



BY PATRICIA PISTERS

1. The Death of the Image is Behind Us

Starting with the observation that “a certain idea of fate and a certain idea of the image are tied up in the apocalyptic discourse of today’s cultural climate,” Jacques Rancière investigates the possibilities of “imageness,” or the future of the image that can be an alternative to the often-heard complaint in contemporary culture that there is nothing but images, and that therefore images are devoid of content or meaning (1). This discourse is particularly strong in discussions on the fate of cinema in the digital age, where it is commonly argued that the cinematographic image has died either because image culture has become saturated with interactive images, as Peter Greenaway argues on countless occasions, or because the digital has undermined the ontological photographic power of the image but that film has a virtual afterlife as either information or art (Rodowick 143). Looking for the artistic power of the image, Rancière offers in his own way an alternative to these claims of the “death of the image.” According to him, the end of the image is long behind us. It was announced in the modernist artistic discourses that took place between Symbolism and Constructivism between the 1880s and 1920s. Rancière argues that the modernist search for a pure image is now replaced by a kind of impure image regime typical for contemporary media culture.

Rancière's position is free from any technological determinism when he argues that there is no "mediatic" or "mediumistic" catastrophe (such as the loss of chemical imprinting at the arrival of the digital) that marks the end of the image (18). The qualities of an image do not depend on the fact that they are seen on a canvas, a cinema screen, a television set or a computer window. For Rancière there is a certain imageness (that can even be evoked by words) that continues to influence our perception and understanding. Rancière defines cinematic images in particular as a manifestation of "operations that couple and uncouple the visible and its signification or speech and its effects, which create and frustrate expectations" (4-5). Images on the one hand refer to reality, not necessarily as a faithful copy, but as to what they suffice to stand for. And then there is also the interplay of operations between the visible and invisible, sayable and unsayable, an alteration of resemblance and dissemblance which is the way by which art constructs images that have affective and interrupting power. Rancière argues that (filmic) images in our museums and galleries today can be classified in three major (dialectically interrelated) categories according to the dominant type of operations: the naked image, the ostensive image, and the metaphorical image.

Naked images are those images that do not constitute art, but which testify to reality and trace history; they are images that primarily witness and testify. Ostensive images are images that also refer to reality but in a much more obtuse way, in the name of art, with dissemblances (such as the framing of the image within an exhibition context, or within an aesthetic style) that perform an operation on reality. The final category of images, the metaphorical ones, follow a logic that makes it "impossible to delimit a specific sphere of presence isolating artistic operations and products from forms of circulation of social and commercial imagery and from operations interpreting this imagery" (24). These are images that employ various strategies (play, irony, metamorphosis, remixing) to critically or wittily interrupt and join the media flow. Taken together, these image-types constitute the operational power of the image in contemporary culture, while the last category especially seems to indicate the dominant impurity of the new image regime. It is the last category that is relevant for discussing the future of the image as a third type of image in a Deleuzian sense. In the larger project from which this paper is derived I explain more fully why this third type of images should be called the neuro-image.[1] Put in a very concise way, this

new formulation draws on an explicit reference to Deleuze's suggestion that "the brain is the screen" and his call for looking at the biology of the brain for assessing the audio-visual image. Here, I simply want to emphasize that the starting point of the neuro-image is a change in cinema, where we slowly but surely have moved from following characters' actions (movement-image), to seeing the world filtered through their eyes (time-image), to experiencing directly their mental landscapes (neuro-image). But this is in fact a flashforward of what will come later in this paper.

First, I should like to address a problem that seems to be hidden in Rancière's categorization of the images in respect to the future of the cinematographic image. While he refers to the new image regime of contemporary culture, his filmic examples almost always refer to modern cinema of the sixties, or, to put it in Deleuzian terms, to "time-images" that diverge from more classical cinema or "movement-images" in that characters no longer seem goal-oriented but more adrift (or even lost) in time and space. And when Rancière in *Les Écarts du cinéma* speaks of more contemporary cinema, such as the films of Pedro Costa, these films also follow the irrational and crystalline logic of the time-image (Rancière 137-53). But one can wonder if the heart of cinema today still resides in modern time-images. Of course, time-images exist in contemporary cinema. But is the impurity that Rancière describes as typical for the new image regime really a form of the time-image? Or have we moved to a third type of cinema, beyond the movement-image and time-image? A comparison of two "apocalyptic images," one from the sixties and one from contemporary media culture, help to investigate this question further.

2. Flashback: The Time-Image Grounded in the Past

First, a flashback to Alain Resnais's *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1959): not only a classic modern time-image in a Deleuzian sense, but also a film that investigates the (limits of the) power of the image. The famous phrases "I have seen everything in Hiroshima" and "You have seen nothing in Hiroshima" indicate the struggle between the visible and its significations that Rancière theorizes. Considered according to his categories of naked,

ostensive, and metaphorical images, we can see that on one level the film is a naked image that traces the catastrophic event of the atomic bomb attack on Hiroshima in 1945. In the first instance, Resnais was asked to make a documentary about this apocalyptic event. And some of the images, such as those shot in the Hiroshima Memorial Museum, are “naked” in that witnessing sense. However, *Hiroshima Mon Amour* is not a purely, nakedly documenting image. As Resnais recounts in an interview on the DVD edition of the film, he quickly found out he was not capable of making a documentary on this traumatic moment in history. Not finding any solution to transform the disaster into images that would add something to the existing Japanese documentaries and newsreels, he asked Marguerite Duras to write a script. During their long conversations, the filmmaker and writer were wondering about the strange fact that while they were talking about Hiroshima, life took its usual course while new bombs were flown over the world. This is how they arrived at the idea of focusing on a small-scale personal event, a love story involving a Japanese man and a French woman, with the catastrophe constantly in the background.

And so we see how Resnais and Duras render the naked image obtuse, witnessing, but also transforming the image poetically by colliding together words (Hiroshima - Amour), bodies (the famous opening sequence of the ash-embracing bodies), seeing and not-seeing (“You have seen nothing in Hiroshima”), places (Nevers in France, Hiroshima in Japan) and times (the past and the present that start to collapse into each other). I will return to these temporal dimensions of Resnais’s film, but at this point it is important to see how this temporal confusion as one of the “dissemblance” techniques is typical of the artistic ostensive image. However, as far as Rancière’s last image category is concerned, the metaphoric image, it is more difficult to see where Resnais’s film intervenes ambiguously in the flow of media images. Even though the images of agonizing/loving bodies in “ashembrace” at the beginning of the film are in themselves images that allow metaphoric (or allegorical) readings, they are not part of the playfully critical artistic and commercial images Rancière ranks under this category (the term metaphoric is perhaps not the most well-chosen in that sense). Therefore, it is fair to say *Hiroshima Mon Amour* moves between naked and ostensive images, but cannot be categorized under Rancière’s last category of impure metaphoric images so typical for today’s audio-visual culture. Is the time-image (exemplified by Resnais’ film) then the best way to understand the futurity of the image? I

do not mean to imply that Rancière and Deleuze make a similar argument about the image. Rancière is more concerned with a political-aesthetical dialectics between the visible and the sayable, the visible and the invisible. Deleuze addresses the ontological problem of the complex temporal dimensions of cinema, the virtual and the actual (which is not the same as a play between the visible and the invisible). Nevertheless, in the following I will propose to develop a temporal ontology for the futurity of the image that might produce an encounter between *and* beyond Rancière and Deleuze.

Hiroshima Mon Amour is a time-image in the Deleuzian sense. As is well known, in all his work Alain Resnais is preoccupied with time. Practically all his films present a battle with the ravages of time, with echoes of the past that keep on resonating in the present. *Hiroshima Mon Amour* audio-visually translates the Bergsonian thesis that the past coexists with the present. The love story the French woman has with the Japanese man in 1950s Hiroshima causes her to relive her first love affair, with a German soldier during the Second World War. The Japanese man becomes the German lover from the past. She is in Nevers in France. *Hiroshima Mon Amour* is a crystal of time, which gives us the key to the time-image in general (Deleuze 69). As Deleuze argues, “what the crystal reveals or makes visible is the hidden ground of time, that is, its differentiation into two flows, that of presents which pass and of pasts which are preserved” (98). *Hiroshima Mon Amour* translates the untranslatability of the apocalypse and the unimaginabilities of the traumas of the (collective and individual) past into ostensive images that are fundamentally Bergsonian in their conception of non-chronological time, the pre-existence of a past in general, the coexistence of all layers of the past and the existence of its most contracted degree: the present (Deleuze 82). In order to understand these temporal dimensions of the time-image (and its relation to the future), it is useful to make a connection between Deleuze’s *Cinema 1: The Movement Image* and *Cinema 2: The Time Image* on the one hand, and his philosophy of time as developed in *Difference and Repetition* on the other.

3. Temporal Dimensions in the Passive Syntheses of Time

In chapter 2 of *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze develops the idea of the passive syntheses of time. As in the cinema books, here too Bergson is the main reference point, although the beginning of Deleuze's reflections is Hume's thesis that "repetition changes nothing in the object repeated, but does change something in the mind which contemplates it" (Deleuze 70). Repetition has no "in itself," but it does change something in the mind of the observer of repetitions: on the basis of what we perceive repeatedly in the living present, we recall, anticipate, or adapt our expectations in a synthesis of time, which Deleuze calls in Bergsonian terms "duration." This synthesis is a passive synthesis, since "it is not carried out by the mind, but occurs in the mind" (71). The active (conscious) synthesis of understanding and recollection are based upon these passive syntheses that occur on an unconscious level. Deleuze distinguishes different types of passive syntheses of time that have to be seen in relation to one another and in combination with active (conscious) syntheses. The conception of the syntheses of time is incredibly sophisticated and complicated, which James Williams recently has demonstrated brilliantly (Williams). Here I will only be able to refer to the basic elements of Deleuze's conception of time because it offers the possibility of conceiving the "future-image."

The first synthesis Deleuze distinguishes in *Difference and Repetition* is that of habit, the true foundation of time, occupied by the living present. But this passing present is grounded by a second synthesis of memory: "Habit is the originary synthesis of time, which constitutes the life of the passing present. Memory is the fundamental synthesis of time which constitutes the being of the past (that which causes the present to pass)" (80). Moving to the cinema books, it is possible to argue that the first synthesis of time, habitual contraction, finds its aesthetic expression as movement-images, the sensory-motor manifestations of the cinematographic brain-screen. The second synthesis of time corresponds to the dominant form of time in the time-image, where the past becomes more important and shows itself more directly as the ground of time. The first and second syntheses of time have to be seen as "temporal keynotes" of sorts that are different in the movement-image (having its base predominantly in the present) and the time-image (grounded in the past). The second synthesis can enfold moments of the first synthesis, so the temporal keynotes are permeable systems. Each synthesis has its own composition of past, present, and future.

The present that is based in the first synthesis of time is a contracted synthesis, a particular stretch in the present, as with the lovers embracing in *Hiroshima Mon Amour*: “It’s crazy how soft your skin is,” the woman tells the man in the first scene after the long opening sequence when we finally see the lovers in a hotel room. This scene is a stretch in the living present where the lovers are in the actual moment of their love affair. By way of contrast, the present as a dimension of the past (grounded in the second synthesis of time) is the most contracted degree of all of the past, which is the more dominant temporal dimension in *Hiroshima Mon Amour*. The Japanese man in the present becomes the culmination point of all layers of the past: he becomes the German lover of the past, he becomes (the events that happened in) Hiroshima. The present is now a dimension of the past as its crystallizing point.

But the past also has its own temporal manifestations: as a dimension of the present (in the first synthesis) the past is always related to the present as a clear reference point from which it differs. For example, the flashback in the most famous impossible love story of the movement-image, *Casablanca*, constitutes the shared memory of Rick and Ilsa: the recollection of their love affair in Paris that explains the drama of the situation in the present of *Casablanca*.



Figure 1 - HIROSHIMA MON AMOUR (Alain Resnais, 1959)

But in the second synthesis of time, the past exists as sheets of all of the past that start to float and move, such as the collective and individual pasts that get mixed up in *Hiroshima Mon Amour*. Or the mosaic of memory snippets in other Resnais films, such as *Muriel, or the Time of Return* (1963), where memories of the Algerian War of Independence and personal memories of the characters connect in fragmentary and ambiguous ways.

And then there is the problem of the future. If we look from the dimensions of the first and second syntheses, the future is anticipated either from a point in the present, or from the

past. Usually, in the first synthesis of time, the future as a dimension of the present is an expectation that departs from the present, an anticipation that in movement-images motivates goal-oriented behavior, such as the pursuit of happiness in melodrama or the various goals of an action hero. It can also be argued that the future in the movement-image starts after the film ends, such as the “happily ever after” moment of the wrapping up of classical Hollywood narratives. The future is that which comes after the present of the film has ended; an end that in the movement-image we usually anticipate through genre conventions that frame our expectations.

4. The Future as Dimension of the Past

In the time-image, on the other hand, the future becomes a dimension of the past. Here it becomes less an anticipation of an action, but the expectation of a repetition of an event whose outcome is based on the past. Each layer of a coexisting past implies its own possible future. Deleuze mentions Resnais's *Je t'aime, Je t'aime* (1968) as one of the few films that show how we inhabit time. As the poster for the film announces: “The past is present and future in Alain Resnais's new time machine.” In other words, the present and future are dimensions of the second synthesis of time. *Je t'aime, Je t'aime* is the strange science fiction story of a man who has tried to commit suicide after the death of his girlfriend. He survives, collapses into a catatonic depression, and is recruited as a guinea pig for a scientific experiment. He is brought to a remote research center where scientists tell him that their subject of research is time. They have built a machine that looks like a giant brain. The idea is that the scientists will use the machine to send him back in time exactly one year (to 5 September 1966 at 4:00 p.m.) for the duration of one minute. Before he enters the brain-machine the man is heavily sedated with drugs that, as the scientists explain, make him “completely passive though still capable of receiving memories.” As if they had read *Difference and Repetition*, the scientists seem to have created a machine for literally travelling into the second passive synthesis of time.

The inside of this machine is soft and lobe-like. The man lies down, sinking into the velvet

folds of the brain-machine, and waits for the memories to come to him. The scene to which he returns is at the seaside during a holiday with his girlfriend in the south of France. He is snorkeling and gets out of the water. His girlfriend, sunbathing on the rocks near the water, asks him, "Was it good?" This scene is repeated several times, but always with slight differences and subtle variations, both in the order of the shots within the sequence, its variable beginnings and ends, and the slightly different camera angles and shot lengths. One can say that it is as if his brain is looking through a kaleidoscope to see all the possible combinations of the mosaic snippets of memory, possibly looking for a new outcome, a new future. Another important scene of the past that is repeated with variations is set in a hotel room in Glasgow where the man and his girlfriend are on holiday. This is the moment where she will die because of a leaking gas heater. Was it an accident or not? Did she kill herself or did he (accidentally) kill her? The memory is not clear and changes slightly each time. The first time, we see the memory of this hotel room scene and the flame of the heater is burning. His memory is transformed by the man's feelings of guilt, and at the last return, we see that the flame is extinguished. His future changes accordingly: when this memory (albeit possibly a false memory) arrives, he returns from his wanderings in the layers of the past to the present, collapses, and finally will die. So the future in this film is a dimension of the past.

Hiroshima Mon Amour also represents the future as related to the past. At several points, the film suggests that the traumas of war and other disasters will be repeated in the future, which is based on the idea that we have seen nothing, that we will forget, and everything will start all over: "2,000 dead bodies, 80,000 wounded, within nine seconds. The numbers are official. It will happen again," the woman says in voice-over over images of the rebuilt city of Hiroshima. Also in the love story, the future is a function of memory and forgetting, as the man says, "In a few years when I have forgotten you, I will remember you as the symbol of love's forgetfulness. I will think of you as the horror of forgetting." The woman, too, when she recalls her first love, trembles at the fact that the intensity of such shattering love can be forgotten, and a new love can occur again.

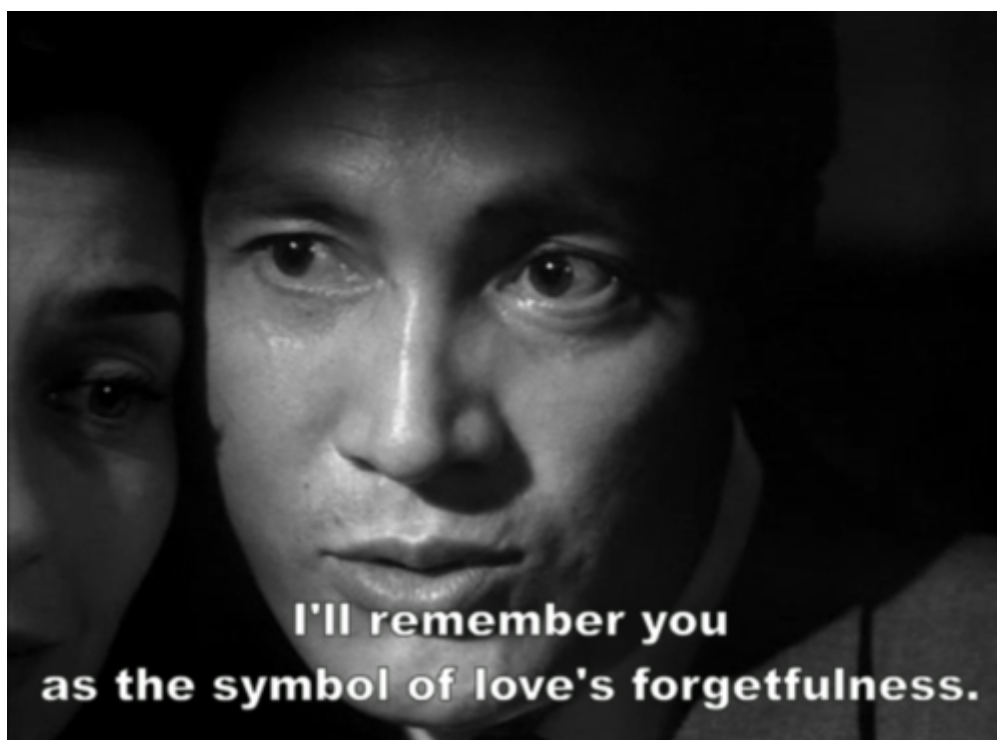


Figure 2 - HIROSHIMA MON AMOUR (Alain Resnais, 1959)

It is important to note that in *Hiroshima Mon Amour* everything happens a second time. Historically, the unimaginable disaster had been repeated already three days later, in Nagasaki. The French woman's impossible love affair from the Second World War is repeated in another passionate love affair in post-war Japan. Even film history returns as the film recalls, both thematically and stylistically, other impossible love affairs of the cinema, in allusions to *Casablanca* as mentioned above, as well as Hitchcock's *Vertigo*. Not only do the Hitchcock and Resnais films share the theme of a love affair haunted by the past, but some of the scenes in *Hiroshima Mon Amour* are composed in a strikingly similar way to *Vertigo*. On all levels, we can see in *Hiroshima Mon Amour* a variation of the idea of the future that is based in the past: I will forget you. We will forget (love, war). And it (love, war) will happen again. Repetition and difference, the future as grounded in the past: this is the cyclic temporality of *Hiroshima Mon Amour*.

5. The Future as Eternal Return

In *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze also postulates another idea of the future, the future as such as the third synthesis of time: “The third repetition, this time by excess, [is] the repetition of the future as eternal return” (90). In this third synthesis, the foundation of habit in the present and the ground of the past are “superseded by a groundlessness, a universal ungrounding which turns upon itself and causes only the yet-to-come to return” (91). In this third synthesis the present and the past are dimensions of the future. The third synthesis cuts, assembles, and (re-)orders from the past and the present, to select the eternal return of difference. The third synthesis is the time of (endless) serial variations and remixes of pasts and presents. My argument is that contemporary cinema can be understood as a third type of image, which I propose to call the “neuro-image,” a mode of cinema predominantly based in the third synthesis of time, which has a particular relation to the future. Only the third synthesis can include the first and second syntheses of time. This, as I hope to show, can explain some of the neuro-image’s impurity and manifestations in contemporary modes of filmmaking. But let me first return to Deleuze’s discussion of the third synthesis of time.

For the development of the third synthesis of time in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze no longer refers to Bergson; Nietzsche has now become the main reference point. In *The Time-Image* Bergson also seems to disappear at a certain point to make way for Nietzsche’s appearance, though in the cinema books Nietzsche is not *explicitly* connected to the question of time (not to the third synthesis of time, in any case). In the chapter on Orson Welles and the powers of the false (chapter 6 of *The Time-Image*), Nietzsche is an important reference to understanding the manipulating but also creative powers of the false.[2] However, this is discussed as a consequence of the direct appearance of time, which is until that moment in *The Time-Image* mainly elaborated in terms of the pure past (all of the past) of the second synthesis of time. At the end of the discussion of Welles’s cinema, the powers of the false are connected to the creative powers of the artist and the production of the new (though not explicitly to the eternal return and the future). The series of time (characteristic of the third synthesis) are also mentioned in *The Time-Image*, especially in the chapter on bodies, brains, and thoughts (chapter 8). Here the bodies in the cinema of Antonioni and

Godard relate to time as series. In the book's conclusion Deleuze explains this temporal image as "a burst of series": the time-image here "does not appear in an order of coexistences or simultaneities, but in a becoming as potentialization, a series of powers." (275).

But after all the insistence on the Bergsonian temporal dimensions of the movement-image, the time-image, and Deleuze's extended commentaries on Bergson, this form of time as series remains rather underdeveloped on a theoretical level in *The Time-Image*. Referring to *Difference and Repetition*, we can deduce that the powers of the false and the series of time that can be identified in some time-images might perhaps belong to the third synthesis of time. We have seen that Alain Resnais's films, *Hiroshima Mon Amour* in particular, are firmly rooted in the second synthesis of time, even when they speak of the future. Is it perhaps possible to find glimpses of the third synthesis of time in Resnais's films, where the images speak *from* the future? As Deleuze suggests at the end of "The Brain is the Screen," cinema is only at the beginning of its exploration of audio-visual relations, which are relations of time (372). This suggests the possibilities for new dimensions of time in the image and perhaps clearer openings to the third synthesis of time.

In *My American Uncle* (1980), Resnais mixes fiction with scientific findings about the brain. Here the genre is less "science fiction," where scientists invent strange experiments to reveal truths about the nature of time and memory as in *Je t'aime, Je t'aime*, but more a "docufiction" where French neurobiologist Henri Laborit discusses (in voice-over and in direct address from behind his desk) findings about the workings of the human brain that are by and large consistent with contemporary cognitive neurosciences. Laborit discusses the brain from an evolutionary perspective from which it is possible to distinguish three layers in the brain (a primitive, reptile kernel, which is the brain for survival; a second affective and memory brain; and a third brain, the outer layer or neocortex that enables associations, imagination, and conscious thoughts). Throughout the film, Laborit explains how these three layers together, in dynamic exchange with one another and constantly influenced by others and by our environment, can explain human behavior. These scientific intermezzos are seamlessly connected to the stories of three different characters, who tell and enact their stories and whose lives intersect at certain moments. These fictional stories

translate the scientific discourse of the neurobiologist quite literally, sometimes too literally for a contemporary audience. Nevertheless, *My American Uncle* also gives a moving insight into what ultimately motivates the filmmaker, the philosopher, and the scientist: the drive to understand more profoundly why we do what we do, and to find ways to improve not only individual destinies but also the fate of humanity.

The last images of *My American Uncle* present a particularly political coda to the expositions and dramatizations that went before. This scene follows directly after we have heard Laborit in voice-over declaring in a future conditional tense that as long as we do not understand how our brain works, and understand that until now it has always been used to dominate the other, there is little chance that anything will change. What follows are images of a camera traveling through a ruined city landscape, and because the words that preceded these images still resonate throughout the sequence, we comprehend that this devastated landscape might be understood as an image from the future: the eternal return of the series of war and disaster. The images are in fact of the aftermath of urban riots in the Bronx in the 1970s. But the images also immediately remind us of the desolate bombarded cityscapes of Sarajevo in Bosnia and Grozny in Chechnya, and other still future urban war zones at the time of filming, and Boulogne, a French city that suffered heavily during the Second World War, and the setting of his film *Muriel* (1963). So the past, the present, and the future are now dimensions of the future. Then at the end of the final sequence of *My American Uncle*, the camera suddenly detects a ray of hope and holds at the only colorful image in the deserted streets: on one of the somber walls is a mural of a forest by American artist Alan Sonfist—a sort of city screen as a hopeful sign of a possible future, a new beginning. While the camera zooms in, the forest turns into pure green, fragments and colors that are not yet connected to concrete images; everything is still open to possible futures. As such, these last images of the film, as a sign of death and re-beginnings, belong perhaps to the third synthesis of time, the future, the image related to the inevitability of death and repetitions of death, but also the possibility of the creation of the new.



Figure 3 - MY AMERICAN UNCLE (Alain Resnais, 1980)

6. Database Logic of the Neuro-Image

So Resnais's cinema, although mainly based in the second synthesis of time (with its particular future), also seems to be open to the third synthesis of time that speaks from the future as such. Moreover, not coincidentally, as I will try to show, his films also express a "digital logic" *avant la lettre*, which prefigures some of cinema's translation of the challenges of the future of the image. The necessity of cinema's internal positioning towards

the digital is suggested in an important remark made by Deleuze in *The Time-Image*: “The life or the afterlife of cinema depends on its internal struggle with informatics” (270). It may seem like a stretch to think of Resnais as a Web 2.0 filmmaker. But there is a kind of very contemporary “database logic” in Resnais’s work. Database logic is defined by Lev Manovich in *The Language of New Media* as a typical characteristic of digital culture (212-81). Contemporary culture is driven by databases, from which, time and again, new selections are made, new narratives constructed, in endless series. As Manovich explains, this does not mean that the database is only of our time: the encyclopedia and even Dutch still-life paintings of the seventeenth century follow a kind of database logic. It is just that with the seemingly endless storage and retrieval possibilities of digital technology, the database has become a dominant cultural form in the 21st century. Specifically, it allows for the creation of endless series of new combinations, orderings, and remixes of its basic source materials, which on a temporal scale matches the characteristics of the third synthesis of time, the future as eternal return.

The database logic in Resnais is often developed from within the second synthesis of time: in *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, *Last Year in Marienbad*, *Muriel*, and *Je t’aime, Je t’aime*, for instance, the past presents itself in different variations. But there are also some moments where the future as the third synthesis of time appears in a glimpse as the ungrounded ground from which it is spoken, such as in the last images of *My American Uncle* discussed above. Or, for example, in a scene in *The War is Over* (1966), in which the main character imagines in a sort of “database flashforward” the unknown girl who helped him escape from the police on the Spanish border (he only heard her voice on the phone): a montage of flashforwards with female faces gives various possible options of what the girl would look like. These kinds of database-options of various futures return at other moments in the film as well. *My American Uncle* is also database-like, when at the beginning of the film several objects are shown without any clear meaning or connection between them. Later in the film, some of these objects will be suggested in relation to different stories and characters, and obtain (symbolic) meaning, only to return in a mosaic of many different objects and persons at the end of the film. Here Resnais’s film-screen really resembles a typical web page that offers multiple entrances that each lead to other possible future stories.



Figure 4 - MY AMERICAN UNCLE (Alain Resnais, 1980)

Taking this database logic one step further, I suggest that the third synthesis of time that appears in the *Time-Image* (in a more or less disguised form) is the dominant sign of time under which cinema's images in the digital age operate much more explicitly, and which allows for the conceptualization of a third image type, the neuro-image. The serial and remixing logic of the database has today become the dominant logic, corresponding to the temporal logic of the third synthesis under which the neuro-image is constructed. Of course there are still movement-images that operate under the logic of the rational cut, continuity editing and the integration of sequences into a whole (Deleuze 277), and are based in the first passive synthesis of time. And obviously time-images also find new directors whose

work is grounded in the second synthesis of time reigned by the incommensurable or irrational cut of the coexisting layers of the pure past (277). But, arguably, the heart of cinema has now moved into a database logic connected to the third synthesis of time. It is an impure image regime, because it repeats and remixes all previous image regimes with their specific temporal orders (the movement-image and the time-image), but it ungrounds all these regimes due to the dominance of the third synthesis and the speculative nature of the future as such.

7. Flashforward: The Neuro-Image from the Future

Some examples of popular contemporary neuro-images where we have moved quite literally into the character's brain world include *Source Code* (Jones 2011), whose tagline punningly calls it "an action flick with brains," and *Inception* (Nolan 2010), where a team of dream invaders tries to implant (or incept) one little thought in someone's mind that might change the future. *Avatar* (Cameron 2009) is another case in point of "brain power" in cinema, where the avatars are operated by brain activity. And of course there is the world of the precogs appearing on the tactile screens in *Minority Report* (Spielberg 2002) that predict future crimes. Typically in these films, people are hooked up to a kind of brain-scanning machine. Yet even when this is not so literally emphasized, contemporary cinema has become a mental cinema that differs in major ways from previously dominant modes of filming.[3]

Focusing only on the temporal dimensions of these images, for the purposes of this argument, it becomes evident that the future plays an important role that can be expressed on many different levels. In *Minority Report*, crime prevention is based on crimes that are about to happen, predicted by savants with the power of predicting the future; in this way, the future is literally part of the narrative. The main character in *Source Code* acts with increasing knowledge of the future, every time he relives a variation of the past in a kind of eternal return. If we think of *Inception*, the whole story is actually told from a point of view in the future. At the beginning of the film, the main characters meet when they are very old.

At the end of the narrative, we return to this point, indicating that actually everything was told from this future moment of old age and even the moment of their death. Here, again, the future structures the narration. In a different way, *Avatar* is told from the point of view of the future of the planet, the story being situated after the collapse of the earth. These are all examples from contemporary Hollywood, which is by and large still characterized by the movement-image (so we also still have typical characteristics of the temporal dimensions of the first synthesis of time, such as the sensorimotor orientation and genre expectations). But alongside this continuation of convention, a different temporal order of repetition and difference, eternal return and serialization, with the higher degree of complexity typical of the digital age has definitively made its way to the cinema screen.

The American television series *FlashForward* is another interesting contemporary example of a neuro-image (with movement-image tendencies) that is told from the point of view of the future. *FlashForward* is based on the science fiction novel of the same name by Robert Sawyer (1999) in which the main character is a scientist who works at CERN, where the Large Hadron Collider particle accelerator is performing a run to search for the Higgs boson, with the side effect of a global blackout during which all people on earth experience a flashforward of twenty-two years. The television series adds other characters and changes the leap forward in time to six months, but the basic premise remains the same: everybody in the world is confronted with an image from the future. The show questions the idea of what it is to live and act based on a vision of the future. Since the future as such is always speculative (we simply cannot know for sure what will happen in the future, so it is not a matter of determinism even though destiny becomes an important problem), some fear their visions will come true, others fear they will not; but all have to act in respect to their flashforward. As in *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, in *FlashForward* there is a collision between collective and individual fate, but the television series presents us with a more mosaic-like story typical of the neuro-image's database narrative (presenting the countless possible variations of the future). Quite literally we see here how the idea of the future has now come to inform our image culture. We can also see this perspective of our present and past from an idea of a vision of the future more broadly in contemporary culture: 9/11 and the War on Terror marked the moment of preventive war, tests to measure the telomeres in DNA can predict the age of a person's death, and the ecological future of the planet is more uncertain

than ever. Clearly, there is much more to be said about the ways in which the neuro-image resonates with larger developments in contemporary culture.

At this point I will just make a few more comparative observations between the future in *FlashForward*, or, more generally, the future from the third synthesis of time in the neuro-image, and the future in *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, or the future based in the second synthesis of time. In both *Hiroshima Mon Amour* and *FlashForward* the catastrophe is in fact caused by a scientific invention: the atomic bomb and the Large Hadron Collider, respectively. However, in *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, as we have seen, future disasters are imagined from the perspective of this past event: it has happened; it will happen again. *FlashForward* actually deals with speculations predicated on a future disaster: we do not know if the Large Hadron Collider will create the effect as described. Most scientists assure us that it will absolutely not provide anything like a blackout, let alone a leap in consciousness into the future. Nevertheless, the series clearly posits the whole narrative as a dimension of the future. On a more individual scale, *Hiroshima Mon Amour* deals with the horror of an intense and seemingly unforgettable love affair that will be forgotten. In *FlashForward* the horror (or surprise) is situated in the future. Some characters see themselves in the future in another love affair, for example, something unimaginable in the present. In all cases, the future influences the present in *FlashForward*, just as the past influences the present in *Hiroshima Mon Amour*.

Now, one may object that *Hiroshima Mon Amour* and *FlashForward* are absolutely incomparable. And of course this is true in certain respects. *Hiroshima Mon Amour* is an absolute masterpiece of modern art cinema, a pure time-image in the Deleuzian sense, and an ostensive image (with naked references) in Rancière's terms. As I have argued, *Hiroshima Mon Amour* does not exactly fit Rancière's classification and arguments for modern cinema as playfully critical, and impure in the sense that commercial and artistic images are mixed. I have tried to show that Rancière's very useful classification does not match very well with the cinematographic examples upon which he himself draws, which are all time-images based in the second synthesis of time. The future of the image, as defined by Rancière, seeks to move beyond the time-image into a new and impure regime of imageness where the commercial and the artistic are increasingly mixed. The neuro-image I

propose here, in following Deleuze's suggestions in "The Brain is the Screen" to explore cinema's temporal dimensions (372) as part of the contemporary Hollywood machine, is just such an impure image. But the neuro-image can also present itself in a more artistic way, which remains perhaps closer to the time-image, but which is rather found in the museum, gallery, or on the Internet.

After Hiroshima Mon Amour (Kolbowski 2008) is a digital film presented as a museum installation that can also be viewed online. This film is an example of a critical and artistic remixing of, and operation on, the image that comes closer to Rancière's third category of future-images. But, just like the key films in contemporary Hollywood described above, this film is a neuro-image in its temporal dimensions. Kolbowski's film repeats *Hiroshima Mon Amour* from the point of view of different future disasters (in this case the War in Iraq and the Katrina disaster in New Orleans); the allegorical love affair of the French woman and Japanese man is serialized and played by ten different actors of various ethnicities, races, and genders. The famous opening scene of the "ashembrace" is slowed down, made to stutter, and filtered with colors; various scenes of the original film are recreated in black and white; contemporary material downloaded from the Internet is added, and the score and sound design of the original film are remixed. In this way the audio-visual relations become relations of time: while the texts address the past by recalling the exact dialogues of *Hiroshima Mon Amour* ("You have seen nothing in Hiroshima"), the images speak from repetitions in the future (images of soldiers' video diaries made during the Iraq War) of a multiplication of the wars and love affairs in an eternal return.



Figure 5 - AFTER HIROSHIMA (Silvia Kolbowski, 2005-2008).
Courtesy of the artist.

With the concept of the neuro-image, which can appropriate both artistic characteristics of the time-image and classical Hollywood characteristics of the movement-image, but which remixes, reorders and serializes these images in new ways, we can see how we have entered an image-type of the third synthesis of time, which speaks from the future, but which itself also indicates that the future is now.

Works Cited

After Hiroshima Mon Amour. Dir. Silvia Kolbowski. 2005-08. Video/16mm B&W film. Vimeo. Web. <<http://vimeo.com/16773814>>.

Avatar. Dir. James Cameron. 2009. USA: 20th Century Fox. DVD.

Casablanca. Dir. Michael Curtiz. 1942. USA: Warner Bros. DVD.

Deleuze, Gilles. "The Brain is the Screen." Trans. Marie Therese Guirgis. *The Brain is the Screen: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Cinema*. Ed. Gregory Flaxman. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2000. 365-73. Print.

—. *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta. London: Athlone, 1989. Print.

—. *Difference and Repetition*. Trans. Paul Patton. London: Athlone, 1994. Print.

FlashForward. Concept Brannon Braga and David S. Goyer. 2009. USA: ABC. Television.

Greenaway, Peter. "Cinema=Dead." Interview (2007). YouTube. Web.<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-t-9qxqdVm4>>.

Hiroshima Mon Amour. Dir. Alain Resnais. 1959. France: Argos Films. Nouveaux, 2004. DVD.

Inception. Dir. Christopher Nolan. 2010. USA: Warner Bros. DVD.

Je t'aime, Je t'aime. Dir. Alain Resnais. 1968. France: Les Productions Fox Europa. DVD.

Last Year in Marienbad. Dir. Alain Resnais. 1961. France: Cocinor. DVD.

Manovich, Lev. *The Language of New Media*, Cambridge: MIT, 2001. Print.

- Minority Report*. Dir. Steven Spielberg. 2002. USA: 20th Century Fox, Dreamworks. DVD.
- Muriel, or the Time of Return*. Dir. Alain Resnais. 1963. France: Argos. DVD.
- My American Uncle*. Dir. Alain Resnais. 1980. France: Philippe Dussart, Andrea, TF1. DVD.
- Pisters, Patricia. *The Neuro-Image: A Deleuzian Film-Philosophy of Digital Screen Culture*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2012. Print.
- . "Synaptic Signals: Time Travelling Through the Brain in the Neuro-Image." *Deleuze Studies* 5.2 (2001): 261-74. Print.
- Rancière, Jacques. *The Future of the Image*. Trans. Gregory Elliott. London: Verso, 2007. Print.
- . *Les Écartés du cinéma*, Paris: La Fabrique Éditions, 2011. Print.
- Rodowick, David N. *The Virtual Life of Film*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2007. Print.
- Sawyer, Robert. *FlashForward*. New York: Tor, 1999. Print.
- Source Code*. Dir. Duncan Jones. 2011. USA: Vendôme. Film.
- The War is Over*. Dir. Alain Resnais. 1966. France/Sweden: Europa. Film.
- Vertigo*. Dir. Alfred Hitchcock. 1958. USA: Alfred Hitchcock Productions, Paramount. Film.
- Williams, James. *Gilles Deleuze's Philosophy of Time: A Critical Introduction and Guide*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2011. Print.

Notes

An earlier version of this paper originally appeared in *Deleuze Studies* Volume 5: 2011 supplement: 98-115, and is a companion piece to “Synaptic Signals” (Pisters 2011), which focuses on the schizoanalytic aspects of the neuro-image. Reprinted with permission of Edinburgh University Press.

[1] A fuller argument on the neuro-image is developed in Pisters (2012).

[2] “Time has always put the notion of truth in crisis, . . . It is a power of the false which replaces and supersedes the form of the true, because it poses the simultaneity of impossible presents, or the co-existence of not-necessarily true pasts” (130-31).

[3] Obviously the neuro-image did not just happen overnight. In the conclusion of *The Neuro-Image* I situate the emergence and consolidation of this new mode of cinema between 11/9 (the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989) and 9/11 (the fall of the twin towers in 2001). I also discuss precursor films such as the films of Alain Resnais, and Pontecorvo’s *The Battle of Algiers*. The main difference with these precursor images is that the opening of brain spaces was confined to either the avant-garde or the genres of science fiction or horror. Contemporary popular cinema has moved the image more pervasively inside the skull.

Patricia Pisters is professor of film studies at the Department of Media Studies of the University of Amsterdam and director of the Amsterdam School of Cultural Analysis (ASCA). She is one of the founding editors of *NECSUS: European Journal of Media Studies*. She is program director of the research group Neuraesthetics and Neurocultures and co-director

of the research group Film and Philosophy. Publications include *The Matrix of Visual Culture: Working with Deleuze in Film Theory* (Stanford UP, 2003); *Mind the Screen* (ed. with Jaap Kooijman and Wanda Strauven, Amsterdam UP, 2008), and *The Neuro-Image: A Deleuzian Film-Philosophy of Digital Screen Culture* (Stanford UP, 2012). Her latest book *Filming for the Future* is on the work of documentary filmmaker Louis van Gasteren (Amsterdam UP, 2015). For articles and other information, see her blog patriciapisters.com.

Patricia Pisters, "Flash-Forward: The Future is Now," in Denson and Leyda (eds), *Post-Cinema: Theorizing 21st-Century Film* (Falmer: REFRAME Books, 2016). Web.
<<http://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/post-cinema/2-3-pisters/>>. ISBN 978-0-9931996-2-2 (online)