HOW FILM HISTORIES WERE MADE

Materials, Methods, Discourses

EDITED BY

MALTE HAGENER
YVONNE ZIMMERMANN

How Film Histories Were Made

How Film Histories Were Made

Materials, Methods, Discourses

Edited by
Malte Hagener and
Yvonne Zimmermann

Cover illustration: Designed by Julia Eckel.

Cover design: Kok Korpershoek
Lay-out: Crius Group, Hulshout

Table of Contents

V Into the Digital: New Approaches and Revisions

15   Audiovisual Film Histories for the Digital Age

From Found Footage Cinema to Online Videographic Criticism

Chiara Grizzaffi

Abstract

The essay focuses on videographic criticism as a form of audiovisual historiography. The introductory section proposes a brief reflection on those material and cultural changes which make it possible for cinephiles and scholars to resort to practices of appropriation and reuse of film images that were once the prerogative of smaller groups of artists and professionals. The second section aims at historicizing online videographic criticism, thus retracing its steps from the work of early practitioners to its progressive institutionalization. Finally, the essay addresses some examples of audiovisual essays that focus on film history issues to argue for the innovative potential of the audiovisual approach.

Keywords: film history, digital media, video essay, found footage

The students of a film history course of today would have a hard time imagining the struggles their colleagues had to face sixty, fifty, thirty or even twenty years ago to watch those films that, for them, are just a click away. It is quite possible they also ignore how difficult it was, for scholars, to study films they could only watch in a movie theatre, or on precious 16 mm prints, or in low-resolution VHS. Students are rarely invited to reflect upon the material conditions in which film history, as a discipline, has been built, conceptualized, and institutionalized. And yet, the paradox at the core of these conditions troubled film scholars and critics for many years, as their

talking and writing about cinema was the chase of an "absent object"[1] that could not (yet) be owned, or quoted, or be fully explained through verbal language.

As a matter of fact, as Michael Witt recalls in his extensive study of Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988–1998), the first attempts at film histories using images, the same material of their subject, date back at least to the 1920s—he mentions two films, Lepage and Duvivier's *La Machine à refaire la vie* (1924) and *L'Histoire du cinéma par le cinéma* by Grimoin-Sanson (1926).[2] Throughout the history of cinema, there have been numerous attempts at analytical and critical writing through images and montage. Found footage cinema, for instance, as a self-reflexive form that focuses on images as a construct, questions the very nature of representation through a set of operations of editing, deconstruction, reconfiguration.[3] Through formal strategies such as alteration of motion and duration of shots, freeze frames, superimpositions, isolation of single details, re-filming with analytical camera or physical interventions on the film strip, found footage cinema aims at uncovering the deep structure of cinematic representation, as well as its underlying ideological system. Joseph Cornell's *Rose Hobart* (1936), by way of example, is a tribute to the actress of *East of Borneo* (George Melford, 1931), but most notably an invitation, for the viewer, to reflect upon the transfiguration of stars' bodies and gestures on screen; in several of his films—from *Home Stories* (1990) to *Phoenix Tapes* (1999) and *Kristall* (2006), the last two made with Christoph Girardet, Matthias Müller obsessively catalogues visual and narrative motifs: their works are so accurate in pondering on the essential features of cinematic genres and of film language that Christa Blümlinger describes *Phoenix Tapes* as "a form of video analysis, [...] an equivalent of the film theory of the last decades."[4]

These experimental practices have inevitably been concerned with both history (consider, in this regard, the work of Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi) and cinema history, thus renegotiating the memory

1   Raymond Bellour, "The Unattainable Text," in *The Analysis of Film* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 26.

2   Michael Witt, *Jean-Luc Godard, Cinema Historian* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 106–7.

3   See William C. Wees, *Recycled Images: The Arts and Politics of Found Footage Films* (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1993); Nicole Brenez, "Montage intertextuel et formes contemporaines du remploi dans le cinéma expérimental," *Cinémas: revue d'études cinématographiques* 13, no. 1–2 (2002): 49–67; Christa Blümlinger, *Cinéma de seconde main. Esthétique du remploi dans l'art du film et des nouveaux medias* (Paris: Klincksieck, 2013), among others.

4   Blümlinger, *Cinéma de seconde main*, 84 (my translation).

of the images and challenging that of the viewer, "always aiming, through repetition, transformation, adaptation, rewriting and rearrangement, to the uniqueness of a renewed viewing and hearing."[5] Such an interest in film history is demonstrated by the "return to the primary scene[s]" of artists like Harun Farocki and Peter Tscherkassky who, in *Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik* (1995) and *L'Arrivée* (1999),[6] respectively, confront themselves with two foundational views—*La Sortie des usines Lumière* (1895) and *L'Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat* (1895), as seen through its quotation in *Mayerling*, by Terence Young (1968). For Farocki, the film is an opportunity to denounce an absence, the systematic obliteration of work in cinema; Tscherkassky, for his part, in his work deconstructs and at the same time instils the essence of classical narration: action, movement, the human face.

The *relocation* of cinema out of the theatre and into other media, such as television or home video, gave further impetus to these reflexive practices, encouraging, for example, the production of television programmes or documentaries on cinema and, later, of DVD commentaries.[7] Compared to the experimental found footage cinema, these works have often a more argumentative and pedagogical aim, to which corresponds the use of formal elements, such as the voice-over, that fit such purpose. This distinction, however, is somehow reductive: indeed, even the more institutional practices could present an openness to experimentation. Furthermore, the essay film, an elusive form, situates itself precisely in-between experimentation and documentation, in-between the inner, subjective sensibility and the rigorous investigation of the outside world[8]—or of cinema, as in the monumental project of the *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, by Jean-Luc Godard.

---

5   Ibid., 142.
6   *L'Arrivée* is the second film devoted by Tscherkassky to the Lumières views after *Motion Picture* (1984). In 2021 the artist presented in Cannes a third work, *Train Again*, that is both an homage to Kurt Kren and to the fundamental motif of the train in cinema.
7   There are countless documentaries on cinema, and very few attempts to map the field. The book edited by Adriano Aprà, *Critofilm. Cinema che pensa il cinema* (Pesaro: Pesaro Nuovo Cinema 2016), offers one of the most accurate and detailed filmographies. About film studies and the DVD, see Mark Parker and Deborah Parker, *The Attainable Text: The DVD and the Study of Film* (New York: Palgrave, 2011).
8   On the issues of a strict distinction, within the recycled cinema, between the tradition of the documentary and experimental forms, a distinction that undermines "the hybrid strategies of the essay film," see Blümlinger, *Cinéma de seconde main*, 78–84. Jaimie Baron also concurs with this position, claiming that such dichotomy risks concealing "the continuities between documentary and experimental appropriations." Jaimie Baron, *The Archive Effect: Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), ch. 1.

Cinema's relocation, however, according to Francesco Casetti, also entails the shift from *attendance*—that is, going to specific places for watching movies ("experience of a place"), thus entering a liminal world, in-between the reality of the spectators participating in a collective rite ("experience of a situation"), and the fictional world of the film, a world in which to project and identify oneself ("experience of a diegetic world")—to *performance*.[9] With the television broadcasting of films, and then with the introduction of VHS and DVDs, domestic space becomes a private space for film consumption; what defines the performance, however, is not only this individualization of consumption, its transformation into an activity guided by personal choices, but also an active "doing" of the viewer, essential to enjoying the film experience. This activity unfolds on several levels: emotional and cognitive, technological, relational, expressive, and textual.[10] The textual "doing" refers to practices of appropriation, manipulation, and reuse of the film allowed by the introduction of digital media:

> [T]he spectator increasingly possesses the chance to manipulate the text that she/he is consuming, not only by "adjusting" viewing conditions (keeping or transforming the format, choosing high or low definition, and so on), but also by intervening in it (as with the clips, and the reedited and new soundtracks, on YouTube). Thus, filmic experience is a performance based on an act, rather than a moment of attendance.[11]

The new conditions of filmic experience also affect the work of film analysis as well as the didactic and research methodologies in the field of film studies. Scholars, students, and critics now have the opportunity to manipulate images in almost infinite ways. The practices of appropriation and reuse of film footage, once the prerogative of smaller groups of artists and professionals with cultural and economic resources and specific technical knowledge, have now been adopted by viewers and cinephiles and are becoming part of the methodological toolbox of film critics and film studies scholars on a global level.[12] This is demonstrated by the increasing diffusion in our field

9   Francesco Casetti, "Filmic Experience," *Screen* 50, no. 1 (2009): 60.
10   Francesco Casetti, *The Lumière Galaxy: Seven Key Words for the Cinema to Come* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 186–88.
11   Casetti, "Filmic Experience," 64.
12   It should be observed, however, that as a practice relying on the availability of digital media, infrastructures, software and editing tools, as well as on the circulation of films and other media, videographic criticism suffers, in its diffusion on a global scale, the consequences of economic, political, and social inequalities in access to such resources.

of the so-called audiovisual essays, works that reuse and reassemble clips from films or images from other media to conduct an audiovisual argument, resorting to montage to suggest critical and analytical readings.

A Bit of History of Online Videographic Criticism

As it is often the case, establishing a birth date for what is known today as videographic criticism is an almost impossible endeavour, especially considered the proximity with its precursors as well as with other online forms such as remixes and mash-ups. However, it is quite reasonable to affirm that its first appearance coincides with the diffusion of video-sharing platforms.[13]

In 2007, Kevin B. Lee posted on YouTube and on his blog *Shooting Down Pictures* an audiovisual essay on Fritz Lang's *While the City Sleeps* (1956).[14] It is the first attempt at the form made by Lee, today one of the most prolific and well-known practitioners. It is particularly interesting to compare this work with another audiovisual analysis on the same subject conducted almost thirty years prior. At the end of the 1970s, on the Italian TV channel Rete 2, scholars Gianfranco Bettetini, Francesco Casetti, and Aldo Grasso hosted a programme, *Studio Cinema* (1978–1979; 1983), dedicated to the analysis of films. In the first cycle of the show, devoted to the Hollywood years of Fritz Lang, there is an episode on *While the City Sleeps*.[15]

---

13   As noted by Michael Witt, among others, who recalls that his first experience in teaching an audiovisual criticism course coincided with the birth of YouTube. See Michael Witt, "Taking Stock: Two Decades of Teaching the History, Theory, and Practice of Audiovisual Film Criticism," *NECSUS* (Spring 2017), https://necsus-ejms.org/taking-stock-two-decades-of-teaching-the-history-theory-and-practice-of-audiovisual-film-criticism/.

14   *Shooting Down Pictures* was a cinephile project carried out by Lee with the aim of sharing notes and critical reflections while attempting at watching all the thousand titles indicated by the website *They Shoot Pictures Don't They* as the essential masterpieces in the history of cinema. Lee's blog is not online anymore, but his video can be watched on Vimeo (https://vimeo.com/showcase/4397711/video/197704817). A detailed account of this early stages of Lee's path as a video essayist has been offered by Lee himself in the official blog of the Harun Farocki Residency, which Lee attended in 2017 (https://www.alsolikelife.com/video-essays-the-first-ten-years). For a brief account of this early stages of online videographic criticism, see also Miklós Kiss and Thomas van den Berg, *Film Studies in Motion: From Audiovisual Essay to Academic Research Video* (Scalar, 2016), http://scalar.usc.edu/works/film-studies-in-motion/index.

15   Part of the episode can be watched on *Rai Cultura*, https://www.raicultura.it/cinema/articoli/2020/01/Fritz-Lang-beb3a69b-cc18-443d-a32f-30e0c5fe25c6.html. On the TV show and its relationship with videographic criticism, see also Chiara Grizzaffi, "Dal taccuino del

The three scholars rely on a professional—the editor of the TV pro-gramme—who used an editing table positioned in the studio set, winding the film forward and backward, or arresting the images of the film in order for the hosts to discuss specific scenes and shots. On the one hand, therefore, there is a professional production context, with a precise division of labour and an expert who handles a complex and expensive technical tool; the editing table was also, for many years, the only means through which scholars—at least those who were lucky enough to have access to it and to a 16 mm copy of the films they wanted to study—could watch multiple time and analyse a film when film history itself was established as a discipline. On the other hand, there is a film critic, Lee, who uses editing software accessible at very low costs to create a video on his computer, in complete autonomy, that can immediately be shared online to receive feedback from other users.

It did not take too long for scholars to take advantage of digital technolo-gies, thus embracing the "attainability" of the cinematic text.[16] In 2008 the journal *Mediascape* published Eric Faden's essay "A Manifesto for Critical Media," in which the author, building on Alexandre Astruc's infamous notion of the caméra-stylo, advocates the adoption, within the field of film studies, of the "media stylo," that is audiovisual works "using moving images to engage and critique themselves; moving images illustrating theory; or even moving images revealing the labor of their own construction."[17]

Another manifesto is posted in 2009 by Catherine Grant in her blog *Film Studies for Free*. This "Multiprotagonist Manifesto" is, quite appropriately considering its subject, a collage of quotations from scholars, film-makers, and film critics that stress the innovative approach and the creative potential of the video essay, while also establishing the continuity with the tradition

---

critico alla timeline digitale. Il rimontaggio del film come pratica di analisi," *Bianco e nero* 584 (January–April 2016): 42–50.

16   The reference is, obviously, to Bellour's "The Unattainable Text," quoted in recent years by many scholars who acknowledge its prophetic quality. Bellour himself has commented on his essay and on the current situation of cinema and film studies in "35 Years On: Is the 'Text,' Once Again, Unattainable?," in *Beyond the Essay Film: Subjectivity, Textuality and Technology*, ed. Julia Vassilieva and Deane Williams (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020); for a discussion on the legacy of Bellour's essay for the theorization of the audiovisual essay, see, in the same volume, Cristina Álvarez López and Adrian Martin, "To Attain the Text—But Which Text?"

17   Eric Faden, "A Manifesto for Critical Media," *Mediascape* (Spring 2008). The journal doesn't seem to be online anymore, but the essay can be found at https://scalar.usc.edu/works/film-studies-in-motion/media/FADEN%20Manifesto%20for%20Critical%20Media_Spring08.pdf.

of the essay film (the first quotation is from Hans Richter's "The Film Essay: A New Form of Documentary Film").[18]

In the same year, Grant also begins to make audiovisual essays; introducing such works in the "About" section of another blog, *Filmanalytical*, she writes:

> The audiovisual essays, in particular, represent my attempts to study films in ways which are informed as much by my affective experiences of them as by my cognitive (sense-making) efforts. Unlike all of my earlier academic publications, the video essays here will have been created using free-associative, and playful, techniques, albeit following on from numerous viewings of the films and the usual scholarly surveying of relevant critical work by others. If the essays come to be published here, it means that I have been moved and informed by the experience of creating them.[19]

This early remarks on her work already posit some elements that are crucial in her approach to videographic criticism, and in that of many other scholars: the importance of the affective experience as well as the combination, in her method, of study and research with creative and playful exploration.

Grant's definition resonates with the reflections of Christian Keathley. In addition to having made, in 2006, one of the earliest examples of a scholarly audiovisual essay (*Pass the Salt*), Keathley wrote, in 2011, an essay that can rightly be considered the first attempt at defining and even systematizing videographic criticism. According to Keathley, the new digital tools allow for

> a new way of thinking about film, [...] a new way of conducting and presenting film research. What that kind of critical "writing"—still in the process of being invented—looks and sounds like marks a dramatic broadening in our understanding of what constitutes the meaning of such terms as criticism and scholarship, supplementing them with features that resemble art production.[20]

18   Catherine Grant, "Video Essays on Films: A Multiprotagonist Manifesto," *Film Studies for Free* (July 2009), http://filmstudiesforfree.blogspot.it/2009/07/video-essays-on-films-multiprotagonist.html.

19   *Filmanalytical* (June 2010), http://filmanalytical.blogspot.it/p/about-filmanalytical.html.

20   Christian Keathley, "La Caméra-stylo: Notes on Video Criticism and Cinephilia," in *The Language and Style of Film Criticism*, ed. Alex Clayton and Andrew Klevan (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 179.

Furthermore, Keathley states that such critical, audiovisual "writing" is developing in a continuum between two poles: an explanatory mode and a poetic one. Despite resorting to images and montage in order to conduct their argument, works tending towards the explanatory mode rely on verbal language and an argumentative tone; conversely, for videos in the poetic mode verbal language may be an option among many others, and the form is more opaque, less assertive, and more suggestive. These two modes are not mutually exclusive: video essays often combine poetic and explanatory strategies.[21]

The notion of the two modes immediately gained great popularity among the community of scholars interested in videographic criticism: Keathley doesn't propose a rigid taxonomy, and thus his intuition seems particularly effective in order to understand a heterogeneous phenomenon, which still had to be institutionalized. Furthermore, the idea of two different poles is exemplary of another dichotomy that characterizes videographic practice since the beginning: on the one hand, there is the desire to bring its expressive strategies back into the familiar realm of analytical and academic writing; on the other hand, there is the ambition of getting rid of certain consolidated scholarly conventions, so that videographic criticism can represent a truly new methodological and research approach.

The debate about the appropriateness of the expression "video essay" to indicate a varied array of works reflects such a dichotomy. Defining what is, or what is not, the video essay is the aim of many writings at this stage, and the adoption of the term "essay" raises several issues.[22] On the one hand, in fact, it declares an affinity between the video essay[23] and the essay film, although videographic criticism does not always share the latter's self-expressive strategies and purposes. On the other hand, the word "essay" is in itself problematic, as Álvarez López and Martin argue: its nature is ambiguous because it designates, simultaneously, the rather rigid structure of the five-paragraph essay and a more digressive and open

21   Christian Keathley, "La Caméra-stylo: Notes on Video Criticism and Cinephilia," 180–83.

22   See Erlend Lavik, "The Video Essay: The Future of Academic Film and Television Criticism?," *Frames Cinema Journal* 1, no. 1 (July 2012), http://framescinemajournal.com/article/the-video-essay-the-future/; Drew Morton, "Beyond the Essayistic: Defining the Varied Modal Origins of Videographic Criticism," *Cinema Journal* 56, no. 4 (2017): 130–36.

23   The term "video essay" is also adopted within the field of visual arts to indicate, more broadly, works "somewhere between documentary video and video art" that borrow their strategies both from the essay film and experimental video art and explore the potential of digital technologies while also critically with them. See Ursula Biemann, *Stuff It! The Video Essay in the Digital Age* (Zurich: Voldemeer, 2003), 8–9.

to experimentation form, that "belongs to the tradition of Roland Barthes, Judith Williamson, Walter Benjamin, Christa Wolf, or Ross Gibson."[24]

The expression "video essay," therefore, may recall the subjective rumination of the essay film and the structured, argumentative scholarly text, but, in fact, it also indicates works that may have little to no connection with both.[25] The terminological debate reflects a desire for a precise definition that would help to establish the audiovisual essay as a legitimate form of film criticism and film analysis. And yet, the video essay remains an elusive object that has a hybrid nature. It shows influences from historically consolidated models (the experimental found footage film, the documentary, the essay film), reclaiming their formal elements, or even explicitly paying homage to them—consider Richard Misek's video essay *The Black Screen* (2017), conceived as a response to Chris Marker's *Sans soleil* (1983), or Catherine Grant's *Mechanized Flights* (2014) and David Verdeure's *The Apartment* (2019), that adopt formal strategies similar to those employed by Martin Arnold in *Alone: Life Wastes Andy Hardy* (1998) and *Deanimated: The Invisible Ghost* (2002)—but its scopes, methods, and its outcomes may differ significantly.

Found footage films pondered about cinema and its history often using discarded footage painstakingly or fortuitously recovered, focusing on the *materiality* of cinematic images and interrogating not just the thematic, narrative, or stylistic features of films, but also the *dispositif* itself. Online videographic criticism, on the other hand, confronts itself with the "digital plenitude," "a universe of products [...] and practices [...] so vast, varied, and dynamic that is not comprehensible as a whole,"[26] and with the proliferation of *dispositifs* and viewing modes. At the same time, is the quintessential product of such plenitude, the result of the cross-contamination of high culture models and "vernacular"[27] forms (mash-up, tributes, vidding, etc.) that were apparently more playful and less critical. The audiovisual essay transforms avant-garde strategies into a new norm and blurs the boundaries

24 Cristina Álvarez López and Adrian Martin, "Introduction to the Audiovisual Essay: A Child of Two Mothers," *NECSUS* (Autumn 2014), http://www.necsus-ejms.org/introduction-audiovisual-essay-child-two-mothers/.

25 It is precisely for this reason that scholars like Catherine Grant propose and adopt the expression "videographic film studies" instead. See Catherine Grant, "How Long Is a Piece of String? On the Practice, Scope and Value of Videographic Film Studies and Criticism," *The Audiovisual Essay: Practice and Theory of Videographic Film and Moving Image Studies* (September 2014), http://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/audiovisualessay/frankfurt-papers/catherine-grant/.

26 Jay David Bolter, *The Digital Plenitude: The Decline of Elite Culture and the Rise of Digital Media* (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press, 2019), 7–8.

27 Kevin B. Lee, "New Audiovisual Vernaculars of Scholarship," *The Cine-Files* 15 (Fall 2020), http://www.thecine-files.com/new-audiovisual-vernaculars-of-scholarship/.

between experimentation, pedagogy, and playfulness; however, it does not give up on assuming a critical and reflexive function, once again based on a rip, on a violation, not of the film strip, but of the undifferentiated image flow of the internet and of streaming platforms, more and more interested in "domesticating," guiding, and limiting the "textual doing" of users.

Despite its complex status, since the 2010s the audiovisual essay has gradually been embraced by a growing number of film critics, scholars, and cinephiles: as a critical practice it is adopted in magazines such as *Sight and Sound* and *Little White Lies*, or websites like *Film School Rejects*, which commission original contents or curate columns on the growing variety of videos and channels on YouTube; as a research methodology, it is increasingly explored by scholars from all over the world, whose work is published in journals such as [*in*]*Transition*, *NECSUS*, *Tecmerin*, *MAI*, *Frames*, *Movie*, among others; moreover, it has proved to be a valuable didactic tool for school and university courses. Finally, it has also become a means for promotion and advertising for subscription video on demand (SVOD) platforms such as Mubi or Netflix (which has commissioned video essays about its original productions).

Within the academy, videographic criticism's process of legitimization is fostered not only by its diffusion in institutional venues such as journals, university courses, or conferences, but also by its conceptualization as a subject through the publication of essays, special issues of journals, and even books dedicated to video essays, which focus on multiple aspects of this practice.

Such discussions, however, do not occur only in institutional places. From its very beginning, the field of videographic criticism has been marked by a collective dimension: practitioners have created a lively exchange of ideas and an informal debate alongside the more formal one in traditional scholarly venues.[28] Such informal platforms include the comment section of video-sharing platforms like YouTube and Vimeo, social media, and, more recently, podcasts like Will Di Gravio's *The Video Essay Podcast*.[29]

It should also be noted that very often video essays are accompanied by writings and commentaries that are not focused exclusively on the same subject of the video, but assume a self-reflexive form: the authors dwell on videographic criticism itself as a methodology, detailing those aspects of their research that have been made possible or enhanced through the

---

28   See Tiago Baptista, *Lessons in Looking: The Digital Audiovisual Essay* (PhD diss., Birkbeck University of London, 2016), 37–40.
29   Will Di Gravio, *The Video Essay Podcast*, https://thevideoessay.com/work.

audiovisual form. Several scholars and critics, such as Catherine Grant, Kevin B. Lee, Cristina Álvarez López, Adrian Martin, Christian Keathley, and Jason Mittell, have pondered on the methodological aspects of their work. The research process plays such a pivotal role that Alan O' Leary has described his experimentation with "deformative" videographic criticism[30] "not as the activity of answering questions about a given topic, but as a practical enquiry into the affordances of a method."[31]

At any rate, the theoretical debate on the audiovisual essay has developed mainly around some crucial aspects:

–   *The genealogy of videographic criticism*: Several studies try to trace a genealogy, focusing on video essays "precursors"—the above-mentioned experimental found footage films, documentaries, and essay films. This genealogical excavation has a double purpose: trying to understand, more generally, how images and montage can produce meaning and, specifically, articulate a visual discourse on cinema, but also dignifying a recent practice by relating it to other, already recognized experiences, thus stressing how such "new' approach to film studies has actually a longer, well-established history.[32]

30   Deformative criticism "strives to make the original work strange in some unexpected way, deforming it unconventionally to reveal aspects that are conventionally obscured in its normal version and discovering something new from it." Jason Mittell, "Videographic Criticism as a Digital Humanities Method," in *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, ed. Matthew K. Gold and Lauren F. Klein (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019), https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled-f2acf72c-a469-49d8-be35-67f9ac1e3a60/section/b6dea70a-9940-497e-b7c5-930126fbd180#ch20.
31   Alan O'Leary, "No Voiding Time: A Deformative Videoessay," *16:9* (Autumn 2019), http://www.16-9.dk/2019/09/no-voiding-time/#.
32   See, among others, Drew Morton, "Beyond the Essayistic: Defining the Varied Modal Origins of Videographic Criticism," *Cinema Journal* 56, no. 4 (Summer 2017): 130–36. Morton draws on Bill Nichols' seminal study on documentary to suggest a taxonomy of the audiovisual essays based on Nichols' modes; for this purpose, he traces some analogies between Nichols' examples and video essays. About the relationship between found footage films and video essays, see Corey Creekmur, "Compilation and Found-Footage Traditions," [*in*]*Transition* 1, no. 2 (June 2014), http://mediacommons.org/intransition/2014/06/28/compilation-and-found-footage-traditions, or Cristina Álvarez López and Adrian Martin, "The One and The Many: Making Sense of Montage in the Audiovisual Essay," *The Audiovisual Essay: Practice and Theory of Videographic Film and Moving Image Studies* (September 2014), https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/audiovisualessay/frankfurt-papers/cristina-alvarez-lopez-adrian-martin/. The latter is a paper presented at the international workshop "Audiovisual Essay: Practice and Theory," offered by the Film, Media and Theatre Studies Department of Goethe University and the Deutsches Filmmuseum of Frankfurt in November 2013 and organized by Cristina Álvarez López and Adrian Martin, with support from Vinzenz Hediger. Significantly, the workshop—probably the first event entirely devoted to the

– *Videographic criticism and written text*: Written text often accompanies the publication of video essays; in the early stages of its diffusion, it served to introduce this new practice by illustrating its advantages. However, this soon raised doubts about the nature of video essays: were they autonomous, or rather ancillary to the more conventional written essays? Scholars such as Miklós Kiss advocate for more straightforwardly argumentative and explanatory video essays, arguing that "videos that remain unclear without their textual accompaniment—lacking in offering independent, rounded-out argumentation in themselves—could be seen as merely improved illustrations to traditional textual criticism."[33] Conversely, other scholars, such as Catherine Grant, are more inclined to consider the interaction between written commentaries and accompanying text as a resource and to compare such commentaries to the written exegesis that complement artefacts of creative practice research in a way that they both concur to articulate meaning.[34] Significantly, [*in*]*Transition* adopts an open peer review policy, publishing, together with the video essays and written statements by authors, two reviews. Behind this decision, as explained by Jason Mittell, there is once again the need to legitimize the video essay as scholarship: "What we actually publish are the creator statements and peer reviews that strive to answer the question 'How does this video function as scholarship?' […] We offer validation of videos you could easily watch elsewhere by framing them as scholarship that 'counts.'"[35]

– *Modes and forms of videographic criticism*: The reflections on videographic criticism were not only aimed at demonstrating its validity: they soon focused on the need to understand concretely the modes and forms of such practice. Kiss and van den Berg's book offers a detailed

---

audiovisual essay in Europe—provided, besides the talks of scholars and film critics, screenings of some of the most important found footage works, including *Rose Hobart* and *Kristall*. On the connection between videographic criticism and film education on television, see Volken Pantenburg, "Towards an Alternative History of the Video Essay: Westdeutscher Rundfunk, Cologne," *NECSUS* (Autumn 2017), https://necsus-ejms.org/towards-an-alternative-history-of-the-video-essay-westdeutscher-rundfunk-cologne/; Kiss and van den Berg in *Film Studies in Motion* focus in particular on the essay film and on DVD extras; in my book, *I film attraverso i film: dal testo introvabile ai video essay* (Milano-Udine: Mimesis, 2017), I offer a general overview on the precursors of online videographic criticism.

33   Miklós Kiss, "Videographic Scene Analyses, Part 1," *NECSUS* (Spring 2018), https://necsus-ejms.org/videographic-scene-analyses-part-1/.

34   See Catherine Grant, "The Audiovisual Essay as Performative Research," *NECSUS* (Autumn 2016), https://necsus-ejms.org/the-audiovisual-essay-as-performative-research/.

35   Jason Mittell, "Opening Up [*in*]*Transition*'s Open Peer-Review Process," *Cinema Journal* 56, no. 4 (Summer 2017): 138.

taxonomy organized according to what the authors identify as the main types of video essays present online as well as their formal and thematic features.[36] Other scholars focus on the formal aspects of videographic criticism,[37] or propose an analysis based on an "auteurist" approach—that is, addressing the defining features in the works of well-known video essayists such as Grant, Lee, or kogonada.[38]

–   *Videographic criticism and pedagogy*: The value of the video essay as a teaching methodology has also fostered reflections centred on its pedagogical function,[39] as well as how-to guides[40]—extremely useful for those approaching the video essay without basic knowledge of editing software and other technological resources. The most significant pedagogical project has certainly been the workshops run by Jason Mittell and Christian Keathley at Middlebury College since 2015, "Scholarship in Sound and Image." The workshops represent an important training opportunity aimed at junior and senior scholars interested in learning how to adopt videographic criticism as a research method. The pedagogical approach of the workshop, formalized in a volume in two editions, *The Videographic Essay: Criticism in Sound & Image*, has become an international model.[41]

Such a set of discourses on and practices of videographic criticism have determined its progressive institutionalization. A certain rhetoric of the "novelty" that dominated (and sometimes still resurfaces today) the debate

---

36   Kiss and van den Berg, *Film Studies in Motion*, ch. 2.1.

37   Grizzaffi, *I film attraverso i film: dal testo introvabile ai video essay*. On specific formal strategies of videographic criticism see, by way of example, Ian Garwood, "The Place of Voiceover in Academic Audiovisual Film and Television Criticism," *NECSUS* (Autumn 2016), https://necsus-ejms.org/the-place-of-voiceover-in-audiovisual-film-and-television-criticism/; Catherine Grant, "Déjà Viewing? Videographic Experiments in Intertextual Film Studies," *Mediascape* (Winter 2013).

38   Baptista, *Lessons in Looking*.

39   *The Cine-Files*, for example, has published since 2014 several articles that describe and reflect on teaching videographic criticism; other reference includes Jennifer Proctor, "Teaching Avant-garde Practice as Videographic Research," *Screen* 60, no. 3 (2019): 466–74; Drew Morton, "'Use the Force, Luke!': Teaching Videographic Criticism to Students and Colleagues," *Flow* 22 (2015), https://www.flowjournal.org/2015/09/teaching-videographic-criticism/; Michael Witt, "Taking Stock: Two Decades of Teaching the History, Theory, and Practice of Audiovisual Film Criticism," among others.

40   See, for example, the how-to guides section of *The Audiovisual Essay: Practice and Theory in Videographic Film and Moving Image Studies*, https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/audiovisualessay/resources/.

41   Christian Keathley, Jason Mittell, and Catherine Grant, *The Videographic Essay: Practice and Pedagogy* (Scalar, 2019), http://videographicessay.org/works/videographic-essay/index.

early on has gradually been replaced by greater integration and "normalization" within film studies.

The most evident traits of this institutionalization process do not lie so much in the specific features of the video essays. There are, indeed, some distinctive elements in the scholarly audiovisual essay, such as the use of theoretical references, often made explicit through direct quotation in subtitles, intertitles, or through the reference list at the end of the video; or a certain predominance of the explanatory mode, even if many of the academic journals mentioned above are open towards more poetic and experimental forms. Rather, such affirmation is marked by a shift from the tentativeness, the "amateurish quality" Patricia Pisters ascribes to video essays,[42] to a sort of "professionalization": that is, a greater confidence in the use of tools that are becoming increasingly sophisticated, as well as a better understanding of strategies and rhetorical forms already consolidated.[43] Such understanding has been fostered and enhanced by the above-mentioned theoretical reflections, which are now part of a shared knowledge that allows the more confident integration of the video essay into research and teaching practice.

This process, however, does not necessarily imply giving up looking for videographic approaches that diverge from more established research practices; in fact, the multiplicity of strategies for the study of cinema through videographic criticism is confirmed by the numerous definitions and proposals (some even antithetical) given by scholars in the special issue of *The Cine-Files* dedicated to scholarly videographic criticism.[44]

Such variety mirrors the numerous, converging influences that are shaping the field of videographic criticism, a field that is still lively and not rigidly codified, as demonstrated by some inventive and compelling experiments for a videographic history of cinema.

A Videographic Film History?

As a methodology, videographic criticism addresses cinema history from the same entry points of traditional forms of film scholarship—auteur or genre theory, feminist film theory, close reading and formalist analysis, history

42   Patricia Pisters, "Imperfect Creative Criticism," *Cinema Journal* 56, no. 4 (Summer 2017): 145.
43   See Johannes Binotto, "In Lag of Knowledge: The Video Essay as Parapraxis," in *Practical Aesthetics*, ed. Bernd Herzogenrath (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2020), 84.
44   Tracy-Cox Stanton and Allison De Fren, eds., special issue on the scholarly video essay, *The Cine-Files* 15 (Fall 2020), http://www.thecine-files.com.

of technology, media archaeology and so on. Some of these approaches have been more successful than others: it is undeniable that auteurism was one of the most adopted perspectives right from the start. The editing software becomes the ideal tool for identifying, isolating, and analysing the visual and stylistic distinctive features of authors—as demonstrated by the obsession for directors like Wes Anderson (fostered by the viral success of the video essays made by kogonada), Spielberg, or Tarantino, among others. The adoption of new technologies, then, does not necessarily entail giving up on more traditional, even conservative, approaches to film studies: in fact, videographic criticism is still mainly concerned with a Western-centric canon of works, also because of their wider circulation and availability.[45]

However, there are aspects of films and of the viewer's experience that the video essays convey with unprecedented immediacy, thus opening new paths also for historiographic approaches. By way of example, there is a line of inquiry that traces a compelling and innovative audiovisual history of techniques and aesthetics. The use of film stills as an analytical gesture, as Raymond Bellour argued, comes at the price of interrupting movement, thus losing the essential element of cinema as moving pictures.[46] Stills and frames accompanying written essays and books freeze in a series of poses what otherwise moves before our eyes. Videographic criticism, on the other hand, allows movement to be preserved, thus offering new possibilities for the study of stardom, performance, and gesture, as demonstrated by video essays of scholars such as Laura Mulvey (*Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, 2013), Catherine Grant (*Not a Grand Dame*, 2017; *Mechanised Flights*, among others), Jaap Kooijman (*Success*, 2016). However, it is not just the movement of the bodies on screen that is difficult to convey: as Volker Pantenburg points out, "camera movement confronts us with transitions, flowing developments, gradual and continual shifts that are difficult to describe. [...] [T]he characteristic of a horizontal pan can actually only be reproduced as movement."[47] Therefore, the audiovisual essay is the ideal means through

45   Some efforts have been made, however, for a more inclusive research agenda, and for increasing the visibility of marginalized groups: consider, by way of example, journals like *Tecmerin*, that promotes linguistic plurality and the overcoming of a Western-centric perspective, or the "Black Lives Matter Video Essay Playlist," curated by Kevin B. Lee, Cydnii Wilde Harris, and Will Di Gravio (https://thevideoessay.com/blacklivesmatter), aimed at making more visible videographic production concerned with the representation of Black people in film and media, with systemic inequality and with the Black Lives Matter movement.

46   Raymond Bellour, "The Unattainable Text," 25–26.

47   Volker Pantenburg, "Videographic Film Studies and the Analysis of Camera Movement," *NECSUS* (Spring 2016), https://necsus-ejms.org/videographic-film-studies-and-the-analysis-of-camera-movement/.

which analysing camera movements, restoring not only their complexity, but also their effect on the viewer. The work of the cinematography scholar and video essayist Patrick Keating is exemplary in this respect: In *A Homeless Ghost: The Moving Camera and Its Analogies* (2016), Keating addresses camera movements in 1920s and 1930s' Hollywood cinema from a cultural perspective, investigating the relationship between their aesthetic qualities and their conceptualization through the debates in trade magazines.[48] Keating's video lets the viewer literally "experience" the two metaphorical definitions—the omnipresent eye and the ghostly presence—adopted to conceptualize camera movements.

The video essay *Feeling and Thought as They Take Form: Early Steadicam, Labor, and Technology (1974–1985)* by Katie Bird (2020) is as effective.[49] Bird focuses on the first decade of the introduction of stabilizing technology, comparing Steadicam with the less successful Panaglide. Juxtaposing clips from films of that decade—from the most well-known, like *Rocky* (John Avildsen, 1976) or *The Shining* (Stanley Kubrick, 1980), to minor genre films—with other non-theatrical materials such as industrial and training films, Bird adopts a media-archaeological and cultural perspective "to expand and disrupt our notion of technological emergence and stylistic origin narratives," focusing on the complex intertwining between visual experimentation and technological research, labour culture, and cinematographic aesthetics. The expressive and formal richness of the video—which uses different strategies, including voice-over, split screen, graphic elements, cropping, and zooming—reflects the different, entangled layers of the argument. But, most importantly, such audiovisual approach allows the viewer to feel, "to experience embodied stabilizers aesthetics."[50]

The focus on the experiential and affective dimension, explored by several video essays, allows the tracing of alternative paths and unexpected connections within the history of cinema. Catherine Grant's work, for example, addresses the issue of intertextuality through a "material thinking" that makes visible, "dense," almost tangible, the memory of films, the stratification of forms and models, the ghosts of a cinematic past that haunts

---

48   Patrick Keating, "A Homeless Ghost: The Moving Camera and its Analogies," [*in*]*Transition* 2, no. 4 (2016), http://mediacommons.org/intransition/2015/12/29/homeless-ghost.
49   Katie Bird, "Feeling and Thought as They Take Form: Early Steadicam, Labor, and Technology (1974–1985)," [*in*]*Transition* 7, no. 1 (2020), http://mediacommons.org/intransition/feeling-and-thought-they-take-form-early-steadicam-labor-and-technology-1974-1985.
50   Ibid.

films.[51] In *The Haunting of the Headless Woman* (2018) Grant investigates the eerie similarities between *Carnival of Souls* (Herk Harvey, 1962) and *The Headless Woman* (Lucrecia Martel, 2008) through superimposition, thus "introduc[ing] us to the 'unconscious optics' of particular instances of intertextuality, allowing us not just to know about these, but also to experience them, powerfully, sensually, in this and other cases in [her] work, through an affectively charged morphing aesthetic."[52] But the intertextual connections on which Grant lingers may concern not only the memory of films, but also that of the viewer. In "The Use of an Illusion: Childhood Cinephilia, Object Relations, and Videographic Film Studies," Grant and Keathley present works—*Uncanny Fusion: Journey to Mixed-up Files* (2014) and *SFR* (2014)—which draw unexpected connections between films (or, in Keathley's case, even between actresses of the same name, or between actors and politicians): these two videos are indeed a journey into the authors' unconscious, into their personal and spectatorial experience through images assembled like fragmented, confused, and incomplete childhood memories.[53]

In videographic criticism the biographical and subjective dimension is often merged with critical and theoretical reflections, and the history of cinema encounters the individual stories of its spectators:

> The technology of film today—notes David Colangelo—indulges and amplifies personal reflections and compulsions as it relocates films to places and spaces where we can explore its relationality to itself and to ourselves, and at the same time explore its expressivity through ourselves and through digital tools.[54]

Video essays can even work as a time machine for the cinephile of the digital age, allowing one "to re-create in and through the textual manipulations, but also through the choice of media and storage formats that sense of the unique, that sense of place, occasion, and moment so essential to all forms

---

51 See Catherine Grant, "The Shudder of a Cinephiliac Idea? Videographic Film Studies Practice as Material Thinking," *Aniki* 1, no. 1 (2014): 49–62; Grant, "Déjà Viewing? Videographic Experiments in Intertextual Film Studies."

52 Catherine Grant, "The Haunting of *The Headless Woman*," *Tecmerin*, no. 2 (2019), https://tecmerin.uc3m.es/en/journal-2-1/.

53 Catherine Grant and Christian Keathley, "The Use of an Illusion: Childhood Cinephilia, Object Relations, and Videographic Film Studies," *Photogénie*, June 19, 2014, https://photogenie.be/the-use-an-illusion-childhood-cinephilia-object-relations-and-videographic-film-studies/.

54 David Colangelo, "Hitchcock, Film Studies, and New Media: The Impact of Technology on the Analysis of Film," in *Technology and Film Scholarship: Experience, Study, Theory*, ed. Santiago Hidalgo (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 139.

Fig. 15.1. Jessica McGoff's desktop documentary *My Mulholland* (2020).

of cinephilia, even as it is caught in the compulsion to repeat,"[55] as in the case of the desktop documentary *My Mulholland* (2020), by Jessica McGoff. The video is a sort of re-enactment, through screen-capture technology, of her experience as a precocious preteen cinephile frightened by *Mulholland Drive* (David Lynch, 2001).[56] McGoff's singular experience becomes the starting point for a deep dive into the history of the internet, allowed by the Internet Archive and the digital repository Wayback Machine, and a meditation about the pervasiveness and the ambiguous nature of images.

Videographic criticism, therefore, can become an invaluable instrument for the approaches to the history of cinema that consider not only the "texts"—the films' formal features or thematic issues—but also the spectatorial experience. The relevance of the subjective and embodied aspects of viewing experience for videographic criticism is demonstrated by a renewed interest in phenomenological approaches to film studies; and by putting together those videos that address, more or less in detail, the modes of consumption of films and media,[57] from cinemagoing to home video, one

55   Thomas Elsaesser, "Cinephilia or the Uses of Disenchantment," in *Cinephilia: Movies, Love and Memory*, ed. Marijke de Valck and Malte Hagener (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 40.

56   Jessica McGoff, "My Mulholland," *The Cine-Files* 15 (Fall 2020), https://www.thecine-files.com/on-mulholland-drive/.

57   Besides McGoff's *My Mulholland*, example of such videos could include Kevin B. Lee's *Explosive Paradox* (2020) and the other works in Ariel Avissar and Evelyn Kreutzer, eds., *"Once*

can obtain an interesting, transgenerational account of the movie-going and movie-watching experience between "classical" cinephilia and the new cinephilia of the digital age. Some works also address the context of reception of films from a historical perspective: *Public Controversy and Film Censorship: The Release of* All Quiet on The Western Front *(1930) in Berlin* by Manuel Palacio and Ana Mejón (2020) resorts to archival documents to reconstruct and even re-enact the protests organized by Nazis during the first screening of Milestone's film in Berlin.[58]

Furthermore, the audiovisual essay can be a useful research method for those theoretical perspectives which favour non-linearity, rupture (new cinema history, media archaeology, visual culture). In *The Cine-Files* dossier on the scholarly audiovisual essay, Tracy Cox-Stanton and John Gibbs discuss two of their works to argue precisely for the potential of videographic criticism to enable "non-linear, non-hierarchical approaches to film history."[59] Cox-Stanton's video essay *Gesture in* A Woman under the Influence (2019), moving from the backyard dance scene in Cassavetes' film "re-invokes" "the ghostliness of gestures" by tracing the connections between the performance of the dying swan by Gena Rowlands and the images of other female bodies, other gestures that explicitly or implicitly recall those movements. Once again, the superimposition of the images allows for the presence of these "ghosts" to become immediately visible, for bodies that are distant in time and space to "touch," "creat[ing] a point of view that short-circuits the easy objectification of the video's aberrant bodies by recontextualizing them within scholarly considerations of gesture and within a broader history of society's disciplining of the 'feminine' body."[60]

Cox-Stanton's "charting of relations" beautifully resonates with Gibbs' audiovisual "mind map," one that connects Rio de Janeiro's Cinelândia to Hitchcock's Hollywood, *Footlight Parade* (Lloyd Bacon, 1933) to *Macunaíma* (Joachim Pedro de Andrade, 1969). His video essay, *Say, Have You Seen the Carioca?* (2019), aims at exploring the encounters and connections

upon a Screen": Audiovisual Essays, a special issue of *The Cine-Files* 15 (Fall 2020), or Cormac Donnelly's "Pan, Scan, Venkman," [*in*]*Transition* 6, no. 3 (2019), http://mediacommons.org/intransition/pan-scan-venkman.

58 Manuel Palacio and Ana Mejón, "Las polémicas públicas y la censura cinematográfica. El estreno de *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930) en Berlín," *Tecmerin* 4, no. 1 (2020), https://tecmerin.uc3m.es/revista-4-4/.

59 Tracy Cox-Stanton and John Gibbs, "Audiovisual Scholarship and Experiments in Non-linear Film History," *The Cine-Files*, no. 15 (Fall 2020), http://www.thecine-files.com/audiovisual-scholarship-and-experiments-in-non-linear-film-history/.

60 Tracy Cox-Stanton, "Gesture in *A Woman under the Influence*: A Charting of Relations," *NECSUS* (Autumn 2019), https://necsus-ejms.org/gesture-in-a-woman-under-the-influence-a-charting-of-relations/.
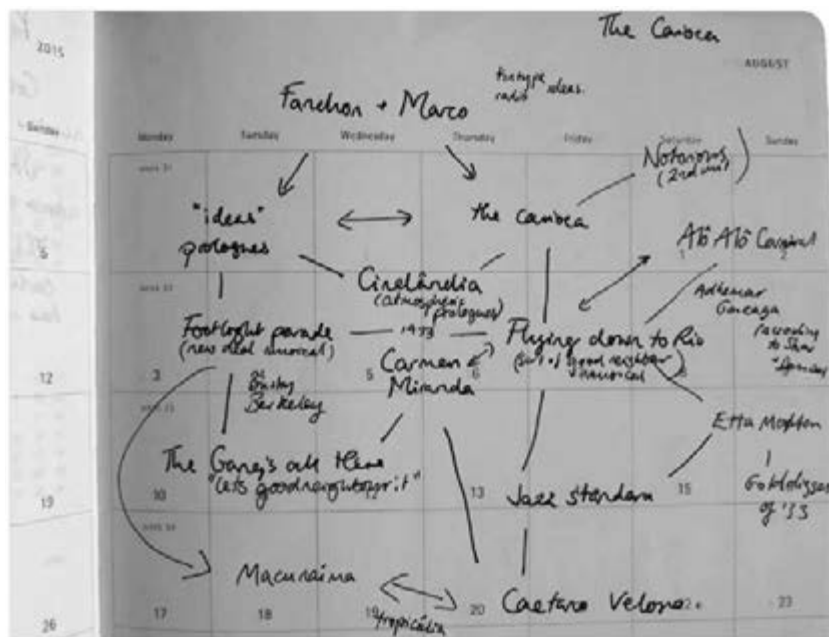
Fig. 15.2. The draft of the "mind map" in John Gibbs' *Say, Have You Seen the Carioca?* (2019).

between North American and Brazilian cinema.[61] A mind map scribbled in a notebook is the visual expedient through which the viewer is invited to a journey from one node of the map to the other (see fig. 15.2), experiencing those connections as well as the richness of an intermedial method that combines written text, photographs, recordings from re-enacted silent movie prologues, film clips, and live music recordings. Through the similarities between their works, the two scholars conclude that

> Both videos experiment with non-linear methods as opposed to "histori-ographies drawing on evolutionary chronologies and classical–modern or centre–periphery models," and both achieve this, at least in part, through embracing intermedial connections. They also deploy a range of audiovisual techniques to make these leaps and connections—layering of dissolved images, split screens, quotation of other works, dialogue and sound. In doing so they uncover the complexity of cultural relationships in their respective areas of enquiry, and suggest new ways of approaching

61   John Gibbs, "'Say, Have You Seen the Carioca?' An Experiment in Non-linear, Non-hierarchical Approaches to Film History," *Movie* 8 (June 2019), https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/film/movie/carioca.pdf.

and revealing the intricate histories and the fusion of elements which shape media objects.[62]

In the path toward its institutionalization, therefore, videographic criticism has been successfully integrated with more conventional and well-established approaches for the study of cinema history, but it has also enabled scholars to think about different forms and methods for historiographical research. The horizon of such "audiovisual histories" is still expanding: there are new, promising experiments that, for example, combine audiovisual essays and technologies such as VR. By way of example, one could mention *Montegelato* (2021), a VR film made by videomaker and video editor Davide Rapp and dedicated to Monte Gelato, a filming location just outside Rome. Its waterfalls have been the background for over 180 films, starting with Rossellini's *Francesco giullare di Dio* (1959): they are very often genre films, ranging from Westerns to pepla, from comedies to science fictions, but there are also auteur films like *I Knew Her Well* (1965), by Pietrangeli (1965), or *Don Quixote* (1964/1992), by Orson Welles. Over the span of five years of study, research, and recovery of materials—some of which were almost impossible to find—Rapp has conceived a 360-degree work, an immersive experience in the decades of cinema history that have passed through Monte Gelato. Given the peculiar conformation of the location, the camera position was very similar in each film: this allows Rapp to superimpose the film clips on each other as they appear on the virtual screen, following an order that is not chronological, but rather a sort of narration that juxtapose the scenes according to micro-motives (the arrival at the clearing, the bivouac, the fight, the "bathing beauties"). The images accumulate, stratify, surround the viewer: *Montegelato* is an immersive experience of spatialized time. Through its engaging, riveting nature, the film also raises several crucial issues for film studies, because it offers the opportunity to reflect on the relationship between the camera and space, between cinema and landscape, and between film locations and production models, as well as on *topoi* and clichés of genre cinema, offering itself as a groundbreaking methodology for a historical geography of cinema.

Montegelato has been selected for the official competition of Venice VR Expanded (a section of the Venice International Film Festival). Concluding this brief overview with the film made by Rapp—who is not a film studies scholar himself—I would like to offer some final remarks. The path towards the institutionalization of videographic criticism as a creative form and as a

---

62   Cox-Stanton and Gibbs, "Audiovisual Scholarship and Experiments in Non-linear Film History."

Fig. 15.3. A still from Davide Rapp's VR film *Montegelato* (2021).

methodological tool has not held back the hybridization between languages, between fields and areas of film studies, and between practitioners from different backgrounds that has characterized its birth and development. This hybridization allows video essays to circulate in platforms and contexts that range from festivals and events to online magazines, from streaming platforms to university classrooms, and helps such form to reach an audience that goes beyond film scholars or professional film critics.

The inventive, affective, intimate, creative, and pioneering forms that this research methodology can assume demonstrate that the purpose of videographic criticism exceeds that of simply illustrating already written cinema histories. Rather, it aims at reimagining film history, inviting us to new, adventurous time travels.

References

Álvarez López, Cristina, and Adrian Martin. "Introduction to the Audiovisual Essay: A Child of Two Mothers." *NECSUS* (Autumn 2014). http://www.necsus-ejms.org/ introduction-audiovisual-essay-child-two-mothers/

Álvarez López, Cristina, and Adrian Martin. "The One and The Many: Making Sense of Montage in the Audiovisual Essay." *The Audiovisual Essay: Practice*

and Theory of Videographic Film and Moving Image Studies (September 2014). https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/audiovisualessay/frankfurt-papers/cristina-alvarez-lopez-adrian-martin/

Álvarez López, Cristina, and Adrian Martin. "To Attain the Text—But Which Text?" In *Beyond the Essay Film: Subjectivity, Textuality and Technology*, edited by Julia Vassilieva and Deane Williams, 49–74. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020.

Aprà, Adriano, ed. *Critofilm. Cinema che pensa il cinema*. Pesaro: Pesaro Nuovo Cinema, 2016.

The Audiovisual Essay: Practice and Theory in Videographic Film and Moving Image Studies. https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/audiovisualessay/

Avissar, Ariel, and Evelyn Kreutzer, eds. *"Once upon a Screen": Audiovisual Essays*, a special issue of *The Cine-Files* 15 (Fall 2020). http://www.thecine-files.com/issue15-audiovisual-essays/

Baptista, Tiago. *Lessons in Looking: The Digital Audiovisual Essay*. PhD diss., Birkbeck University of London, 2016.

Baron, Jaimie. *The Archive Effect: Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History*. London and New York: Routledge, 2014.

Bellour, Raymond. "The Unattainable Text," In *The Analysis of Film*, 21–27. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000.

Bellour, Raymond. "35 Years On: Is the 'Text', Once Again, Unattainable?" In *Beyond the Essay Film: Subjectivity, Textuality and Technology*, edited by Julia Vassilieva and Deane Williams, 33–48. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020.

Biemann, Ursula. *Stuff It! The Video Essay in the Digital Age*. Zurich: Voldemeer, 2003.

Binotto, Johannes. "In Lag of Knowledge: The Video Essay as Parapraxis." In *Practical Aesthetics*, edited by Bernd Herzogenrath, 83–94. London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2020.

Bird, Katie. "Feeling and Thought as They Take Form: Early Steadicam, Labor, and Technology (1974–1985)." [*in*]*Transition* 7, no. 1 (2020). http://mediacommons.org/intransition/feeling-and-thought-they-take-form-early-steadicam-labor-and-technology-1974-1985

Blümlinger, Christa. *Cinéma de seconde main. Esthétique du remploi dans l'art du film et des nouveaux medias*. Paris: Klincksieck, 2013.

Bolter, Jay David. *The Digital Plenitude: The Decline of Elite Culture and the Rise of Digital Media*. Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press, 2019.

Brenez, Nicole. "Montage intertextuel et formes contemporaines du remploi dans le cinéma experimental." *Cinémas: revue d'études cinématographiques* 13, no. 1–2 (2002): 49–67.

Casetti, Francesco. "Filmic Experience." *Screen* 50, no. 1 (2009): 55–66.

Casetti, Francesco. *The Lumière Galaxy: Seven Key Words for the Cinema to Come*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015.

Colangelo, David. "Hitchcock, Film Studies, and New Media: The Impact of Technology on the Analysis of Film." In *Technology and Film Scholarship: Experience, Study, Theory*, edited by Santiago Hidalgo, 127–48. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018.

Cox-Stanton, Tracy. "Gesture in *A Woman under the Influence*: A Charting of Relations." *NECSUS* (Autumn 2019). https://necsus-ejms.org/gesture-in-a-woman-under-the-influence-a-charting-of-relations/

Cox-Stanton, Tracy, and John Gibbs, "Audiovisual Scholarship and Experiments in Non-linear Film History." *The Cine-Files*, no. 15 (Fall 2020). http://www.thecine-files.com/audiovisual-scholarship-and-experiments-in-non-linear-film-history/

Creekmur, Corey. "Compilation and Found-Footage Traditions." [*in*]*Transition* 1, no. 2 (June 2014). http://mediacommons.org/intransition/2014/06/28/compilation-and-found-footage-traditions

Donnelly, Cormac. "Pan, Scan, Venkman." [*in*]*Transition* 6, no. 3 (2019). http://mediacommons.org/intransition/pan-scan-venkman

Elsaesser, Thomas. "Cinephilia or the Uses of Disenchantment." In *Cinephilia: Movies, Love and Memory*, edited by Marijke de Valck and Malte Hagener, 27–44. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005.

Faden, Eric. "A Manifesto for Critical Media." *Mediascape* (Spring 2008). https://scalar.usc.edu/works/film-studies-in-motion/media/FADEN%20Manifesto%20for%20Critical%20Media_Spring08.pdf

Filmanalytical (June 2010). http://filmanalytical.blogspot.it/p/about-filmanalytical.html

Garwood, Ian. "The Place of Voiceover in Academic Audiovisual Film and Television Criticism." *NECSUS* (Autumn 2016). https://necsus-ejms.org/the-place-of-voiceover-in-audiovisual-film-and-television-criticism/

Gibbs, John. "'Say, Have You Seen the Carioca?' An Experiment in Non-linear, Non-hierarchical Approaches to Film History." *Movie* 8 (June 2019). https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/film/movie/carioca.pdf

Grant, Catherine. "The Audiovisual Essay as Performative Research." *NECSUS* (Autumn 2016). https://necsus-ejms.org/the-audiovisual-essay-as-performative-research/

Grant, Catherine. "Déjà Viewing? Videographic Experiments in Intertextual Film Studies." *Mediascape* (Winter 2013).

Grant, Catherine. "The Haunting of The Headless Woman." *Tecmerin*, no. 2 (2019). https://tecmerin.uc3m.es/en/journal-2-1/

Grant, Catherine. "How Long is a Piece of String? On the Practice, Scope and Value of Videographic Film Studies and Criticism." *The Audiovisual Essay: Practice*

and Theory of Videographic Film and Moving Image Studies (September 2014). http://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/audiovisualessay/frankfurt-papers/catherine-grant/

Grant, Catherine. "The Shudder of a Cinephiliac Idea? Videographic Film Studies Practice as Material Thinking." *Aniki* 1, no. 1 (2014): 49–62.

Grant, Catherine. "Video Essays on Films: A Multiprotagonist Manifesto." *Film Studies for Free* (July 2009). http://filmstudiesforfree.blogspot.it/2009/07/video-essays-on-films-multiprotagonist.html

Grant, Catherine, and Christian Keathley. "The Use of an Illusion: Childhood Cinephilia, Object Relations, and Videographic Film Studies." *Photogénie*, June 19, 2014. https://photogenie.be/the-use-an-illusion-childhood-cinephilia-object-relations-and-videographic-film-studies/

Gravio, Will Di. *The Video Essay Podcast.* https://thevideoessay.com/work

Grizzaffi, Chiara. "Dal taccuino del critico alla timeline digitale. Il rimontaggio del film come pratica di analisi." *Bianco e nero* 584 (January–April 2016): 42–50.

Grizzaffi, Chiara. *I film attraverso i film: dal testo introvabile ai video essay.* Milano-Udine: Mimesis, 2017.

Keathley, Christian. "La Caméra-stylo: Notes on Video Criticism and Cinephilia." In *The Language and Style of Film Criticism*, edited by Alex Clayton and Andrew Klevan, 176–91. London and New York: Routledge, 2011.

Keathley, Christian, Jason Mittell, and Catherine Grant. *The Videographic Essay: Criticism in Sound & Image*, 2nd ed. Montreal: Caboose, 2019.

Keathley, Christian, Jason Mittell, and Catherine Grant. *The Videographic Essay: Practice and Pedagogy* (Scalar, 2019). http://videographicessay.org/works/videographic-essay/index

Keating, Patrick. "A Homeless Ghost: The Moving Camera and Its Analogies." [*in*] *Transition* 2, no. 4 (2016). http://mediacommons.org/intransition/2015/12/29/homeless-ghost

Kiss, Miklós. "Videographic Scene Analyses, Part 1." *NECSUS* (Spring 2018). https://necsus-ejms.org/videographic-scene-analyses-part-1/

Kiss, Miklós, and Thomas van den Berg. *Film Studies in Motion: From Audiovisual Essay to Academic Research Video* (Scalar, 2016). http://scalar.usc.edu/works/film-studies-in-motion/index

Lavik, Erlend. "The Video Essay: The Future of Academic Film and Television Criticism?" *Frames Cinema Journal* 1, no. 1 (July 2012). http://framescinemajournal.com/article/the-video-essay-the-future/

Lee, Kevin B. "New Audiovisual Vernaculars of Scholarship." *The Cine-Files* 15 (Fall 2020). http://www.thecine-files.com/new-audiovisual-vernaculars-of-scholarship/

Lee, Kevin B., Cydnii Wilde Harris, and Will Di Gravio. "Black Lives Matter Video Essay Playlist." *The Video Essay Podcast*, August 21, 2020. https://thevideoessay.com/blacklivesmatter

McGoff, Jessica. "My Mulholland." *The Cine-Files* 15 (Fall 2020). https://www.thecine-files.com/on-mulholland-drive/

Mittell, Jason. "Opening Up [in]Transition's Open Peer-Review Process." *Cinema Journal* 56, no. 4 (Summer 2017): 137–41.

Mittell, Jason. "Videographic Criticism as a Digital Humanities Method." In *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, edited by Matthew K. Gold and Lauren F. Klein, 224–42. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019. https://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/read/untitled-f2acf72c-a469-49d8-be35-67f9ac1e3a60/section/b6dea70a-9940-497e-b7c5-930126fbd180#ch20

Morton, Drew. "Beyond the Essayistic: Defining the Varied Modal Origins of Videographic Criticism." *Cinema Journal* 56, no. 4 (2017): 130–36.

Morton, Drew. "'Use the Force, Luke!': Teaching Videographic Criticism to Students and Colleagues." *Flow*, no. 22 (2015). https://www.flowjournal.org/2015/09/teaching-videographic-criticism/

O'Leary, Alan. "No Voiding Time: A Deformative Videoessay." *16:9* (Autumn 2019). http://www.16-9.dk/2019/09/no-voiding-time/#

Palacio, Manuel, and Ana Mejón. "Las polémicas públicas y la censura cinematográfica. El estreno de *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930) en Berlín." *Tecmerin* 4, no. 1 (2020). https://tecmerin.uc3m.es/revista-4-4/

Pantenburg, Volken. "Towards an Alternative History of the Video Essay: Westdeutscher Rundfunk, Cologne." *NECSUS* (Autumn 2017). https://necsus-ejms.org/towards-an-alternative-history-of-the-video-essay-westdeutscher-rundfunk-cologne/

Pantenburg, Volker. "Videographic Film Studies and the Analysis of Camera Movement." *NECSUS* (Spring 2016). https://necsus-ejms.org/videographic-film-studies-and-the-analysis-of-camera-movement/

Parker, Mark, and Deborah Parker. *The Attainable Text: The DVD and the Study of Film*. New York: Palgrave, 2011.

Pisters, Patricia. "Imperfect Creative Criticism." *Cinema Journal* 56, no. 4 (Summer 2017): 145–46.

Proctor, Jennifer. "Teaching Avant-garde Practice as Videographic Research." *Screen* 60, no. 3 (Autumn 2019): 466–74.

Wees, William C. *Recycled Images: The Arts and Politics of Found Footage Films*. New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1993.

Witt, Michael. *Jean-Luc Godard, Cinema Historian*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013.

Witt, Michael. "Taking Stock: Two Decades of Teaching the History, Theory, and Practice of Audiovisual Film Criticism." *NECSUS* (Spring 2017). https://necsus-ejms.org/taking-stock-two-decades-of-teaching-the-history-theory-and-practice-of-audiovisual-film-criticism.

About the Author

Chiara Grizzaffi just finished a postdoctoral fellowship at IULM University of Milan, in Italy. She is the author of *I film attraverso I film. Dal "testo introvabile" ai video essay* (Mimesis, 2017) and co-editor with Rocco Moccagatta of *Mino Guerrini. Storia e opera di un arcitaliano* (Mimesis, 2022). Her essays have appeared in journals such as *The Cine-Files*, *Imago*, and *Cinergie* and in books including *Writing about Screen Media*, edited by Lisa Patti (Routledge, 2019), and *Harun Farocki. Pensare con gli occhi*, edited by Luisella Farinotti, Barbara Grespi, and Federica Villa (Mimesis, 2017). She is the co-editor of *[in]Transition* and associate editor of *Cinergie*.