

with one step can certainly cross a river even if the gaps between the jutting stones in it happen to be too widely spaced for a normal person to safely cross; but she is *stopped dead* by the freezing specific to the undead.

Bazin: "It is inconceivable that the famous seal-hunt scene in *Nanook* should not show us hunter, hole, and seal all in the same shot. It is simply a question of respect for the spatial unity of an event at the moment when to split it up would change it from something real into something imaginary ... [the scene in *Louisiana Story*] of an alligator catching a heron, photographed in a single panning shot, is admirable ..." ³⁰ As long as the two parties within the frame are aware of the mortal threat one or both of them poses to the other, Bazin's qualified prohibition of montage is valid. In Franju's *Blood of the Beasts*, while the sheep readied for slaughter sense what is going to happen to them, a horse led to the abattoir occasionally blithely lowers its head to smell the ground, as if nothing could happen to it. It is then suddenly killed: ³¹ an accident. So strong is the horse's unawareness of the imminent deadly danger facing it that it imposes a specific kind of montage: the cut from the long shot of the horse insouciantly sniffing the ground to a close-up of it being shot. We have a law of montage here: every time two persons, or a person and a domesticated animal, are within a frame and one of them is totally unaware of the imminent danger she or he or it is in, there will occur a cut, whether the *sensitive* filmmaker wants it or not, between that shot and the shot in which that person or animal is killed. In the absence of a cut, we, the audience, will infer that we went through a lapse, and that the killed or seriously injured animal or person has been replaced within the shot by a double, that it is the latter that is killed or gravely injured or else that it is himself/herself that has been injured or killed by a double of the person or animal in whose presence he or she is, because his or her surprise is that of being eaten by a mimicry animal.

Bazin's "seamless dress of reality" cannot exist except where death has been reduced to organic demise. In the realms of undeath and madness, reality is, as in Robbe-Grillet's and Ruiz's works, full of gaps, or, as in Godard's *King Lear*, where the film editor stitches together the film pieces of two shots, full of seams.

Lapses:

In Stoker's *Dracula*, Harker loses consciousness as he approaches the vampire's castle: "I must have been asleep, for certainly if I had been fully awake I must have noticed the approach of such a remarkable place"; in Murnau's *Nosferatu*, Harker loses consciousness while leaving the vampire's castle. The frontier, the place of entry of the labyrinthine realm of undeath is inaccessible since hidden by the trance that seizes one there (*entrance n. 2*. A means or point by which to enter; *entrance v. tr. 1*. To put into a trance [*American Heritage Dictionary*]). ³² If someone who is not a spiritual master is not entranced at the entrance of a place, this indicates that the latter is not a labyrinth. The entry into and exit from the realm of undeath occurs in a lapse hence is missed. ³³ With the exception of the yogi/Zen master, one is always already undead. ³⁴ You can neither enter nor leave the labyrinth; and you've always been lost in it, that is you cannot be found there. Are you then ever in the labyrinth from which you cannot leave? On a map, a labyrinth is formed of one line that meanders on and on, twists and involutes, forming a fractal object with a dimension between one and two, with the following two consequences. First, the labyrinth is all border, hence one cannot be fully inside it: if one can hide in the labyrinth, it is not because one is inside the labyrinth, for the labyrinth maintains one on the outside (thus it has aura), but because it is in the labyrinth that one is lost. Second, lapses are sure to occur to one in the labyrinth since it does not have a dimension of 3, is not a full volume.

There can be no understanding of primitive cultures without

undergoing possession, for if understanding is a form of possession in the normal sense of the word, they in turn must possess us, in their way, or rather what possesses them must also possess us. We can include them in history and memory only if they can possess us, that is include us in amnesia, in lapses, in that which maintains outside. A true relation presupposes this unbalanced, equivocal (since it maintains the two meanings of *possession*) exchange. It is not accidental that the records (and, in the case of Armand Schwerner's *The Tablets*, the false records) we have of ancient cultures are interspersed with holes, lapses, are in the form of fragments, for what is primitive is more akin to the primary process, closest to the unconscious, itself full of lapses (a schizophrenic: "I turned around and did something and looked at my watch, and it jumped an hour and a half").³⁵ While in the case of the primitive, these lapses, holes, do not produce ambiguities but an absolute necessity for the one who undergoes them, in *The Tablets*, they induce a proliferation of interpretations.

Films about lapses in consciousness and disorientation are very important in cinema since cinema is itself largely made of changes of place and focus.³⁶ Walter Benjamin writes in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction": "The work of art of the Dadaists ... hit the spectator like a bullet It promoted a demand for the film, the distracting element of which is also primarily tactile, being based on changes of place and focus which periodically assail the spectator."³⁷ Classical cinema tries to occult such periodic change through smooth editing. These changes of focus and location and lighting should rather be foregrounded not merely in a structuralist, modernist investigation of the medium and specific art form that cinema is,³⁸ but also through a highlighting of films that deal on the level of content with reality as filmic. One would not forget to say *en passant* (but not too quickly) that bullets (or things with their speed: what causes amnesia in concussions is not so much the material that traverses the brain as its acceleration) have been the cause of many con-

cussions that resulted in amnesias, and hence in the creation in real life, and outside of all cinemas, of "changes of place and focus which periodically assail" the amnesiac (Nolan's *Memento*, 2000).

Marguerite Duras criticizes most filmmakers for a condescending attitude toward the spectator, which reveals itself for instance in their showing him or her all the successive stages of an action, as if he or she were a dolt who could not otherwise understand what was happening. Duras is only partially right in her insistence that the continuity in the portrayal of actions be dispensed with: a generalized habit of letting the spectator piece together what happened by projecting what was skipped makes it extremely difficult for the filmmaker to thwart such a projection, and thwarted it sometimes must be for in some cases nothing happened between the two shots forming the ostensible jump cut. Robbe-Grillet writes: "The duration of the modern work is in no way a summary, a condensed version, of a more extended and more 'real' duration which would be that of the anecdote, of the narrated story. There is, on the contrary, an absolute identity between the two durations. The entire story of *Marienbad* happens neither in two years nor in three days, but exactly in one hour and a half"³⁹—to wit the existence of the man and the woman in *Marienbad* "lasts only as long as the film lasts."⁴⁰ Robbe-Grillet's general characterization is correct; nonetheless, I do not think that it is fully exemplified by *Last Year at Marienbad*. For the implication of structuring the film in terms of scenes—a scene is "a unified action ... that normally takes place in a single location and in a single period of time"—is that there is a narrative ellipsis between each two scenes, with the consequence that the spectator is not inhibited from filling it with a duration. The spectator can yet be inhibited from filling it with a duration in various ways: in case the characters can still be surprised, it suffices to make them startled and disoriented at the beginning of each scene, thus alerting the spectator that no time has passed between the two non-contiguous locations-times, and hence inhibit-

ing him or her from projecting any transition time between them, the diegetic world presented by the work lasting then only the time of the projection of the latter. In case the characters are not surprised by diegetic jump cuts, the transition from one sequence of shots full of jump cuts to another at a different location and time should happen by means of either a cut on movement (a paradoxical continuity at the level of the image), as in *Meshes of the Afternoon*, or a cut on the two consecutive parts of a continuous phrase uttered in sync (a paradoxical continuity at the level of sound). For instance, although shot 24 in *L'Immortelle* shows the woman and the man starting toward Beyköy and shot 25 shows them arriving there, Leila, who was saying in sync “You are a foreigner ... You got lost ...” in the first shot, continues her phrase in sync in the following one (the cine-novel is explicit here: “continuing her phrase”): “You have just arrived in a Turkey of legend ...”—this making it impossible for the spectator to project that any time had actually passed between heading toward Beyköy and arriving there. One particularity of such a situation is that the outside is no longer what belongs to a different location-time, since, through the cuts on movement and/or on consecutive parts of the same phrase, the diverse locations-times are no longer separated, but form one ensemble; rather, the outside is now inside the same location, so that while one no longer greets as one changes locations-times, one does so at the start of the second shot of each jump cut in the same location.

“Build up: 1. Dramatic cutting leading to a climax in the action; 2. the insertion of frames to designate a missing section or shot in the work print.” Everything after these missing sections, these blanks is experienced as a climax, as a surprise. One should have *sang froid*, though not during these hibernation-like lapses, but as one is suddenly out of them. How to start (begin) without starting (being surprised)? “How can the outstanding be abolished?” “Only by

abolishing the outstanding.” Was a satori produced by this koan-like answer? Only when the surprising, the uncanny is abolished is the unaccomplished, the overdue in the same movement also abolished. Only those who no longer ever get surprised can definitively short-circuit.

Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* begins with Harker’s stress on timing: “3 May. *Bistritz*.—Left Munich at 8:35 P.M., on 1st May, arriving at Vienna early next morning; should have arrived at 6:46, but train was an hour late. Buda-Pesth seems a wonderful place ... I feared to go very far from the station, as we had arrived late and would start as near the correct time as possible.” (Having passed the bridge, [Murnau’s] Harker is from then on always late, not reaching the door in time to open it himself: it opens by itself—he turns into a witness.) It continues with an emphasis on chronological time—what is chronology but timing, so that events that belong to the past should not arrive too late, that is in the future, and events that should occur in the present would not occur too early, in the past, or too late, in the future—through Mina’s editing of a history: the multiplicity of letters and journals by various protagonists, which are different angles on and fragments of what happened, makes possible cutting around the eternities and lapses of some characters to produce a smooth narrative. While the transition from chapter III to chapter IV (“Jonathan Harker’s Journal—*continued*”) and the transition from chapter I to chapter II (“Jonathan Harker’s Journal—*continued*”) each occurs after an explicit lapse—chapter III begins with “And I sank down unconscious” and chapter II starts with “I must have been asleep, for certainly if I had been fully awake I must have noticed the approach of such a remarkable place”—the underlined transitions (*continued*) from chapter II to chapter III, from chapter XIV to chapter XV, from chapter XV to chapter XVI, and from chapter XVI to chapter XVII don’t occur after a manifest lapse. The titles “Chapter XV, Dr. Seward’s Diary—*continued*,” “Chapter XVI, Dr. Seward’s Diary—*con-*

tinued,” “Chapter XVII, Dr. Seward’s Diary—*continued*,” “Chapter III, Jonathan Harker’s Journal—*continued*,” as well as “Chapter IV” (the beginning of chapter IV continues the diary entry from the previous chapter) are inserts/cut-aways (does the *continued* function as a dissolve?) implying the existence of lapses that otherwise would not have been sensed.

Dans le temps one was always in time. No more; this *from time to time* is experienced literally by schizophrenics, epileptics, and people on LSD. Only occasionally do they return to *c’est le temps*, that is to the appearance of time. But *entre-temps* where are they? An epileptic: “It was about eleven o’clock when I put down my pen, feeling suddenly tired ... I made the tea, looked up at the clock—a strange chance—and saw that it was ten minutes past eleven. The next moment I was still looking up at the clock and the hands stood at five and twenty minutes past midnight. I had fallen through Time, Continuity and Being.”⁴¹ When she tries to go to her bedroom, she realizes that she does not know which way it is. With the epileptic, the two meanings of *fit* exclude each other. Coming back to consciousness, the familiar is no longer so: the first degree of being lost is not yet recognizing a familiar place in the aftermath of a *petit mal*—*lost and found*, simultaneously. And the unfamiliar becomes strangely familiar (this often induces as much apprehension as when the familiar becomes unfamiliar): with many epileptics the aura that announces a fit/black-out takes the form of a déjà vu sensation (naming *aura* an “I’ve been here [or witnessed or done this] before” or a smell that is there without an object that would exude it, like a reproduction that is divested from both the painting and its location, i.e., what does away with the aura, would have interested Walter Benjamin).

“It [cinema] makes a molding of the object as it exists in time and, furthermore, makes an imprint of the duration of the object.”⁴² Hence cinema preserves also the absence of time. It does so both by documenting epileptic fits (*petit mal* or *grand mal*) and trance, allowing

the one who underwent them to see what his body did when he was absent (Jean Rouch’s *Les maîtres fous*; Herzog’s *Heart of Glass*, during the filming of which all the actors except one were hypnotized); and by portraying in fiction films states where there is an absence of time during which the person is not unconscious (as for instance in Robbe-Grillet’s films [*Last Year of Marienbad* ...]). Cinema has to do much more with preserving this absence of time than with preserving time.

In films manifesting quantum effects, such as tunneling, one can reasonably expect the intermittences of interference patterns or of what is discrete, and vice versa. In Kubrick’s *The Shining*, Torrance tunnels through the locked larder door of the kitchen, and the child’s tricycle repeatedly passes over the alternating carpeted and bare sections of the corridors of the Overlook Hotel, producing a distinct alternation of silence and the sound of the wheels on the marble. The quantum world of Robbe-Grillet is permeated by intermittences that indicate interference patterns: on the cover of the 1965 Grove Press edition of the two novels *Jealousy* and *In the Labyrinth* and in *L’Immortelle* the author Robbe-Grillet and the heroine of that film respectively appear behind window blinds. With *Last Year at Marienbad*, one telling difference between the film directed by Alain Resnais and the elaborate and precise script by Robbe-Grillet is that the interference pattern in the opening section of the script (“at regular intervals, a lighter area, opposite each invisible window, shows more distinctly the moldings that cover the wall”) is not in the opening section of the film.

Lapses render the existence of those who suffer from them aphoristic only if additionally things and events are received by these persons.

In Bertolucci’s *The Spider’s Stratagem*, Athos asks two conversing men directions to get to the hotel. They begin arguing about which direction it is, pointing in opposite ways. “When you settle [which direction is the hotel] I’ll pass by again.” The second time Athos walks in the direction of the two arguing men, *there is a crossing of the imagi-*

nary line before he reaches them, so that we see him walking, in the exact same scenery, away from them, with the two still-arguing men having now exchanged positions, so that the one who was standing screen left is now screen right and vice versa. This indicates that Athos did not pass the two arguing men a second time.

A significant percentage of children experience epilepsy during their first seven years, mostly of the *petit mal* variety. The many *petit mal* episodes he suffered daily resulted in his seeing the world in time-lapse (time-lapse cinematography reproduces both the absence [skip-frame] and the convulsion [jerkiness] of epilepsy), so that everything was speeded up and he could follow more easily what was usually too slow to be perceived. When he became older and the *petit mal* episodes stopped, the world became slower.

The painter Andrew Wyeth portrays Helga in so many works—4 temperas, 12 drybrush paintings, 63 watercolors, 164 pencil sketches and drawings, etc.—in so many attitudes, positions, surroundings, moods that in the situations that have not been portrayed she is absent from herself.

Sometimes his talk is interrupted by a black screen then resumed at the same point with “As I was saying.” At other times, although the shot is not interrupted and none of those present cuts in, he keeps interjecting his talk with: “As I was saying.”

Memorable Accidents:

His car crash was a memorable accident not only because he still remembered it after so many years, but also because during it he saw a flash review of his life.

One day in 1906, a filmstrip jammed in Méliès’ camera. He managed to get the camera to function again and continued filming. At the projection of the reel, a horse-drawn tram suddenly became a hearse. An accident produced in the camera between a hearse and a horse-drawn tram both moving at rather slow speeds, hence

having enough time, even had their drivers found themselves on a collision course, to avert crashing into each other. A crash between their images. It is not accidental that that mixing of two things that had nothing to do with each other, which ushered editing, was related, as indicated by the appearance of the hearse, to death, the great intermingling.

Sensitivity to Initial/Final Conditions:

Whenever we deal with the unconscious, we find, as in any far from equilibrium (dynamical) system, an extreme sensitivity to initial conditions.⁴³ So it should come as no surprise that one of the most noteworthy characteristic of the state following death is the extreme sensitivity (and suggestibility) to initial conditions: here the final conditions of life, the initial conditions of death. Consequently, disciplines concerned with doing away with or at least having mastery over the Bardo state, for instance yoga, mention, among the “powers” that can be obtained through *samyama*, that of knowing the moment one is to die. Such knowledge would permit one to try to be in the best condition to deal with death: in meditation, hence detached from set (having complete control over one’s stream of consciousness and/or absolute detachment from it) and setting. The same emphasis on this last moment is found in fifteenth century Christianity: whereas in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries “the balance sheet is closed not at the moment of death but on the *dies illa*, the last day of the world ... [the great gathering] in the fifteenth century had moved to the sickroom ... The dying man will see his entire life as it is contained in the book, and he will be tempted either by despair over his sins, by the ‘vain-glory’ of his good deeds, or by the passionate love for the things and the persons. His attitude during this fleeting moment will erase at once all the sins of his life if he wards off temptation or, on the contrary, will cancel out all his good deeds if he gives way. The final test has replaced the Last Judgement ...”⁴⁴

Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 33–34.

²⁹ Dziga Vertov, *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, ed. and introd. Annette Michelson, trans. Kevin O'Brien (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 41.

³⁰ André Bazin, *What is Cinema?* vol. I, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 50–52.

³¹ First a Behr-gun stuns him by percussion.

³² In Herzog's *Nosferatu* and in Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, Harker's hypnosis at the entrance to the castle is implied by the door that opens on its own (motionlessness of objects is a phenomenon encountered in hypnosis, e.g., the hand of the entranced subject that levitates outside his control following the lead of the hypnotist). The vampire seldom entrances his guest by staring him in the eye; he does so rather by not appearing in the mirror or by the auto-mobility of objects (door, ship, etc.) that his freezing allows. That the door opens on its own for Harker in Coppola's film indicates either that he is at that point already hypnotized; or that the door is hypnotizing him: the passivity of the guest of the vampire as the door, which has become auto-mobile through the freezing of the vampire, opens or closes on its own before or behind him does not remain at the level of action but becomes extended to the complementary level of intention and will: he or she becomes entranced.

³³ For additional examples, see Dante's *Inferno*. In "Canto I," we read: "I cannot clearly say how I had entered / the wood; I was so full of sleep just at / the point where I abandoned the true path" (Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, Canto I: 10–12, trans. Allen Mandelbaum). The transition between Canto III and Canto IV, and therefore between the Ante-Inferno and the First Circle, or Limbo, happens in a similar manner. Canto III ends with, "A whirlwind burst out of the tear-drenched earth, / a wind that crackled with a bloodred light, / a light that overcame all of my senses; / and like a man whom sleep has seized, I fell"; and Canto IV begins with, "*Dante's awakening to the First Circle, or Limbo ...* The heavy sleep within my head was smashed / by an enormous thunderclap, so that / I started up as one whom force awakens; / I stood erect and turned my rested eyes / from side to side, and I stared steadily / to learn what place it was surrounding me." Similarly, Canto V ends with, "And while one spirit said these words to me, / the other wept, so that—because of pity— / I fainted, as if I had met my death. / And then I fell as a dead body falls"; and Canto VI begins with, "Upon my mind's reviving—it had closed / on hearing the lament of those two kindred, / since sorrow had confounded me completely— / I see

new sufferings, new sufferers."

³⁴ Probably this is what initially drew me, an aphoristic writer, to death: it is the exemplary realm of the absence of introductions.

³⁵ Matthew Edlund, *Psychological Time and Mental Illness* (New York: Gardner Press, 1987), 81.

³⁶ Exceptions: primitive cinema, Hitchcock's *Rope* (1948), many of Warhol's films ...

³⁷ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. and introd. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 238.

³⁸ As was the case with the modernist stress in painting on the flatness of the canvas (Jasper Johns' painted targets and flags ...), the shape of the support, the properties of the pigment.

³⁹ Alain Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel: Essays on Fiction*, trans. Richard Howard (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1989), 152–3.--

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 152.

⁴¹ Margiad Evans [pseud.], *A Ray of Darkness* (New York: Roy Publishers, 1953).

⁴² André Bazin, *What is Cinema?* vol. I, 97.

⁴³ Schizophrenia being an altered state of the mind, a far from equilibrium state of consciousness, it is not surprising that the schizophrenic sometimes feels that a specific, rather mundane change, for example whether or not one falls asleep before a specific hour, whether or not one goes through a door, will radically alter the state of the universe—a phenomenon similar to the *butterfly effect* encountered in the case of the weather, that paradigm for chaotic, far from equilibrium states.

⁴⁴ Philippe Ariès, *Western Attitudes Toward Death: From the Middle Ages to the Present*, trans. Patricia M. Ranum (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 34–37.

⁴⁵ Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland & Through the Looking-Glass* (New York: Nal Penguin, 1960), 16.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 26. Was one replaced during the lapse that precedes the psychedelic state by the *dead ringer*? Was this why one's friends did not recognize one then? Or was it that one merely hallucinated that they didn't? Yoga makes it possible for the yogi to go through phase transitions without the lapses/blackouts/synapses that occur then and that permit possession and doubles. The yogi has no double, that is, he manages, through psychomental withdrawal, to be absent from absence, to make his double absent, liberating and becoming the astral