

of the facial skin of another woman. She enters the room where the latter is stretched anesthetized for the operation, and looks at her. At no point does Franju cut from a close-up of Christiane to her point of view of the face of the one lying anesthetized. Her point of view would have shown her her (future) mirror image. Later, the woman whose facial skin has been removed, and who is covered by bandages, manages to flee the room in which she was imprisoned and wanders through the house. I expected that she would encounter Christiane, who at present has her face, seeing then her (negative) mirror image. But the two women do not meet. It appears that one is witnessing in both these instances the impossibility of a mirror image. But this impossibility is a characteristic of the undead, specifically of the vampire. Is a certain logic leading me astray? Then I suddenly remembered that the film begins with Christiane's fake funeral, during which the disfigured corpse of another woman was buried in a grave with Christiane's name engraved on the tombstone.

The vampire has no mirror image even in the form of body-image, hence he does not and cannot have a *phantom limb*.

The French language felicitously links in the word *reconnaissance* reconnoitering, recognition and gratitude. The dead's *reconnaissance* in the undeath realm fails both because such a realm is labyrinthine, and because he or she no longer has an image, and hence can feel no sense of recognition. The living have here an occasion, and perhaps a duty, to *create* a valid portrait of the undead, one that he or she can gratefully recognize, one that is neither a portrait of him or her as he or she was while still alive, nor an ideal or demonic portrait.

The Indefinite Poetry of Death:

Does the circumstance that cinema gives a definite image to what maintains a wide latitude of abstraction in a verbal description make that medium more prosaic than literary prose? Not necessarily. This facet of the medium has produced a poetic modality in at least two forms:

— Literalizing what we take for figures of speech, through dealing with states of altered consciousness or body. Finally becoming sure of who his host “is,” the recently arrived young guest at Count Dracula's castle confronts him: “I can see through you.” The reverse shot shows the vampire smiling and then becoming translucent, his victim's vision tunneling through him, revealing the victim's mirror reflection with its back to him.⁵¹

— Undoing or suspending the tendency cinema has, when not abstract or deploying to excess the off-screen, of sooner or later showing, embodying, giving everything a determined image. This is clearest in films that subscribe to Moslem tradition's prohibition of the representation of the prophets recognized by the Qur'ān, the first four caliphs, and the Shi'ite imams (and not necessarily in the crude form this subscription assumes in Muṣṭafa al-'Aqqād's *The Message*); and those that deal with Judaism's prohibition of the representation of Yahweh (Straub-Huillet's *Moses and Aaron*). But definite embodiment in cinema is undone also in manners other than the all-or-non one of transcendent religions, for example through:

— Remakes. In remakes, the same character is played by different actors. Buñuel humorously and poetically made two actresses play the female protagonist of *That Obscure Object of Desire*, this making of *That Obscure Object of Desire* both the film and its remake.

— The close-up when its tendency to undo individuation is not resisted by the filmmaker. Deleuze: “Ordinarily, three roles of the face are recognizable: it is individuating (it distinguishes or characterizes each person); it is socializing (it manifests a social role); it is relational or communicating (it ensures not only communication between two people, but also, in a single person, the internal agreement between his character and his role).... The close-up is the face, but the face precisely in so far as it has destroyed its triple function ...”⁵² In the great film of the close-up, Bergman's *Persona*, the complementary halves of the faces of Alma (played by Bibi Andersson) and Elisabeth (played by Liv

Ullmann) join seamlessly and indistinguishably into one face.⁵³

— The over-turn, which results in the undead's having his back to the film spectator both outside and inside the mirror (Magritte's *Reproduction Prohibited*).

— The mask produced by the fear-induced swish pan or tilt of one's look.

The poetry of death is obviously not limited to the revelation of the figurative as literal in the undeath realm, nor to the undoing of definite embodiment, nor to the surrealists' *exquisite corpse*. It also appears in that realm's frequent simultaneity of contraries: the simultaneity of stillness and movement: "I saw a female figure standing at the foot of the bed A block of stone could not have been stiller As I stared at it, the figure appeared to have changed its place, and was now nearer the door" (Sheridan Le Fanu, "Carmilla");⁵⁴ the simultaneity of being here and elsewhere, of appearance and disappearance: the undead was standing next to his guest, while also, as indicated by the absence of his reflection in the adjoining mirror, not being there;⁵⁵ the simultaneity of silence and music or sound: standing next to the vampire frozen in the coffin, and thus enveloped in diegetic silence-over, his enemies hurriedly discussed how to definitely kill him.⁵⁶ In a work of art, these instances of a simultaneity of contraries are poetic only when they attain to being aesthetic facts.⁵⁷

The Dance of Death:

"Grace appears most purely in that human form which either has no consciousness or an infinite consciousness. That is, in the puppet or in the god" (Heinrich von Kleist, "On the Marionette Theatre"). Polished grace of what is both marionette and god, of the undead, whose bodies are as inanimate as a marionette, and whose minds dwelling in the Bardo state have the powers of a god, as they dance in Roman Polanski's *The Fearless Vampire Killers*.

I've seen the dance of death in the freezing of the undead Willis

in *Giselle* and in the spastic and convulsive jerks of a mortally-wounded man from Qānā in the aftermath of the Israeli massacre in that Lebanese village. On first hearing that there is a dance spot in Karantīna, the site of a massacre perpetuated in 1975 by Phalangist troops on the Palestinians who lived in the refugee camp there as well as on many Kurdish and Lebanese war refugees, I imagined a place reserved for dances that project a subtle dancer into a realm with diegetic silence-over, freezing, etc., characteristics of the undeath realm, therefore for dances that reactivate the ancient connection of dance with death (*Giselle*, etc.), and in which the projected subtle dancers may dance, at least sometimes, with the revenants from the massacre. What did I actually find? A nightclub (!) by the "name" of B018. Notwithstanding that its tables, each with a flower, a candleholder, and a photograph of a legendary musician (Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Charlie Mingus, Charlie Parker, etc.), assume a votive appearance and are moreover designed to look like cemetery memorial stones, once the trendy music starts the youths who crowd the nightclub on the weekend move to it as they do in any of the other nightclubs in the city. Someone might try to justify having such a place on that spot by invoking the need to champion life in a country that has seen so much death. But if there is something that does not need a catalyst in order to continue, it is life, for *life goes on*. B018's architect, Bernard Khoury, would have had only to look at the grass that had already appeared on the presumed mass grave at the site of the massacre to ascertain that life goes on. Bernard Khoury should also have pondered Kubrick's *The Shining*.

Here Lies and the Worldless:

Michel Serres: "At the very site of reference lies death, which makes space something other than a homogeneous vacuum. Being-there is easily translated in the French language: *ci-gît* (*here lies*), ancient funerary formula. Here lies: that means here rests such or such, but

body.

⁴⁷ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: Avon Books, 1965), 226.

⁴⁸ Frieda Schaechter, "The Language of the Voices," in *Language Behavior in Schizophrenia: Selected Readings in Research and Theory*, comp. and ed. Harold J. Vetter (Springfield, Ill.: Thomas, 1968), 151.

⁴⁹ Stan Brakhage, *Film at Wit's End* (New York: McPherson and Company, 1989), 104.

⁵⁰ In Dostoyevsky's *The Double*, had even one person at the office commented on the newcomer's remarkable physical similarity to Golyadkin, the newcomer would no longer be Golyadkin's double but simply a twin or a clone, or the similarity would be a fluke.

⁵¹ If one intends to generalize the theme of vampires from the strictly literal (the vampire as an undead that sucks the blood of the living) to the economic and political (Marx: "Capital is dead labour, that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks" [*Capital*, vol. 1]), one has beforehand to take into consideration the way the undeath realm literalizes the metaphoric.

⁵² Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, 99.

⁵³ There is no jealousy in the indistinguishability of faces: the shot in *Persona* where Elisabeth faces the camera while *behind her back* her double Alma and Elisabeth's husband have a conversation and kiss, which reproduces the spatial positioning of the protagonists in Munch's *Jealousy*, is a bad forgery of Munch's painting.

⁵⁴ *In a Glass Darkly*, 412.

⁵⁵ For an interpretation of such a scene/procedure in terms of fetishism, see Roger Dadoun's "Fetishism in the Horror Film," in *Fantasy and the Cinema*, ed. James Donald (London: British Film Institute, 1989).

⁵⁶ These kinds of simultaneity are encountered also in the affined realm of dance: next to a number of dancers immobilized by the diegetic silence-over, a couple of dancers were moving to the accompaniment of the saving diegetic music-over. The freezing in the realm into which dance projects the dancer having allowed an auto-mobility of objects, the dancer was moving while not moving, since the floor on which he was standing motionless was gliding.

⁵⁷ Arts create aesthetic facts. When in a film a dancer is convincingly shown penetrating a two-dimensional object such as a mirror or a book illustration, rather than assuming that the dancer has the same kind of body we normally

have, and concluding that such a feat is impossible, and that therefore it must be either a character's fantasy or dream or a genre convention, one should ask what kind of body the dancer has acquired for such a feat to be possible.

⁵⁸ Michel Serres, *Statues: le second livre des fondations* (Paris: Éditions François Bourin, 1987), 114 (my translation).

⁵⁹ Regaining my seat after getting a coffee refill, I resume looking at the street: this is the third homeless person to search in the same garbage can in the last five minutes. The second homeless person had found an empty bottle that the first one had skipped. The garbage discarded by one homeless person is visited, as still not useless enough, by a second, then a third homeless ... Something almost Buddhist in this gradation in nothing. This society makes those it does not recycle, the homeless, extract what it missed recycling.

⁶⁰ Philippe Ariès, *Western Attitudes toward Death*, 47.

⁶¹ Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant, introd. Mike Gane (London: Sage Publications, 1993), 126 (I myself would have put quotation marks around *inferior races*). See also Michel Foucault's *Madness and Civilization* on the exclusion of the mad (at least until the start of deinstitutionalization in the 1960s). It is not by living in a cemetery, as hundreds of thousands of Egyptians do in Cairo, that one will reach the dead's space, the labyrinth where one is homeless, ending the dead's confinement.

⁶² An observer on the outside of a black hole's event horizon is not affected by the breakdown of predictability at the singularity, for no signal can reach him from it. Are black holes' singularities the universe's hallucinations? What goes on in the minds of schizophrenics and of those on LSD may be as objective as what goes on inside a black hole, where at the singularity—according to quantum gravity as it is currently understood—"time ceases to exist" ("no longer can we say that 'this thing happens before that one'"), and space becomes "a random, probabilistic froth," or "—according to the laws of general relativity—the curvature of spacetime becomes infinitely large, and spacetime ceases to exist."

⁶³ One notices an intriguing similarity between reports of the transportation of entities of extended death (undeath) and reports of the transportation of items of extended life (cryonics); compare the *Nosferatu* intertitle to: "The first embryos were sent from Oldham to David Whitting for freezing in London—by courtesy of British Railways—and the guards on the Manchester-London expresses can have had no idea of the momentous contents of the packages they handled for us so efficiently!" (my italics).

⁶⁴ Lotte H. Eisner, *Murnau* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973),