of sound and image relate to one another in a meaningful way commonly shared by viewers, and communicable through reference to language of visual and auditory sensual perception, the ephemeral aesthetics of the olfactory disrupt this convention. Although similarly to cinema, there is a technological repeatability of the screening experience that would allow for experiences to be of an equal nature, there is nevertheless a strong subjective element of comprehension inherent to the aesthetics of the cinematic concert. From a technological point of view, the different stages of the cinematic concert melt into one another, as there is no direct cut, like in motion pictures, from one shot, scene or sequence to another, but rather a soft sense of melting and moving stages that amend from one stage to another. Not only does the viewer perform the camera-like

function of assembling individual momentary impressions here, but the viewer also assembles the piece over time throughout the different stages. This means that the viewer experiences the cut of editing as the transformation from one stage to another in subjective terms, or rather it is the viewer, who to a large extent performs the cuts of the editing process mentally. Further, from an interpretative point of view it is also the viewer who assembles the piece into one distinctive holistic experience. This may include an apprehension of the stages as separate, distinct, concrete bits, akin to moving images, but may also be subject to a more fluid reading of the stages as flowing-into-one-another, non-separate entities.

The immediacy in which *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited* enacts its aesthetic regime onto the viewer reminds me of an idealistic statement of Bazin concerning the ontology of the photographic image. Writing on the structural constitution of urban realism in *Bicycle Thieves* (1948), Bazin proposes an ontological vanishing point of cinematic technology via dissolving into reality as such. He writes, '[n]o more actors, no more story, no more sets, which is to say that in the perfect aesthetic illusion of reality there is no more cinema' (1971: 60). It appears that *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited* finds a method to approximate Bazin's longing for the ideal of a disappearance of cinema into reality, or the construction of an illusion thereof. By concentrating on the concept of mobility, Bazin finds 'pure cinema' in its ability to both transcend 'the action of a "spectacle" and of an event' (1971: 60). It is through the directness, immediacy, and immersion of the cinematic concert that the viewer is embedded within, rather than confronted by this form of cinematic work. While *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited* does indeed 'endow the audience with a sense of presence in an olfactory-mediated landscape of the mind', as Bradstreet (2010: 59) notes, it also allows for a blurring of the boundaries that a screen-

based cinematic experience constructs: the viewer is simultaneously inside and outside the piece. Rather than finding themselves visually confronted by a world that reconfigures the viewer's sense of self, the architecture of the cinematic concert forces the viewer to reconstitute their sense of selfhood throughout the cinematic experience of the piece, as a main part of its aesthetic experience.

A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited presents the viewer with a durational situation in which the earlier established sense of collection of *The Congress* and *Boyhood* is complicated. Rather than the work of art itself constituting a collection of selfhood through a specific technique of the self and an epistemic scene that the viewer retrospectively encounters – as an observer, partaker, and witness thereof, the viewer is here dramatically implemented into the constitution of the work of art to be meaningful. In other words, the crucial distinction between looking at the motion pictures of the other films and videos in their duration, and the looking into or looking with the experience of durational motion in *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited* is the constitution of the viewerly self through the immersion and embeddedness into the work of art. The transitionality that an epistemic scene provides in *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited* is turned from the waves of light as temporal and durational image, to the waves of scent and sound. The ontological instability of this situation structured by its constant renegotiation of a momentary sense of presence within the narrative development of travel leads to the continuous sense of location and relocation of a sense of self. However, otherwise than, for instance, in the analysis of *Self in the Mirror*, the present moment here is not a moment that can be understood to consist of a possibility of fixation and conclusive representation thereof in an image.

Dispersion is the experience of the viewer of being in a constant state of negotiation of their viewerly self. Blindness as a form of groundlessness, in which the viewer is positioned in the piece, amalgamates with the excess of the scent significations to a constant experience of deferral of stability. The viewer finds themselves negotiating anew and anew their spatial position within the cinematic experience over time in momentary positions that continuously change anew. As there is no arrestation of the flow of sensuous engagement, the viewer's consciousness works towards apprehending the meaning of difference, while the differing continues anew and anew. The exposition of selfhood occurs here as a form of excess, the differences of meaning of the cinematic concert cannot be framed as distinctive pieces. There is a true aesthetic of the instant moment as the viewer engages in a process of constant collection and deferring of that collection, due to the impossibility thereof. In contrast to an experience of void or flux, the viewer as participant is encaged within a narrative arranged like a string of pearls that unfolds in temporal progression in which positions in space are exchanged. The composition of selfhood of the viewer is reconstituted anew and anew through the encounter with the work, which is in a state of coming-into-being that does not stabilise itself in the same way that a photographable situation does. This means that the viewer's sense of selfhood is continuously re-territorialised and re-territorialising in the voyage that *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited* suggests. Orientation in space here becomes the aesthetic and ontological experience of the artwork. There are no holistic points of reference and anchorage of this experience, but the viewer's sense of selfhood is fragmented and fragmenting – dispersing durational realms and spatial spheres of time. The viewer themselves recollects anew and anew their positionality within the realm of the narrative of the piece without the stability suggested by the visual characteristics of the image. This

process of the encounter with the work of art results in the constant and continuous reconfiguration and the deferral of one's self as fixated, stable, non-moving entity.

A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited makes use of duration as aesthetic quality as a non-collecting force. While in *The Congress* collection refers to a point in time to which the recollection refers, earlier suggested as a vertical point in time or vertical bar, *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited* breaks from the anchorage to a specific point in time. As there is no collection evolving, but the dispersion of space throughout the experience of duration, there is only a momentary now experienced by the viewer, which however, is evolving anew and anew as the piece linearly progresses. Space on the other hand, is unstable, non-identifiable, non-singular, and non-fixated, as it exists conceptually for the viewer as a horizon that amends in perpetuity of the piece. While time as duration moves on linearly and steadily, the location in space for the viewer progresses in successive exchange relationships. The work of art thus becomes an ontological experience for exploring travel in space. From a very practical perspective, the viewer sits within the presentation of a journey, a compressed and condensed durational activity that induces a sense of wondering and daydreaming-like state. By facing a void-like black blindness in the beginning of the trip, the viewer begins to comprehend this visual non-image as an invitation to conclude the sensual experience in their head through the visual impression of an image. Although there is a progression in time that similarly to *Boyhood* rolls into the now, there is no collection of a continuous embalmment achieved, but the continuous relocation in space. In the process of the impossibility of grounding the experience in anything but the excess of possibilities of meaning-making the viewer faces the experience of dispersion of their experience of location in space.

In a similar way to *Boyhood* there is a vast compression of time that the artwork achieves through the technique of sequences or stages that flow into one another. *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited* uses the technique of temporal compression with the clear purpose of inducing a sense of space and spatial presence for the viewer. However, unlike in *Boyhood* there is no collection of a self achieved within this process, but rather the process achieves the sensation of a dispersion of a self over time. There is a similar use of – literally – milestone moments like in *Boyhood* to allow for the viewerly sensation of recognition of where one is positioned in the unidirectional trip. However, there is one crucial difference with respect to the technique of the durational unfolding compared to *Boyhood* as there is no recollection of a past that folds into a temporal shared presence between viewer and self on screen. The exposition of presence occurs within and through a sense of dispersion that does not collect itself over time. *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited* does not work with temporality in this manner, but uses temporality as a means to achieve its aesthetic effect of placing and replacing the viewer in space. Nevertheless, the different olfactory stages of the trip are drifting from one into the other stage, thereby like in *Boyhood* the sense of the present moment rolls on from one stage to the next one. While the scents produce a sense of location and relocation, the accompanying sound structure generates the sense of progressive movement in space, which is nonetheless not grounded in a singular distinctiveness.

A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited produces a superimposition of sense significations within the spatio-temporal passage of the piece as durational experience. The viewer is located in this work of art that unfolds into the future through the mechanical and technical reproduction of an immersive environment, which, however, presents rather than represents a momentary presence in time. Crucially, the technique of articulation of the

present moment is freed from the indexicality, the trace of the past of the pictorial cinematic image. While the pastness of representation is not integral to the viewer's experience of the immersion into the presence of the piece, there is nevertheless a strong sense of temporal layering occurring for the viewer, as the piece negotiates the placement in space through the subjective workings onto the imagination and memory of the viewer. This magical enactment of a viewerly sense of selfhood within the presentness of the artwork is reminiscent of what visual scholar Max Silverman in *Palimpsestic Memory* calls the 'principle of the superimposition of different traces to condense surface and depth, present and past, and the visible and the invisible' (2013: 25). The forces of superimposition of sense impressions together with the condensed experience of spatio-temporal presence produce dispersion for the viewer, a constant process of the intuitive workings of imagination and memory. Through the synesthetic effect of the scent and sound onto blindness, however, the forces of superimposition gain non-visual meaning thereby producing a holistic sensual panorama.

In conclusion, *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited* breaks with the structure of inside (the screen) and outside (the screen) that a cinematic work conventionally consists of. The viewer is not only witness of the Nancean motion of the real through the cinematic unfolding, but the viewer here is in the practice of motion. Breaking this separation leads on the one hand to the sense of immediacy and contact that makes the work powerful, on the other hand this leads to the sense of dispersion in space as an experience enacted upon by the viewer. Thus, the viewer constructs a cycle of representation in its most immediate form, as the viewer moves from the relational construction of the cycle of representation into the enactment of representation itself. I am reminded here of a note of Nancy in *The*

Muses that provides theoretical guidance through this process enacted in *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited*:

> [a]rt is the transcendence of immanence as such, the transcendence of an immanence that does not go outside itself in transcending, which is not ex-static but ex-sistant. A 'transimmanence'. Art exposes this. Once again, it does not 'represent' this. Art is its ex-position (1996: 34–35).

Nancy here develops a language to bridge both the difference of inside/outside that the work crosses, and the durational logics of immersion and embeddedness. What art exposes, and not represents, is the simultaneous going out of the experience of the work, while remaining within the work. As Nancy also remarks, 'each work [of art] is in its fashion a synesthesia and the opening of a world' (1996:31), and it is within the logics of the opening of a world in which the viewer is able to articulate a sense of selfhood within the process of dispersion. From a cinematic perspective, *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited* allows us to understand the refashioning of subjectivity as a process of renegotiation of the cycle of representation, by the enactment of forces of inside over outside, and space over time.

Chapter 12: Loosing Touch with Reality: *Cool World*

With the introduction of Ralph Bakshi's *Cool World* (1992), I conclude the analysis of *The Cinematic Self* by further developing the conception of dispersion. While I introduced the concept of dispersion of selfhood in the previous chapter with the interpretation of *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited* and the aesthetics of this particular work that transgress

rigid conventions of the cinematic based on the primacy of the visual, I now further conceptualise this term in more immediate relation to cinematic work. In *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited* the function of dispersion is immediately linked to the experience of the viewer's selfhood relocating in space over durational time. This characteristic of dispersion is further developed in the analysis of *Cool World* with respect to the understanding of the dislocation in space of cinematic selves in this motion picture. While the viewer themselves engages in a dispersion over time in an unstable environment created by the intrusion into the dynamics of the work of art in *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited*, it is the presentation of an environment that escapes any intuitive stable representational nature in *Cool World* which disperses the sense of ontological grounding in space. The aesthetic experience of the viewer is thus profoundly shaped by the confusion in terms of belonging in space. The viewer experiences not only a fundamental ontological confusion in the narrative of the film, but this complicated narrative is paired with the additional ontological complexity caused by the use of hybrid imagery. Diverging from the use of animation as opposed to live-action images that are not animated in *The Congress*, in *Cool World* these two distinct imageries interact with one another *within* frames and scenes. In other words, the dislocation of selves that *Cool World* exposes is not inside an easily accessible narrative realm of visual representation, as there is the creation of a hybrid realm within the film parallel to, or rather on top of a realist and animated realm.

The distinctive cinematographic characteristic of *Cool World* is the experimental composition of a complicated hybrid imagery transgressing conventional cinematic work. While *Cool World* fulfills the ontological main criterion of constituting a cinematic work by virtue of consisting of a durational ensemble of motion pictures, it simultaneously escapes a rigid classification therein. Throughout the ninety minutes running time, *Cool World* consists

of three different cinematic ontologies: two independent yet interrelated realms, and one that exist as an amalgamate form. Like *The Congress,* the film consists of both live-action and animation images. In contrast to *The Congress*, however, where this different imagery is used to demarcate distinct narrative realms within one another, with the exception of the transitional car scene, the different cinematic imagery is used in *Cool World* in a more complicated and innovative manner by melting into one another. This means that *Cool World* contains what I term the "hyper-image": a third category of an image, namely blends of animation images and live-action images. Telotte (2007), for instance, enlists *Cool World* among other films such as Joe Pytka's *Space Jam* (1996), Des McAnuff's *The Adventures of Rocky and Bullwinkle* (2000), or Bobby and Peter Farelly's *Osmosis Jones* (2001) as 'hybrid animation' (2007: 108). Yet, there is no scholarly conception of the fusion of animation and live-action imagery besides the naming as hybrid or, to use another term, 'mélange films' (Bruckner 2015). In my conception based on *Cool World*, the hyper-image is a combination of both live-action and animation, in which there is a hybridisation achieved by combining foreground and background into divergent ontological categories. Crucially this includes the display of selves within the film as either live-action characters or animated figures in divergence to what the background or principal realm of the imagery would suggest. This means that the film consists of three different image qualities, in which the third novel image category of the hyper-image escapes an intuitive understanding of its anchor to a photographable or realist sense of reality.

This chapter frames *Cool World* through the analysis of the hyper-image and its distinctive composition. The reading of the film progresses through the interpretation of the narrative, which is intertwined through the use of the two different image techniques and the production of the amalgamate third image technique. This production of the hyper-

image is the specific technique of the self that the film advances. In other words, the hyper-image allows for the articulation of selfhood within this distinctive framing. By situating the location of the exposition of selfhood of the narrative within this hybrid realm, the film suggests a particularly strong sense of dislocation and vanishing in space. The analysis of *Cool World* thus serves to further point out the technicalities of the dispersion in space earlier introduced through *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited.* The relationship between inside the artwork and an outside reality is here revisited through the composite nature of an amalgamate image that constructs its own sense of diaphanous and hybrid reality. I analyse the viewerly experience with the new form of presence of the image with respect to the aesthetic-ontological set of relations that emerge through the articulation of this form of imagery. Throughout the film, the viewer is in a state of constant apprehension of the location of the selves with respect to the realms of the film. Further to that, the narrative of the film even includes the dislocation and loss of selfhood as part of the dramatic storyline, pointing to location and dislocation as crucial narrative thread.

Ralph Bakshi directed *Cool World* in 1992 as a Hollywood blockbuster film produced by Paramount Pictures with the two main protagonists Jebb Deebs (Gabriel Bryne) and Holli Would (Kim Basinger). To give a reductionist account of the highly fragmented, yet consistently linearly evolving plot, the storyline principally evolves around the cartoonist Jebb. In the process of leaving a prison sentence, Jebb enters the world he envisioned and produced in his artistic work, as he is summoned into the so-called cool world, leaving the city of Las Vegas. In this cool world suggested through the use of animation imagery, Jebb encounters Holli, who is an animated character or doodle that is knowledgeable of the façade of the cool world and aspires to enter the real world. Holli who has summoned Jebb, pursues him and intends to seduce him sexually as an opportunity to enter the real world

through that action, and leave the cool world behind. However, Detective Frank Harris (Brad Pitt) – a human character forced into the cool world after a tragic accident seen in the beginning sequence of the film – polices these attempted trespassers aspiring to enter the real world. Frank thus chases Holli throughout the film, yet nevertheless fails to prevent her from sexually seducing Jebb, and in turn transubstantiating from a doodle to a human self. After Hollie enters the real world and Las Vegas with Jebb, their appearance begins to flicker between doodle and human, or animation and live-action image. As a solution to the non-groundedness in either world and loss of belonging, Hollie attempts to get a hold on the so-called "Spike of Power", which however fails, and leads to the transformation of humans into doodles in Las Vegas, and the ending of the film.

The study of selfhood within *Cool World* is intricately linked to the complicated composition of the narrative of the film. While the three different ontologies of the image disperse the attention of the viewer across those three realms, the narrative further complicates the sense of grounding any belonging or relationality within a singular realm. Thus, my reading proposes that the experience of watching the film is an experience of loss of viewerly selfhood in space understood as the sense of belonging in reality. The grounding in space of the viewer is disturbed and disrupted, and the viewer experiences dislocation. While the film dramatises the dislocation of its characters over time in the different spatial realms throughout the film, the viewer experiences the dispersion in space analogously not only through the confrontation with this narrative, but through the multilayered spatial presence suggested through the hyper-image. Further to that, the different sequences of the film are cut and edited in a disorienting manner that further complicates the tracing of the narrative. In addition to that, the rhythm and fast pacing of the musical score, consisting of dominantly shattering electronic music, contributes to a

shaky sense of orientation. The viewer is quite simply lost in the attempted apprehension of the complexifiying relationalities within the film, while the framing of the realities depicted loses, rather than gains, a sense of collection in and through time. Through the relocation of the sense of self in this dislocating multi-dimensionality, the viewer is wretched in their ability to comprehend a stable relationality towards the world and worlds on screen. The viewer encounters through watching the film their own trip-to-the-self-like aesthetic experience, analogously to the exposition of the selves on screen that advance through the technique of the self in the hybridising articulation through the hyper-image.

The live-action and animation hybrid image constitutes the most radical intervention of the film within the cinematic canon. The first time this technique was used is in Robert Zemeckis's *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1988), in which so-called "toons" or cartoon personae interact with humans. Ralph Bakshi envisioned this technological invention through *Cool World* as a means to construct 'a living, walk-through painting' (in Gibson and McDonnell 2008: 219). My reading of the film advances that the graphic, painterly, animated, and crucially animating intrusion into photographic imagery or motion pictures introduces a sense of layering of reality or realities over one another. In other words, the characteristic of 'living' Bakshi aspired to create, or the aspect of 'walk-through' of the painterly is the sense in which there is another, second aspect of staging of the photographic image (in Gibson and McDonnell 2008:219). The photographic image – and with that the mimetic representation of reality through the photographic – is intruded upon by another realm within the same frame. The reality depicted by the photographable, the realist ontology is supplemented through this intervention resulting in a hyperreality of the image. By choosing the fabric of reality as the main narrative theme of the film through the drama of the plot, the relation between the imaginative world of the artist and the real

world becomes further thematised by aligning form and content. The metaphysical and ontological questions the film provokes with the storyline of Holli Would concerning the existence of selves within multiple, supplementary worlds are thus articulated through the choice of form or imagery of the film itself. In addition to that, the film further intruded the limits of representation outside its own boundaries through the commercial promotion. As seen in *Figure 15* below, the commerical promotion included the intrusion of a model of an animated Holli Would integrated into the iconic Hollywood sign in Los Angeles.

Figure 15. The promotion of *Cool World.*

The promotional work that the film has been marketed with to the viewer illustrates the interplay of spatial references of *Cool World* as a phenomenon. While *Figure 15* shows the printout of the simulacrum of Holli Would in the physical reality of Hollywood, epitomised by its tagline intruded upon as a marketing sting, this photograph also allegorically illustrates the complexity of the referential universe of the film. The materiality

of reality is played upon, and intruded upon through the hyper-image – in the promotional activity suggested by the placement of the printout figure in the world – which results in a configuration of reality as a hyperreality. The symbolic exchange between the physical, filmic, historic, allegoric and other spaces enacted in *Figure 15* displays the layerings and depth of communicational maneuvers and orientation the viewer mediates within the encounter of the film. In other words, *Cool World* presents a world in which there is a constant quest for understanding relationalities with reference to one another, such as the belonging in space of the different selves. However, this quest leads to the redirections and bifurcations of significations across the realms of the film, which ultimately also escape the contained realms of the film. The constructed referential realm of the film spans into, or slips outside the filmic frame very vividly through the interrelatedness of for instance the choice of Las Vegas as the primary filmic location, and the real world connotative characteristics of Las Vegas as a space of desire. The relationships of realities as structures of meaning within the narrative of *Cool World* produces the sense of a fabrication of an own kind of reality through the repeated use and reference of the cool world. The signification of the dialogue, however, often times also escapes meaningful interpretation through the effective meaninglessness of many interjections and dialogue sequences. The rhythmic unfolding of the sequences of the film is most strongly held together through the fabrication of the hyper-image as the in-between stage of the immersion into the two distinctive realms.

The dialogue that *Cool World* constructs on the cinematographic level in the production of hyper-images produces a "hyper film". *Cool World* cannot be classified as either live-action or animation film, and thus exemplifies a hyphenated and hybrid category of filmmaking. The narrative exposition of a dramatic story also moves attention away from

understanding the film within the categories of the essay film or the experimental film. *Cool World* is further hybrid as it includes its own metafilmic interpretative clues, containing more self-reflexive depth than the Hollywood blockbuster conventionally allows for. In other words, the film includes its own structurally invented ontological reality through the *Cool World*, which is self-reflexively thematised within the film. Also, the storytelling includes references to the film's constitution as a cinematographic piece sui generis, as many dialogues in the film center on the question of the constitution of reality. Indeed, most of the meaningful dialogues in the film – in contrast to the countless interjections – center on the question of belonging in space, principally by Holli Would and Jebb. Within this dramatic arrangement, Detective Frank serves as an explanatory helper of understanding the nature of fabrication and interrelatedness of both realms for the viewer. The metaphysical realm is thus directly thematised by means of questioning and reflecting upon the location in space by the selves of the film, while they move among realms.

Cool World consists of three different types of selves that are present within the film. The first category of selves are the live-action characters, such as the protagonist Jebb. These selves exist within the realistic and photographable realm of reality known as the real world. In the jargon of the film these characters are known as "noids". Principally, most characters that remain rooted within the real world in their existence are unaware of the cool world realm. Thus, the supporting cast of the film within the Las Vegas setting falls within this sub-category, while Jebb and Detective Frank navigate between the real world and the cool world realm. The second category of selves is the non-live action characters, or animated human-like characters, such as the protagonist Holli. These characters are essentially representations of humans and share human features through their appearance, actions, and speech. These characters are known as "doodles" within the jargon of the film,

and they exist as human-like and non-human-like graphic form. What differentiates the human-like doodles from the non-human-like ones is the capacity for a human-minded consciousness, developed language skills, and the knowledge of the boundaries of the real world and the cool world. Thus, the third category of selves are the non-human-like doodles, animated comic figures on a varying scale between animal representations, fantasy forms (such as objects or spectral appearances), and android representations. These exclusively animation-only figures appear as inhabitants of the cool world realm, and many of these figures seem to be primarily attention grabbing creatures disturbing the noids and the viewer, irritating any grounding of concentration as durational span. These often times most heavily distracting figures qualify as noise-like appearances that plague the viewer. Unbound of gravitational logics or other worldly or social conventions, these doodles are mindlessly wandering figures that permeate the cool world realm.

The relationalities between the three different forms of selves in the narrative of the film are exposed and explored within the three different image qualities. While the live-action image evokes the real world, and the animation image the cool world, the film's narrative consistently complicates this dualist understanding of the two realms of the film. For instance, in the earlier mentioned flickering sequences, there is no clear sense of belonging in either of the two realms of the film, and the characters appear in not only the in-between stages of those two realms, characterised by the pulsating rhythm of the flickering, but also outside of these two realms in a void-like state or environment. Turning to the qualities of the hyper-image, the relationality of the different realms with respect to the image is further complexified. The hyper-image produces complicated ontological relationalities through the assemblage or the amalgamation of different qualities of the image. However, the relationality of the two images with respect to one another is

complexified not merely through the question of the nature of the amalgamate image in terms of its ontology, but via the question of perspective. As the cool world is both a fictional realm in its own right, and also the subjective vision and manifested imagination of Jebb, the viewer finds themselves following his perspective or consciousness within this complex set of relations. Jebb's angle onto the cool world is juxtaposed through the perspective of Frank, whose storyline from the beginning sequence of the film does not only incept the journey into the abyss of the cool world, but whose role as a detective within the film also brings an ethical dimension to the unfolding of events.

Figure 16. The hyper-image in *Cool World.*

The film spans the modern age and problematises understandings of localizations in space through its use of spatial geographies. While the film begins in 1945 in the desert surrounding Las Vegas with the narrative exposition of Frank's return from World War II, the intertitles indicate 1992 as the new point in historical time after this introductory

sequence. Like in *The Congress*, where the entrance into the Miramount world includes a caesura concerning the continuation of historical time, this temporal spacing foreshadows the ontological spacing to come. While Frank has been taken from the real world by an initially seemingly invisible force, suggested through the visual presentation of an eclipse, Jebb's entrance into the cool world is suggested through the pulling force of the character Holli he draws in his prison cell. The drawing he makes of Holli begins to move out of the ground of the paper, in black-and-white graphic form Holli's hands intrude the three-dimensional sphere of the cell. Through the display in the foreground of the live-action image that turns to – and thereby transforms to – a hyper-image, her hands pull Jebb towards her direction. The visual effects of lightning and flashes, and the erasue of Jebb from the image suggest his departure from this realm, that after a cut is additionally presented as a fall downwards into an animated Metropolis-like dystopian cityscape – the cool world. Although in the next sequence Jebb is presented in his attempt to touch or seize Holli whom he faces responding to her dance movements, as seen in *Figure 16* he is then a couple of seconds later shown to be physically present again in the real-world cell. This effect introduces the dispersion of Jebb's selfhood: Jebb is torn and in-between the real world and the cool world, in the process of exchanging his physical location between those realms. During the brief first encounter with Holli in the cool world the theme of contact through the failed physical touch emerges as the desire that drives the plot, while after the sequence Frank and the investigation team set up the chase for Holli as a suspect.

The hybridity of the space of reality is established within the film by manufacturing the cool world into the narrative and into the live-action image. The live-action image and narrative of the real world is intruded upon by the cool world story: Jebb is moved into the display within that realm. It is not through the juxtaposition in separate imageries of the

two realms that the selves of Jebb and Frank are presented, but through the integration into one visual image and frame. The dispersion of selfhood is articulated here in the film through this mechanism of systematic continuous dislocations: the world becomes groundless through the intrusion of this second ontological realm into the experience of reality. With respect to Jebb, and the continuous evolving encounter with Holli, he appears to encounter with the cool world a psychological space, a subconscious space, and a space of desire. Nevertheless, he is taken into the cool world in what is visualised as a fall into it, and subsequently follows the logic of awakenings and dreams. While this means that Jebb loses a sense of reality and a sense of selfhood, it also displays vividly the force of dispersion into the spatial territories and geographies within the film. The major experience that Jebb and the viewer with him confront is the loss of the plateau of a coherent sense of selfhood experienced through the grounding in reality. The cool world as the creation of a comic book as an object, a physical thing of the real world has not only transformed into a form of experienced, walked-through supplementary reality, but also exists for Jebb within the film as a form of consciousness. The cool world infiltrates Jebb's consciousness and renegotiates his most fundamental conceptions concerning the status of his belonging in space and the ontology of reality. The hyper-image very evocatively displays this manifold layering of reality as consisting of multiple realms within the human experience of Jebb.

One of the most striking moments of dispersion in *Cool World* is the transubstantiation of Holli from a doodle or animated self into a human self. The sequence serves as an epistemic scene that presents the transformation of the sense of reality and consciousness for Holli paired with the witnessing of the accomplished desire of Jebb of the sexual encounter. The materiality of both realms and the belonging in both realms substantially amends and transforms through this encounter. The film makes it explicit that

it is possible for Holli to cross into the real world through a magical sense of contact established through the sexual encounter, which motivates her behaviour that leads to the seduction of Jebb. The longing of Holli to enter the real world is because of her knowledge of the benefits of a real world existence in comparison to a cool world existence. Holli develops a passion to penetrate and permeate the reality that appears to give her corporeality and sensual perceptions more truthfulness and authenticity. In other words, it appears that Holli experiences a sense of double consciousness, able to perceive the reality she is bound to, while also understanding the reality she is encaged in from the perspective of the other. The process of othering here is the distinction created between the privileged real world and the cool world, a subordinated realm in terms of authenticity of the wordly experience and sense of fulfillment of personhood.

Figure 17. The transformation of Holli Would from a doodle into a human.

The sequence of transsubstantiation of Holli into a human self breaks the consistency of her displayed identity as a doodle. As seen in *Figure 17*, the transformation of

Holli occurs visually through the intrusion of the live-action properties into the animated-image. The articulation of Holli's corporeal existence as human self – the dispersion of ontological categories – is presented as an event in a close-up frame. The transubstantiation of her body is visually accomplished through the creation of the blending of the ontological difference between animation and photographable live-action in a soft fade out. Rather than breaking, or appearing in a sudden eclipse-like fashion – such as the initial entrance of Frank and Jebb into the cool world – the transformation of the body of Holli occurs as a cinematographic effect. Thereby the metalepsis, the 'jump across' the ontological realms is suggested for the viewer as an experience of corporeal transformation. The layers of graphic display that are visible in this rotoscope-like image disappear in the extreme close-up within the passage of a couple seconds. While in the rotoscope-like still of *Figure 17* the transformation process is visible in the phase of a doubling of the image in a gestalt changing fashion, which could suggest a doubling or division of Holli into two selves, the peeling-off of Holli from animation to live-action happens as a transubstantiation in this hyper-image. Holli exchanges the realm in which she appears to belong through this palimpsestic process, a sweeping and transitional moment of instrumental exchange.

In conclusion, in *Cool World* the viewer is subjugated to an experience of dispersion through the hybridisation of reality. The experience of consciousness of a singular moment in time is not anchored within a singular conception of space, but oscillates and is in exchange between the co-existing spaces of the films production of hyperreality. Through the film's use of hyper-imagery the film presents a world constructed according to the principle of dispersion therein, as a continuous experience of exchange, groundlessness and existential void. Through this experience of dispersion, the film positions the viewer in what Frederic Jameson describes in *The Seeds of Time* as 'a purely fungible present in which

space and psyches alike can processed and remade at will' (1994: 14-15). The experience of dispersion as a spatial process in which consciousness is negotiated through the experience of reality is thus a principle of representational looping that achieves to disorient and agitate the viewer's constitution of selfhood. While there is a closure of the cycle of representation in *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited* through the cinematic experience, as the viewer is dispersed in space of interaction with work of art, in *Cool World* the viewer confronts the experience of dispersion as process in which a sense of spatial belonging is impossible to be achieved. The dispersion in *Cool World* is achieved as a matter of location and re-location in various ontological spaces and galaxies, the augmentation and co-inhabitation of augmented realities, and the interaction with non-human selves.

SECTION III. Moments of Selfhood: Neoliberal Practices of Portraiture of Selves

In Section III, I look at films within the episteme that *The Cinematic Self* self-reflexively suggests, the contemporary neoliberal age, and the forces on selfhood enacted therein: morality and ethics, conditions of corporeal work, and the emotionality of existence, in relations of love. I analyse three filmmakers working at the friction of documentary and fiction, in hybrid and mixed documentary and fiction aesthetics across their oeuvres with a focused reading of epistemic scenes in their films that inhabit a presentation of selfhood. While the films as a whole have a clear focus on the presentation of selfhood as the main narrative theme and topic, individual key scenes serve as portraits of the selves and the forces that each film emphasises. The use of the term portrait does not direct overt attention to the face, but rather refers to the style of filmmaking that foregrounds the

characteristics of the composition of selfhood. In other words, portraiture is understood as the cinematic exposition of the forces that work on the self. The analysis thereby moves from the understanding of the body through the figure of the other and relationality in abstract terms to concrete forms in which the forces of space and time act on the body. There are a number of questions that the analysis will focus on, such as: What are the techniques in which the self is presented, exposed, and excavated? How does the cinematography, mise-en-scène and editing compose a sense of selfhood for the viewer? What are the distinctive characteristics of the broader individuals, which are both revealing their self and a condition of selfhood that is part of the human condition more broadly? How is the self constructed with respect to its distinction from the other? What is the relation that is inhabited by the selves with respect to the other? What is the basis in which the relationship to the world is constructed? What role is given in the world to the subjects and what world do the subjects choose to give to themselves? These questions are embedded within the broader interpretation of the forces in which selfhood is explored in the cinematic works.

In the following section of the thesis my reading of cinematic selfhood turns to the exposition of moments of selfhood. This means that there is extended attention to epistemic scenes that present and expose the constitution of selfhood. The constitution of selfhood is understood as confessional and confrontational with respect to its exposition: there is a confessional practice of moments of selfhood directed towards the viewer, and there is a confrontation through the immersion of selves in relationships of identifications. I thus anaylse and interpret epistemic scenes in which there is a constitution of selfhood as a moment in which there is a force of durational collection and spatial dispersion achieved within the interaction of the viewer and the selves on screen. However, rather than focusing

on the theoretical constitution, like in Section I, or the force of contact in terms of time and space, like in Section II, I turn to the experience of selfhood within the experience of reality. The self is thus analyzed with respect to the aesthetic-ontological constitution of reality, and the cinematic is considered as a locus of imagination of the interaction of the self and reality. Rather than understanding the film thus within the rigid demarcations of documentary and fiction, the analysis transgresses these boundaries through the interpretation of the constitution of selfhood.

The storytelling that portraits selves in lived and performed reality in Joshua Oppenheimer's, Michael Glawogger's, and Yorgos Lanthimos's cinema is structured in three thematic strains of the neoliberal self: death, survival, and love. These three examples of the contemporary practice of a focus on selfhood in cinema are embedded within the neoliberal world, understood as denoting a global era of economic ordering according to a worldwide market structure. Also, the neoliberal is understood as an attribute of the style of portraiture in the sense that subjectivation in terms of individuality, autonomy and globalisation is part of the style of the films. The selves on screen also make visible the foundations of existence of the societal worlds these films excavate and present: portraits of selves as cinematic form to mirror societal forces in embodiment. Each filmmaker is respectively shown to construct expositions and presentations of specific dramatical selves in their cinema of the self with respect to the struggle with ethics, labour, and love. I here pay extended attention to the aesthetics of the composition of the body as self, and aesthetisise its construction in time and space, while also considering the body and self of the viewer itself as spatio-temporal composition. In the analysis, the constitution of the self within reality is displayed with respect to the interaction with the past (Oppenheimer), the production of presence (Glawogger), and within an imaginative utopos (Lanthimos). This

section concludes my doctoral thesis through the implications the cinematic self of the selves on screen have for the self of the viewer, through the societal and ethical complications of collection and dispersion, and neoliberal relations of death, survival, and love.

Chapter 13: A Site of Ethics – Re-enacting Death & Confronting the Self

Joshua Oppenheimer's documentaries *The Act of Killing* (2012) and *The Look of Silence* (2014) thematise the ethical complications of the violent political conflict in Indonesia of the mid 1960's. The practice of portraiture of the two films is the exposure of selves in the performance of remembrance of this conflict in the present moment. Rather than representing a past conflict through its documentation, the films present selves, which today live and embody its consequences. To use the formulation of the opening titles of *The Act of Killing*, 'the Indonesia government was overthrown by the military…over one million "communists" were murdered'. As of today, the coup remains a willingly neglected issue in the modern historical narrative within the country. Quite the contrary it is a non-issue – as the perpetrators of injustice remained in power ever since. 'The army used paramilitaries and gangsters to carry out the killings. These men have been in power – and have persecuted their opponents – ever since', as the opening titles further put it. Simply stated, the perpetrators of the committed crimes against humanity live under stable conditions of impunity, while the relatives of survivors of the genocide fear existential repercussions to speak up against the elite. In 2016, The United Nations condemned the Indonesian 'mass killings' through the International People's Tribunal 1965, explicitly formed as a reaction to

The Act of Killing (International People's Tribunal 1965 2016a). Nevertheless, the state of

affairs at the time of filming both films remains still the status quo of the official and

popular perspective concerning the history of Indonesia, as the government refused to

partake in the Tribunal, and thus escapes this international authority of justice. Although

from The UN's perspective, it is now established that 'the Indonesian genocide must be

included among the major genocides of the 20th century', this has not yet led to an end of

impunity in any meaningful way (International People's Tribunal 1965 2016b). Promoted by

the ethical question of how relatives of survivors can live with the state of impunity of mass

murderers, the documentary project follows the pursuit of justice.

The two documentaries of the Indonesian atrocities form a diptych that confronts

the ethical construction of memory from the perspective of the perpetrators and relatives of

victims. The role of the films as diptych, as Oppenheimer explains, is that 'they stand side

by side...rather than one following the other' (in Cohn 2015). The films are a diptych

through the choice of perspective and framing of their subject matter and an interwoven

selection of portrayed people. The asymmetrical relationship of memory and justice stands

at the forefront of the documentary project. Both films present this ethical issue of the

construction of memory as a discursive matter. This means that the relationship of

historical action – or memory of the past – to the present moment in time – or experience

of now – is contextualised through the lived consciousness thereof, or remembrance of the

memory of the past as a lived custom. The practice of portraiture of the films disrupts the

concept of the past as a stable state of memory through the presentation of the

construction of memory of the exposed selves on screen as lived matter. The films expose

selves in the performance of remembrance and display the lived experienced of

remembrance in the present moment. In *The Act of Killing* this translates into a practice of

portraiture of perpetrators that works with the method of staged acting, vis-à-vis the reflection on the hands-on practice of genocide. The filmmaking strategy of dramatic re-enactments of mass murder made the film a cause célèbre, and enabled the depiction of the victims' perspective in *The Look of Silence*, which was subsequently finished. While the making-of structure of *The Act of Killing* brings back the atrocities of the perpetrators through the action and practice of mass murder, *The Look of Silence* more intimately excavates the structure of rationales and reasons for the involvement therein.

In *The Act of Killing* mass murderers re-enact their crimes in their desired forms, as part of a film-within-the-film structure. The film consists of episodic re-enactment scenes of a fictitious film production of the perpetrators, which serve as the main form of the presentation of selfhood. Accompanying these direct scenes of re-enactments, there are interwoven interviews and monologues with the perpetrators throughout the film, both concerning the real historical events, and as a commentary of the production of the re-enactment project. Focussing on Anwar Congo, and Adi Zulkadry, who both are former leaders of the notorious Frog death squad, and Herman Koto, a former gangster of the *Pemuda Pancasila* youth organisation, these three perpetrators confess to mass murders within a referential framework of heroism, innocence, and freedom. The means of storytelling and cinematic form that the film-within-a-film scenes of re-enactment take is profoundly shaped and inspired by Hollywood and gangster films, musicals, Westerns, horror films, and War movies. These cinematic genres and cultural stereotypes shape the individual memory and imagination to an overarching degree in terms of how action is envisioned and is performed. In the re-enactments, the perpetrators act out themselves, they play themselves as they both remember and imagine themselves to be. Through this portrayal of acting out themselves, *The Act of Killing* becomes a documentary of the

imagination of the perpetrators. The re-enactments are temporal tools of making the past appear again as present, including the distortions and dramatizations of the stance of the actor as former perpetrator. This means that the re-enactments are recollections of a former past and subjectively enacted epistemic scenes: performances that re-negotiate remembrance in the present moment of the now. However, the perpetrators are also acting out the roles of the victims in the re-enactments. The re-enactments are thus actions of a dramatic space beyond likeness and representation of an event.

The re-enacting performer reconfigures their relationship to their self through the enacting anew of the past in a process of self-mirroring. This mirroring process through the distancing of time within the intimate restaging of action builds what Camilla Reestorff in an article on *The Act of Killing* considers a 'cross-temporal connection' of perpetrators to themselves, which in turn displays them as 'troubled indexes of themselves' (2015: 24). The testimonial and confessional character of their restagings is troubling for the viewer. The documentary aspect of *The Act of Killing* is the display of reality as interplay of fact and fantasy – and the excavation of the memories of killing through corporeal remembrance and imagination. On the one hand the actions as indexes or recollections alone are deeply disturbing already, and on the other hand the stylistic performance of their remembrance adds a layer of distortion and re-troubling nature to their display. What Alexandra Moore in an essay on *The Act of Killing* calls 'heterotemporality of atrocity' is this presentation of a doubling of time within a repeated unethical action (2016a: 209). Analysing the repetition of re-enactment in *The Act of Killing*, Homay King describes this technique of the self as the engagement of the 'self as actor in the midst of a drama[,] and the self as observer' (2013: 32). Rather than constituting a traditional form of Brechtian distancing effect, the performer of the re-enactment renegotiates the forces of remembrance by distorting the

past through dramatization or escapism into grotesque, surreal, obscure or other styles of re-enactments. The cinematic experience for the viewer moves away from the confrontation of a realist documentary of the events of the Indonesian genocide to the portrait of fractured selves that establish an intimate yet self-alienating relationship to their historical self – and the victims of their own atrocities. Also there is the element of dispersion of an exchange of identities and roles between perpetrator and victim, which display the ethically troubling mindset of the perpetrators, for instance, when Anwar suggests that he can 'really' feel like his victims have felt.

Figure 18. Still from *The Act of Killing*.

Figure 18 is a still from one of the first scenes in which mass murders are restaged in detail. The realistic re-enactment of the garroting technique of Anwar marks the beginning of the restaging of horrific atrocities in various forms thereafter. After the camera follows Anwar through a clothing store to the rooftop of a residential building, he presents the authentic place and the means through which he conducted mass killings. He introduces the

space of the roof as inhabited by ghosts to reference the many people that 'died unnatural deaths'. The roof itself here is thus metaphorically introduced as collector of dead souls, charged with inhabiting the spirit of the dead. In this setting Anwar nonchalantly explains that at first people were beaten to death on the roof, but this way there was too much blood and smell to be dealt with in addition to the corpses. Therefore, for reasons of efficiency Anwar developed a garroting system that he enthusiastically presents with an assisting friend, as seen in the shot of *Figure 18*. Anwar vividly displays how he used a wire to strangle his victims to death by re-enacting the method, while he also speaks about the management of dead corpses. This factual restaging and narration of the re-enactment is paired with a spontaneous reflection concerning the actions. In the scene, Anwar further reveals his personal strategy of winning over his conscience through entertainment, nightlife, and recreational drugs. What follows thereafter is a grotesque and ecstatic moment of selfhood in which Anwar abruptly begins to demonstrate his Cha Cha dance skills. This dramatic intrusion of action appears socially awkward and as a diversion of attention. Anwar's assistant in the mid-size shot during the dance stands on the roof without purpose and looks into the camera. He begins to chuckle while he continues to face the camera and appears to be tempted to burst out in laughter. Instead he pronounces, 'he's a happy man', after which the scene ends with the troubling aural resonance of this commentary.

The garroting re-enactment scene returns within *The Act of Killing* as a screened video. Anwar is seen at his home with his grandchildren and Herman watching the recording of the re-enactment on his personal TV set. The viewer is here witness to both the reaction of Anwar and Herman, and the reaction of Anwar's grandchildren towards the re-enactment. This sequence displays the sense of an afterness of afterness, a double

spiraling of meaning and time in the derivate discussion concerning the style of the re-enactment. Anwar contextualises the differences between the re-enactment and the memories of the real events: 'I never wore white'. The additional layer of mediation of seeing himself acting out himself here gains a surreal punctuating force for the viewer, as the recorded re-enactment appears to be seen as detached from what it actually depicts. There is a dispersion that Anwar performs away from the actions as meaningful in terms of their consequences to understanding the actions as meaningful in terms of their aesthetic intensity. Anwar is very concerned with not appearing as cruel and sadistic as he envisions himself to be and to have been. As Oppenheimer summarises in an interview '[h]e's watching that scene with his grandchildren, who are a projection, a part of himself. He's talking to himself' (in Nayman). The revisiting of the scene here makes the viewer feel once again as accomplice of injustice through the repetition of the sequence as a video and the reaction of Anwar towards his own re-enactment.

The viewer here confronts the perspective of the perpetrators as an accomplice of their aesthetic and ethical point of view. Written after *Regarding the Pain of Others* as a response to the infamous Abu Ghraib photographs, Susan Sontag observes in 'Regarding the Torture of Others' that with Abu Ghraib the production of images of torture turned from professional journalists to perpetrators themselves, and that the viewer is partaking in 'their war, their fun, their observations of what they find picturesque, their atrocities' (2004). In *The Act of Killing*, which also offers a productive response to the Abu Ghraib torture and prisoner abuse scandal, the viewer is forced through sequences like the one above to repeatedly re-confront and re-endure the atrocities themselves and face the perverse persistence of a 'moral vacuum' concerning those deeds from the perpetrators side (Oppenheimer in Jelly-Schapiro 2015).

The role of remembrance as a matter of recollection and force of presentation of selfhood is central is central to the practice of portraiture of *The Act of Killing*. The method of acting and re-enacting blends afterness and now in the performance of the present moment through which the selves of the film are both portrayed and portrait themselves. The power of constructing a form of representation as the repeated presentation of the past is given to the perpetrators, they construct their relation to themselves in whatever form desired. This technique of the self of acting out the past in the afterness of the event allows for the powerfully delusional and distorting fictionalising rather than documenting self-image of the perpetrators. While *The Act of Killing* thus moves further and further away from a confrontation of the perpetrators of what it means to have killed uncountable masses of people, this central question is more directly tackled through *The Look of Silence*. Through the intrusion of the relative of a dead victim as the trigger of dialogue, the perpetrators construct an image of themselves in the present moment by responding to an otherwise ignored force. The viewer here is facing the situation of impunity in which the perpetrators of injustice verbally portrait themselves as successors yet confess to cruelty and barbarism. While *The Act of Killing* centrally positions acting out as a technique of the self, *The Look of Silence* uses a technique of confrontation via dialogue, or "thinking out". This means that the structure of re-enactment as a repetition of action is exchanged here with the use of the repetition of thought, or rather the inception to think for the first time about the ethics of barbarism. The concrete practice of portraiture here thus evolves through the display of thought, reflection and articulation as a means of presenting consciousness.

The Look of Silence follows Adi, the brother of a victim, to question and disrupt the silence that prevails concerning the genocide through the confrontation of mass murderers. Enabled through the popularity and success of *The Act of Killing* that gave the filmmaking

team informal immunity within Indonesia, the cinematic recording of a confrontation of perpetrators who are still in power is unprecedented in the history of the moving image (cf Oppenheimer in Moore 2016b: 495). However, the film distinctively achieves more than just the recording of an unprecedented confrontation, it also consists of a powerfully personal story within the universal sense of longing for justice it aspires to satisfy. While at the outset the film can be seen as rather conventional talking heads documentary film, the practice of portraiture of framing perpetrators of violence is focused on a multi-layered construction of the performance of remembrance. There is the structure of the diptych that takes shape through an intricate relationship to the *Act of Killing* by the inclusion of short video bits of, for instance, the Snake River sequence from *The Act of Killing* in *The Look of Silence*. In the Snake River sequence in *The Act of Killing*, a spectacular and aggrandising re-enactment of mass murder is being performed, reminiscent of the aesthetics of jungle murder scenes of Vietnam war films like Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979) or Oliver Stone's *Platoon* (1986). Within *The Look of Silence* itself, these horrific images punctuate Adi's promenade along the riverbank.

 The Look of Silence uses layers of remembrance and forgetting, and visibility and blindness within the narrative exposure of the film to thematise sensual relationships as main force of the presentation of selfhood. This means that the multi-layered exposition of those forces inform the perception of the viewer concerning how the perpetrators sense of self is directed by the use and abuse of those forces. As Adi is shown in his profession as an optician, the social authority of the optometrist allows the relative of the victim to create a confrontation free of associations to the genocide. The use of the professional conversation as a pretense to verbally investigate the personal roots of the person looking for a clearer view is an ingenious storytelling tool for the breaking of silence. Not only does this create

the respect to be able to speak and be responded to at arm's length, the optometrist's procedure also strongly evokes the need of the other in the sculpting of consciousness and self-consciousness. Nevertheless, unlike the respect and authority that is displayed for the profession of the optician, the position of Adi as the inquisitive seeker of understanding is reacted to critically. This means that with the verbal confrontation and attempted renegotiation of the memory of the past that happens through the film, an act of mediation occurs which is characterised by an immense fragility, which reflects the overall real situation of the relatives of the victims.

Figure 19. Still from *The Look of Silence.*

At the forefront of *The Look of Silence* is the systematic questioning and disrupting of the silence regarding the genocide through scenes of confrontation. One of the most powerful scenes of confrontation is the one illustrated by *Figure 19* between Adi and Inong, who allegedly and reportedly killed Adi's brother Ramli. Inong mutilated and killed Ramli together with an accomplice named Amir, and threw the corpse into the Snake River. As

seen in *Figure 19*, the confrontation takes place through a dialogue setting in which the optometric examination overlaps with a conversation. 'Those are scenes and they're confrontations; they're not interviews' as Oppenheimer insists, meaning that the encounters mutually inform the expression, exposure, and performance of selfhood (in Moore 2016b: 492). The verbal as the means of communication in those scenes is the medium of communication, however, the scene as such is structured by the corporeal encounter, which due to its unprecedented nature already inhabits communicative meaning. The opening, listening and responding of Inong to the questions of Adi allows for an excavation of remembrance concerning the mass killings to occur. The excavation of memories is the basis for the formation of resonance between the perpetrator and relative of the victim. This remains unaccomplished, and instead the confrontation re-asserts the 'cognitive dissonance in a whole society' echoed through the body of Inong (Oppenheimer in Moore 2016b: 484).

Inong confesses to having acted out cruelties such as mutilating bodies, and to cannibalism, more precisely drinking the blood of victims to remain sane and not go insane among all the manslaughter. While Adi attempts to provoke a "thinking-out" of the personal involvement of Inong within the larger apparatus of atrocities, Inong uses the verbal means of speech not to confess to moral wrongdoings, but to irrational and narratively mystifying acts. Through the interventionist tactics of the dialogue paired with the authority of the optometric instructions, such as Adi's repeated questioning 'so, do you see more clearly or less clearly', the scene evokes the possibility of change of perspective. Nevertheless, there is no apology, no signs of erring or doubt, as repentance appears unimaginable for Inong, and thereby the scene presents that facticity is neither sufficient to induce a different understanding of the past nor breaking down immunity. As much as the

verbal narrative exposes Inong's stabilised relation to himself, his twitching face is central to the expression of fragility of his selfhood confronting the inconsistency of his ethical integrity. Although the film creates a situation of social imagination and vision, as it documents the so far unthinkable encounter between relatives of victims in Indonesia, the practice of portraiture mirrors and thus simultaneously presents the systemic architecture of vulnerability of the situation within the Indonesian society as a whole. While 'the film insists on the presence of a claim to the right to look that is also the right to speak', as Alexandra Moore puts it (2016a: 203), the perpetrators decide upon the breaking of the silence. In the fitting scene with Inong, this soft power of the verbal interruption immediately reminds the viewer of Adi's situation: When Inong intervenes that Adi places too much emphasis on 'the political', he is in charge of the narrative and the ability to silence it – inside the cinematic confrontation and outside of it.

Both *The Act of Killing* and the *Look of Silence* use the corporeal as the privileged site of the excavation of meaning concerning the Indonesian genocide. The presentation of history occurs through the exposure of selves, as the site of embodied ethical conflict concerning the historical narrative. It is the present moment as the site of encounter between the now and the then that both films offer access to. The performance of remembrance in this diptych is portrayed through the cinematic means of what I have described as acting-out in *The Act of Killing* and thinking-out in *The Look of Silence*. The filmic here is a space in which the recollection and dispersion of belonging are negotiated. The films use this practice of portraiture to construct social documentaries of imagination: on the one hand the re-enactment of the past, on the other hand the construction of a confrontation of the past. While *The Act of Killing* uses the powerful renegotiation of selfhood through the construction of a relationship of self to self, *The Look of Silence*

accomplishes the presentation of selfhood through the confrontation with the other. The diptych of films in turn produces a site of ethics for the viewer, in which the self of the perpetrator is seen through the process of fictionalisation, de-realisation, and de-personalisation as the strategy to mask the personal history of barbarism. The filmic as the space of presentation of those selves achieves the dimension of a representational realm of a site of ethics, where the filmic is a space of encounter for the viewer of the imagination and selfhood of these perpetrators. The viewer is entangled in a punctuating process of understanding morality concerning both victims and perpetrators of the genocide within the exposure of the performance of the selves of the perpetrators.

Chapter 14: Poetics of Precarity – Survival at Work

Michael Glawogger's late documentaries are a trilogy on the topic of globalisation. Excluding the posthumously finished *Untitled* (2017), which Glawogger himself described as a free form film outside his typical cinematic œuvre, the globalisation trilogy portrays human selves and their struggle of survival (cf Glawogger in MacDonald 2012: 49). In contrast to the associations and representations of a faceless globalised economic market evoked by the term globalisation, Glawogger's personal cinema focuses on individuals at the margins of the global capitalist profit systems. 'Glawogger's films undermine common notions of fact and fiction, document and staging' as scholar Christopher Huber notes, through the creation of durational visual portraits (2014: 337). The practice of portraiture in this cinema is the concentrated exposition of the performance of selfhood and corporeal labour within a struggle of survival. The three observational documentaries portray

subjective selves and their stories of survival produced and guided by the forces of global capitalism within a neoliberal focus on the individual self. There is a concentration in the trilogy on the performance of selfhood within corporeal labour. *Megacities* (1998) concentrates on personal survival stories in four of the world's most populated cities, while *Workingman's death* (2005) frames five perspectives on manual labour, and *Whores' Glory* (2011) focusses on sex workers in three different cultures and contexts. All of the three films present corporeal exchange relationships through the use of the body as primary vehicle of labour. However, the films not only present the exchange relationships of labour, but also enact an experience of global travel by producing borderless personal relations across the globe between the viewer and selves on screen. Not only is this cinematic work 'destabilizing and challenging the position of the spectator', but it reconfigures the relationship of the viewer to the world and globalisation through this intimate relational practice (Binter 2013: 191).

The globalisation trilogy explores the phenomenon of the globalised contemporary capitalist society through the exposition of precarious selves across the globe. These selves are portrayed not in a process of motion and mobility, not precarious because of instability, but settled in precarity within a permanent struggle for survival seemingly without a horizon of hope for a better life. While on the one hand, globalisation in Glawogger's trilogy is explored through the heterotopic spatial narrative construction of each individual film, it is embodied within the highly local non-mobile disenfranchised bodies and selves so dominantly sculptured by the forces of survival. This means that Glawogger's documentaries de-complexify the globalisation of the world through the presentation of individual selves that are embedded in complex capitalist exchange relations that govern their lives in an embodied fashion, as their labour is exclusively corporeal. On the other

hand, this 'glocal' practice approximates the French term *mondialisation* or world-forming, meaning in Nancy's use the globalised world according to value-driven non-abstract human relationality rather than mere economic relationality (cf. 2007b: 28). This means that while the trilogy is strictly speaking documenting globalised capitalist society, and indeed 'each film is an intimate, shocking, sometimes courageous panorama of working conditions', the films are particularly innovative and ground-breaking through their opening of relational meaning (MacDonald 2012: 40). There is thus a sense of labour of imagination in the trilogy in the construction of a perspective upon the world that does not confine itself in myopic boundaries, but achieves an opening to the world through the establishment of relationality.

In the globalisation trilogy an imaginative sense of relationality is produced between the viewer and the selves on screen. This is achieved through multi-layered, sensual and provocative portraits in all three films. In *Megacities* there is the presentation of twelve stories of survival across the four cities New York, Mexico City, Moscow, and Mumbai. The nomadic gaze across the global polis in the film creates a fragmented narrative perspective of atomised selves that share a universal and global subjugation to capitalist logic. The floating boundaries suggested through the editing style of *Megacities*, cutting from one city into another, presents the porous boundaries and relationality of a globalised world. While there is the experience of an exposition of collected selves in the form of individual 'stories' [*Geschichten*] of selves in *Megacities*, in *Workingman's death* there is the presentation of shared groups in which individual selves are portrayed in 'images' [*Bilder*]. Each of the five durational images in *Workingman's death* exposes live-threatening work environments in Ukraine, Indonesia, Nigeria, Pakistan, and China, in which the individual selves endure their struggle for survival. Thus, with each distinct portrait in *Workingman's death* a new social milieu is exposed in which the selves are rooted, and the viewer relates to.

Like in *Whores' Glory*, where there is the presentation of three microcosms of prostitution in Thailand, Bangladesh, and Mexico, the presentation of individual selves in those specific environments testifies to the stability of precarity that those selves experience. However, differently than in *Megacities* and *Workingman's death*, each of the three individual durational bits of *Whores' Glory* is not only an epistemic scene, but stands in direct relation to one another in the form of a triptych. This means that *Whores' Glory's* panoramic and episodic form of storytelling builds, like *Megacities*, and *Workingman's death*, relationality from one story or image to another, while, however, there is also a form of excess of this compound meaning through the composition of the film as non-separable holistic relational piece held together by its parts.

Across the trilogy, there is the establishing of global relationality to the selves on screen combined with a sense of astonishment, romanticism or magic that permeates the films. While the editing of the films of the trilogy produces the episodic and panoramic relation and formation to the world, there is also the production of a highly subjective and impressionist storytelling. The perspectives and frames of the films destabilise an authoritative objectivizing gaze in favor of an essayistic travelogue perspective. However, this technique is paired with an overwhelming sense of visual romanticism in the films that privileges powerful colours and majestic compositions. Further to the visual extravagance, the films' storytelling juxtaposes the beautiful frames with the shocking confessions and practices of the lives of the portrayed selves. This experience of epistemic contrast of beauty/horror, the merging of shock and awe is what Glawogger describes as the viewerly experience of the 'knot in the head' (in MacDonald 2012: 42). Intended as a direct relational response to the storytelling, the experience of the knot in the head is the conceptualisation of the puncture created by this practice of portraiture, what MacDonald describes as

'complex layerings of shock, beauty, thoughtfulness, empathy' (2012: 40). This is achieved through the use of beauty in the cinematography that frames the selves on screen with a form of grace. It is not only that the camera captures 'grace where others could only see horror', as film critic Grissemann describes, but it produces a confrontation of relationality that appears as inherently complex or in tension with itself (2015: 13). Rather than mere stylisation, the particular sense of beauty is enacted through the contrast to the gravity of the deeper meaning of the frames, the shock inherent in the affective and relational comprehension.

In *Megacities* the viewer experiences an overwhelming tour de force across the globe and the reconfiguration of a relation towards precarious living conditions. In its first seconds the film introduces its underlying premise concerning the status of selfhood that informs the viewer's perspective towards the film to come. The quotation '[a]nd perhaps in the abodes of poverty, where health, learning, shelter and security are not birthrights, the soul is not a birthright either' of William T. Vollman, sets a contextual frame of understanding for the viewer. While the implicit question is posed whether or not the bare life of poverty includes the soul as harbour of selfhood, the viewer here is immediately placed in the discursive and relational context of the struggle for survival. Besides this context, the quotation also provides a connotative relation to the melancholic image on which it is displayed: a shot out of a train compartment's door into a sunset in front of which a family sits on the ground playing music on keyboards. This overall image of movement and mobility, transportation and the passage of time introduces the essayistic and voyage-like style of the film, which works to capture the deeply human aspects of '12 stories of survival'. The compartmentalised train-like episodic structure of the film thereby orbits the world while fixating the selves in relation to their immediate surrounding, their

milieu of life. *Megacities* portrays pimps, sex workers, thieves, hustlers, musicians – selves that are defined and define themselves through their corporeal labour, their immediate relationship to work and the precarity of both their labour and their overall existence. The relational practice of the film across New York, Mexico City, Moscow, and Mumbai is bound together through a unique visual style and rhythm of a nomadic and wandering gaze that presents the selves through portraits of their ritualised labour within their living environments.

Figure 20. Still from *Megacities*.

Megacities frames ritualised practices of labour of selves at the margins of their societies. Every one of the twelve stories in the chosen metropolitan areas introduces the selves through their personalised contexts in which their everyday life unfolds. This means that there is a microscopic concentration on an extremely local level in the film, which is interchanging throughout the film through the successive changes of spaces. Within seconds the viewer moves back and forth between New York, Mexico City, Moscow, and Mumbai in an encircling rather than linear voyage across the globe. This interconnected

assemblage technique strongly evokes the glocal overall atmosphere of the film. While

through the editing those stories as epistemic scenes orbit each other across the globe

forming a global journey that creates a sense of decentred placelessness, the intimate

personal scenes provide visually striking panoramas of the immediate milieus of the

presented selves. One particularly striking example of the practice of portraiture of the film

is the sequence entitled 'Workers' in Mumbai with the dye sifter Akhbar Ali. As seen in

Figure 20, this scene works with colours on two levels, as the medium of labour and product

of exchange, while also exposing itself in immediacy as colour, thus visually dominating the

landscape of the shot. The scene demonstrates on a visual level the complete

embeddedness and immersion of the self in labour through the dominance of the process

of labour marking both the body and the immediate environment. The social milieu in

which the labour is performed, on the other hand instantly reveals itself visually as a slum

suggesting dire poverty and precarious living conditions.

The dye-sifting scene in *Megacities* examplifies the practice of portaiture constructing

affective landscapes of selves. In this practice the working body in ritualised labour is

framed in synergetic relationship with the respective environment. The foreground and

background of the image amalgamate to an overall impressionistic image in which the body

and society appear interconnected. Like in the other scenes, the sensual realm of the image

is very distinctively framed and composed as picturesque, while the sound emphasises the

experience and practice of the labour. The scene of Akhbar Ali is introduced through the

metallic banging sounds of metalworkers who smoothe out dents across pieces of metals

such as barrels, and the pulsating sound then merges into the rhythmically counterpointing

stable swoosh of sifting. The sound of this labour provides a very intuitive signal of

enduring routine, suggesting the core characteristic of the machine-like repetition of the

work. After establishing this atmosphere through the sound, the camera then displays

Akhbar in a close up-shot through a tilt movement from the roof of the shack. The work

environment in this shot is displayed as cocoon-like shack consisting of interconnected

plastic bags that form a tent-like environment offering some protection from the sun. The

scene continues by framing the work environment in different shots displaying the

shantytown structure that is surrounded by trains.

The voice-over of Akhbar gives an account during the scene of himself confessing

to the nature of his work and life. While the exposure of selfhood through the ritualised

and repetitive work explains itself in the visual presentation through the simplicity and

immediacy of the labour, the voice-over narration speaks out to give voice to the soul. The

portrait thus works on the viewer's sense of relationality in a threefold manner through the

image, sound, and voice-over. As in the scene the colours of the sifting change blue, to

green, to red, and ultimately yellow, the viewer is confronted by the voice-over saying 'I

have no choice, so I work here...I'm unhappy...What should I do?'. The voice-over is a

medium here to overlay the visual image with poetic depth and an authority over one's

account of oneself in an address to the viewer. The voice-over is confessional and

improvisational, yet intentionally constructed for the viewer to affect their understanding of

the portrayed life in the moment of its unfolding for the viewer. There is a strong sense in

which this testimonial practice gives the portrait an aura of self-portraiture or immediacy,

while the words extend the consciousness that is limited to the frame and immediate milieu

to the horizon of the lifeworld the confession constructs. Also, the speaking voice here

constructs a moment of dialogical intimacy through the questions posed, which resonate in

the viewer's mind. The hopelessness in which the voice-over speaks gives testament to the

struggle of survival presented throughout the film without a horizon of emancipation into a

better life in sight. Like most confessional confrontations of labour in the film, the scene

collects the exposition of selfhood in *Megacities* as affective landscape bound within the

precarious margins of coporeal exchange relationships.

In contrast to *Megacities*, *Workingman's death* provides a more enduring exposition of

selfhood through the concentrated observation onto five scenes over a longer duration of

time. The swift, nomadic and accelerated orbiting of the metropolitan areas and resulting

flow of travel of *Megacities* is decelerated to the exposition of milieus in more narrative

depth. Playing on the double meaning of the title on the film, the leading question posed in

the beginning sequence of *Workingman's death* is whether corporeal labour has disappeared

or whether it has been made invisible. This question is answered in the film through what

reviewer Forsythe calls a 'global sweep across a metaphoric circuit of capitalist production',

the presentation of the most extreme labour in the most extreme conditions (2006:68).

While in industrialised societies corporeal labour may have mostly disappeared from

quotidian sight, this presupposition is contrasted through the presentation of working

selves embedded within the circuits of global exchange relationships. The five images or

epistemic scenes of *Workingman's death* present heavy corporeal and life-threatening labour

across the globe within precarious living conditions. These five indeed 'elegiac and

revelatory' stories, as critic Sandhu remarks, form an overall episodic film that is concluded

with an epilogue in Germany displaying children touring a post-industrial coal mine

transformed into a recreational park (2005). While this post-industrial coda of the film

exemplifies the transformation of labour and society, the five principal images testify to

enduring remains of labour-intensive and indisputably life-threatening labour performed

primarily as a means of survival.

Figure 21. Still from *Workingman's death*.

The practice of portraiture in *Workingman's death* privileges the heavy burden the labour imposes on the body and the life-threatening character of the work. At the core of the film is the struggle for survival of the labouring selves within an environment that imposes a high risk of accidental or circumstantial death. In addition to that, the fruits of one's labour barely help one to sustain oneself condemning the selves of the film to precarious poverty. All of the jobs demand corporeal immersion in hazardous actions and working and living in proximity to unsafe natural environments. In order of appearance, there is the presentation of Ukrainian colliers working in an abandoned and claustrophobic coalmine, entitled 'Heroes'. As seen in *Figure 21*, the second scene is of Indonesian labourers excavating sulphur at the edge of an active volcano with the title 'Ghosts'. Thirdly, there are Nigerian workers slaughtering animals open-air in public in a scene entitled 'Lions', while fourthly Pakistani labourers dismantling huge ships and deep-sea vessels are displayed in 'Brothers'. Lastly, there is the fifth scene entitled 'The Future' with Chinese steel mill workers that leads into the epilogue in Germany concluding the film. All

of the chapters provide a concrete immersive relational experience of the performance of labour through the display thereof in ritualistic detail. The scenes, however, also emphasise through monologues of the workers their experience of selfhood within their environment and their understanding of themselves within the global world.

In the scene of the still of *Figure 21*, like in the other four scenes, a miniscule activity within a global industry is presented that relies on heavy corporeal labour. In the case of the scene 'Ghosts', there is the presentation of sulphur mining at the edge of the active Indonesian volcano Kawa Ijen. The scene testifies to the visual sensitivity of Glawogger's cinema, while it also dramatically displays the monstrosity of this labour at the edges of slipping into death. In the scene, cinematographer Wolfgang Thaler follows the labouring process with a steadicam, and by mirroring the movements up and down the volcano thereby documenting the corporeal action. The labour consists of repeated cycles of excavating the sulphur and carrying it up the edgy roads alongside the volcano to the weighing station. The shiny sulphur is carried on the workers shoulders through a tool consisting of two interconnected wooden baskets that is balanced on the rocky path. The majestic landscape here provokes associations to the sublime by the grandeur of the abyss that the volcano consists of, paired with the role of an interacting protagonist through the fog and haze it produces. There is an unbelievable knot-in-the-head-like experience for the viewer of the contrast between the gravity of beauty of the landscape, and the precarity of the performed labour at the site. The scene mirrors the ritual of work through the pacing of speed following performance of work, and the display of pauses, in which confessions of hopes, aspirations, and desires are articulated. While the excavation of sulphur is part of a global invisible network of exchange relationships, the workers directly confront Western tourists who visit the volcano site and photograph them. This confrontation in the scene

provides the most immediate and 'startling *frisson* of contemporary contradictions, of combined and uneven development in the most vicious sense', as critic Forsythe notes (2006:68, original emphasis).

The third film of the globalisation trilogy, *Whores' Glory,* presents three environments of sex work across the globe in a triptych structure. While *Workingman's death* primarily exposes the male worker, *Whores' Glory* concerns itself with dominantly female labour in local prostitution industries. In contrast to *Workingman's death* however, the practice of portraiture here does not concentrate on the exposition of the ritualistic and isolated aspects of the labour itself. Unlike the production of goods for exchange, the sex labour is client-based work that relies exclusively on the instrumentalisation and objectification of the workers body for the pleasure and consumption of the client. The sex work itself is not presented as such in *Whores' Glory*, but rather auxiliary aspects of the instrumental labour within the three vastly divergent social microcosms, such as the emotional and physical burden of the labour. The film has a distinctive non-judgemental observational perspective and provides a perspective on different dimensions of the labour. The practice of portraiture here is the sensitive and relational exposition of the performance of selfhood to sell one's body and its consequences. The three parts of the triptych encircle the work environment to provide a panoramic perspective upon the work involving the architectural space and social relations to clients, pimps, and people in the outside world. Ultimately, *Whores' Glory* as a film displays articulations of the workers and the ways the labour shapes their life. As the film is indeed, as Glawogger suggests, 'a composition and interpretation of reality', the triptych relates the practices in Thailand, Bangladesh, and Mexico to one another to emphasise the aspects of difference in the performance of selfhood and labour. Nevertheless, the film is intended as a unified piece and Glawogger's

insistence that 'it should be like a Hieronymus Bosch painting, it should be like an altar',

means that the film collects the differences of depiction and perspective on the labour (in

Kasman 2012).

Figure 22. Still from *Whores' Glory*.

In *Whores' Glory* the three epistemic scenes present the everyday labour conditions

of the local prostitution industry through an observational storytelling. This means that

there is a focus on the exposition of the work environment paired with confessional

monologues of the prostitutes, as seen in *Figure 22*, that are also augmented with some

verbal statements of customers. Through this practice the relational aspects of the corporeal

work are being emphasised and the film displays how the relationship towards the world is

informed by the routine instrumentalisation of one's body. In all of the three environments

the work is shown through the power relations that define the experience of labour: the

corporeal performance of sexuality for the other – the customer. This display of the market

as the primary force deciding over one's livelihood is vividly displayed in the first part of

the film in Bangkok, in the 'fish tank' sequence, where numbered prostitutes are sitting on

one side of a glass wall and are being ordered by clients from this aquarium-like space. *Figure 22*, taken from the second part of the film in Bangladesh, on the other hand, is one of the most powerful direct addresses towards the viewer of the film. The monologue by one of the presumably underage teenage prostitutes most powerfully describes the desperate working conditions and the hopelessness engrained in her precarious life.

The direct addresses towards the viewer in *Whores' Glory* present the performance of labour from the self-reflective perspective of the sex workers. In the scene of *Figure 22*, like in numerous other sequences in Thailand or Mexico, there is the visual presentation of the immediate work environment that frames the address. Before the direct address, the labyrinthine structures of the neighbourhood are shown, together with other workers, and the madams who run the brothels to present the structures of enslavement. The room that is shown here is the bleak main living and working environment, with a window including iron-bars. As it is revealed in the direct address, there appears to be no direct or physical force holding the women inside the 'prison without closed doors', as Glawogger summarises the environment (in Kasman 2012). It appears that the workers are trapped in a system of exploitation out of which there is no escape. The precarity and hopelessness is summarised through the questions of the woman in *Figure 22* towards herself and the viewer, 'Why do women have to suffer this much? Isn't there another path for us?' – which is left unanswered. The acutely shocking words punctuate the viewer's sense of relational world-forming, and inspire a sustained reflection concerning the structural inequality that defines those living conditions. This deeply emotional address excavates the longing and the desire for justice and the need to be able feel a sense of relation to this world.

In all three films of the globalisation trilogy, the practice of portraiture of Glawogger's cinema produces a sense of relational orientation for the viewer. While in

Megacities this orientation towards the world is produced through the flow of the interconnected scenes and the multitude of selves exposing their struggle for survival in succession, *Workingman's death* and *Whores' Glory* provide more concentrated expositions of precarious labour across the globe. The performance of the body in all films is portrayed through the performance of labour, which in turn defines the selfhood through the force of survival that dominates the content of the portrayed lives. There is an intimate relationality produced through this practice of portraiture that confronts the viewer with direct immediacy of social milieus. The films use the production of presence of direct scenes of portraiture to establish a relationship of exposition of selfhood to the negotiation of the present moment. The structure of experience of life is exposed through the lens of corporeal work, and labour is displayed here as a perpetuation and eternalisation of presence, and thus as the most powerful force that sculpts the selves in their lives. This human endeavour confronts the viewer with a perspective onto globalisation that is world-forming through the presentation of the role of precarious labour and lives within the chain of global exchange relationships. The trilogy documents the direct personal involvements in precarious conditions that are invisible within the global economic order's representation. By privileging the personal realm of the self of a global marginalised population within cinematic techniques, the role of labour within the constitution of selfhood and the formation of relationality towards the viewer and the world is intensified: the complicitiy of the viewer within the global exchange relations presents itself as immediate and direct.

Chapter 15: Politics of Intimacy – Relationality, Exchange, and Love

Yorgos Lanthimos is a contemporary filmmaker working with a radical practice of storytelling analogously to Michael Haneke and Lars von Trier. Together with his main collaborator Athina Rachel Tsangari, for whom he produced for instance *Attenberg* (2010), or *Chevalier* (2015), his œuvre is tagged by critics as 'Greek Weird Wave' to describe a realist cinema preoccupied with human relations and its discontents (Rose 2011, Psaras 2016). In what I would term aesthetics of austerity this is a minimalist cinema using a presentational and exhibitionist paradigm of acting-out scenes of ensembles of selves. Lanthimos' feature length films stage humans in a world that serves as a theatrical set to portray physicality and the performativity of human identity. As a deconstructive form of social examination, the films create a representational system that is explorative and experimental and unearths human practices, ritual, and convention. The practice of portraiture in Lanthimos' cinema is the presentation of the contemporary human condition as a lost intuition of relationality epitomised in the pursuit of love. Excluding the début *Kinetta* (2005) that uses techniques of re-enactment already paid attention to in Oppenheimer's œuvre, I analyse Lanthimos' three main feature films to date, *Dogtooth* (2009), *Alps* (2011), and *The Lobster* (2015), with respect to their construction of relationality. All of the three films problematise the boundaries and the relationship of self and other, and inside and outside, through a focus on the family as ensemble of intimate social relation and interaction. While *Dogtooth* presents the development of selfhood through the portrayal of siblings confined in a family home with no relationship to the outside world, *Alps* exhibits a group of surrogates replacing the absent and deceased selves of loved ones. *The Lobster* displays the forced necessity of post-

romantic matching and the abandonment of loneliness that replaces amorous love and relationality in a fictitious society. In all of the three films love as governing force exposes the social construction of human relationality, intimacy, and sexuality to underscore the performance of selfhood as a practice of relation to self and other.

The films of Lanthimos explore the contemporary neoliberal society and the structures of its human relationships through an exhibitionist and presentational paradigm of storytelling. The films consist of reconstructions and deconstructions of reality through the hyphenated and accentuated presentation of parallel social microcosms. This means that Lanthimos' films portray plausible and relatable worlds through this technique of hyperfictionalisation, which conceptually deconstructs human relationality through the reconstruction thereof through a mechanism of othering. This means that fictionalisation here is truly a space of theatrical imagination in which selves operate in an environment of negativity and difference with respect to logos, normativity, and convention. As critic Pinkerton notes the studies in 'behaviourism' that explore the 'permeable boundaries of selfhood' renegotiate the system of rules in which humans perform their selfhood for the viewer (2012). The sense of weirdness within this cinema and technique of the self thus arises through the quasi-unnatural or queer foreignness of the performativity of identity within the films. The viewer here is an observer and interpreter of holistic representational systems through a sociological regard towards deciphering the human behaviour of the selves on screen. The 'performative corporeal realism', as critic Koutsourakis (2012:106) terms the performance, behaviour, and acting of the selves on screen simultaneously exposes what scholar Cooper terms the 'constructed status of relationships' (2016: 165). The viewing experience here strongly resembles an observational exercise of watching an embodied experience of imaginative mirroring, distortion, and difference of selfhood.

Within the films the viewer thus experiences an imaginative space, a performative utopos as space of reflection of the inhabited reality by the viewer that reinforces sensitivity towards the viewer's relational construction of reality.

All three films of Lanthimos play with the precarious stability of the order of reality held together by human relationality. There is a paratactic, enumerative style of sequential bits of narrative that do not conclude in unity, but remain fragmented excerpts of broader dramatic chains of events. The storytelling documents the social realms and microcosms of the films as social laboratories that excavate overall structures and logics of social governance. The experience of parallel mirror worlds and societies is achieved through the incorporation of alterity in terms of language and social norms in the films, together with realist cinematography. As scholar Mark Fisher puts it '[t]he camera lingers impassively, unobtrusively, as if it is performing a merely documentary function' (2011: 23). The storytelling thus engages in undermining the boundaries of theatrical and representational through a focus on the performative element of the physical bodies in relation to one another. Influenced by the Dogme 95 aesthetic, the gaze onto the bodies presents primarily nameless characters, performers that are acting out selves in their social roles as humans. There is a layer-like intrusion of a meta-narrative dimension in the films, rather than however exposing the filmic medium, this meta-narrative dimension exposes the artifice of human relationality and its codes as trained and cultured. This deconstructive style of the filmmaking stages human relations on screen in performances of selfhood that also displays the social realm as rule-driven normative system. The idiosyncratic style of the films is thus the exposure of ideology, and in particular the neoliberal ideology of self-realisation of identity in social roles within the frame of the nuclear family.

Dogtooth begins with a groundbreaking scene in which a hand inserts a tape into a vintage cassette player. Upon playing the tape, the viewer hears a diktat as a language instruction: '"Highway" is a very strong wind'. The viewer here witnesses the construction of a simulated otherly world through the privatisation of language. The female voice of the speaker produces and crafts the non-sensical and illusionary realm of the children's existence through their dictated private language, their mother tongue. This opening sequence of the film presents the one of the main themes of the film: narrative and naming as an instrument of domination. However, *Dogtooth* presents the construction of a social system rather than just consists of a portrayal of 'family wrongness' (Rose 2011). In the film, a younger (Mary Tsoni) and an older adult girl (Angeliki Papoulia), and an adult boy (Hristos Passalis) are shown living a home-schooled life in an affluent home in some Greek suburban area. The infantilised siblings receive their understanding of the world completely through their parents, who confine their nuclear family life to the interiority of their property. The father (Christos Stergioglou) leaves the microcosm of the house and pool-featured garden every workday to work as a manager in a factory, while the mother (Michele Valley) takes care of the house, and the couple thereby enacts a traditional role-play of the nuclear family. The children have no immediate contact to the outside world, as for that they have to wait until their dogtooth falls out – so goes the parental myth implanted into their heads. Rather than violently abusive, the relation of the parents to their children in *Dogtooth* appears to have developed from parental love into pathological and totalitarian control of their autonomy and freedom.

Dogtooth presents parental authority over the formation of selfhood and consciousness in a most extreme state. The film consists of the display of events and rituals of the adult children, a 'collection of happenings' as Koutsourakis correctly calls the family-

album like structure of short snippets of video-like bits (2012: 98). The film displays the *oikos*, the family, the family's property, the house in which life is lived, and the universe in which the adult children exist. Due to the bewildering and estranging use of language outside of mimetic and representational meaning, and the intellectually infantilised and alienated behaviour of the selves, the film constructs what Koutsourakis calls a 'meta-performative space' (2012: 100). In the film, the viewer notes the alienation, the othering, the alterity, the non-development of selfhood of the children through what Fisher calls a 'disturbing discrepancy between physical and behavioural maturity' (2011: 22). This means that these bodies display the construction, the formation and deformation of selfhood through the loss of autonomy and freedom over their own identities. The forced confinement and the desolate mystifications of the outside world excavate the force of relationality, and *Dogtooth* displays indeed, as scholar Psaras notes the 'specific normative structures that regulate the production of particular subjectivities and forms of identity' (2016: 75). Through the enigmatic decoding of the private language, and the strange and awkward behavioural patterns of the selves on screen, the viewer stitches the logics of the universe together for the purpose of orientation within these relationalities. Through the mechanism of othering the selves, as Psaras notes, the force of relationality as such is excavated, as 'in *Dogtooth* the family *in* the narrative exposes family *as* a narrative, indeed a myth in itself' (2016: 70).

Figure 23. Still from *Dogtooth*.

Figure 23 displays the family as an ensemble mourning over the staged death of the missing brother that most probably is a narrative construction of the parents and never existed. The shot of *Figure 23* is one of the few shots of *Dogtooth* that displays the family as ensemble, and here the mourning performance is both indicative of, and part of the falling apart of the precarious structure of reality that the parents constructed. The viewer confronts multiple narrative layers in this scene providing an excess of relationalities, constructed, imagined, simulated and vanishing. The scene testifies to the aspect of simulation within the distorted reality that the children inhabit. Here, the family together mourns the fake death of the missing brother, who never existed, yet allegedly escaped the house, and who was killed by a cat – in the film's representational universe 'the most dangerous animal there is', as the father declares. The family stands at the tall hedge and fence that separates them with the outside world, and the children are dressed up for the funeral-like ritual to throw flowers over the fence. The viewer confronts here a distilled image of the relationalities of the film: the family separated into couples of the parents and the sisters, with the lonely brother who in his mind lost a brother (that never existed), and

they all stand on one side of a fence that confines their existence and defines their microcosm. While on the one hand, this scene portrays the 'controversial meaninglessness', to use Psaras formulation of this confined world and their gestures, beyond the dadaistic aspect there is the presentational aspect of an exposition of selves and their relations through the regulation in which relationality is displayed. As Koutsourakis puts it: '[t]he actor's bodies are not simply the carriers of dramatic *agon*, but the medium through which the filmmaker captures the most ordinary aspects of human behaviour, so as to dissect them and analyse them' (2012: 96, original emphasis). This means that the scene displays the acting of the bodies as relational human selves that provoke the viewer to confront the performative elements of love and the construction thereof in actions and gestures, such as mourning, in excess of the filmic space.

Dogtooth engages in the presentation of the manipulation of experience through the force of relationality. The confinement of the children and the creation of a private language is a hermeneutic system that constructs a hermetic world. The patriarchal figure of the father controls this anxiety and fear-driven environment through the mantra '[a]s long as you are inside you are not in danger. You are protected.' The parents construct an environment that consists of a lot of warnings about the outside world and is thus 'literally xenophobic, terrified of everything', as Fisher points out (2011: 27). The feeling of a self-enclosed world for the viewer is epitomised in a scene in which the family watches a video of themselves as a form of entertainment. The television device as a connector to the outside world is disabled in its function, and instead becomes a mirroring microscope of time, offering the bleak recollection of the family's past togetherness as the family is watching themselves. Throughout the film, the children are held captive as functionally illiterate in this corporeal and representational system that stabilises itself through circular

feedback loops. While the relationship of inside to outside is disrupted, and the children are completely under-stimulated and in a state of hypnotic idleness, there is an odd sense of wellbeing in their insular existence. The force of relationality of the parents in *Dogtooth* is exposed as what Psaras terms 'affective ambivalence', which is both 'caring and abusive' (2016: 72, 76). Nevertheless, as the director points out, the film is the 'story of a person who tries to escape a fictitious world' – namely the older daughter (Lanthimos in La Porta 2011). To satisfy the brother's sexual needs, the father occasionally brings Christina (Anna Kalaitzidou) home, who is a security worker from the factory. The regular visits of Christina come to a close, however, for security reasons, and the parents put the chore onto the older sister. This marks an incestuous involution of the film, which leads to a series of events in which the older sister violently removes her dogtooth, and in the ending of the film her escape through the trunk of the father's Mercedes is visually suggested.

In contrast to *Dogtooth*, which problematises the development of selfhood as a relational activity to the world in control by the other, *Alps* displays the assumption of a self for the sake of the satisfaction of the other. Similarly to *Dogtooth*, the film displays the formation of selfhood within a relational configuration, as it portrays an ensemble of a group of amateur business partners who provide surrogate services to others. In the film, there is display of the construction of identities by force of impersonation of others, for the sake of the satisfaction of paying customers. The film also displays the tensions of the group of the 'Alps', which meets in a gymnasium consisting of a paramedic (Aris Servetalis) as a leader, a gymnastic coach (Johnny Vekris), and a nurse (Angeliki Papoulia). With the authoritarian group lead by Mont Blanc, the 'Alps' attempt to collectivise their efforts of the performance of other identities as a side job. While the film displays scenes of the group as a whole, and individual short snippets of impersonations, it focuses on the portrayal of the

nurse Monte Rosa, and her all-consuming life as care-taker in the hospital, at home taking care of her father, as 'Alps' member, and taking care of her 'Alps' customers. There is also a prologue and epilogue of a gymnast (Ariane Labed) consisting of two acrobatic exercises and performances that frame the film and the theme of performing for the gaze of the other. The film thus juxtaposes multiple layers of construction of selfhood through the portrayal of individuals, chiefly the nurse, as private individuals, in their professions, as group-members, and as performers of surrogate services. Like in *Dogtooth*, however, the effect of hyperfictionalisation of performativity within the film underscores the force of construction of selfhood as a relational activity. This is presented in *Alps* through the situations in which the surrogate identities are impersonated for the customers in role-play like recollections of vanished or deceased loved ones. The film thus produces scenes of acting out the selves of others and thereby the viewer is confronted with what Psaras calls 'resubjectivations' (2016: 166).

In *Alps* the performance of selfhood is shown as a relational exercise for the other. The impersonations occur through the theatrical enactment of events chosen by the customers, in which the impersonator satisfies or re-satisfies the customer's demands of the assumed self and subjectivity. In the film, the 'Alps' group members, such as the nurse, recruit customers through their professional work at the hospital. The commercial promise of surrogating is that it facilitates the mourning process through what Psaras terms the 'spectral presence' of an 'Alps' member replacing the vanished person (2016: 28). As Monte Rosa puts it recruiting a couple after their teenage daughter dies in the hospital she works in: 'It will help ease your grief, until after a while, it disappears completely.' The viewer witnesses this catchy pitch scene that is not responded to by the devastated couple, but as the film later reveals in a sequence at their home they give it a try, and let Monte Rosa re-

enact their daughter. In the first substitution sequence Monte Rosa tries on the tennis shoes of the dead daughter, puts on the perfume "Eternity", and sits in the living room and speaks about a tennis match that never happened. Monte Rosa here assumes a teenage identity through the gestures, language, and behavioral traits she displays, exposing a recollection of selfhood for the parents and the viewer. The impersonation occurs thus as a post-mortem event through the assumption of the body, personality, and character of the recently deceased by Monte Rosa who thereby performs a simulated enactment of selfhood. The display of selfhood is thus both performative and spectral, while the cinematic presentation of the enactment further thematises the construction of selfhood as a form of acting.

The viewer encounters through *Alps* and the portrayal of the nurse/Monte Rosa a representational stage of the performance of selfhood. As Psaras points out, 'the space *in* the film and the space *of* the film resonate sublimely in the way they accommodate/foreground the actor as always an actor and never a subject' (Psaras 2016: 158, original emphasis). In other words, this means that there is the constant visibility and interplay of different forms of enactment and role-play as the film displays the functional regimentation of the articulation of personality and character. The film displays the performance of selfhood as a process of acting out a reality, of fitting into a narrative, whether as daughter, as nurse, or as impersonator of an English lover, or as a teenager. The viewer is situated as a witness of the process of recollection of selfhood through the illusionistic staging of interactions with customers of the substitution service. These interactions appear strange and odd for the viewer, at times bizarre and grotesque, as the constructed artificiality of the impersonation resurfaces within the staged interactions that occur for the gaze of the other that receives them. However, there is not only the force of

love of the other that works on the presentation of acting-out assumed selves by providing financial compensation for the effort. As Lanthimos explains, *Alps* is about 'people who pretend to be other people to escape their own life' (in La Porta 2011). The escape out of an own sense of self and the slip into another sense of self is performed out of pleasure more than for the financial remuneration. As the sequences of the nurse/Monte Rosa display, enacting another self and slipping into the assumed self to continuously live out the narrative of their life offers an escape out of one's own self and life.

Figure 24. Still from *Alps.*

Figure 24 displays the ending shot of the filmic presentation of Monte Rosa's substitute performance as teenage daughter, and overall ending of the main body of the film. In this long shot Monte Rosa stands on the garden terrace, almost leaning towards the roller shutters and looks at them as if through them, while the shutters as a screen display her shadow image. The concluding shot of *Alps* is this image of projection of selfhood, found in the play of the shadow on the shutters in this scene, as Monte Rosa moves her body. Previously in the scene, Monte Rosa shows up uninvited at the house of the teenager's parents, and as ringing the doorbell is left unanswered, she breaks into the house

by throwing one of the outside chairs at the window, which smashes it. As the alarm of the house signals the break-in, she descends into the children's room and lies in the daughter's bed. The father runs down the stairs and forcefully removes her from the bedroom, and drags her out of the front door, while Monte Rosa manically speaks out typical statements of her impersonation in a disconnected and frantic manner. Being thrown out of the house, she encircles the property in panic to the terrace as she tries to regain access inside again. Arriving at the glass window front she watches the declining shutters, which the father operates from inside, and standing at the threshold she says: 'Dad? I'm home.' The scene here comes to a full circle and the physical loop from outside to inside to outside also manifests her personal breakdown as excluded from any sense of relationality. *Figure 24* thus displays the transgression of the boundaries of self and other, through the relationship of inside and outside of the house, and the emotional and mental breakdown of Monte Rosa in a single shot.

The portrait of Monte Rosa as substitute problematises the relationality to oneself lost in the excess of a presentation and performance of otherhood. Monte Rosa dissolves in the role of the teenager in the immersion and desire to not only perform and impersonate, but to become and be this self. The pleasure of performing for the other is not what drives her, but the assumption of the teenager's life. The precarious and unsustainable situation of this impersonation cannot provide a meaningful relationality and sense of belonging. Not only does Monte Rosa also violate the rules of the Alps group by taking on the family as a client by herself rather than as a collective, for which she is punished by Mont Blanc, she further transgresses the performance of impersonation by inviting the former boyfriend of the teenager to her house to have sex with him in her own self-interest. The film displays and problematises the recollection of selfhood through

impersonation, through the failed attempt to ameliorate suffering and loss through the performance of selfhood for the other through Monte Rosa. This means that *Alps* is not, as Landon Palmer writes, 'the ensemble piece it seems to be at first, but a portrait of a woman who lives entirely without identity' (2012). Ultimately the decay of Monte Rosa occurs through the lack of a practice of self-love and self-care for her own constitution and development of selfhood, and the projection into the narratives and reality of others. *Alps* is thereby a film that displays the force of othering and the emotional and existential burden as a 'search for identity and belonging', as Psaras puts it, and the desire of recollection of youth (2016: 157). The practice of othering leads Monte Rosa into the transgressive immersion of the dead teenager's life, and the problematic identification with the role-play as integral part of her self-experience, rather than the re-enactment of a role.

Both *Dogtooth* and *Alps* highlight the relational performance of selfhood within the construction of social situations that are produced by the force of love. The two films display othering through the use and abuse of parental love and self-love. In *The Lobster*, the display of processes of othering is presented through the context of romantic love. *The Lobster* displays the forced necessity of post-romantic matching and the abandonment of loneliness that replaces amorous love and relationality in a fictitious dystopian society. The film portrays David (Colin Farrell) who has been left by his wife, and therefore finds himself at The Hotel, a luxury seaside resort where according to the laws of The City single people are kept for matchmaking. *The Lobster* complements the construction of a relational performance of selfhood in Lanthimos's cinema through the construction of a relationally motivated situation in the film: single people have forty-five days to find a romantic partner or otherwise are transformed into animals of their choice. This somewhat absurd claim motivates the narrative as a fable and constructs the stage for the performance of selfhood.

While there is the use of games as ritual in *Alps* and *Dogtooth* such as tennis and swimming, *The Lobster* displays the practice and pursuit of love as a game-like situation and ritual. The film uses the ideology of coupledom and the nuclear family and enforces societal reproduction as an existential condition for the survival as a human being. Through the extreme enforcement of this ideology as an instrument of hyperfictionalisation, *The Lobster* creates a narrative of 'unnatural situations to question what's natural', as critic Tasha Robinson points out (2016).

The Lobster is a farcical tale about the neoliberal dynamics of choice and the necessity of choice explored within the economic logics of a market in which participation is obligatory. The society presented in *The Lobster* institutionalises that being single equals being unloved and dysfunctional, and thus subversive qua existence as a human body. The unnamed society in *The Lobster* that consists of nuclear families is thereby harmonious and without outliers, as it is stable through the nuptial love. Thereby, the society inflicts ontological insecurity and precarity to the self: singledom is an existential crisis that leads to the end of existence as a human. The pathologisation of the single in the society is thus paired with the rule enforcement of through the state enforcement of coupledom and the related features of monogamy and heterosexual reproduction. This means that the film offers a social examination of a fantasy and disciplinary society through the theatrical focus on The Hotel and the social practice therein of what scholar Sarah Cooper calls 'logic of compatibility' (2016: 163). *The Lobster* focuses on scenes within The Hotel that closely follow David's experience through the experience that resembles a stay in a spa resort, disciplinary camp, and an assessment center training. For example, the disciplinary exercise upon arrival, besides the wearing of provided clothes, is to be handcuffed for a day so that only one hand can be used to allow for an embodied experience of the advantages of pairs

of two. The hotel staff further educates and disciplines the participants in middle-class conservative, conventional and pedantic values and behaviour to maximise their compatibility with the other gender. By emphasising distinct individual characteristics, such as the self-presentation in front of the hotel assembly and including the mention of a 'defining characteristic', the logic of matching is exposed as post-romantic disenchanted instrumental encounter.

The Lobster displays the loss of meaningful relationality to one another in the context of love through the portrayal of David and his forced participation and performance in the prescribed dating. The loss manifests in *The Lobster* through the display of shared sense of loneliness and alienation by the inhabitants of The Hotel even when they are technically together as a group or in a dating setup. The urgency and the need to find the significant other in The Hotel further lead to a loss of play and playfulness within the social interactions, as the performance of selfhood is so forcefully sculpted through the desire of survival as a human. The provision of state-induced quality time thereby leads to a pursuit of unhappiness in seeking alikeness to one another as the chief relational and matchmaking characteristic. The performance of selfhood here occurs for the normative gaze of the state as agent of othering, enforcing the normative order of the dystopia onto its citizens. This normativity is presented in *The Lobster* through Buñuel-like surreal moments of bourgeois ideology and its underlying discontent, while also achieving an Orwellian undercurrent in the use of nomenclature. The naming of people according to their defining characteristic, such as 'Lisping Man' (John C. Reilly) or 'Nosebleed Woman' (Jessica Barden) display the reification of these selves into communicable entities with certain tags.

Figure 25. Still from *The Lobster*.

     The Lobster consists in the first half of the film's duration of scenes in The Hotel, while the second half portray David's escape out of The Hotel into The Woods. The representational system of the film includes the renegade or resistance movement called Loners that consists of a group surrounding the Loner Leader (Léa Seydoux). The Loners occupy the forests and live excluded from the City as guerrilla movement according to a set of rules that forbid coupling and the display of affection to group members. *Figure 25* displays David and Shortsighted Woman (Rachel Weisz) in the scene of their discovery of a common characteristic trait of shortsightedness as indication of belonging together. This discovery displays their revelation of quasi-authentic love for one another, as they plan to attempt to leave the resistance movement that subjugates them to the force of the leader. The forced loneliness proves not to be a liveable form of togetherness for both of them, and they subvert the rules of the group by not participating in shared group activities in loneliness but creating a relational and intimate experience of togetherness by gestural communication. Further, the life in The Woods allows for the encounter with animals that

are transformed human selves thereby as memento mori further sparking a survival instinct. The coded exchange of gestures as love language developed by David and the Shortsighted Woman presents their resistance towards the resistance group anticipating the escape of the loners and the attempted reintegration into mainstream society. With the self-inflicted attack on the eyes of David in the mirror scene at the end of the film, *The Lobster* fades out with an attack on the dominance of sight as the establishing force of relationality towards oneself, the other, and the world. The practice of portraiture of the film in this ending sequence produces through the mirror scene an iconic image of the neoliberal self, as a figure of narcissus, yet rather than in love with the mirror image in doubt of the sense of sight.

Conclusion

> 'Nowadays, humans do not live in the real world. [...] They rather live in their own images, the images they made of the world, themselves and others, and from images that have been constructed for them of the world, of themselves and of others.' (Kamper 1995:7, my translation)

Throughout this dissertation I developed an argument for the encounter with art as a form of negotiation of selfhood. Thinking of the statement above as an indication for the role of imagery in the constitution of a self, a world, and a relationality of the subject to both, I have tried to shed light on the ways in which an articulation of selfhood takes place through the encounter with works of art. Art in my study is deconstructively understood as a mediation of reality, a reality in and of itself, and at the same time a form of situation and

encounter which through repeatability and interpretation thereof becomes more meaningful than the pure vanishing instantaneousness of the unmediated real now. Thereby I have privileged attention on the specific forms in which this form of selfhood comes into being, through concentrating on individual works that above all form an ellipsis or cycle of representation. As an aesthetic-ontological condition, the self navigates the spheres of reality as a form of constant, consistent and endless mediation. As I have shown throughout this dissertation, encounters with artworks that enable and produce a cycle, a loop, and an infrastructure of representation allow for an enactment of selfhood to take place.

In this study the interpretative emphasis has been on the constitution of selfhood ranging from stilled to moving imagery and durational environments. I gave attention to three forms of engagement reflected in the methodology and threefold structure of the study. First, I analysed the construction of selfhood of the viewer and the self on screen in stilled forms of imagery; second, I interpreted the role time and space play in the constitution of selfhood, and third I explored the possibilities of forms of exposition of selfhood. By focusing the critical engagement on the construction of selfhood in all parts of the study, I have argued for the self as the locus of the encounter of the work of art and the participant, observer, witness, or simply viewer. Throughout the analysis the works of art have thus been environments of interaction and intimacy, rather than objects of contemplation and distance. I understood the aesthetic experience in this study as the constitution of a self through a representational closure of the work of art with the viewer and the engagement with this closure over time and space. Further to this overarching assertion I have demonstrated the manifold experience of selfhood that comes into being through the particularities of the cinematic mode of engagement.

The cinematic is comprehended and argued for throughout this dissertation as means of engagement rather than genre of art. Ranging from visual media, such as photography, painting, and film, one of my attempts here was to build a bridge towards other forms of non-conventional audio-visual artworks, such as the perfume concert, or the hybrid animation and live-action film, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the modes of encounter with art. Naturally, the distinctions between different forms of art exist for reasons related to their form and the engagement with the senses of the human interacting with them. Culturally, however, as I have argued in this study, the encounter takes place in a presentational setting not primarily determined by the media, but by the expositional force of the work of art and the mode of engagement with the viewer and participant. The cinematic is thus understood as a durational engagement with an overarching stimulating environment that produces a contact and renegotiation of selfhood for the viewer.

In the first section of the thesis *Towards a Theory of the Cinematic Self* I introduced my argument through the deconstructive analysis of selfhood. In my analysis, I established selfhood as aesthetic-ontological relation and construction based on specific techniques of the self. Conceptualizing the relationship of the self and the other, life and death, and absence and presence I analyzed the possibilities for an expression and thus constitution of selfhood in photography through the interpretation of *Self in the Mirror*. In the construction of *Self in the Mirror* the photographic act is understood in dialogue with Derrida, Richter, Nancy, Foucault and Barthes as articulation of selfhood through the establishment of a cycle of representation with and through the viewer in an epistemic scene. In *Las Meninas*, I turned from photography to painting and from the establishment of contact across the

work of art to the viewer themselves, whose selfhood is constituted through the closure of the representational loop in the epistemic scene of the painting.

Moving from the stilled image to the moving image in my interpretation of video after Krauss, I argued for an immersion of the viewer into the dynamics and the cycle of presentation of selfhood as a form of technique of durational work. By interpreting *Cornered* accordingly, durational works of art such as video present a relationship of immersion, confrontation, and collection of the self on screen and viewerly selfhood. In the first part of the dissertation, I argued for a presentational rather than representational perspective concerning selfhood by translating *Self in the Mirror*, *Las Meninas*, and *Cornered*, into my conception of a cinematic theory of selfhood. Based on the presentation of selfhood in those works, the viewer establishes a cinematic relation to the visual self that extends and transgresses the boundaries of inside and outside, presence and absence, and here and there.

In *The Cinematic Self: Selfhood as Collection and Dispersion*, the second section of the dissertation, I turned attention to the role of time and space within the durational constitution of techniques of the self. While the first section interpreted the constitution of selfhood first in the moment (in photography and painting) and then over a moment in time (in video), the second section interpreted the durational collection and spatial dispersion of selfhood within feature-length films. In the second part, I thus interpreted epistemic scenes of cinematic works as durational scenes in which selfhood is exposed with respect to the forces of time and space. The aim of the second part of the dissertation is to derive the principles of collection and dispersion as the principal force of viewerly reconfiguration of selfhood within the cinematic encounter.

I established the principle of what I termed collection of selfhood through the analysis of *The Congress* and *Boyhood* and my interpretation of Bazin and realism. My close readings of epistemic scenes of the *The Congress* and *Boyhood* propose that here cinema is a philosophical mirror collecting loss of selfhood over time for the viewer. While collection over time is one force in which the cinematic self is articulated, the cinematic cycle of representation is also capable of creating an immersion in space for the viewer. I have thus argued that the cinematic concert *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited* and the hyper-film *Cool World* disperse a spatial sense of selfhood for the viewer. The principle termed dispersion derived from the viewerly experience of selfhood in *A Trip to Japan in Sixteen Minutes, Revisited* and *Cool World* describes the constant negotiation and reconfiguration of exchange of space. In contrast to collection, dispersion is shaped by the impossibility of the viewer being able to encompass a technique of the self that endures a sense of ontological stability over time. The cinematic experience of the epistemic scenes the works provide equals a constant reconfiguration of mirroring, and looping in space, and consequently the experience of continuous loss and the impossibility of the establishment of a cycle of representation for the viewer.

In the third section *Moments of Selfhood: Neoliberal Practices of Portraiture of Selves* I applied the theoretical analysis of the earlier two sections to contemporary cinematic practice. By displaying three topical cinematic œuvres of three international filmmakers I presented practices of neoliberal portraiture that display a relationship to the constitution of selfhood, its collection in time and its dispersion in space. Ranging from death in Oppenheimer to labour in Glawogger, and love in Lanthimos, these cinematic works expose the primary conditions in which selfhood is enacted and negotiated in the 21st century contemporary culture. I interpreted the force of death in *The Act of Killing*, and *The*

Look of Silence within the portrait of perpetrators, the force of labour in the portraits of corporeal workers in *Megacities*, *Workingman's death*, and *Whores' Glory*, and the force of love in *Dogtooth*, *Alps*, and *The Lobster*. This section thus presented a study of three forces in which selfhood is exposed in hybrid documentary and fiction filmmaking that uses imaginative presentational techniques.

This dissertation and study finds both its limitations and its implications at the intersections of its project. The method of the deconstructive approach and analysis of specific corpus of French and continental theory positions this project between film studies, film philosophy, and critical theory. While the cultural paradigm of the neoliberal is still in the midst of its unfolding, the analysis contributes to the current and emergent discourses on hypermodernity, transhumanism, dataism, and the reconfigurations of the individual amidst the fourth industrial revolution and its social consequences. Focusing on both a breadth of thought and limited exemplary material there is certainly a vast range of applicability and extension of the framework presented here. The fruitfulness of this project, however, so I hope, is at its intersections, for instance the creative possibilities and adaptabilities of the use of collection and dispersion as primary forces of the cinematic self in many other contexts – whether cinematic or other. Techniques of the self and epistemic scenes remain two of the main methodological propositions for the analysis and interpretation of cinema and visual culture more broadly, whose usefulness could be assessed in various settings outside the scope of this study. Needless to enumerate, the confrontational, confessional and performative approaches of the filmmakers and the works of the third section are innovative and fresh approaches to filmmaking which surely will inspire an array of yet to be made and critically understood art. The renegotiation of selfhood remains a topic of thought of unprecedented interest in the scholarly community,

and the cultural and societal paradigm in which the academy operates finds itself occupied

by questions of representation and ontology on an everyday level.

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