Apparatuses, Globalities, Assemblages:
Third Cinema, Now

by

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Abstract

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Colonial wounds endure but are refrigured in 21st century cinematic landscapes. These are spaces of memory and mourning, as well as sites of creativity and transformation. New assemblages of power emerge along with equally complex amalgams of resistance, producing multiple and competing cinematic regimes. Third Cinema, the cinematic movement that emerged alongside “Third World” struggles for decolonization in the late 1960s, laid claim to a global space of cinematic production outside existing geo-political relations of power, hierarchies of communication flows, and towards the liberation of the “Third World” and its cinemas. But while Third Cinema has ample genealogies and global sites of production, its critical tools have not been sufficiently engaged in an analysis of contemporary cinematic production, including digital video, interactive video installations, Internet art, and film, in the contemporary context of globalization, the transnationalization of capital with information technology at its core. Third Cinema offers the opportunity for understanding and developing generative intersections between the cinematic decolonization movements of the “Third World” and the present context of cinematic praxis of the “Global South.”

This dissertation engages the cinematic texts of Cao Fei, the Raqs Media Collective, Michelle Dizon, Cecilia Cornejo, and Fanta Régina Nacro in a conversation with Third Cinema. The texts selected for study include video, video installation, Internet art, and film. This selection highlights the diversity of contemporary cinematic practices and expands the definition of the cinematic. The process and conditions of production are analyzed, and key examples of each artists’ cinematic texts are given a close reading. This conversation is anchored by three critical terms: apparatus, globality, and assemblage. Each of these draws upon genealogies that both productively resonate with historical notions of Third Cinema while also transposing it across theoretical scales. The notion of the cinematic apparatus has been key to previous theorizations of relations of power and knowledge production in cinema. It is used here as a technic for mapping the re-arrangements of power and the attendant epistemic interventions evidenced in the cinematic praxis of these artists. The inquiry is centered on the question of how each artist produces a novel assemblage of the cinematic apparatus, understood as a relationship of author, cinematic text, and spectator, and how, in turn, this produces forms of globality, epistemes that are contentious responses to particular geo-political spaces of knowledge production. The inquiry proceeds through a
series of close engagements with the artists’ cinematic texts, discussing the transformation of the artist/author from individual to multiple, the redefinition of the “cinema” as a series of assemblages of screen and non-screen based practices, the constitution of the spectator as a site of spectral ephemerality, and the relationship of these transformations to the epistemic and geo-political sites of cinematic praxis. The study combines this textual analysis of the artists’ work with a socio-historical analysis of information communication technologies on global and local scales. An interdisciplinary set of theoretical frameworks are mobilized, including post- and decolonial theory, philosophy, media studies, transnational feminism, and Third Cinema.

In the cinematic praxis of these artists, I find productive resonances and dissonances with the critical tools of Third Cinema. Along the variegated routes of “information society,” these artists create new forms of cinematic praxis and knowledge production. They significantly destabilize global constructions of race and gender, which they encounter in the contexts of factory workers in China, discourses of information technology and development in India, and global warfare as experienced in the U.S., France, Chile, and Burkina Faso. When thought together as a field, these artists constitute related sites of aesthetic, political, and economic arrangements of cinematic forms. These cinemas reconstruct relations of power and refigure global discourses that produce temporary workers, the “Global South,” and permanent war. The tracing of the remnants, refusals and re-compositions of the cinematic apparatus, and, in tandem, Third Cinema, reveals the consequences of colonial conditions for global cinemascapes, and creates a platform for present and future emancipatory cinematic praxis.
## Contents

List of figures ii

Acknowledgements iii

Preface: Origins of Cinema v

Chapter One: The Vastness of the Apparatus 1
  Third Technics
  The Assemblage of Now

Chapter Two: First, Movement 24
  Temporary Worker
  Another Beginning, A Second Life

Chapter Three: Indeterminate Cinema 47
  Southern Time
  Trans-Modern Spaces

Chapter Four: Spectator/Specter 68
  Spectral Crossings
  Beyond the War Machine

Chapter Five: Herramientas Colectivas [Collective Tools]: Three Propositions 91
  I. Contemporaneous Globalities
  II. Temporary Revolutions
  III. The Future Apparatus
## List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Artist, Year</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Still from “Commentaire,” Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, 1980.</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Still from “Commentaire.” Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, 1980.</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Still from “Commentaire.” Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, 1980.</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Still from <em>Whose Utopia?</em> Cao Fei, 2006</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Still from <em>Whose Utopia?</em> Cao Fei, 2006</td>
<td></td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Still from <em>i/mirror.</em> China Tracy/Cao Fei, 2007</td>
<td></td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Still from <em>A Measure of Anaoustic Reason.</em> Raqs Media Collective, 2006</td>
<td></td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Still from <em>The Network of No des.</em> Raqs Media Collective, 2006</td>
<td></td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Still from <em>What Will You Remember of September?</em> Cecilia Cornejo, 2004</td>
<td></td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Still from <em>Civil Society.</em> Michelle Dizon, 2009</td>
<td></td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Still from <em>La Nuit de la Verite.</em> Fanta Régina Nacro, 2004</td>
<td></td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgements

In 1982, at the St. Mark’s bookstore in New York City, I picked up a book. It was Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s *Apparatus*. I had just begun making films. I was deeply involved in politics. At that moment, this book provided me with the possibility of imagining film and politics as intertwined. Even more importantly, it provided the possibility of practicing film and politics with an equally integral poetics. This poetics, furthermore, was a poetics imbued with a distinctive voice, one that was fearless and forthright. This is the opening scene for this dissertation: The opening of this book. My first acknowledgement, then, must go to Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, whose scholarship and artwork remain enormously generative achievements, always producing further affirmations and criticalities.

If this dissertation marks a return to this book, it is only because many people have made this time-space travel possible. The writing of a dissertation, as many have observed before me, is a collective project. First and foremost, the voices I would like to acknowledge belong to those of my dissertation committee. My dissertation chair, Trinh T. Minh-ha, is a mentor, teacher, and colleague who consistently opens pathways of passionate, transformative scholarship, for myself and many, many others. Minh-ha’s friendship and hospitality, rigorous scholarship and poetics, breadth and depth of knowledge across the disciplines, and keen critique combined with kind generosity, have made this project possible. Her books and films form a constellation of visionary openings. Laura E. Pérez opened the initial door to the University of California-Berkeley and has kept opening doors ever since. Her work on spirituality and transformation come from rich insights drawn from life, of which she is never afraid. Nelson Maldonado-Torres has a voice that enables a wide and deep imaginary of liberation. His dislocating of modernity and unleashing of being also creates a condition that makes this work possible. Deniz Göktürk is a fearless and precise critic, the best of friends for a writer. Her engaged transnational scholarship is also a model for this work, as well as her humor, commitment to interdisciplinarity, and productive skepticism.

My department at the University of California-Berkeley, the staff and faculty of the Ethnic Studies Graduate Group, are committed advocates for the assertion of other worlds of sense and new forms of rigorous, interdisciplinary scholarship. In addition, the staff and faculty of the Designated Emphasis in Gender and Women’s Studies have been generous, providing me with another supportive location at which to think and work. Beyond these companions, there have been important conversations in seminars, working groups and conferences that have contributed to the production of this work. Most importantly, I would like to acknowledge the members of the Visuality and Alterity Working Group (2005 – 2008), including Lindsay Benedict, Laura Fantone, and Annie Fukushima, whose work established a set of terms that enriched the thinking done here. The Townsend Center for the Humanities at UC-Berkeley provided a wonderful home for that group.

I have listened, over the years, to other voices, which have been constantly in the background: Those of my family. I thus acknowledge the contribution of my children, Isadora and Joaquin Bratton-Benfield. Their voices provide the soundtrack of my life, and is, in fact, a sound that infuses it with sheer pleasure. My partner, Christopher Alan Bratton, is a trusted interlocutor and creative collaborator whose spirit infuses this project. My parents, Dalida Quijada Benfield and Marion W. Benfield, Jr. are loving and generous, and have been important examples for me of risk-taking and fearless living.
The generosity and collaboration of all of the artists whose work is discussed here must be acknowledged, including, in the order of my chapters, Cao Fei, the Raqs Media Collective, Michelle Dizon, Fanta Regina Nacro, and Cecilia Cornejo. Many provided me with generous access to their work, as well as answered questions of clarification. These are enormously busy and gifted people whose time I appreciate so much. I thank them for their committed work that has enabled many open-ended trajectories, only a few of which I follow here.

Conversations with many other artists and scholars have been helpful in affirming the urgency of the concerns expressed here and generating crucial questions for further inquiry. These artists and scholars include: Raul Ferrera-Balanquet, Okwui Enwezor, Pedro Pablo Gomez, Lewis Gordon, Ramón Grosfoguel, Hou Hanru, Evelyne Jouanno, Alanna Lockward, María C. Lugones, Walter Mignolo, Freya Schiwy, Katharine Wallerstein, and Catherine Walsh. Also, at a key moment, Boaventura de Sousa Santos affirmed the urgency of my project. Most recently, the Decolonial Aesthetics group, instigated through the Center for Global Studies and the Humanities at Duke University, has been a locus for focused and transformative conversations. While there are many more people I would like to mention, I will end with just one: Alfred Arteaga. Alfred was a brilliant scholar and poet. The memory of his joyous openness and nimble humor will forever contribute to my understanding of what it is to live within the matrix that is the 21st century, and to thrive. I regret not being able to share this conversation with him. Each of these friends and colleagues, and many more, made their mark on the milieu in which this apparatus emerges.
Preface

Origins of Cinema
I put my hands inside the black bag, seeing with my fingers. I feel the curve of the camera, the smooth length of metal that edges the case, the three short cylinders of the lenses and the cold hardness of the back of the encasement. At the bottom are an indentation and screw threads for the tripod.

I find the release mechanisms and remove the cover. I find the post that the film will sit on. Picking up the roll of film that is also inside the bag, I pull out a length of film. I install the reel on the post and place the strip of celluloid across the shutter.

Reaching around in the bag, I find the take up reels. I install the take up reel on the other post, and take the edge of the film and connect it to the take up reel. The heavy cover is found in the bag, and I struggle to get it situated correctly. Once its edges are perfectly flat with the body of the camera, I turn the locking mechanism. The camera is loaded.

This is about what will come next. This is just the beginning.

I pull the camera out of the black bag.

This is an encounter with the cinematic machine. It carries both the limits of its mechanical pasts and the possibilities of its next moment.

With this memory of another starting point, mapping the contours of a cold metal film camera in a black cloth bag, and the infinities of its cinemas, I begin.
Chapter One

The Vastness of the Apparatus
It is necessary to emphasize the vastness of the subject, the cinematographic apparatus.
-Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Apparatus*

In the introduction to her remarkable work, *Apparatus*, an artists’ book which consists of “Autonomous Works on the apparatus of cinema,” Theresa Hak Kyung Cha describes its intention as that of revealing “the individual components and complete apparatus, the interdependent operations comprising the “film, the author of the film, the spectator”” (1980, i). Cha’s poetic introduction emphasizes the covering and uncovering, veiling and unveiling, that the cinematographic apparatus performs. The apparatus produces an “impression of reality,” she explains, but obscures this process of production, as “inherent in its very medium, is to conceal from its spectator the relationship of the viewer/subject to the work being viewed” (i). This complete operation - the production of the film-world, of the spectator in that world, and the final concealment of that production - is the totality of this machinery, the cinematographic apparatus. It is an enclosure. Alongside this acknowledgement, however, her book, which includes theoretical texts, writings by filmmakers, key images from films, and original art work, posits other approaches to the constitution of this machinery. She emphasizes the importance of theory and practice in her selection of contributions: “The selection of works was made to approach the subject from theoretical directions synchronously with work of filmmakers…” (i). The filmmakers included are those whose work is “to turn backwards and call upon the machinery…” and to “…reveal the process of film” (i). Throughout the book, then, are process notes, scripts, theoretical writings, manifestos, and reflections on the process of production by filmmakers such as Dziga Vertov, Maya Deren, and Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub, alongside theoretical texts by Jean-Louis Baudry, Christian Metz, and Bertrand Augst.

Underlining the political importance of this synchrony of theory and practice, thinking and making, her introduction begins with an epigraph of a conversation with the filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard. The thought is posed to him, “You have repeatedly defined the difference between making a political film and making a film politically” (i). Godard responds to this with Brecht: “As Brecht already said, it’s not important to know what are the real things but rather how things are real ” (i). Godard elaborates this “how” in the context of capitalist society: “An image is nothing. It’s the relationships between the images that matter…Marxism indicates what is the nature of the relationship between things. They are relations of production” (i). With this, Cha suggests that the revelation of the machine of cinema is also a revelation of relations of power, between images, between people, and between people and machines. It is this relationship, which in Godard’s account is an unequal relationship based on capitalist relations of production, that is made secret by the cinematic apparatus. Spectators, and workers, do not own their labor. The machine, in this case, the cinematic machine, is a technology of capitalist exploitation. It produces capitalist subjects. This relationship is both reproduced and hidden from the viewer/subject by the cinematic apparatus. It produces their subjectivity in capitalism, it produces capitalism, and it holds these productions in secret.

Yet, revealing this apparatus, the project engaged in by the theorists and filmmakers in her book, is an activity that creates a space of transformation and agency, in which the apparatus can be “called upon” and employed to create different meanings. Cha concludes her concise preface with the insistence that her book will not engage in concealment, “enveloping its contents,” but will be an open, “plural text” (i). If the cinematic machine usually produces secrets and obscurities, then Cha’s goal is another kind of production and
visibility. As she writes, her book is a “making visible of his/her position in the apparatus” and the “making active” of the “viewer/reader” (i). Cha offers the book as another form of meaning making that is concerned with the revelation of its own process, and the emancipation of the author, film, and spectator. There may be multiple ways of knowing “how things are real,” and she suggests that it is through the intersection of both theory and practice that this can be revealed, a looking back upon the machine and an activating of the viewer/reader. This is another story about the cinematic machine, another Apparatus. This is a machine that might produce something other than capitalism, other than its forms of the real, and other than its secrets.

The questions of how the cinematic apparatus might become and produce a “plural text,” of what might allow for the telling of multiple stories about and with the apparatus, is where this dissertation begins. This dissertation is designed to reveal, in synchrony with Cha’s Apparatus, theories and practices that themselves reveal and construct anew the cinematic apparatus. The thinkers and practitioners with whom this dissertation converses create novel assemblages of the apparatus with elements situated across different cinematic media, locations and identities. De-centering the determining logics of capitalism, the fixity of geo-political locations as well as gendered, racialized, and national subjectivities, the processes attended to here refigure the cinematic apparatus as a machine with multiple iterations. The cinematic practices of all of the artists discussed here - Cao Fei, the Raqs Media Collective, Michelle Dizon, Cecilia Cornejo, and Fanta Régina Nacro - rearrange the elements of the apparatus, and in the process, transform its milieu, the worlds they inhabit. Each creates mobile spaces that are disobedient to existing epistemic boundaries. The space that is explored by the artist Cao Fei in her cinematic text, “Whose Utopia?” crosses borders between the worker and author, body and machine, China and the world, as well as between gendered subjects and the gendered spaces of the factory. It also repositions the factory in another set of global flows of cultural and economic information. In the multiple forms of the cinematic apparatus created by the group of artists who work together as the Raqs Media Collective, a mobile cinema is produced that spans geo-political and epistemic boundaries, and posits multiple surfaces upon which their cinematic texts may be projected. These nodal points map connecting lines that scale multiple registers of national, historical, cultural, and material embankments. Finally, in the work of Michelle Dizon, Cecilia Cornejo, and Fanta Régina Nacro, the apparatuses constructed by each, although significantly different from one another, trespass the real and the unreal, story and testimony, and the ghostly presences of spectators, within and beyond the cinematic space. At the points of encounter that they create between their spectators and their cinematic texts, the borders crossed are also those of the global flows of cinematic texts and other forms of information technologies, creating new routes of exchange.

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s Apparatus provides a luminous poetic and political starting point for entering into this conversation with these contemporary revelations and reworkings of the cinematic apparatus. Her book constitutes an open-ended theoretical and practical reconstitution of the apparatus. She constructs a zone of engagement in which many forms of the apparatus – its vastness – become possible. Some of the rhythms and tones encountered in this vastness appear in Cha’s own artistic contribution to Apparatus, a sequence of words and images in the center of the book, entitled “Commentaire.” Cha creates an assemblage of stills from the film Vampyre (1932), directed by Carl Dreyer, along with images of screens, brick walls, words, and black pages (Figures 1, 2, and 3). This is a rearrangement of author, film, and spectator. Dreyer’s film is made porous as its frames are transposed to other registers of meanings, constituted by the other variables Cha introduces.
These function as pauses and jump cuts. In her assemblage of images and words, the viewer/reader is resituated in relation to the film and to spectatorship. She provides space, and time, in which to explore multiple relationships to the various elements that she introduces. The organization is non-linear, temporally and spatially, as the elements invite re-reading and lengthy contemplation, without the pressure of completing a story, essay, or other genre-specific mode of viewing/reading that leads to an endpoint. The rich gray scale encountered in the stills of the film, the black pages, and the poetic words, evoke instead an evolving tonal geometry. This geometry maps multiple dimensions of illumination and opacity. The journey through this geometry is elegantly formed, with different elements and sensations is shaped in a rhythmic flow, punctuated by open spaces. Opacity, openness, and untold stories intersect sequences of strikingly complex black and white stills. The viewer/reader shifts along different moments of seeing and not seeing, knowing and not knowing. The rhythm of viewing/reading is jointly made, through the viewer/readers’ interaction with the pages of the book. Cha’s work is a sequence of discrete pages/frames that can be reordered endlessly. Across those pages/frames, Cha takes apart words and images and resequences them. This makes possible a consideration of the sensations of light, of obscurity, and of historical time, narrativity, and of cinematic experience.

In this work, Cha instantiates another apparatus. She creates a changing geometry of relationships between the cinematic text, the author, and the spectator. In this resituating, the terms transform. The author emerges as a fluid agent, the initiator of a series of creative gestures, beginning with her own. She is not so much an identity but a transiting pulse, an enabling rhythm that creates a multiplicity of meanings with diverse elements. The spectator, in turn, becomes a viewer/reader, an active participant in the construction of meaning. It is cinematic, but it is not a film; it is an apparatus, but it does not reproduce a relationship of capitalist production. “Commentaire” instantiates, then, a cinematic theory that is fused with a cinematic practice - a cinematic praxis - that the project of the book is designed as a whole to produce. This cinematic praxis is not simply a formalistic fusion of intellectual and aesthetic impulses, expressed as combinations of words (thought) and images (action). Rather, it is a process rather than a product, and one that is key for unleashing imagination and action. Paulo Freire defines praxis as a central tactic of struggles for liberation from oppression understood broadly, including capitalism and colonialism. For Freire, “It is only when the oppressed find the oppressor out and become involved in the organized struggle for their liberation that they begin to believe in themselves. This discovery cannot be purely intellectual but must involve action; nor can it be limited to mere activism, but must include serious reflection: only then will it be a praxis” (1970, 17). Praxis requires alternating from modes of action, activism, reflection, and intellectual work, or simultaneously engaging in all of these modes at once. A cinematic praxis, while it could take many forms, suggests dissolving or rearranging the positions of author, cinematic text, and spectator, so that the different modes of thought and action that each presume become entangled.
Figure 1. The trace of the author. “Commentaire,” Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, 1980.
Figure 2. A glimpse of the *Vampyre*. Still from “Commentaire.” Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, 1980.
Figure 3. A consideration of screens. Still from “Commentaire.” Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, 1980.
The cinematic praxis that Cha engages in, in this work, as well as throughout her oeuvre, which includes artists’ books, films, videotapes, and performances, construct novel cartographies for author, cinematic text, and spectator. In these works, the limits of these positions, and the relationships between them, is found and dwelled upon. As Laura Fantone reflects:

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha dealt profoundly with the limits of speaking and writing genres: their thresholds, ruins, failures, especially affected by forced multi-lingualism and colonialism. In her book *DICTEE*, in her videos *Videôme* and *Passage Paysage*, writing is a way of interrupting and dividing; words create white spaces on the surface, spaces that allow silence to be audible on the page. In-between screens and voices, a dreamlike space emerge where temporality changes, and memory become physical, momentarily embodied in a circular movement (2012, 2).

Multi-lingualism, colonialism, migration, dislocation, and gendered subjectivities constitute the milieu of contestation in which Cha’s apparatus emerges, and Fantone’s emphasis on the space that transforms time is central to understanding the cinematic praxis that Cha effects. In “Commentaire,” her artistic contribution to *Apparatus*, Cha addresses the monolingualism and colonialism of the cinematic apparatus as constituted in capitalism. Monolingualism and colonialism impose forms of one-way communication, within confined spaces and linear time, but the spatial and temporal dispersal of author and spectator redistributes and pluralizes sites of meaning-making. Cha’s activities of dis-assembling and re-assembling of words and images, spaces and times, make the apparatus ephemeral, positioned anew with each encounter. The elements and positions from which meaning is made transform and multiply, creating a new map of relationships. This is a temporary map that is redrawn every time. This form of mapping is central to the generative activity of the rhizome:

The rhizome is altogether different, a map and not a tracing. Make a map, not a tracing. The orchid does not reproduce the tracing of the wasp; it forms a map with the wasp, in a rhizome. What distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real…It is itself a part of the rhizome. The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 12).

Cha’s “Commentaire” is a wasp-orchid relationship. Its fields – its images and words, as well as its visual and temporal pauses - are connected through “an experimentation in contact with the real,” including Cha’s active mapping of multiple images, multi-lingual words, and the viewer/reader. The “map” that is created is a transformed cinematic apparatus. It is, indeed, seen to be “open and connectable in all of its dimensions.” The story of the cinematic apparatus in capitalism becomes only one possible story. Cha liberates the apparatus, and its transformation is neither its erasure nor its demolition, nor is her apparatus posited as the definitive alternative or lasting solution. Cha’s intervention brings into view a cinematic praxis that is rhizomatic, through a process that mobilizes author, cinematic text, and viewer/reader. This approach emphasizes agency and creativity, which loosens the cinematic machine and enables its reconstruction.

The cinematic praxis engaged with in this dissertation create assemblages of the cinematic apparatus, each an innovative machine of liberation. Each of these is a novel and ephemeral construction, not renovations of existing machines but the construction of different machines. The relocation of terms and the introduction of new terms enable these constructions. The notion of “technics” elicits the contours of the cinematic apparatus in this open-ended way. Bernard Stiegler discusses technics as all human techniques, regardless
of their end products or marketability. Technics are not just “the specified domain of tools, of instruments, if not only machines” (1998, 93). Instead, “technics (tekhe) designates, however, first and foremost all the domains of skill” (93). This encompasses such skills as cooking, craft, dance, as well as poetry, rhetoric and language. The elements from which a cinematic apparatus is constructed may be understood with this broad and flexible definition of the technics of human life, including both tools and skills. The term technics, or tekhe, in Stiegler’s usage, then, enables the expansion of the field of “technology” to include those tools separate from bodies (including what are in common phrasing considered to be “technology,” including cameras, cellphones, televisions, and computers), as well the entire domain of knowledge and skills. The idea of technology makes a fundamental shift here, away from its common sense understanding as electronic tools and machines, and is instead understood as a techno-log, a discourse or knowledge about technics.

In this sense, each cinematic apparatus is also a techno-log, a knowledge about technics. These techno-logs evidence the specific creativity and epistemic location of each apparatus and its creators, which become apparent in the selection and assemblage of technics. If technics are understood broadly, as suggested by Stiegler, and the cinematic apparatus is understood as techno-log, then the field of the cinematic, and of the milieu in which cinematic textic events occur, becomes expansive. This approach expands the field of the cinematic apparatus beyond the specific tools that are used to produce moving images, as well as beyond the forms of genre-based vocabularies that are commonly used to understand cinematic texts.

The expansion of the possible elements that might constitute the apparatus enables the recognition of a plurality of logics, epistemes, that might drive its construction. A multiplicity of these forms of cinematic praxis is explored throughout Cha’s Apparatus. After her introduction, the first text of the book is “The Vertov Papers,” a selection of writings by the filmmaker Dziga Vertov. These writings intersect with Stiegler’s sense of expanded technics. Vertov, a filmmaker committed to finding an exit point from the capitalist cinematic apparatus, emphasizes the necessity of making multiple connections between the camera and the world, between different technics. In the opening section, referring to the film, Man with the Movie Camera (1929), he writes:

A little man, armed with a movie camera, leaves the make-believe world of the film factory and heads for real life. It throws him to and fro like a ship. He’s a fragile toy boat on a stormy sea. The violent currents of city life swamp him again and again. Mobs of people surge around him at every turn…The man with the camera must give up his usual fixed position. He must exert his powers of observation and his agility to the maximum in order to keep up with the speed of life (1928/1980, 8).

The “film factory” here is a site of safe enclosure, while “real life” is threatening because of its multiplicity, forms, and speed. The camera escapes to a tumultuous scene that requires that the camera move to its rhythms. This is an epistemic shift that has enormous consequences for the moving images produced by Vertov’s movie camera. In Gilles Deleuze’s discussion of Vertov’s cinematic text, he describes the new eye that is evoked:

In Vertov, movement is perception, the glance, the eye. But the eye is not the too immobile human eye; it is the eye of the camera, that is an eye in matter, a perception such as it is in matter, as it extends from a point where an action begins to the limit of the reaction, as it fills the interval between the two, crossing the universe and beating in time to its intervals (2003, 40).

Resonating with Deleuze’s description of the mapping of orchid by the wasp, Vertov’s camera is an interface in motion, a threshold of the changing limits of action and reaction.
This connects different forms of matter, dissolving the eye into camera, and the camera into perception. Quoting Bergson, Deleuze elaborates: “You may say that my body is matter or that it is an image. . . . it is the universe as cinema in itself, a metacinema” (53). This sense of a “metacinema” is profoundly freeing. “The universe as cinema” suggests new logics of representation emerging from the multiple luminosit"ies and geometries of life itself.

The “universe as cinema” is understood here with an expanded sense, then, of the technics that might constitute this cinema, understanding it as multiple practices of moving image production illuminated on or by different forms of cameras, images, sounds, and screens, with many different possible positions for the author and spectator, and multiple epistemic approaches to what constitutes cinema. This is accomplished with diverse sets of elements in different locations. An expanded sense of the apparatus as produced in and through cinematic praxis is not only an epistemic shift in the forms of knowledge that might constitute the apparatus, but it is also an acknowledgement of the expanded practices of contemporary cinematic production, which include film, video, video installation, and Internet cinema. From this perspective, the disciplinary discourses of these forms that have separated them as distinct venues for theorizing aesthetics and politics are unnecessary. The relationship of the technics of the apparatus, as well as the locations of these assemblages, is of crucial interest here, and this requires a mobility and flexibility of the understanding of technics. While the idea of the apparatus enables a shifting and mobile framework through which to understand contemporary cinematic practices, the problem of location emerges as a tension through which another poetic dimension of the political becomes available. The question of the definition of location itself takes on many different meanings in relation to the elements of the apparatus. Each term - author, cinematic text, and spectator - has a location, which can be understood as a discursive site and a geo-political location. These different senses of location evince layers of localities.

Third Technics

Contending with the problem of location is crucial for a conversation with contemporary cinematic practices that are committed to renovating not only the cinematic apparatus, but the world. Each of the cinematic texts discussed in this dissertation is a rethinking of the meanings of globality and a production that creates other worlds through the assemblage of the apparatus. These tactics invoke the genealogy of Third Cinema. Third Cinema is a trajectory, like that of Cha’s Apparatus, that creates a terrain of liberated cinematic production. In Octavio Getino and Fernando Solanas’s telling of it:

Real alternatives differing from those offered by the System are only possible if one of two requirements is fulfilled: making films that the System cannot assimilate and which are foreign to its needs, or making films that directly and explicitly set out to fight the System. Neither of these requirements fits within the alternatives that are still offered by the second cinema, but they can be found in the revolutionary opening towards a cinema outside and against the System, in a cinema of liberation: the third cinema (2007, 42-43).

Octavio Getino and Fernando Solanas, like Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, begin with three terms, plotted on a timeline. They explain that if the first cinema is Hollywood cinema, and the second cinema, as a response to Hollywood, the auteur cinema of Cinema Novo and the French new wave, then Third Cinema is the “revolutionary opening towards a cinema outside and against the System, in a cinema of liberation.” Third Cinema, then, while it begins on a shared timeline with the first and second cinemas, jumps to another temporal
The revolution does not begin with the taking of political power from imperialism and the bourgeoisie, but rather begins at the moment when the masses sense the need for change and their intellectual vanguards begin to study and carry out this change through activities on different fronts (35).

Their insistence on the Third Cinema’s present tense, and its exteriority, “outside and against,” is predicated on being sited in a geo-political and epistemic space that is outside and against the space of the “System:” the Third World. It is this location that makes third cinema possible. The location of the authors of third cinema is thus a central concern, because location enables them to escape the fortress of official cinema, as they explain here:

But the questions that were recently raised appeared promising; they arose from a new historical situation to which the film-maker, as is often the case with the educated strata of our countries, was rather a latecomer: ten years of the Cuban Revolution, the Vietnamese struggle, and the development of a worldwide liberation movement whose moving force is to be found in the Third World countries. The existence of masses on the worldwide revolutionary plane was the substantial fact without which those questions could not have been posed (34).

The “Third World,” for Getino and Solanas, is the first site for revolutionary movement, and is both a temporal and spatial condition that makes third cinema possible. Here they offer an addition to the analytical trinity of the cinematic apparatus with which we began. The first moment in the apparatus is not the author, but is instead, “movement.” Next, the spectator is multiplied to become the “masses on the worldwide revolutionary plane.” Then arrives the film author, the “latecomer.” The film, finally, follows. The Solanas and Getino theorization, creates an other assemblage of the cinematic apparatus, positing movement as its opening moment. This time has a space: The location of this movement is central to their theorization. Third Cinema emerges from an epistemic space that is in tandem with a geo-political space. Solanas and Getino envision it as a location that is not lagging behind the world order of capitalism, but is rather leading the world to its next historical system. The “Third World” is the “worldwide revolutionary plane.” This is the “Third World” as the next world; a conceptualization that moves it from geo-political marginalization to epistemic and political center. It is temporally in front, and spatially in the center.

But while this is a transformative re-locating of the “Third World,” the Third Cinema apparatus that is constructed by Solanas and Getino maintains a fixity that becomes apparent when thought alongside the activity of Cha’s rhizomatic practice. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha might ask of the Solanas and Getino apparatus: Is the author of a cinematic text always separate from the masses? Are the masses only in one position, or do they infect all of the other elements? Is the author of a cinematic text only in one location, or does the author shift across other locations? Further, where is the political in the apparatus? Is it to only be found in the times and spaces of the “Third World” and the following of its movements, or is it in the creative construction of the apparatus, across multiple geo-political time-spaces? In response to these questions of location and the “Third World,” Trinh T. Minh-ha emphasizes the radical mobility of subjectivity across worlds: “Whether she turns the inside out or the outside in, she is, like the two sides of a coin, the same impure, both-in-one insider/outsider” (1989, 75). This shifting position crosses the fixed division created by the Solanas and Getino apparatus, a border between worlds. The possibility of mobility across worlds is also expressed in Homi Bhabha’s response to Third
Cinema through his formulation of the third space. Bhabha addresses the problem of the multiple binaries that are produced when there is a valorization of some locations over others, and a lack of attention to the fact of the epistemological construction of all locations: What the question of writing reveals most starkly are the ambivalent and fantasmatic texts that make ‘the political’ possible. From such a perspective, the problematic of political judgment cannot be represented as an epistemological problem of ‘appearance and reality’ or ‘theory and practice’ or ‘word and thing.’ [...] On the contrary, we are made excruciatingly aware of the ambivalent juxtaposition, the dangerous interstitial, invaginated relation of the ‘factual’ and the ‘fantasmatic’, and, beyond that, of the crucial function of the fantasmatic and the rhetorical – those vicissitudes of the movement of the signifier – in the fixing of the ‘factual’, in the ‘closure’ of the real, in the efficacy and power of strategic thinking in the discourses of Realpolitik (1989, 116 – 117).

Against the enclosure of the sign of the political in that of the real, Bhabha posits the third as an imaginative and symbolic vehicle that intervenes in the time-lag of signification, opening meaning at the moment at which it risks enclosure. He goes on to describe the “third space” as passage and process, an operation across symbolic registers, a journey of meaning between the I and the You. This interval is further opened by Trinh T. Minh-ha, who writes:

For “between” can be endless, starting from you and me, camera/filmmaker/spectator/events/persons/filmed images/sound/silence/music/language/color/texture/links/cuts/sequences/… (1989, 62).

Cinematic practices have the potential of destabilizing orders of meaning, across imbricated ideological and geo-political registers. The creative construction of the apparatus produces multiple points of engagement. The multiplicity of possible forms of movement are suggested here. In these iterations of third cinemas and spaces, there is an emphasis on infinite trajectories of movement.

In Getino and Solanas’ Third Cinema, there is a moving from and a moving towards, to an other form of signification and a transformation of milieu. This diachronic movement emphasizes the time-space of the unit of analysis of Marx, towards decolonization and a utopian communist society. At the same time, third cinema, posited as both outside and against, suggests a space of exteriority to the teleology of Modernity. It is this outside and against, this double movement, that are also present in Bhabha and Trinh’s conceptions. Both synchronic and diachronic, in the syntagmatic time-lag but moving paradigmatically into other meanings, these movements suggest the necessity of multiple framings of units of analysis, and time-spaces, in which to understand the milieu and the transformations effected in them by the artists discussed here, disparately located in multiple worlds.

If there is one assertion that all theorists of the moving image could agree on, it is the following: Cinemas produce worlds. Yet, understanding how these worlds are produced, and what are the theoretical frames through which we should approach this question, is a vast question, as vast as human societies and our imaginations. Keeping this question as open-ended as possible, understanding the “vastness” of the apparatus in different locations, requires loosening the conceptual grip of technological determinism. In Stephen Heath’s analysis of the theorization of the “cinematic apparatus,” he notes that there is a reliance on the cinematic machine as the originary moment, the thing itself. This reliance on the materiality of the machine echoes the commercial fetishization of “technology” in early cinema: “In the first moments of the history of cinema, it is the technology which provides
the immediate interest: what is promoted and sold is the experience of the machine, the apparatus” (1980, 1). The theorization of the apparatus, particularly as practiced by Christian Metz and Jean-Louis Baudry, as a “meta-psychological” operation, one in which the spectator is enclosed in the dream-world of ideology, is, for Heath, another instance of technological determinism:

The site or moment is a return to the machine, the apparatus: the facts of the Lumiére programme are taken up, examined, by Metz himself and by others – camera, movement, projection, screen. Or rather, the facts become new facts, the terms are recast under the pressure of a theoretical discourse that inserts new concerns, different conceptions for an understanding of what the programme indicates as ‘this apparatus’ (2).

This theorization may leave out the question of the historical and assume a false unity of the history of the apparatus:

Hence the necessity to engage not a history of the technology of cinema, but a history of the cinema-machine that can include its developments, adaptations, transformations, realignments, the practices it derives, holding together the instrumental and the symbolic, the technological and the ideological, the current ambiguity of the term apparatus. Hence the necessity also to conceive that that history is a political understanding, to imagine that it can be grasped critically from aspects of contemporary avant-garde film practice, for example, or that it might be radically envisaged and recast by the questions posed by women to the machine in place (7).

The question of the historical, is not, then a question of the “real relations” in place between workers and machines. Rather, it is question of the possible multiplicity of the “cinema-machine,” within and across different trajectories of history, including its “transformations” and “realignments.” The question of history is rendered open, to be constructed by “avant-garde film practice” and “the questions posed by women.” As with Cha’s gesture, Heath points here to the possibility of the production of different forms of cinema-machines.

Alongside Heath’s analysis, Peter Wollen also points out the false unity of the apparatus:

I would like first to stress that the technology of cinema is not a unified whole, but is extremely heterogeneous. It covers developments in the fields of mechanics, optics, chemistry and electronics…In the past theorists have tended to stress and even essentialise one or other area of technology at the expense of the others. Cinema is seen in terms of the camera and the recording process or reproduction and the printing process or projection and the physical place of the spectator (Bazin, Benjamin, Baudry). In this way the heterogeneity of the cinema is reduced to one subset of determinations in a reductionist manner. In effect a myth of the cinema (Bazin’s own term) is thereby created, which serves to efface the reality of production (1980, 21).

This myth of cinema, in Wollen’s analysis, also impacts the practice of avant-garde filmmaking, which sees the “means” as “essences” (21). The call that Wollen makes, then, is to understand the “different and heterogeneous determinations at work and struggling to release them from the interlock in which they are bound, that we can conceive and construct a new cinema, not necessarily with a new technology, but certainly with a new place of and for technology” (21).

An approach that accounts for the multiplicity of different cinema-machines is found in Deleuze and Guattari insistence upon “collective assemblages of enunciation” in theorizing communication (1987, 88). They insist upon the autonomy of specific instances of
communication as key moments in the structuring of the semiotic system, and use the concept of representational regimes, or semiotic machines, as a way of understanding the highly mobile, complex, multilayered structures of ideology and communication systems that include both semiotic rules and individual communicators, or users and innovators of the system, in a specific time-space or socio-historical moment. Deleuze and Guattari emphasize the contingency and non-alignment of individuals, addressing them as multiplicities, because of their constitution within multiple and simultaneous sites of assemblages of enunciation. In conversation with this call, Cha’s book both includes but moves beyond the trajectory of film theory discussed by Heath and Wollen. Cha’s book is an open-ended engagement with the terms of cinematic texts, authors, and spectators. Differently coded cinematic machines are evinced by the diverse texts included in Cha’s Apparatus. Not rigidly adhering to an orthodoxy of an historical or theoretical genealogy of film theory, the book contains manifestos, scripts and critical analysis. Along with the other contributions, the total effect of this arrangement is much like Cha’s own intervention, her “Commentaire.” There is a distributed sense of the importance of both word and image and an expanded sense of the presence of multiple time-spaces of cinema and thinking about cinema. This sensibility creates a conversation in and amongst diverse thinkers and practitioners in different parts of the world and at different historical moments.

Across the global landscapes of contemporary cinematic praxis, there are many points of entry that allow glimpses of the collective assemblages of enunciation that are being continuously formed, as Heath suggests, by women who are asking questions of the “machines in place.” These engage multiple cinematic technics, including film, video, and the Internet. Just such a generative starting point is the artist Minerva Cuevas’ Internet project, www.espora.org. It positions Internet cinema, and information technology generally, as a sign for rebellion. The website offers a meeting ground for the sharing of technics amongst individuals and movements, including a series of images, to download, reproduce and disseminate. They are spores, helping to seed worlds that are not yet known. These worlds are in formation, imagined, constructed, and announced by artists and activists, at different points on the geo-political map. A statement on the website communicates its intention: “Espora.org is a cultural project dedicated to the construction of a infrastructure for the collective learning of free technologies and to the socialization of knowledge through a server (a computer connected to the Internet) in which we develop resources in an autonomous way” (Espora, 2005). Cuevas creates a series of images for distribution on the site. Computers are central to the possible worlds proposed by www.espora.org. One of her images is a black and white illustration of a workstation with several computers and monitors, with the following caption: “Herramientas Colectivas: Siembra rebelias, cosecha libertades [Collective tools: sow rebellions, harvest liberties].” The computers in this image have been transposed by the artist onto an other horizon, towards worlds beyond global capital. Each displays signs that contest the hegemonic meanings of technology: commercial exchange, economic development and intellectual property. On one of the computers depicted, where the corporate logo would usually be found, Cuevas instead positions an inverted copyright symbol, hybridized with the crossed bones of a pirate flag. This announces: “Death to copyright at the hands of intellectual property pirates!” Alongside this is a computer screen that displays a drawing of a jolly penguin, suggesting the secret and subversive double-lives of cartoon characters, finding an other path of cultural production after-hours. On the final computer screen is emblazoned the ancient glyph-like icon of www.espora.org, the URL at which this image can be found, and one of the many websites that Cuevas has created, often working with other artists and activists.
This sense of shared technics towards a world in creation resonates with Boaventura de Sousa Santos’ conception of post-abyssal thinking: “Post-abyssal thinking stems thus from the idea that the diversity of the world is inexhaustible and that such diversity still lacks an adequate epistemology. In other words, the epistemological diversity of the world does not yet have a form” (2007, 26). The motto of the World Social Forum, the most important meeting ground of social movements against neo-liberal globalization, is: “An Other World Is Possible.” Thinking with de Sousa Santos and Cuevas, the phrase might become “Other Worlds Are Possible in the Future, and Also Exist Now.” This slogan suggests two different movements, one temporal, and one spatial. It acknowledges the possibility that other worlds of sense, or “the epistemological diversity of the world,” exist, now. This is the vertical, paradigmatic, movement, suggesting that if we were to move, up or down, we might find, while still at the same point in on the time line, other positions in the symbolic and geopolitical field that are, indeed, other worlds. At the same time, it suggests that if not “now,” then other worlds might come, in the future. This is the horizontal, syntagmatic, movement. Both of these movements are of equal importance.

These two movements are equally present in Cuevas’ images. Her images resignify both the hardware of computer technology, the paradigmatic field of sense of the objects, as well as the teleological discourse of information communication technologies, or its horizontal, temporal flow. The spore invokes Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s rhizomatic thought, as well as Arjun Appadurai’s sense of media generated “sodalities;” new affiliations, enabled by information technologies, between people in disparate locations. These create novel cartographies of shared imaginaries and social movements. This hope is echoed, but also tempered by, an additional public domain image that Cuevas offers on her website. It is an image fashioned in the style of the international language of street signs. A figure holds the scales of justice; beneath is the caption: “Por un acceso justo [Towards a just access].” Here, Cuevas calls attention to unequal access to means of production and distribution of cinema and digital media and the domination of global capitalist media, and asks us to imagine the route towards “just access.” Imagining this route requires that we engage its terms; the meanings of justice, and of access. What kind of justice, and what is its measure? What are the technics that need to be accessed, and by whom? What is the quality and the manner of access? How does this access flow? From whom to whom, where to where, and is it one way, two way, or multidirectional? Drawing on Rosie Braidotti’s discussion of Deleuze, the way towards “just access” might be unexpected:

Deleuze subverts this vision of one, steady central point of reference, a normative principle of rationality as the privileged viewpoints, seeing without being seen, as in Foucault’s notion of the Panopticon. He severs the thread which links the puppets to the master and lets them circulate freely in space, that is to say no longer activated by a central power but through the multiple effects of attraction and repulsion of spatial entities, bodies intersecting with each other. Deleuze gives up the quest for ideas which are just, which would conform to the dominant system of significations, and prefers ‘just ideas’, temporary coalitions of expressive forces, of intellectual desires.

The intertwining of justice and access are at the heart of movements for global technology, understood as communication hardware and software, that work to provide these to “marginalized” groups around the world. Yet Minerva Cuevas is not just searching for a right to be given access, but rather an other approach access altogether; understanding computers and other tools as malleable, permeable, and flexible technics, not to be narrated
and fixed through their legitimated status as gifts. In this sense, Trinh T. Minh-ha’s formulation of the liberatory power of Otherness is instructive:

Otherness becomes empowering critical difference when it is not given, but re-created. Defined with the Other’s newly formed criteria (1989, 71).

Cuevas does not accept the gift of techno-logy from the “developed” world, the Global North. She positions what is known as “technology” as instead, technics, and works towards developing a “newly formed criteria” for the technics she engages, an other techno-logy. In this way, the authors of cinematic texts in the contemporary global landscape of cinematic praxis such as Cuevas re-create the tools, forming new techno-logies – knowledges about technics - in the process.

The relationship between the individual and collective as fluid and mobile is crucial to understanding how contemporary authors of cinematic texts reconstruct the apparatus. This requires a methodology that is complex, with multiple nodal points of meaning: collective assemblages of enunciation. This is also a process of world creation. In conversation with Hans Ulrich Obrist, Cuevas talks about the political implications of her collective formation:

Minerva: […] I have been following these manifestations since the beginning. I met the people organizing "June 18th", the first of this global demonstrations, I found very interesting the idea of building an international network of people questioning capitalism as a system. …I think that's the reason why we are interested in media and a wide range of tools like the internet, or printed matter like "Ne Pas Plier" in France. They distribute stickers, banners or postcards at demonstrations, and they help in that sense to spread information, it's very good work, they are involved in education as well, they work with children, they print a newspaper, those can be valid ways. I think we have to approach activism as a way of life, some kind of simple popular rational ethics... why is it so difficult?! I think collectives have a short life period in general, so at the end it has to be a series of very personal decisions in daily life (2001).

This sense of the individual moment within the ephemerality of collective machines illuminates the mobility of the author in the transformed cinematic apparatus. The “series of very personal decisions” produces moments at which emerge collective assemblages of enunciation. Just as Deleuze and Guattari go beyond making the distinction of structure and instance, or langue and parole, to use linguist Ferdinand De Saussure’s theorization, in their discussion of collective assemblages of enunciation in theorizing communication (1987, 88), Cuevas also reveals the indivisibility of the personal and the collective. Specific instances of communication structure the semiotic system, and constitute representational regimes, or semiotic machines. Deleuze and Guattari also emphasize the contingency and non-alignment of individuals, understood as multiplicities because of their constitution within multiple and simultaneous sites of assemblages of enunciation. This elaborates semiotic activity that is unconstrained. This approach enables a reframing of the question of ideology in the multilayered structures of communication systems. Communication is an amalgam of ideological discourses, semiotic rules and individual users and innovators of the system, in specific time-spaces and socio-historical moments.

While located, refigurations of the cinematic apparatus like Cuevas’ also entail a transformation of the milieu of the apparatus. This is a global milieu. Communication systems and the world-system known as globalization are intertwined. With the theorization and practice of the apparatus as a collective assemblage of enunciation, it is organically
integrated into complex elements of its milieu that exceed local constraints. Not a solitary tool, it is assembled from technics, both within and beyond the tools that would generally be thought of as constituting the “technology” of cinema, media or information communication technology. This is a reclamation of communication in a contested arena. The cinemas of contemporary capitalism, including computer-based and other communication media, such as the telegraph, telephone, television and radio, are central to the expansion of the world-system and its attendant hierarchies. These contribute to the discursive production of globalized differences that produce and order forms of knowledge, determined in and through raced and gendered senses of location. They are central to the ceaseless construction and reconstruction of the West as a meta-archive of knowledge, and as instruments of power, “technology” has been constructed as the property of the Global North, a gift to be given to the Global South.

Yet, this global milieu in which the cinematic apparatus is constructed is already troubled by geographical and political disturbances. David Harvey’s iteration of the molecular activity of capital elicits this sense of the small movements that transform everything. Addressing territorial and capitalist logics of power, he discusses the ungovernability of certain forms of agency: “Individual (usually business, financial and corporate) agency is everywhere at work and the molecular form makes for multiple forces that bump into each other, sometimes counteracting and at other times reinforcing certain aggregate trends” (2003, 28). Different logics are in tension with one another: “The literature on imperialism and empire too often assumes an easy accord between them: that political-economic processes are guided by the strategies of state and empire and that states and empires always operate out of capitalistic motivations. In practice the two logics frequently tug against each other, sometimes to the point of outright antagonism” (29).

Extending this logic, communications systems, could be described as functioning in both territorial, including realms of the political, symbolic, ideological and capitalist orders, and financial, infrastructure, deterritorializing logics. The “molecular” activity of small-scale cinematic production constitutes a form of molecular activity that contributes towards an “antagonism” between territorial and capitalist logics. It asserts a site of molecular material production at the same time that it contests both territorial and capitalist logics. This molecular activity may include liberatory gestures that acknowledge and mobilize collective knowledges that have been subordinated. The global systems that have produced that subordination are multi-layered.

Aníbal Quijano proposes the term the “coloniality of power” to understand ongoing historical legacies of colonialism, which both reinscribe global relations of subordination, but also produces creative exteriorities (2000). This term is dependent on the conception of the modern/colonial capitalist world-system, which emphasizes the continuity of colonialism in contemporary geo-politics. As explained by Ramón Grosfoguel:

From a modern/colonial/capitalist world-system approach, modern peripheral nation-states, mostly populated by non-Western peoples, are still colonial in relation to the hegemonic European/Euro-American core states. Moreover, the impact of the European colonial expansion still informs the racial/ethnic hierarchies and the “imagined community” at the nation-state level. Thus, continuities from colonial times are as important as discontinuities” (2003, 7).

While exteriority to the modern/colonial/capitalist world-system has no guaranteed outcomes or privileges, for some thinkers, such as Walter Mignolo, this exteriority entails a valorization of indigenous ways of thinking and being. Gloria Anzaldúa’s conception of the
borderlands provides the generatively shifting ground upon which Mignolo builds his thinking:

The radical move made by Anzaldúa (as well as by Indigenous and Afro people in continental South America and the Caribbean) is no longer one of “resistance” but one of conceptual (epistemic) “delinking”; a radical shift in the geo-politics and body politics of knowledge. However, in order to delink and move forward, you need a new pair of shoes (2005, 138).

Anzaldúa’s borderlands is a site of multiply articulated differences and creativities. Looking across the globe to map cinematic praxis across contemporary circuits of communication can be understood as a locating of these borderlands locations, an unveiling of the historical and geographical realities of the colonial encounter and its consequences, and to build on multiple languages of critical engagement and cultural production. Understanding the logics of colonial encounters also requires a mobilizing of a borderlands across psychic and national borders. It is also to disrupt and rearrange norms of understanding flows and counter-flows of power. The border between North and South, the colonial and the decolonial, between nation-states, and between the colonized and decolonized is a mobile and contingent interface.

There are, consequently, no fixed, proscribed answers for the question of how to produce cinematic texts in these borderlands spaces, no easily identifiable markers of North or South, colonial or decolonial, and no indicators of authenticity and purity. Freya Schiwy articulates this resonant ambiguity across forms of indigenous media production in the Americas. Through her research on indigenous video productions in the Andes, she concludes that we must decolonize the aesthetic norms that have been defined as decolonial or Third Cinema aesthetics. In the videotapes with which she engages, she finds multiple logics at work that are beyond the tactics called for by theorists of Third Cinema who insist upon the necessity of producing cinematic texts that are beyond “the System.” Because she encounters forms of cinematic texts that are not clearly within or outside of the genres of the First or Second Cinema, as defined by Solanas and Getino, Schiwy posits the opportunity for a radical re-opening of the questions of the politics of representation in and through indigenous media. Rather than settle for a paradigm of authentic anti-imperialist media in a binary relationship to “the System,” she insists instead on the necessity of understanding the specificity and complexity of what she terms the “techne” and “techné” - the apparatus itself and the uses that the apparatus are put to – in theorizing the aesthetics of indigenous media.

In the collective processes of indigenous video groups in the Andes, she writes: “Video emerges from this process as a logical extension of indigenous intellectual capacities and of indigenous epistemic technologies. They collapse as such the division between techne and techné by transforming not only the use or the form of the technological product, but the definition of the technology itself” (2008, 12).

This redefinition requires a commitment to theorizing cinematic praxis as it emerges differently in particular socio-historical locations. It also requires a rethinking and reconstruction of the vocabularies of cinema and media studies, which has itself become part of the “System,” and often relies on the terms of “the apparatus” as if they were always fixed and impervious to local, molecular reassemblages. While the theoretical roots of these analyses may have something to offer to theorizing the cinematic apparatus in its current complexities, their inflexibility inhibits their epistemological ruptures. These approaches must be re-contextualized in fields of geo-political knowledge, the colonially of power, and global institutions of racialization and gender, and invigorated through an engagement with the now multiple forms of cinema that are being produced and distributed globally.
“Trans”-modernity, a term offered by Enrique Dussel, provides a locus for the possibility of epistemic alterity that belies the totalizing narratives suggested by the conceptualization of the apparatus as a consistent reproduction of capitalist ideologies. Dussel offers an image of these spaces of exteriority:

This modernity’s technical and economic globality is far from being a cultural globalization of everyday life that valorizes the majority of humanity. From this omitted potentiality and altering “exteriority” emerges a project of “trans”-modernity, a “beyond” that transcends Western modernity (since the West has never adopted it but, rather, has scorned it and valued it as “nothing”) and that will have a creative function of great significance in the twenty-first century (2002, 221).

“Trans”-modernity is not simply a given condition, but it is a moment in which struggle is being constantly waged, a “globality” that counters globalization. While it may be nourished by the knowledge of indigenous and non-Western people, it is also a practice that is available to all who engage in the struggle to inhabit what has been the “omitted potentiality” of globalization. Dialogue is a central moment in the construction of “trans”-modernity for Dussel. Within this fundamental and necessary dialogue, our subjectivities are transformed, traveling between the worlds of Eurocentrism and those of the excluded. This is a voyage between times, spaces, and epistemologies, forms of art and cinema, and ways of thinking, confronting the being and the non-being that our bodies inhabit.

It is precisely this voyage that is addressed by Édouard Glissant and Catherine Walsh, both of whom think with and toward a “trans”-modern, geo-political semiotics emerging from decolonial understandings of time-space, subjectivity and modernity. The rupturing of the time-space of modernity/coloniality that occurs through their re-visioning of the places and times from they work constitutes collective re-creation of semiotic and epistemic understandings. Glissant, whose work emerges from the geo-political and poetic spaces of the Caribbean, offers the key notions of errantry, root thinking versus rhizomatic thinking, and the poetics of relation. Walsh, who works in the context of Afro-Ecuadorian and Indigenous activism in the Andes, discusses ancestrality and lo propio. Together, their work forms a trans-modern approach to semiotics which can be productively applied to an analysis of contemporary iterations of the cinematic apparatus.

Glissant’s notions of errantry and the Poetics of Relation, developed through an analysis of Caribbean literature and politics, are diasporically and rhizomatically indebted to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s “root” and “rhizome.” The Poetics of Relation is an elaboration of rhizomatic thought: “The notion of the rhizome maintains, therefore, the idea of rootedness but challenges that of a totalitarian root. Rhizomatic thought is the principle behind what I call the Poetics of Relation, in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other” (1997, 11). The conception of relation as an always moving towards the Other is crucial. The search for origins and roots as markers of spiritual power and identity construction is characteristic of Western civilization and its conquests. For those creating new epistemes beyond that history, it is necessary to reject the call for developing roots. Glissant asserts that the “Antillean soil” is a “rhizomed land” (146). The rhizome is itself deterritorialized as a Caribbean and diasporic concept effected by coloniality; the space of the Caribbean is a rootless root. The Poetics of Relation emphasize knowledge that emerges from interaction amongst and between diasporic and decolonial subjects. Importantly, it is from “rhizomed” territories that this possibility emerges.

Catherine Walsh proposes ancestrality and lo proprio, concepts that further elaborate a sense of an/other semiotics. She argues that the ancestral creates a particular sense of history and imagination for Afro-Andean peoples:
In the thought of Juan García, the ancestral is a mandate of the elders that one must fulfill and pass on. It is a mandate that reinforces and cultivates a collective sense of belonging. The ancestral is equivalent to an affiliation or attachment that preceded those living today and has three central elements:

1. *Ancestrality is philosophy* because it has teachings and mandates that help order life, behavior, and relations within the community.

2. *Ancestrality is doctrine* because it implies an obedience and respect in relation to the elders.

3. *Ancestrality is history* because it constructs ties between my being and that of my ancestors.

Ancestrality then implies a learning of and from what preceded me; to be allied or united with those who came before (forthcoming a, 3).

Ancestrality proposes an/other history from which to build practices and analyses of communication. It also privileges “old” forms of communication that in the developmentalist discourse of coloniality would be seen as obstacles to development; as traditions that are not worth saving. An engagement with contemporary practices of ancestral history, storytelling and language comes into view as a necessary project. This mobilizes definitions of culture, and the semiotics of these cultural practices, into a new sphere of thinking, an other episteme; engaging with the knowledges, languages and symbolic practices that have been anthropologized by the Western episteme as its evolutionary past is to create an entirely new temporal-spatial field of inquiry.

Walsh also develops this sense of interconnection with the concept of *pensamiento propio* which reflects a relationality that resonates with the rhizomed thinking of Glissant. While it suggests property or heritage, Walsh is clear that *lo propio* is not only for ‘us’: “Today indigenous and black peoples’ struggles are waged not only in local contexts but also in national and transnational spaces that cross and make fluid geopolitical as well as ethnic or racialized borders” (2002, 66). Walsh articulates the possibility here, as does Glissant, of the knowledges and histories of colonized and diasporic peoples enriching each other towards a larger project of global proportions. This inter-relation enables a new epistemic ground upon which to build a transmodern engagement with cultural production with an intercultural, rhizomed semiotics that intersect multiple histories, forms and strategies across global colonialities.

*The Assemblage of Now*

This is the contemporary milieu, then, in which the author, the cinematic text, and the spectator encounter each other. Cinema and capitalism are intertwined. Colonial wounds endure. But these are also refigured in the 21st century as spaces of memory and creativity, as well as sites of mourning and transformation. The movements of territorialization and deterritorialization echo across the global mediascape, whispering old stories while also producing new narratives. There are simultaneous moments of coloniality, de-coloniality, across East/West and North/South divides. New assemblages of power emerge, producing multiple and competing representational regimes. In this context, this dissertation examines a series of cinematic texts and considers how these practices constitute novel apparatuses. These iterations occur at mobile and diverse geo-political and subjective locations. They enact both a deterritorializing and territorializing movement, as they wrest fields from the clutches of global capital, while also capturing them for the imagined communities of future worlds. The dream of a liberated apparatus is revived here, not on a linear timeline of revolution, but as an open-ended set of philosophies and models of cinematic practice. Sited
along variegated routes of contemporary global society, the artists with whom this dissertation converses create assemblages of the cinematic apparatus with new claims for emancipatory practices. These contemporary works constitute a web of rhizomatic affiliations, shifting iterations of third spaces and cinemas, through a poetics that reconstructs geo-political, cultural, gendered, and raced subjectivities. This transformed field becomes an entangled site of aesthetic, political, and economic arrangements across a range of cinematic production, including digital media and internet practices. Importantly, it is from this “rhizomed” territory, the world understood as criss-crossed with the multiple histories and contestations of capitalism, coloniality, decoloniality, and communication, that this possibility emerges.

The guiding question is, how do contemporary cinematic practices refigure the apparatus? Further, following the impulse of Third Cinema, how do these assemblages transform not only their milieu, but also the world? The approach taken to these questions in each chapter is inflected with a different emphasis, ranging from textual analysis, to an analysis of specific cultural places and flows, to historical, discursive and geo-political contexts of communication systems. The chapters are structured to answer this question according to the logic of the three terms of author, cinematic text, and spectator. These terms are each used as entry points into a process of mapping the apparatus that is constructed in each case. The cinematic events can then be understood comparatively and relationally, pursuing relevant contemporary theoretical resonances, while also contending with the new terms that they propose. The following questions are asked in order to elicit the contours of these apparatus constructed in each case: What technics are selected for the construction? How are the technics positioned in relation to each other? What is the milieu produced in this relationship? Each apparatus has a spatial and temporal consequence, which is correlated with a geo-politics of knowledge. Each also produces a novel approach to subjectivity, which is constructed through particular combinations of technics from multiply inscribed locations. These locations range from local cultural practices to nodal points in global communication networks.

What does it mean to critically engage with cinematic texts while not fixing them, not attempting to enclose them? David Bordwell discusses the process of film interpretation as that of imposing a “semantic field” upon a text: “Semantic fields become plausible by virtue of being connected to meanings that the critic has already identified as referential or explicit” (1992, 35). While it emphasizes the creativity of the critic, in this theorization, the imposition of a rhetorical field, the contextualization of a text, is however, a top-down affair. Instead, this project takes its cues from what Chela Sandoval articulates as a methodology of the oppressed, or a “differential consciousness” as a project of engaging with cultural texts from multiple “semantic fields.” This, Sandoval argues, is a strategy of survival, not just criticism. This methodology, an inventive methodology of for everyday survival and liberation, informs the approach to engaging with the cinemas discussed in this dissertation. Not simply academic, it is a process of liberation that creates the possibility of meaning making towards other forms and sites of life:

Differential consciousness is described as the zero degree of meaning, counternarrative, utopia/no-place, the abyss, amor en Aztlan, soul (2000, 146). Referencing strategies suggested by Bhabha and Trinh, Sandoval theorizes resistance as an active, inclusive, ever-changing field of epistemic and semiotic strategies. The methodology of the oppressed is a creative space of both moving between and creating anew, which is practiced by her own conception of the “cyborg,” the U.S. woman of color, which she elaborates alongside Donna Haraway’s notion. This process is enacted in the scholarship of
this dissertation, which is understood as a differential engagement rather than the fixing of these cinematic texts in an imposed semantic field. Thinking with, and alongside these artists and cinematic texts, the dissertation engages in a form of active meaning making in which the roles of author, cinematic text, and viewer/reader are put into play. The tracing of the remnants, refusals and re-compositions of the apparatus in media practices reveals the consequences of colonial and capitalist conditions for current global media cultures, as well as practices of scholarship.

In the chapter that follows, First, Movement, the transformed position of the cinematic author elaborates an analysis of third technics and the question of capitalism and machines. The artist Cao Fei’s video and performance project, *Whose Utopia?* (2005) refigures relations between the author, the cinematic text, and the spectator, as well as between flows of meaning, scales of time-spaces, and value in the capitalist world economy. The author/artist becomes worker/performer, with the factory as mise en scene, and shares this role when the “masses” also become co-authors, exceeding capitalist logics of exchange. *Whose Utopia?* asserts the field of meaning from which emerges the possibility of mapping the arrangement of technics that is further developed through the ensuing chapters. The identities of worker and artist are discussed as technics. The multiplicity of relationships between machines and actors is also introduced, and the machines of the factory are seen to be cyborgian co-constructors. The transformation of milieu that occurs with this rearrangement is understood, finally, through the question of capital flows and communication, as the technic of video becomes a collective property that interrupts factory time and space. The role of workers in value production is dislodged in the geopolitical context in which this work is produced and circulates. The artists are on the factory floor, and in the gallery, the factory is the spectacle. In these contexts of reception, the labors of producing and consuming are conspicuously unproductive. *Whose Utopia?* reworks capitalism’s globalities and its relations of production in the specific context of the factory in southern China, and in doing so invokes multiple possibilities for the transformation of woman, man, and nation.

Chapter Three, Indeterminate Cinema, identifies the screen as the starting point for discussion. The existence of multiple screens suggests the time-spaces beyond development in the milieu of the globality of India. It is another kind of factory, including skills and tools of engineering, communication systems, transportation, and cinemas. The temporality of progress imbues all of these technics. These are rearranged and ultimately transformed through the work of the Raqs Media Collective, who reposition these communication flows across other flows of the Internet and the sculptural spaces of video installation. The work of the Raqs Media Collective is the production of the time and space of a now that is not only contemporary, but an ongoing project of the co-construction of subjectivities and histories that looks forward and backward. They enact a refusal of global discourses of development and engage in an attendant re-mapping of the Global North and South. Through a conversation with the diverse cinematic practices of the Collective, based in New Delhi, India, the multiple directions, speeds and tones of their transnational media are evoked. Their work references ancestrality and ritual in the global discursive economy and the politics of information communication technology. Trinh T. Minh-ha’s theorizing of contemporary digital media aesthetics and politics is engaged in conversation with Raqs in order to elicit the contours of their project. Media, for Raqs, is a domain of practice that produces multiple third spaces and forms of work. Raqs understands their work in relation to ancient rituals and both “new” and “old” media in their geopolitical and cultural location, which has for centuries been a crossroads of cultures. This practice becomes a reminder of
the precursors and limits of new media cultures, as well as an invocation of other ways of knowing and being. Their work includes audio and video installations, Internet art works, and theoretical manifestos, with an emphasis on the relational strategies through which they reconstruct relations of power. In their collective approach to making, exhibiting and experiencing their work, as well as the ways that they both insist upon and refuse a locatedness in the “Global South,” they point towards a the “trans-modernity” and a “globality against globalization” proposed by Enrique Dussel.

Chapter Four, Spectator/Specter, pushes past the multiple screens of the Raqs Media Collective to gaze upon the disappearance of the spectator. Many spectres haunt global cinematic screens. The theorizing of the spectator as a fixed recipient disables the theorizing of the apparatus as creative and mobile site of creation. Through a liberation of the spectator, cinema is also liberated. This process is initiated by the work of Michelle Dizon, Cecilia Cornejo, and Fanta Régina Nacro. Global warfare marks a refrain in their work, which produces an escape for spectators and a liberation of spectres. In their recent engagements with war and its cinematic consequences, the multiple condensations of particular moments of war are subjected to a reverse chronology that both exposes and hides. They look through the war machine and turn their gaze on each other, other women, in other sites of war across the globe. Yet, war, while it is visually present globally, is also a simultaneously obscure phenomenon. Paul Virilio theorizes war and its cinemas as the defining dynamic of our times, while Sylvia Wynter describes the “war zone of our times” as the ongoing contestation of symbolic orders of global racialization. The space-time of pure war, pure cinema, suggests a counter-formulation that goes a step further - the perfection of a cinema of simultaneous multiplicity and invisibility. From their diverse geo-political locations, these authors of cinematic texts evoke a gendered gnosis of warfare that is both site-specific yet intensely universal, anchored by memory, revenge and love. The rupture opened by these stories return us to Julio García Espinosa’s conception of an “Imperfect Cinema,” a cinema of life, made possible by specters.

In the closing chapter, Herramientas Colectivas (Collective Tools): Three Propositions, the consequences of these artists’ production of distinctive cinematic sites of intervention in a world-system dependent on information communication technologies is discussed. Their work intercepts global flows and creates different streams. Understood as a pluralistic archive of practices, I propose that these works suggest the presence of other vehicles of knowledge that refigure the cinematic archive as a meta-archive, towards new senses of globality, time, and a plurality of inscriptions of life. Each instance represents a reformulation of technics – a movement and a transformative engagement that are specific to each instance but speak to forms of human communication beyond the receding and reinscribing divides of global capital. In this sense, they claim the technics of the cinematic apparatus to create an assemblage of symbolic orders of life not supported by the priorities of the modern/colonial/capitalist world-system. These cinemas become a collective inheritance, now, along with their histories, struggles, previous journeys, and futures.
Chapter Two

First, Movement
Figure 4. Workers’ movements. Still from “Whose Utopia?,” Cao Fei. 2007.
The three terms of the apparatus referred to by Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, “film author, film, and spectator,” are in sequence. They tell a story about cinema, forming a technology. The author occupies the first point on a timeline. This is followed by the film, the second point on the timeline. Finally, the third point, the spectator, appears. This timeline, however, as Cha demonstrates, is malleable. It is disrupted by Cha’s “Commentaire,” as she shifts between the positions of author, film and spectator. The third point becomes the first, the author becomes the cinematic text, etc. With this mobility, Cha inscribes another apparatus. Through this reworking, the spatial and temporal locations of “film author, film, and spectator” are made porous. The putting into play of these three points, with their temporal and spatial locations in movement, enables another apparatus, evincing new technologies.

The location of the film author, then, may be either a starting point or a point that has already been left behind in the construction of an apparatus. Yet the spatial and temporal coordinates of the author, in relation to not only other terms of the apparatus, but also to her broader location, her milieu, are also an important site of negotiation. Her mobility, and her selection of available technics, are aspects of her creative production that emerge differently at particular sites. Across the coordinates of time and space different technics – skills and knowledges – may be elicited. At the same time, this site may be transformed by the film author and her apparatus. Understanding how an author’s location interacts with her cinematic praxis, how she transforms her milieu as she moves through her selection of technics, and in the process, how she is also transformed, is the central project of this chapter. While not forgetting the ephemerality of the site of author, the chapter frames that position as an opening through which to tell the story of how an apparatus is constructed in the context of a factory and its workers in China. Emphasizing the artist/author’s mobility, selection of technics, and her transformation of milieu, her particular cinematic contribution can be understood as a creative response to, and reformulation of, the indivisible social and political conditions of her location, including economic, geopolitical, and cultural constructions of place.

The artist Cao Fei engages in the construction of a cinematic apparatus that is also a reformulation of the time-space of her milieu. The apparatus as constructed in her work is an elaborate and multi-layered engagement with the body and the machine, the gendered positions of mobile workers in the global economy, and the ever present capacity of workers to create novel flows of meaning and relationships across their factory and its digital flows of capital. Fei produces an apparatus in the specific contexts of a transnational factory in China, and an Internet virtual reality site, Second Life. These locations are understood as geopolitical, historical and temporal frames in Fei’s apparatus. Just as the “film author” may be understood as a mobile location, her milieu may also be understood as an ephemeral site that has shifting and indeterminate boundaries. Linking the question of location with inquiries into third spaces and third cinemas, her milieu appears not as a set of fixed conditions, but as a site of negotiation, requiring a reformulation its gendered, geopolitical dimensions, linked to the traces of colonialism and globalization. Yet even as they reveal forms of power in particular sites, these traces also make available creative trajectories that are followed in the author’s cinematic praxis. She creates not only a new itinerary for the apparatus and its technics, but also a pathway for individual and collective movement beyond the terms of given conditions of work in the global economy, gendered social relations, and, in the end, the imagining of contemporary life itself.
In response to the dense layers of analytical terms that may burden an investigation of the cinematic apparatus, Jean-François Lyotard effectively reframes the unit of analysis that can be used to understand cinema with this question: “Here arise two questions that are really quite naïve considering the deliberations of contemporary cine-critics: Which movements and moving bodies are these? Why is it necessary to select, sort out, and exclude them? (Lyotard 1986, 346).” He offers the central category of movement for consideration, and by drawing attention to the process of selection and exclusion of movement that all cinema engages in, points toward the entire spectrum of “movements and moving bodies” that may constitute the technics of an apparatus. Beginning with this vast set of technics, the question of why some movements and not others, some bodies and not others, is put in high relief. With which “movement” and “moving bodies” should cinema begin? While Getino and Solanas locate the opening moment of their Third Cinema apparatus in the liberation movements of the “Third World,” the question of how movements that exceed this definition might also originate important cinemas, cinemas that transform their milieu, remains open. Getino and Solanas begin with “Third World” movements towards a utopic vision of world revolution based on its temporal and spatial exteriority. Utopia, however, has many versions and locations. It may move in many directions, emerging from different movements, bodies, and milieus.

In Cao Fei’s video installation, Whose Utopia?, the questions of the location of the film author, her selection of movement and moving bodies, and the utopic worlds that her apparatus refuses or produces, are central. The video was created in a milieu that for its managers might seem a social space of perfection for the “masses,” the group in whom Getino and Solanas invest their hope for a transformed world. This is the Siemens OSRAM factory in Foshan, Guangdong Province, China. It is a factory that produces light. Like Thomas More’s, this Utopia has its own social orders and hierarchies. The factory, part of a network of Siemens’ global operations, is one node amongst many in its vast system of transnational production and distribution. Siemens is a transnational corporation, founded and headquartered in Germany. Its emphasis is on electronic technology and goods. If understood within Siemens’ logic, the meanings of the OSRAM factory are produced solely through its relationships with the other global nodes in the Siemens network, alongside the meanings and artifacts it produces for a transnational market. It seems to be a coherent and insular system, but in artist Cao Fei’s engagement with it, it becomes more porous, intersecting and producing many worlds and utopias.

The Siemens Art Program is the door through which she is invited into this network of factories and workers. The “Internal Cultural Communications” division organizes a program that “communicates current artistic approaches to Siemens employees, giving artists the opportunity to work in the setting of the company” (Siemens Arts Program, 2006). One of these projects is “What are they doing here?” which as they explain: “Seeks to encourage lively communication between Chinese artists and employees at Siemens in China. They are invited to perceive their working environment not solely in terms of its commercial aspects, but also in its emotional, social and creative dimensions” (2006). By entering into this

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1 Thomas More’s Utopia was published in 1516. He was the first writer in English to use the word utopia. From the Greek, it put together two meanings: no and place. Utopia is no place. Rather, it is a constructed, imaginary place.
relationship, Cao Fei resituates all of the elements of the factory, including machines, workers and their milieu. In her project, machines and workers alternately take center stage, freed from their binding relationship. But at other moments, they become impossibly conjoined, cyborgian, rewriting each other. The production process that she engaged in during her residency included a research process, performances, videos, and installations. Through these multiple registers of its production, different senses of authorship, location and movement are also produced. In this way, the apparatus that is jointly constructed by Cao Fei, the workers, and the machines is not a revelation of the existing relationships of production, but an engagement with their ongoing transformation, which in turn effects a transformation of the workers, their factory, and the milieu of the factory.

This milieu, the Siemens utopia in China, has been some time in the making. Siemens has been present in China for more than a century, and has been intimately connected to China’s current role in global economies and communications, according to the company’s following statement:

The history of Siemens in China dates back to 1872, when the company delivered China’s first pointer telegraph. Siemens has witnessed the tremendous changes that have taken place since China opened up and embarked on its reform drive, and the company is proud to be a reliable, committed and trustworthy partner in the country’s development (2010a, par. 3).

The delivery of its first telegraph is an appropriate point of departure for Siemens’ narrative of “development” in China. In his history of communication, Networking the World: 1790 – 2000, Armand Mattelart argues that the notions of development and modernity are tied to the imaginary of global communication, which evolved from the starting point of the telegraph. At the same moment that the first telegraph cables were being positioned, along with the idea of world communication, a new phase of the world economy was developing: “The invention of communication as an ideal occurred at a time when the prevailing ideas were those of modernity and the perfectibility of human societies. It was thus the product of a belief in the future. The Enlightenment thinkers prepared for its emergence by advocating trade as a creator of values” (2000, 2). Communications technologies have been tightly bound to centers of power in the economic world-system, shifting along with them, and the telegraph is embedded in the colonial history of Great Britain. In the 19th century, British imperialism resulted in the first transatlantic telegraph cable:

The nineteenth century saw the establishment of the British empire as the new economic and financial pole toward which the main flows of wealth and long-distance communication converged. London became the center of a world-economy in the sense given by the historian Fernand Braudel, i.e., a center from which the other powers, intermediate zones, and peripheral regions were organized and in relation to which they situated themselves hierarchically. The undersea cable was one of the clearest illustrations of Victorian Hegemony (11).

Working alongside the British in extending the network of the telegraph, corporations like Siemens provided, and continue to provide, the infrastructure for global communications networks. The benevolent undertone to this work is expressed in their sense of working as a “partner” in China’s “development.” This belies an ongoing tension. In his discussion, Mattelart notes the historical contradiction in the philosophy of communication systems and the inequality in how communication systems were developed, shared, and governed at the close of the 19th century. On the one hand, communication as a universal, uniting force was inspirational for the philosophers of the new society. At the same time, it provided a rationale for the next phase of the world economy, with its new centers of colonial power.
Mattelart quotes the French Minister of Foreign Affairs at the first meeting of the International Telegraph Union:

We are gathered here in a genuine Congress of peace. If it is true that war, more often than not, is born out of misunderstanding, are we not removing one of its causes by facilitating the exchange of ideas between people and by placing their disposal this amazing transmission system, this electric wire through which thought can travel across space at the speed of lightning, and which permits swift and uninterrupted dialogue between the scattered members of the human family? (20).

At the time of this statement, however, the nation-states that controlled communications systems, most importantly, France, Great Britain, and the United States, actively worked to control access to those systems and the development of competing systems (21).

In a similar vein, understanding itself as a “partner” in China’s “development,” Siemens continues to position itself as provider of technics and technologies to China in order to enable its participation in the global economy. This narrative of “development” is a common one in contemporary geo-political relations, and definitively marks the relationships of what is variably understood as the relationships of the “First World” to the “Third World,” the West to the East, and North to the South. China is a temporal and spatial field upon which Siemens maps this hierarchy, putting itself in the leadership role:

For more than 100 years, Siemens has been active in China, where it holds leading positions in its Energy, Industry and Healthcare Sectors, while Siemens IT Solutions and Services functions across all three Sectors. Siemens has long been an integral part of the Chinese economy and a reliable, committed and trustworthy partner of China. In fiscal 2008 (October 1, 2007 – September 30, 2008), sales to customers in China amounted to almost EUR 4.9 billion. New orders totaled more than EUR 5.4 billion. Siemens currently has about 40,000 employees in China (2010b, 1).

The Siemens corporation understands itself as the groundwork for industry in China. Not only are the lightbulbs produced by Siemens in the OSRAM factory, but it also produces the energy infrastructure from which will flow electricity to those lightbulbs. This includes the building of “ten extra-high voltage converter transformers, five of them rated at 800 KV, as well as 6-inch thyristor valve technology for one of the two converter stations for the future high voltage DC transmission (HVDC) link from the Xiangjiaba hydro-electric power plant in south-western China to Shanghai on the east coast of the country” (2010b, 10). With the building of this infrastructure, and its narrative of development, Siemens positions itself as China’s pathway into the global economy.

Engineers, human resource specialists, and architects have created this perfect society, the factory, in which the identity of worker is produced. A network of people, machines and functions, it is the hermetic, utopian territory of a transnational corporation, in sync with a global logic of world capitalism. This logic locates geopolitical sites along a continuum between industrialized or developing. Industrialized sites host metropoles of research and development that are linked to more numerous outlying, developing sites of unskilled production. The factory is part of a network, one node of production, whose geographical dislocation from a hub of production reflects a global logic of the division of labor:

While automation has increasingly enabled companies to eliminate the lower tier of workers, the staggering increase in the volume of production still employs, and will for some time, a considerable number of unskilled and semi-skilled workers whose location in the same areas as scientists and engineers is neither economically feasible nor socially suitable, in the prevailing social context (Castells 2000, 417).
The networks of transnational corporations also create a map of human development, with development measured through the set of skills associated with successful industrialization and, through industrialization, modernization, and further, through information technology use, a “knowledge society.” Those nation-states that are understood to be less “knowledge”-able engage in less “research and development” and are hence the sites of less skilled aspects of production activities. There are repeating patterns on the global scale that can be discerned:

One significant fact needs to be underlined: whereas the developing countries’ share of global GDP stands at 42 per cent as against the 58 per cent share of the industrialized countries, the disparity is much greater in terms of global spending on research and development, since the developing countries account for only 20 per cent of total spending and the industrialized countries 80 per cent (United Nations 2005, 97).

Siemens describes how this logic determines its own arrangement of work. Of 1,640 global locations, the company reports that only ten percent of these are research and development centers:

The challenges confronting today’s world are global – and so are we. With a presence in some 190 countries, we can offer customers fast, local, tailor-made solutions. And that gives us a decisive competitive edge. Our roughly 405,000 employees work at 1,640 locations around the globe, including 176 R&D facilities (Siemens, 2010a).

This division of labor has multiple and shifting dimensions across geopolitical locations, with each site being a set of arrangements that may overlap and contradict one another. Siemens, with 1,640 global locations, has a long-term and “committed” relationship to the People’s Republic of China, with “more than 90 operating companies and 60 regional offices in China” (Siemens 2010b, 4). Its factories there constitute a privileged site and prominent investment of resources for China’s future, but these sites are in hierarchical relationship to other global Siemens sites.

Yet, China’s discursive positioning by Siemens is by no means stable. China is mobile and unnameable in the world economy. It escapes both theorists of the capitalist world-system and theorists of globalization, and has become a place that throws other places into question. While China was a member of the Bandung Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement, both of which were crucial moments in the establishment of the discourse of the “Third World” as a site of possibility outside of global capitalism, that moment has now become something else. As Immanuel Wallerstein reflects, with China’s recent ascent as a global economic center, it is not clear if China is now North or South, left or right, imperialist or anti-imperialist (2011). Returning to Solanas and Getino’s formulation, if the “Third World” is understood as the site of “movement on the worldwide revolutionary plane,” then China is certainly a site of worldwide movement. But understanding China as a “revolutionary plane” needs another trajectory that exceeds the Marxist framework from which Solanas and Getino depart. Building on a path that emerges in this ambiguity, Cao Fei puts into motion another set of meanings that resituate the relationships between the transnational corporation, its machines and workers, China and the modern/colonial world system of capitalism, and movements and moving bodies.

Anthropologist Aihwa Ong has sought to understand the matrix of perhaps multiple modernities represented by China in the context of globalization. She identifies instabilities and shifting definitions, particularly regarding gender, across the landscape of Chinese transnational cultures, including the cultures of transnational corporations. In her study of U.S. human resource specialists in Shanghai, she finds that there are competing ideas about
the inherent lack of skills, and therefore the kinds of “development” needed to produce successful Chinese managers. There is, however, a unity of opinion about women’s capacity as managers: amongst the human resource specialists that she interviews, there is a clear preference for Chinese women over Chinese men as managers, and in particular young Chinese women. It is stated that these women will be more faithful to the company, as well as more able to demonstrate their creativity on the job (Ong, 2006). This preference for women as managers does not necessarily, however, determine the location of women in the hierarchy of corporations. According to Siemens’ data, only 13.4% of its worldwide managerial force are women. In Asia, Australia, and the Middle East, the total percentage of women in the workforce is 32%.

The opening movement for Cao Fei’s project is that of workers. Their movement takes off in different directions. These movements reveal the agency and creativity of their engagements with machines and the milieu of the factory, and enable an understanding of the machine as a technic with infinite capacity. Acknowledging this creativity requires a rethinking of the many possible relationships between workers and machines. This transformation includes not only the bodies of the workers in the factory, but also the bodies of the factory’s machines. The opening sequence of her video “Whose Utopia?” entitled “Factory Imagination,” features the machines as the central actors, the main characters, of the theatre of the factory. The machines themselves are performers in a mechanical ballet, developing an interphased rhythm of movement, colors and sound. The personality of the machines is evoked, as we see them intimately, imagine their grease and steam, feel their weight. The visceral connection to the machines, their soothing quality demonstrates and establishes a cyborgian ground upon which the subsequent sections of the video build.

In the second episode of the video, “Factory Fairytale,” a contrapuntal rhythm emerges between bodies and machines. These co-presences suggest a simultaneity of existence, that these bodies and machines might be doing their proscribed work or something else, producing other things, moving to other rhythms. While there is one flow of information and materials that determines the location of this their activity in relation to other horizons of Siemens, there are excess flows of other energies and materials, unruly and out of control. What is this stuff in the factory that Cao Fei’s camera shows us? White, glittering, accumulating, moving along the conveyor belt. Hands enter. These hands are gloved, skilled, focused. Tactile tools. The materials are light bulbs; the hands are human hands. Human hands inspecting light bulbs. These light bulbs will illuminate things and people. They are produced, they are born. We watch, the screen glowing with this same pulse of electricity. Watching this birth. But this is not all that these machine-bodies can do or say.

In the midst of these activities, in the corridors between work spaces and storage cartons full of light bulbs, dancers appear. As they appear, sounds emerge, creating different entry points. There is a piano. There is typing. There is the continued hum of the dance of the machinery. Wearing the OSRAM factory uniform, a worker dances with astonishingly fluid motion. It is a moon walk, a space dance, an octopus locomotion. In another shot, a ballerina has sprouted wings, and is replete with a tutu and toes shoes. She pirouettes, slowly, evoking yet another rhythm. These dancers are not alone. They are in the midst of environments filled with other worker/dancers. They also evoke other time-spaces, a simultaneity of actions, elsewhere, with their movements and reverberations. It is as if they are mimicking the movements of many other dancers, in other locations, other mirrors. We imagine a series of other scenarios in which these dances are also being performed, now. A nightclub, a rock concert, or a ballet performance. Each situation is not a utopia. Each
carries its own regulatory function. But while this factory is performing a metonymic
function in a particular sequence of production, it is also a metaphoric replica, echoing a
multiplicity of actions, of productions, that are occurring in other sites. Yet, at the same time,
in the moment of their practice, in their evocation of other movers, locations, and networks,
they mark a sustained interval in the time-space of the factory.

In the video, the performances produce a kind of “absenteeism” a strategy of
disruption in the flow of factory, an “autonomous zone” (Bey 1991). But they are absent
while being present, through being present to a different now-time of the factory, another
set of urgent matters to attend to in a time other than factory time. But this is not a seamless
otherworldliness, or other time, that is posed. It is produced in fragments, to be drifted into
or actively attended. At times, during a performance, spectators look on intently. At other
times, they work alongside the dancers in factory time-space. There is no totalizing claim
made for the power of these performers to transform this world, only, indeed, to reveal its
multiple dimensions. Their labors of producing and consuming, dancing and spectatorship,
are conspicuously unproductive. Yet they are, perhaps, more “in” the factory when they
dance than when they performing their normative functions, because this practice constructs
it differently as a space, filled with their diverse agencies. Through their movements that
invoke the space as a theatre for other practices, it becomes more factory than it was
previously, perhaps more productive. The dancers create another factory that exceeds the
productive capacities of the first factory. They hover above it on a series of constructed
layers of time and space. The visual impact of this practice is that of a special effect, the
contentious superimposition of an other factory. They dance between these possible
iterations of productivity and unproductivity. Other workers gaze upon them, removing
themselves from their tasks as they move between spaces of work and non-work.

Is this a liberation? Are they alienated or liberated? Are they cyborgs? Are they
enslaved or emancipated? Living or dead? This movement, off the production line, effects a
transformation of the worker’s relationship to their machines. This is also a reviving of the
life force of the laborer:

The capitalist mode of production is one in which the labor potential of the worker
is objectified as the alien power of the animated monster - the machinery (and in
general, the system of objects) as “dead labor” transformed into the value-creating
force for the capitalist. The distinction between dead and living labor is central to
Marx's concept of alienation. Dead labor is the objectified labor power that exists in
space as machinery. Conversely, living labor is the non-objectified labor capacity of
the individual; or, labor as subjectivity (Grundrisse 272, quoted in Ertun, 2009, par.
15 – 16).

Here, the subjectivity of the laborer is revived and performed, and is connected both across
the factory floor to other workers, to machines, and also across the globe towards other sites
of production. This is a rhizomatic connection of lightbulbs, images and songs.

This assemblage produces other means of narrating living subjectivities in synchrony
with machines. The figure of the cyborg is useful here. As offered by Donna Haraway, the
cyborg is “outside salvation history” (1991, 150). Not just unalienated labor, not just living
subjectivity, but something else, as she suggests:

The cyborg is a creature in a post-gender world; it has no truck with bisexuality, pre-
odipal symbiosis, unalienated labor, or other seductions to organic wholeness
through a final appropriation of all the powers of the parts into a higher unity. In a
sense, the cyborg has no origin story in the Western sense – a ‘final’ irony since the
cyborg is also the awful apocalyptic telos of the ‘West’s’ escalating dominations of
abstract individuation, an ultimate self untied at last from all dependency, a man in space (150 – 151).

The cyborg figure offers a way out of Marx’s binary of the living and the dead, suggesting a frame that might think both/and simultaneously. This reframing of the border between the machine and the body equally activates the in/organic matter of both, creating a fluidity of both dead and living materials, subjectivity and labor, and the gender binary.

In Whose Utopia? the workers’ dances produce a multiplicity of cyborgian relationships between the worker and the factory, the worker and other workers, the worker and machines, men and women, living and dead. This is the effect of the cinematic apparatus produced by Cao Fei in collective praxis with the workers. With the technics of worker, factory, and machine, an apparatus is produced in which each becomes a starting point for movement. These movements co-exist in a further spiral, a collective dance. This apparatus is one that does not reveal existing relationships, uncovering some hidden truth, but is rather an opportunity for new relationships to be built.

This is a very different apparatus than one concerned with revealing what is hidden by the factory and its ideology, the “real” relations of production that rob the worker of her agency. In the epigraph with which Theresa Hak Kyung Cha begins her book, Apparatus, Jean-Luc Godard explains how he thinks about workers’ relations to machines, hidden by the cinematic apparatus:

A machine is not or a worker is not important by themselves, what matters is the relationship between the machine and the worker and the relationships between that worker and the other workers who from their own positions have relationships with the machine (1980, i).

With these relations covered over by the apparatus, the goal of an other form of cinema would be, this suggests, that of unveiling these relationships, an educational process of revealing these relationships that are hidden. Echoing Paulo Freire, “…the educational practice of a progressive intent will never be anything but an adventure in unveiling” (1970/2000, 7). But what are these relationships with the machine, and are they always the same? Are they the same for men and women? Are they the same in China as elsewhere? Relations of production may appear infinitely variable, cyborgian, or they may appear as consistently over-determined by ideology as echoed here by Godard. The interaction between machines and workers may be a sealed totality, a truth to be revealed, or it may be an entry point into endless variations on people and technics.

How workers are conceived as being either acted upon, or acting upon, their worlds, is of crucial importance to understanding their creativity. In Antonio Gramsci’s meditation on the definition of “man,” he locates a creative social agency:

Man is to be conceived as an historical bloc of purely individual and subjective elements and of mass and objective or material elements with which the individual is in an active relationship. To transform the external world, the general system of relations, is to potentiate oneself and to develop oneself. That ethical “improvement” is purely individual is an illusion and an error: the synthesis of the elements constituting individuality is “individual”, but it cannot be realized and developed without an activity directed outward, modifying external relations both with nature, and in varying degrees, with other men, in the various social circles in which one lives, up to the greatest relationship of all, which embraces the whole human species. For this reason one can say that man is essentially “political” since it is through the activity of transforming and consciously directing other men that man realises his “humanity”, his “human nature” (1971, 360).
With this Gramsci asserts the importance of understanding both the conditions of “man” and his/her ability to act upon the world.

In *Whose Utopia?* the gestures of multiple forms of “man”: dancers, machines, and workers, men, women, and cyborgs, re-make the factory. They produce multiple locations, perspectives and framings. Cao Fei’s conception of these performers in the Siemens factory is that they necessarily act on their social worlds, and that they are actively reconstructing their existence and their understanding of their existence, their episteme. This is how she could then engage the workers and the machines in a creative, even joyful, process of collectively constructing a cinematic apparatus.

**Temporary Worker**

In this apparatus, Cao Fei inhabits a particular cyborgian position. For her, two technics, two identities, that of artist and worker, are fused. During the period of her residency, Cao Fei becomes a temporary worker in the factory, tasked with perceiving its “emotional, social and creative dimensions.” The temporary worker is a particular cyborgian conjuncture of gender and technics. With this identity, she joins a multitude of women. Indeed, 95% of women in this region of China, the Pearl River Delta, are classified as “temporary workers” (Ngai 2004). The status of these migrant workers forms a system of graduated citizenship, a technology that “governed through disciplining techniques (e.g. extreme controls on labor rights) and surveillance at the workplace. Such disciplinary techniques over low-wage workers and migrants are intended to instill both productivity and political stability, thus creating conditions profitable for global manufacturing” (Ong 2006, 79). The Open Coastal Belt, the region in which the OSRAM factory is located, is an economic zone designated by the Chinese government that allows for the special status of temporary workers. In this zone, the temporary worker is a migrant from the rural areas. She is required to have a special pass to work there and is unable to have access to services that residents would have (Ong 2006, 107). The temporary worker is a woman on the move, from the rural village to the factory, and between forms of governmentality. She moves between sites of citizenship, from the security of national citizenship to the relative insecurity of the temporary worker.

While this may be understood as a form of insubstantiation that reduces the agency of the temporary worker, for Cao Fei, it is a form of mobility that enables a new relationship to the technics of this milieu - the factory, its forms of governmentality, and the global economy. She becomes flexible, and as such, the possible sites of her authorship are multiplied. This multiplicity can be understood as not only a question of inhabiting and moving between multiple locations, but also the multiplication of forces and desires that invade all sites of meaning, including the body. A feminist sense of this kind of embodied multiplicity is understood by Rosie Braidotti, in her discussion of Deleuze and Guattari:

‘Multiple’ does not mean the dispersal of forces in a given field, but rather, a redefinition of the embodied subject in terms of desire and affectivity, situated in the element of speed, that is to say, time. The multiple is whatever is not attached to any principle of identity and unity, anything that knows how to put into play the differences that constitute the affirmative powers of the bodily subject and, through a game of differences, produces meaning. The multiple is what expresses difference in its eternal becoming, in its multiplicity of meaning (Braidotti 1991, 111).
Cao Fei becomes a temporary worker, and her status as “temporary” becomes a technic of multiplicity, of the embodied producer of multiple meanings. Her presence as another temporary worker enables her pursuit of the unexpected “dimensions” of the factory. With this identity, it might seem that family and home would offer an alternative sense of place, but in one of the performances, not featured in the video Whose Utopia?, the workers allegorize their departure from the family home. The movement of young people from the countryside to the factory creates a dislocation of the family narrative, a move made more distinct by cultural life at the site of the factory. Yet, they continue to dream of family, and in this way continue to enact a sense of belonging. In the performance, the workers build a bridge between home and factory, through the installation of a lightbulb in the family home in the countryside.

This complexity makes the characterizations that sentimentalize their suffering as oppressed class appear as dismissive of their imaginations. We may nevertheless appreciate the tendency towards reconnecting the flows of signification that separate worker from author, as seen in the following meditation with which Chela Sandoval prefaces her discussion of cyborg theory:

I begin here to honour the muscles and sinews of workers who grow tired in the required repetitions, in the warehouses, assembly lines, administrative cells, and computer networks that run the great electronic firms of the late twentieth century. These workers know the pain of the union of machine and bodily tissue, the robotic conditions, and in the late twentieth century, the cyborg conditions under which the notion of human agency must take on new meanings (Sandoval 2001, 374).

Yet who are “these workers” who “know the pain”? Cao Fei does not reveal this to us. Rather, she reveals who they are not, the no-worker identities of each worker. Her presence evokes a series of transformations, of which the video Whose Utopia? is only one part. The entire scope of Cao Fei’s project, which she entitled, What are you doing here?, took place at the OSRAM factory from October 2005 to April 2006. The Arts Program’s statement about the project gives this overview of the process:

OSRAM China Lighting and Siemens Arts Program asked the artist Cao Fei to conceive an art project for the Foshan site. For this purpose, she distributed questionnaires to the employees, inviting them to express their personal feelings, wishes, anxieties, career goals and expectations. Afterwards she worked intensively with 35 employees to translate these intangibles into artistic form. She divided the employees into five groups, each of which focused on one of the following themes: "Future", "Dream", "Reality", "Home City" and "Vision". Expressed as drawings and sketches, their ideas were initially incorporated into lighting installations, that were followed by a collaboratively conceived performance and a video (Siemens Art Program, 2005).

While this collaborative process might connote a technic of incorporation into the factory logic, instilling productivity and stability in the temporary workers, Cao Fei’s thematic questions to the “employees” accentuate pathways out of the factory. Each theme maps a route to places and times beyond the factory, either in the past, future, present “reality” or through memory, “dream” and “vision.” This sense of multiplicity is offered as an embodied experience through the evocation of the multiple time-spaces of each participating temporary worker. They evoke a wide assortment of cinematic texts – dances, songs, stories, and poetry. With these texts, not only are the bodies of the workers transformed into sites of multiplicity, but this transformation effects a further transformation – that of the factory. The installations, performances, and videos that are created in this process are then exhibited.
and performed, transforming the factory into a theatre, museum and gallery for the workers. During the performances and exhibitions in the factory, which were presented from April 10 – 15, 2006, the performers and their spectators were together on the factory floor. In subsequent phases, the positions of artist and worker, performer and spectator, spiral out of the factory. The video, *Whose Utopia?*, in which fragments of the preceding performances and installations are recorded, has traveled to exhibitions spaces around the globe since 2006, including Sydney, London, and San Francisco, amongst other sites.

Although differently articulated in galleries and museums in London, Sydney, and San Francisco, in each repeated exhibition of *Whose Utopia?*, the roles of artist, worker, performer, spectator, and the theatre of the factory, are opened up for further transformation and rearrangement. The continuous element throughout its exhibitions is the video, which is projected on walls or displayed on one or more closed-circuit screens, with variable dimensions. Additional elements that are not included at all exhibition sites are printed publications with the writings of the worker/artists, and an installation of the reproduction of a worker’s dormitory room. This transforms both the space of the factory and the space of the gallery and museum. In recent works, both Hilo Steyerl (2008) and Jonathan Beller (2006) argue that the spaces of cinematic spectatorship are also spaces of coerced spectatorial labor, in the museum, the cinema house, and across other sites of cinematic display. Indeed, through their engagement with *Whose Utopia?*, as well as these additional spatial and visual texts, the spectators at each site of its exhibition are also invited to perform the role of a temporary worker. The factory as a milieu is made mobile. But in this case, it is no longer a site of definitive meanings, in either the logic of the Siemens corporation or the logic of capitalist cinematic spectatorship. It is instead a milieu that is opened up for temporary, collective access and co-construction, in which other imaginaries are mobilized and unexpected affiliations emerge. In both the factory and the gallery, *Whose Utopia?* enables a form of spectatorship that is non productive, escaping the fixity of the cinematic apparatus and its coercive labor of spectatorship.

From the perspective of the global economy, the factory is part of a global network of capitalist production, but this is only one way of seeing it. This network is fundamentally made possible by information communication technologies, or what Manuel Castells terms the “space of flows.” The “space of flows” is another site of Utopia, a no-place of places created by the network of informational society.

The space of flows is the material organization of time-sharing social practices that work through flows. By flows I understand purposeful, repetitive, programmable sequences of exchange and interaction between physically disjointed positions held by social actors in the economic, political and symbolic structures of society (2000, 442).

The factory has both a contiguous material relationship in space and a simultaneous relationship in time to other places. The logic of these relationships, the way its social meaning is determined, is through “the network:”

In this network, no place exists by itself, since the positions are defined by the exchanges of flows in the network. Thus, the network of communication is the fundamental spatial configuration: places do not disappear, but their logic and their meaning become absorbed in the network (441).
Figure 5. The dancer pauses in the factory, interrupting the space of flows. Still from Whose Utopia? Cao Fei, 2006.
Are all meanings and logics absorbed in the network? Cao Fei’s project proposes an other logic and meaning for the workers and their factory. In fact, with each phase of the work, different flows and networks are suggested. Each exceeds the logic of the factory in the space of flows.

There are competing visions by theorists of globalization about the relationship between the local and global, and the role of time and space in defining these spaces. Castells understands the central facets of the information society through these two competing domains, the “space of flows” and the “space of place.” The “space of place” is constituted by those localities that are not part of the networks of power and information in the “space of flows.” This picture of the global, made up of places and networks, is made more complex by Saskia Sassen, who understands the global as having multiple scales, with a mix of temporal and spatial orders, or “novel geographies,” which she explains as: “the formation of partly territorial and partly electronic geographies that cut across borders and the spatio-temporal orders of nation-states yet install themselves or get partly shaped in specific subnational terrains, notably cities…The networks of global cities, global commodity and value chains, the multisited organization of manufacturing production that firms have constructed-all of these are instances of such novel geographies” (2000, 394). This sense of complexity of formations in the transnational spaces of globalization also leads to a rethinking of the binary of the global and the local:

These features also underscore our need to rethink what is often constructed as a duality: the distinction between the global and the local, notably the assumption about the necessity of territorial proximity in the constitutions of the “local,” and the placelessness of the global…One of the tasks here has to do with rethinking spatial hierarchies that are usually taken as a given: local/national/global, where the local is seen as slow time and the global as fast time (Castells 2000, 394).

Through Cao Fei’s intervention, the factory’s place, even in its own novel geography, is resituated amongst different networks and geographies, each one a result of the creative production and visions of the factory’s workers. Their times and spaces, slow and fast, global and local, co-exist. The factory takes flight itself as it enters multiple networks of meaning. It is a place, a locality, and it is also adrift in multiple flows with unexpected streams and directions.

It is across these multiple locations and subjectivities that the factory becomes mobile, part of the assemblage of the Cao Fei’s cinematic apparatus. No longer either in the space of flows or the space of places, the factory itself takes flight. The assemblage that Whose Utopia? creates is a formidable network of people and exchanges. Adapting Deleuze and Guattari’s term, Saskia Sassen asserts that “assemblage” is a term that captures the shifting complexities of amalgamations of juridical, territorial, and political capabilities, that constitute new arrangements of global societies, both within and across the nation-state. In her analysis, assemblages are facilitated only in part by digitization. They are also dependent upon a “bundle” of other capabilities. This produces new types of actors: “In this sense, they enable new types of political actors – networked assemblages – which while informal evince particular forms of power, and in turn, these actors through their practices partly build and shape those assemblages” (2006, 326). Whose Utopia? is evocative of these new types of political actors, who are networked across different scales of identity, the factory, their dreams, and their uniquely inscribed globalities. For Siemens, its art program is part of its own “networked assemblage.” Its commitment to hosting the development of an international art practice in the context of its factories is understood within its capitalist logic of development. However, the work created by Cao Fei maps another networked
assemblage out of this one. The video replays and recombines the factory performances and their multiple time-spaces, enabling their travel. In the video, the dreams, movements, and songs form different trajectories, each of which posits an infinite number of other intersecting lines of meaning. These intersections create networks, the nodes and hubs of which become apparent in the co-producing and circulating amongst them. The viewer, creating another trajectory, is invited into this co-creation. In each assemblage of screen and looker, another assemblage, and another apparatus is constructed.

Pun Ngai, who studies women’s cultures in Chinese factories, offers an analysis of yet another dimension of the new actors and their networked assemblage in the factory. There are many spaces of non-productivity, living subjectivity and diverse uses of language in the factory. In particular, women’s voices are regulated to a particular time-space in factory life:

After bathing, about half past ten at night, was often a time when women talked. Talking was important in factory life, since everybody was kept silent all day while working. Women congregated together based on ethno-kin lines and, when the time came, chatting would start everywhere (2004, 158 – 159).

It is this unofficial, unproductive chatter that defines women’s spaces in the factory. That it is in the space of the women’s dormitory, rather than the space of the official business of the factory, however, does not mean it has no consequences of import. This is made clear in the saying, “qi zuì ba she.”

“Qi zuì ba she” [seven mouths and eight tongues] was a saying about talkative women who were eager to speak out. “Qi zuì ba she”, of course, was term of denigration; its meaning showed overtly the desire and power of men to silence women. Women’s talk had long been seen as a threat to both the patriarchal order and the managerial order. At night the women gossiped about management, and exchanged information on personnel policies, who had been punished by confronting the factory rules, who had succeeded in finding a boyfriend, and who was disgusting and always flirting with women (159).

Importantly, the space of qi zuì ba she is one that has a serial relationship in time and space to the other sites of the factory. It occurs after work, and next to the factory floor, in the worker’s dormitory.

Through her performance process, in which she interviews workers and facilitates the production of songs and movement, Cao Fei imagines and creates another space of qi zuì ba she, but this one is in the here and now of factory time-space. And here, it is not a space only for “women,” and not only for “talk.” Through voice and song, movement and rhythm, the gendered logics of the factory are disturbed. Men and women dance and sing, sprouting costumes and other signs of alternative gendered subjectivities that defy the factory’s binaries. Everyone shares and transforms a space of qi zuì ba she. It is a space of engagement for subjectivities and labors, both living and dead, beyond the heavily regulated and gendered physicalities and dimensions of the time-space of the factory, albeit a process that has been condoned by the official apparatus of the factory through its art program.

Cao Fei’s emphasis on process opens a space that exceeds the constraints of the factory. This is an open-ended process with no predetermined outcome or claim to be a window on the “reality” of the workers. As discussed by Catherine Benamou in her assessment of gender in contemporary Third Cinemas, process, without being ideological, that is, without an apriori political narrative, can open new spaces of inquiry and the production of subjectivities:
Echoing Sara Gómez's example, the strategies used by these films to reveal the constraints and emancipatory strength surrounding the femininity of each woman recall three of the precepts delineated by Julio García Espinosa in his proposal for an "imperfect cinema." Two of these, the choice of protagonists who "struggle" and the narrative engagement of the spectator in the "process" whereby a problem (collective, as well as personal) is exposed and confronted (as opposed to the recounting of an "analysis" and solution that have been elaborated a priori by the filmmaker), are exemplified in the depiction of performance as a means whereby women can remake their own images, …through the hard work of a de/reconstruction of roles and inner self-questioning (1994, 63).

The process of “de/reconstruction and inner self-questioning” becomes an open and shared cinematic praxis in Cao Fei’s work. She does not document the workers in an attempt to provide evidence of a problem to which she has already formulated a solution. She does not force them to inhabit a preconceived identity, oppressed or liberated. In the work of reconstruction and self-questioning that she facilitates, the details of particular lives and the textures of particular experience, while crucial and present, become tools in a creative trajectory that flows from each participant in the context of the process of the performances. Rather than collecting a series of testimonies that are then faithfully transcribed and relayed to audiences, or using the body of the workers as a stand-in for “the people,” she activates a process that enables multiple significations of bodies and subjectivities, evoking subtle and ambiguous gestures.

Rather than bearers of testimony or story, the performers become gestures, their bodies the central carriers of signification. The movements of the workers bodies, in asynchrony with the factory’s mechanical technologies of production, are the content of the narrative in the video. It is their bodily movements and songs, rather than their stories, that unfold onto other time-spaces that transform the factory, and transform their being in the factory. They introduce other nodes of practice, other ways of being, thinking, knowing and doing. The logics of their dances are trajectories, dreams, which exceed the factory. The performers dream, and depending on what they dream, they dance a different kind of dance. These are both/and dances, mixes. The dreams are complex hybrids. Cultural revolution and modernization, ballet and hip hop, hometown and city. The workers articulate complex fairyttales and dreams that create networks of meaning across unexpected dimensions. Workers sprout wings and perform flawlessly as ballerinas. Workers form a rock band and sway to their own rhythm. This network of meaning crosses local and national boundaries, creating, instead a mobile network, a transnational assemblage.

The factory, as encountered through Cao Fei, is a crossroads of machines and bodies, material efficiencies and active imaginations. Cao Fei does not seek to fix the workers in their social condition, or to liberate the workers towards an pre-determined ideological goal. Rather, she mobilizes these diverse forces towards a different set of flexible and co-authored criteria for living, in the now. Different skills emerge, of thought and creativity, “research and development,” for the workers through her process, even while for its managers, it is precisely located as a node of mechanized production, with thought and creativity occurring along the line, assigned in variable ways to either men, women, or machines. The workers exceed the intended formation of the factory, and so does China. Through the multiple dimensions of the workers performances, we may feel how much China is in world consciousness, and how much world consciousness is in China. The dancers are somewhere amidst these exchanges. Their bodies are displaced, in flux, between local, national, and global registers. There are many stories to be told and each one emerges
with a different form. Attempting to describe this infinite diversity of forms, the curator Hu Fang writes that Cao Fei’s strategy is one of “hyper-realism”:

Through a multivalent creative practice that includes both video and theatre, Cao Fei has developed a unique style of “vocalizing.” This style neither expresses a contrived reverence for society, nor is it aesthetic narcissism, but rather a way of creating an alternative “individual reality” by recourse to “hyper-realist” tactics. As she practices it, through collaboration with different groups, she also enables this “individual reality” to become a basis for interaction and involvement among different groups of people in a kind of public creative process (2006, 27).

This process between the “individual reality” and the “hyper-reality” is an exchange, a two-way movement that does not privilege individual, collective or political perspectives. The kind of reality it produces is a form of presence, which Hu Fang also notes, and which he argues is the final effect of the piece:

By reflecting on herself and others, she collected the dreams of each of her subjects, displaying them through light installations, small theatrical performances, video and other visual methods. Those brightly lit installations, and the people who stood, slightly confused, in their midst, served to make people mindful of how art can face a concrete system of production and turn it into a “theatre.” This subversion, albeit fleeting, made its participants acutely mindful of their own existence, enabling them to keep on living in pursuit of their dreams (2006, 29).

To “keep on living in pursuit of their dreams” is not, however, the final message of the closing sequence of the video.

This sequence is entitled “Our Future Is Not A Dream,” and it features a song produced by a band of the same name, which was formed by a group of workers in the process of working with her. Their future, the group’s lyrics assert, is not a dream. This is the future, in all of its complexity. They do not make a statement about who they are and their dreams of becoming, nor do they evoke a sense of longing to be rock stars. They are already rock stars. What they do ask, however, as their refrain, is: “And to whom do you beautifully belong?” This question resonates with different trajectories of possible forms of “belonging.” There is the belonging to the factory, belonging to the workers, belonging to the nation-state, belonging to other women, belonging to family, belonging to culture, belonging to rock and roll. Each one of these forms of belonging seems to imply a correspondence in the space of flows or the space of place, or both simultaneously. They escape the fixity of these flows.

The sense of oppressive “belonging” that is produced in the modern/colonial/capitalist world-system is the psychological effect of multiple operations, as elaborated by Frantz Fanon. He asserts that for the colonized subject, every neurosis is “the product of his cultural situation. In other words, there is a constellation of postulates, a series of propositions that slowly and subtly – with the help of books, newspapers, schools and their texts, advertisements, films, radio – work their way into one’s mind and shape one’s view of the world of the group to which one belongs” (1967, 152). Within the factory, there are postulates and propositions that determine the worker’s view of belonging, and their movements. But the performances produced by Cao Fei with the factory workers makes their senses of belonging, and their movements, multiple and impossible to securely fix. There are multiple ways in which to understand their cyborgian relationships to their conditions. Returning to Stephen Heath’s conception of the interaction between the apparatus and history, the importance of theorizing the body, the apparatus and history together becomes clear:
Cinema does not exist in the technological and then become this or that practice in the social; its history is a history of the technological and social together, a history in which the determinations are not simple but multiple, interacting, in which the ideological is there from the start – without this latter emphasis reducing the technological to the ideological or making it uniquely the term of an ideological determination (1980, 6).

In Solanas and Getino’s conception, history results in the production of the “truth” which becomes the primary source of belonging for the “masses,” and hence, for the film author. But Heath suggests that, with “technology and social together,” history, in this cinema’s history, exists with ideology “there from the start.” In this light, the question of origins becomes crucial. How might we conceive of the sense of origins itself, where does cinema begin? To whom do we belong? Cao Fei responds with multiple responses, all of them open-ended, each one beginning with her own body and the bodies of her co-workers.

Another beginning, a second life

The film, *iMirror*, by Cao Fei, is constructed in Second Life, a virtual reality site on the Internet. In Second Life, she becomes the author of a new cinematic life form, through the creation of an avatar and the construction of the avatar’s milieu and activities. Land, buildings, and services, as well as other bodies, are for sale or trade in Second Life. In *iMirror*, the melancholic edge of this absolute freedom is revealed, for mutual suffering or ambivalent celebration. Under the revolving sign of the almighty dollar, Cao Fei’s avatar, “China Tracy,” is adrift, oddly vacant. She invites us to sing with her as she flies above this unnamed global city. A melancholic song fills the air with longing. Yet the avatar herself shows no emotion. She is a dispassionate and nomadic witness, taking stock of the landscape. Second Life, another milieu of globalization, is full of digital surfaces available for exploitation, or, for squatting and repurposing. The drifting avatar, above it all, mobilizes a transitory sensibility: This, too, shall pass. In the meantime, however, she looks for a strategic place to land. Or, perhaps, she is looking for something she has lost. She is nostalgic. What is missing? A home, a past, a dream, or even, a real body, a real life?

In her engagement with workers in the OSRAM factory, there is a reformulation of the body as a text that can be written with the multiple scripts, the individual dreams, of the workers. Stepping outside the flows of the factory and its network, in *Whose Utopia?* each worker appears as a performer on another horizon of sense, in idiosyncratic relation to global cultural flows of music and dance. In *iMirror*, Cao Fei now produces a new body for herself. This avatar, “China Tracy,” appears to be a lone body in the midst of the digital landscape. But this body is itself digital matter. Digital matter has become the central feature of capital in globalization. Here it seems to be the body itself that might be just another carrier of capital. A scholar of virtual reality writes the following of the semiotics of the body:

The body is also an expressive communication device [(Benthall & Polhemus, 1975)], a social semiotic vehicle for representing mental states (e.g., emotions, observations, plans, etc.) to others. The body emits information to the senses of other bodies,

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2 The video (10 min., 2007) is part one of a three-part Second Life documentary produced for the China Tracy Pavilion Project, China Pavilion, 52nd Venice Biennale 2007.
whether intentional or not [(Ekman, 1974)]. Observers of the physical or mediated body read emotional states, intentions, and personality traits by an empathic simulation of them [(Zillman, 1991)]. The body transmits information to other bodies through a kind of affective contagion. Thinking of the body as an information channel, a display device, or a communication device, we emerge with the metaphor of the body as a kind of simulator for the mind. But as in a simulator, the software and the hardware cannot be cleanly separated; they both contribute to the fidelity of the simulation (Biocca 1997).

In iMirror, the digital body is adrift, creating another path of travel for both software and hardware. She does not travel through the established networks of capital. Creating her own path, her movement resonates with what Saskia Sassen calls a “counter-geography,” the global movement of women’s bodies and capabilities across borders (2000). In iMirror, the body of the avatar maps another geography. She is a condensation of digital matter that produces another thoroughfare, refusing to land, not participating in the economy of Second Life. She remains in flight, non-productive.

This is a reflowing of matter, in this case digital matter, or as Sha Xin Wei describes it: “If we desire matter to perform differently, we cannot simply legislate or script it by brandishing a pen alone, we must also manufacture a symbolic material substrate that behaves differently from ordinary matter” (2010, 3). Thus her movement through the city, this “material substrate” that resists the norms of travel and the well-beaten paths of capital, is also one that recalls the tactic of the derive. The derive, a tactic of political-aesthetic subterfuge proposed by the Situationist movement, encourages the multiple movements of bodies through the city that go against its flows. These are not so much counter-geographies but more open-ended tracings, defined by the lack of an endpoint. These might not be visible enough to constitute something as fixed as a geography, even its counter.

The movement of the avatar as she surveys this landscape follows that of the viewer/user as she moves through multiple video texts on YouTube. YouTube, which is now the leading site for the distribution of digital video in the world, accounting for the majority of all Internet distribution of video, offers multiple video texts for her engagement. Infrastructures for the exchange of digital matter, like YouTube, are architectures of capital exchange and expansion, but they also create open-ended frameworks in which transnational media artists and producers may distribute their work, leading to unexpected audiences and meanings. The complexities of multiple forms of distribution in the context of the global media marketplace is echoed in the work of media theorist Jesús Martín-Barbero. Martín-Barbero uses many of the critical tools of Deleuze and Guattari to understand media, globalization and multiculturality. He creates multiple scales of geo-political and theoretical space in his argument. Both Mattelart and Castells emphasize systems over individuals; mass effects over individual ruptures. But Martín-Barbero is uniquely attentive to particular instances or assemblages and for the openings that these create. He argues for a mobile and open-ended reading of media’s role in global society, as is evidenced in the following passage:

We need to recognize that media now constitute spaces of condensation and intersection of multiple networks of power and cultural production, but also be wary of the unified thinking that legitimizes the idea that technology is now the grand mediator between people and the world, when what technology mediates now more intensely and rapidly is the transformation of society into a marketplace and is then the primary agent of globalization (in its contrapuntal meanings.) The struggle against this unified thinking creates a strategic place not only in the politics of
nomadism and decentralization that moves forward reflection and investigation about what has been historically constituted as communications media, but also transforms the idea of sociocultural mediations, as much in institutional and traditional figures – the school, the family, the church, the neighborhood – as in the emergence of new actors and social movements that, like ecological and human rights organizations, ethnic and gender movements, introduce new sense of the social and new uses of media (2001, 17 [author’s translation]).

With this idea of nuevos usos, Martín-Barbero creates the epistemological and methodological possibility of finding new meanings that do not follow the logic of the marketplace. He discusses, for example, the possibility of the media representing endless difference and diversities of cultural practices, while also understanding the ongoing production of racialized stereotypes and other inscriptions of power over racialized bodies. With nuevos usos, the possibility of forms of mediation, as well as the redefinition of media itself, is opened. The relationship between the film author, the film, and the spectator, may be one that creates novel iterations of both media and its relationalities, as well as political and social forms.

In Cao Fei’s iMirror, nuevos usos are both imagined and practiced. Cao Fei’s video, which she calls a “documentary,” emphasizing the “real” nature of digital capital, is distributed on YouTube.com, which, like Second Life, and like the OSRAM factory, is another site through which we may read the multiple rootings amidst this endless production of capital. The movement of the avatar as she surveys this landscape follows that of the viewer/user as she moves through the multiple video texts on YouTube, which is now the leading distributor of digital video in the world, accounting for the majority of all Internet distribution of video. Infrastructures for the exchange of digital matter, like YouTube, are architectures of capital exchange and expansion, but they also create open-ended frameworks in which transnational media artists and producers may distribute their work, leading to unexpected audiences and meanings. These infrastructures of development echo other technologies of capital expansion, such as routes of transportation, communication, and energy production that have been wrought upon the “developing” world.

The movements of “China Tracy” are, however, quite visible. Her landscape is constructed as a milieu for the performance of her movement. This is all contained and distributed via the screen of the video, the display of which can be rescaled and distributed in multiple contexts. The hyper-mobility of capital, a defining feature of globalization, is made possible precisely because of the screen’s mobility. In his discussion of the “language” of new media, which in his thinking is constituted by all media that is made by computers, Lev Manovich locates the screen as the site of continuity between old and new media. The screen is the defining element of both. The “content” of cinema cannot be thought without the “form” of the screen.

What Manovich does not attend to is that this form is not only a space, but it is also a time, a duration, and that the contours of this time and space are inventions of a particular world economy: capitalism. The screen, in a range of different sizes and speeds, is ritualized across multiple locations in global capitalism. The feature film is of a duration usually lasting 90 to 120 minutes; the television novela form, 60 minutes; the news program, 30 minutes. Short videos on YouTube, however, last anywhere from a few seconds to 12 minutes.

In Second Life, the duration is the length of a lifetime. Cao Fei’s video, which she categorizes as a “documentary,” emphasizing the “real” nature of digital capital, is distributed on the Internet via YouTube.com. Her creation of an avatar on Second Life whose “life” is then documented and distributed via YouTube reframes Second Life as
another form of cinema. Framed within the context of YouTube, Second Life is a duration that is edited, and a space that is glimpsed but not inhabited. It is a digital time-space, a screen and a duration, reframed by another screen and duration. Recalling the reframing of *Vampyre* by Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, the resituating of Second Life is an intersection of screens, at different scales. But Second Life, with its multiple characters, stories, and ongoing lives, is a site, along with Second Life and the OSRAM factory, at which there are multiple possible rootings, places to land and build anew, amidst the endless production of capital.

Cao Fei’s RMB city, the backdrop for her Second Life avatar, China Tracy, is remarkably free of fixed perspectives. The camera eye in Second Life is unexpectedly mobile, ranging across horizontal and vertical territories. The digital landscape is no longer constructed by a camera, even as it pretends to replicate its look. Although the digitally constructed environment that it surveys is for sale, built to be exploited, her eye does not fix these structures and lands. The perspectival grip on the landscape is loosened. The program produces structures, land, and bodies, and the perspectives on and of this world are as infinite as the digital grid upon which it is produced. Framing this roaming activity as story, as a “documentary,” Cao Fei calls our attention to it as an indeterminate space, and in-between moments. As a spectator’s eye moves along with China Tracy’s body, they join in a free ranging activity of both looking and listening across borders and time-lags. Life, landscape, the body, including China Tracy’s, become fleeting moments, only glimpsed in passing. In the following chapter, these *nuevos usos* will be further understood through the cinematic praxis, equally transient its framings, of the Raqs Media Collective.
Figure 6. Digital milieu. Still from *i/mirror*. China Tracy/Cao Fei, 2007.
Chapter Three

Indeterminate Cinema
Figure 7. A cinematic threshold. Still from *A Measure of Anacoustic Reason*. Raqs Media Collective, 2006.
Shuddha: The notion of the South is of interest for some reasons, and not others. So let’s first take, why is it of interest. In a discursive economy, in current times, a lot more comes out of the North than comes out of the South. And in the interest of understanding the world in more nuanced complexity, it’s necessary for anyone anywhere to listen to the South. Simply because of the fact it’s not enough…

Jeebesh: Simply because of the fact that 4 billion people live there…

Shuddha: …simply because of the fact that 4 billion people live there and the voices of those 4 billion people are not heard as often or at the volume of the fewer people who live in other parts of the world. That’s one. Second, there are many of the ways in which the world is defined today, or the way that the world is structured, or has been structured over the past 400–500 years that has crucial importance vis-a-vis the material conditions of the southern hemisphere. Therefore in order to understand the world, one has to understand what’s going on in the South (Raqs Media Collective, 2006a).

Shuddhabrata (Shuddha) Sengupta and Jeebesh Bagchi, members of the Raqs Media Collective, echo here what worlds-system theorist Immanuel Wallerstein also explains—that to understand the world we must understand the South. Wallerstein’s version is that it is only through an understanding of the global capitalist world-system, and its establishment of core countries – the Global North – and peripheral countries – the Global South, that we can understand the structures and rationales of global inequalities. But while Sengupta and Bagchi acknowledge the importance of the “material conditions” in the relations of North and South, they also add a crucial point: The importance of a critical understanding of the global “discursive economy,” which itself structures the hierarchical relations of North and South. This destabilizes these terms, and the knowledge-production of the North, despite its dominance, is challenged as one amongst many discursive possibilities.

Creating a sense of discursive possibility is one of the collective’s many strategies of pluralizing authorship and sites of knowledge production. In the excerpt above, the rhythm of the collective’s interaction with each other is striking, as they add to each other’s sentences, develop ideas together, and point towards a collective imagination. Resonating with Cao Fei’s praxis in the factory, Raqs opens the space of cinematic engagement for collective inhabitation. This exemplifies the cinematic praxis of the collective, which emphasizes joint conversations over solitary artistic visions or media. This sensibility is reflected throughout their praxis, which includes a range of both screen and non-screen based art works, which are displayed and distributed as installations, video installations, single-channel videos, and Internet art, as well as other forms of research and knowledge production, including curating exhibitions and publications, undertaking collaborative, interdisciplinary research projects, and building community arts programs, all of which invite participation and co-construction.

Raqs is comprised of three artists, including Bagchi, Sengupta, and Monica Narula, who have been working together since 1992. The dynamic mobility of their thinking extends
throughout their work, including their self-appellation: “Raqs is a word in Persian, Arabic and Urdu and means the state that “whirling dervishes” enter into when they whirl. It is also a word used for dance. At the same time, Raqs could be an acronym, standing for ‘rarely asked questions’…!” (Raqs Media Collective, 2006b). The meaning of “Sarai,” the name of the research center that they founded in New Delhi, is also an important reference point for their work, evoking ancient traditions of nomadism, transformation, and cultural exchange:

In this sense, for us, the creation of Sarai was about providing a “home for nomads” and a resting place for practices of new-media nomadism….In medieval Central and South Asia, sarais were the typical spaces for a concrete translocality, with their own culture of custodial care, conviviality, and refuge. They also contributed to syncretic languages and ways of being. We would do well to emulate even in part aspects of this tradition in the new-media culture of today (2003, 41).

Relating their work to ancient rituals in their geo-political and cultural location, which has for centuries been a crossroads of cultures, is a reminder of the precursors and limits of new media cultures, as well as an invocation of other ways of knowing and being. As in their conversation, the space of the South is important, but according to a set of criteria that they devise, in a dynamic and open-ended dialectic. It is a site of multiplicity, which extends to their understanding of the site of global media. Importantly, media, for Raqs, provides this domain of practice that produces other spaces and forms of work. It is a point of departure that leads to many different forms of cinematic praxis.

In the construction of novel assemblages of the cinematic apparatus by the Raqs Media Collective, the cinematic text is rescaled, becoming a mobile, nodal point in multiple networks. In their work, the dispersal of the cinematic text across multiple registers of material substrates is a method for refashioning the cinematic apparatus, a mobile point of encounter between author, spectator and screen. The screen becomes a site of molecular activity across many different contexts, including the Internet and the various spaces of exhibition in which it is transformed into a sculptural and spatial intervention. The cinematic text becomes a spatial and temporal iteration. It is durational, a movement in time, that occurs across a screen. At the same time, the screen itself has motion. It takes on different scales, mobilities, and placements in regards to other spatial elements, digital and non-digital. Both the spatiality of the screen and its duration are reinventions of cinema. Most importantly, the Raqs Media Collective's work interrupt a fixed sense of the beginnings and endings, of both the time and space of cinematic events. With this redistribution of the place of the screen and the duration of the film, there is also a recentering of other temporalities and forms of knowledge.

This is a redistribution of information against the grain of the discourses such as the “Global Village,” the “Knowledge Society,” and Information Communication Technology for Development (ICT4D) which have informed a totalizing vision of world information,
and created fixed locations and purposes for cinemas and cinematic screens in a time and space that is either “developed” or “underdeveloped,” depending on its location in the Global North or the Global South. While Solanas and Getino’s formulation of Third Cinema positions the “Third World” as the leading edge of “development,” in the form of global revolution, the development and communication paradigm instead positions the “Third World,” understood variously under the moniker of the “developing world,” or the Global South, as lagging behind the advanced communications of the developed world of the Global North. These discourses reproduce an hierarchical view of the Global North in relation to the Global South. The Global South is a spatial, temporal, and epistemic location that is understood as lacking, in need of “development.”

Information communication technology, including telegraph, telephone, radio, television, satellite, cinema, and mobile communications devices, are ideologically linked to human progress in development discourse. ICT4D describes the project of disseminating communications in the Global South, or the “developing world.” Yet these projects may be imbued with what Andre Gunder Frank (1972) called “the development of underdevelopment;” the disabling of economic, political and social equity, reproducing colonial flows of power, the systematic extraction of resources, as well as the political coercion necessary to maintain the capitalist world-system. The ideologies of modernization and development have provided, beginning in the 1960s, a driving ideology for the work of the territorial expansion of the capitalist world-system through the establishment, maintenance and growth of communications systems. Armand Mattelart writes:

The Westernization ideal represented all the qualities characteristic of a “modern attitude” and “cosmopolitan tastes.” Indexes of modernization were calculated in terms of literacy, industrialization, urbanization, and exposure to the media…UNESCO hastened to translate the basic texts of this instrumental sociology into several languages, while its staff established catalogs of minimal standards: to extricate itself from underdevelopment, to “take off,” a country had to have ten copies of newspapers, five wirelesses, two television sets and two cinema seats for every one hundred inhabitants. As vehicles of modern behavior, the media were seen as key agents of innovation. As messengers of the “revolution of rising expectations,” they propagated the models of consumption and aspirations symbolized by those societies that had already attained the higher state of evolution” (2000, 55 – 56).

These concepts define the project of transnational corporate media expansion to those regions that are thought of as underdeveloped. This “development” is also an instantiation of what Enrique Dussel understands as the teleological construction of “modernity” by the West. Through this modernity, human development is equated with the use of electronic communications technology, and the myth of capitalism as the most evolved form of human society is underscored.

But this picture may have many different entry points and frames, depending on one’s location, as offered by Trinh T. Minh-ha:

To survive, “Third World” must necessarily have negative and positive connotations: negative when viewed in a vertical ranking system – “underdeveloped “ compared to measured by greater and/or new applicability/usefulness of the processed information, as compared with the originally available information” (United Nations, 2005).
over-industrialized, “underprivileged” within the already Second sex - and positive when understood sociopolitically as a subversive, “non-aligned” force. Whether “Third World” sounds negative or positive also depends on who uses it. Coming from you Westerners, the word can hardly mean the same as when it comes from Us members of the Third World (1989, 97-98).

The “Third World” may be a positive or negative site from which to pose cinematic interventions. How one is framed in/as members of the Third World is an alignment or non-alignment with global forces of “development.” Leading edge of global revolution, or empty space in need of “development”? This understanding is inescapably connected to how the “Third World” is understood as a privileged epistemic and political site of exteriority, as in Solanas and Getino’s formulation, or as an “underprivileged” one. This understanding is produced by “who uses it,” who uses the terms, and the tools. While in much development discourse, the assumption is made that the tools of “information communication technology” are for the benefit of their users, the actual use of these tools may move in different directions, with different imaginaries and connotations. As Trinh writes, those within the already “Second sex” are doubly situated within the matrix of “development.”

The role of women and ICTs in the Global South is an arena of ongoing contestation, with an increasing number of programs that emphasize the role of ICTs for women’s liberation from their oppressive conditions. At the same time, this truism is being approached critically by women writing from the Global South: “The discourse of ICTs is rooted in the conviction that access to networking technologies is an empowering tool for women of poorer countries. But is it necessarily so?” (Mitter 2007, 50).

It is in this nested site of contested meanings that the work of the Raqs Media Collective is located. The cinematic apparatus as constructed by their work moves in and between different spaces and moments of the “Third World.” The centrality of the Internet to capital determines the structure and flows of communication. Yet, although the structures themselves are often materially and epistemically constructed in the Global North, these structures are rewoven and reworked at their multiple sites of access. This sense of indeterminacy imbues the work of the Raqs Media Collective. In the many forms of cinematic media and screen cultures evoked in their work, there is a fluid range of practices of new and old media, digital and non-digital cultures, producing and sustaining ancestral logics and languages. Mobilizing multiple trajectories of time and space, their work creates senses of time that extend beyond the frameworks of modernity, spatial mobilities beyond geo-political borders, and forms of knowledge that exceed the discursive possibilities offered by the projects of global “development.” Their work, then, both points the way towards a time and space beyond the “Third World,” at the same time that it resites the cinematic apparatus with a mobility and insurgency that is inflected by the sensibilities and struggles of those places that are exterior to the global project of “development.” This transforms the cinematic apparatus as well as its time and space.

Raqs poses the possibility of Sarai acting as a “resting place for the new-media practices of nomadism,” as well as a “refuge.” It is a a site for an ongoing criss-crossing of cultural forces. The notions of rest and refuge are rarely associated with contemporary media practices. Emerging from Raqs’ reflection on the site-specific cultural and political practices of the sarais, the activities of rest and refuge offer important interventions. When one is at rest, or in refuge, there is stillness, and different moments of thought and relationality become possible. While many information technologies require the stillness of the body of the spectator or interlocutor, this stillness is masked by audio-visual experiences of endless movement and travel across time-spaces. In this context, the framing of rest and refuge is
transgressive, and creates an opportunity for acknowledging and experiencing multiple
temporalities, while also marking the politics of movement.

Spatial mobility and temporal transformation, the shifting role of the “artist” and the
“activist,” and existing within and outside of multiple domains are all in tension in the word
“Raqs”:

We wanted to give ourselves an image. An image of mobility and contemplation and
certain kinds of forms - forms of the past could be brought back alive. So Raqs
came from a Turkish word whirling dervish, the idea of kinetic contemplation, in
movement, but contemplative, and it also could be solitary act, but could be in a
group. That was the kind of self-image. And it is an attitude. An attitude to life. And
media was a domain. We defined it as media, kept it nebulous, amorphous, and at
times we do call ourselves media practitioners. So the words media and practice
sometimes used by us is unsettling for those who would call us scholarly intellectual
artists. So “media practitioners” makes it very banal, everyday. That works out a
domain (Raqs, 2006b).

Raqs refuses fixity, in identity, media or method. Raqs’ work includes many forms of “minor
practices,” including “everyday thinking and doing” which evoke and occur across multiple
temporalities (Raqs, 2006b). Media is posited as one amongst many tools to be transformed
through their collective rituals of cinematic praxis, including video installations, graphic art,
and website production; research and publishing on new media theory and politics; and
community education programs. These rituals are performed nomadically around the globe,
as they contribute towards transnational media and visual art networks, through exhibitions,
publications and multiple forms of artwork, writing and curatorial projects published on the
Internet. In keeping with the practice of the Sarai, both stillness and movement, space and
mobility, are equally important to Raqs’ imagination of their praxis. In this sense, they both
occupy and reorient a space of new media cultures across these multiple cinematic practices.

The Internet provides a particularly complex and contradictory space for their media
practice. The development and propagation of the Internet began in 1958 in the United
States with Arpanet, a military communications technology. It is a central site of the
contentious relationships between the global economy, information communication
technology, and the militarization of both. Arpanet was initiated by DARPA (Defense
Advanced Research Projects Agency), a division of the Pentagon, as a means of coordinating
between research teams working on government contracts. Over time, the concept, requisite
technics, and strategic value of creating a system of public computer networks developed,
and culminated in 1984, with Al Gore’s announcement of the creation of “the Information
Superhighway” at a meeting of the International Telecommunications Union, a division of
the United Nations, at its meeting in Buenos Aires (Matellart 2003, 54). A principle of
egalitarianism has been embedded in the Internet since its early formation. This
egalitarianism, however, is limited:

Along with transparency, ‘egalitarianism’ is another key word in the jargon of techno-
upotias. The belief in a new Athenian age of democracy nourishes hope for a way
out of the spiral of poverty. The main lesson that history teaches, however, is that in
the course of building the world economy, the social forms adopted by networks not
only link people together but continue to widen the gap between economies,
societies and cultures, divided across the demarcation line of development (147).
These infrastructures of development echo other technologies of capital expansion, such as
routes of transportation, communication, and energy production that have been wrought
upon the “developing” world.
The projects of development can have catastrophic consequences across the “developing” world. Arundhati Roy discusses the construction of dams in India as an act of economic, territorial, and epistemic violence. The dam provides a vehicle through which the national is written, and the global economy is accessed. But important forms of knowledge are erased by this inscipture. As she writes,

Dam-building grew to be equated with nation-building. Their enthusiasm alone should have been reason enough to make one suspicious. Not only did they build new dams and new irrigation systems, they took control of small, traditional systems that had been managed by village communities for thousands of years, and allowed them to atrophy. To compensate the loss, the government built more and more dams. Big ones, little ones, tall ones, short ones (1998, 13).

The Raqs Media Collective also directly addresses the violence, but also the multivalence, of digital media use in the midst of an onslaught of media and development projects. Echoing Roy’s discussion of the dam, they address the absences produced by the “narrative of progress”:

There are those who are deliberately obscured in the narrative of progress. There are no memorials from those who fade from view. The missing person is a blur. A decimal point in a statistic. Deported, evicted, cast away. No flags flutter, no trumpets sound (A Measure of Anacoustic Reason, 2006).

While the infrastructure of communications technology seem much more pliable in comparison to the dam, there is also a displacement of people in the global spaces of the Internet.

Building on discussions of the scopic regimes of empire, Arturo Escobar discusses the scopic regime of development, which constructs the “Third World” in the 20th century through images of impoverished people who need to evolve into, as Sylvia Wynter would put it, homo oeconomicus, “man” as constructed by the symbolic order of world capitalism (2000). Beyond their inscription in the linear narrative of “development,” Wynter’s emphasis on the sociogenic nature of humanity insists on specific, and transitory, time-space constructions of symbolic systems. She posits signifying systems as being in a constant state of flux, in tension with historical and economic movements. In this sense, her approach to understanding the technics of communication is radically open, and she imagines the possibility that humans initiate the forms of their self-inscription. This is tempered, of course, by the contemporary construction of humanity as homo-oeconomicus, which constricts the imagination and relegates all communication to the aims of the marketplace. The scopic regime of ICT4D produces a plethora of images of homo-oeconomicus in the “Third World” in various stages of encounter with information communication technologies.

This sense of the coloniality of information communication technology is elaborated by Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, who writes about cyberspace: “Like the New World and the frontier, settlers claimed this ‘new’ space and declared themselves its citizens” (2004, 243). Chun continues: “Those interested in ‘wiring the world’ reproduced - and still reproduce – narratives of ‘darkest Africa’ and of civilizing missions” (243). In tandem, Internet theorist Lisa Nakamura expresses unease about the transformational effects enacted by technological globalization on the Global South, which, she reflects, has also been feminized: “It is crucial that scholarly inquiry examine the ways that racism is perpetuated by both globalization and communications technologies like the Internet across a range of discursive fields and cultural matrices. This becomes all the more important as locales outside of the United States submit to “penetration” by the medium, and consequently undergo the sometimes-wrenching transformations that accompany such discursive shifts” (2002, xix). Nakamura
addresses the issue of the “digital divide” but also problematizes access as a solution to all problems of oppressive racialization on the Internet. As she analyses advertisements for Compaq, Origin and IBM, she encounters racialized, exoticized “Others” who are shown engaging with technology. Nakamura positions these discursive practices as the construction of a “new native” that is necessitated by the political project of imagining a borderless technological universe, with the narrative of development defining a continuum of access. The picturing of indigenous landscapes as pure digital matter resounds with the description of the world as a territory to be colonized, with the transformation of all material into capital.

*Southern Space*

Raqs understands their work as being importantly situated in New Delhi and India, locations that have been the targets of multiple projects of “development” that would define it as the “Third World.” Their sense of locality, however, is a site of multiplicity and open-ended possibility. Raqs performs their exteriority to both the “First World” and “Third World” across different registers of localities and globalities, across micro- and macro-social schema, in such a way that they turn the “inside out and the outside in” (Trinh 1989, 146). Their “everyday thinking and doing” does not mean a normative sense of localized thinking. As Sengupta states: “One way to address the reality and urgency of the South is to demand that voices from the South speak in larger terms” (2006a). This situatedness is one that refuses either an insider or outsider location. The members of Raqs are based in New Delhi, yet they are engaged in collaborations with other artists, scholars and institutions around the globe. In the catalogue for the exhibition “When Latitudes Become Forms,” they discuss the globality of their work:

We, on the fringes of the global space, know more about the global space than those who are at its core know about us. This is the consequence of the relationship over at least the last two hundred years between centers and peripheries in the cultural universe. But this also paradoxically means that we, at the “local” periphery, can claim the “global” center with far less hesitation. We can be global in a discursive sense, more than someone at the center can be. This is our will to globality. This is what ensures that our locatedness in New Delhi is also the crucial determinant of the nomadism of our concerns and practices (2003, 49).

It is centrally important for Raqs that their practices are located in New Delhi, but they also create artistic and intellectual interventions on a global scale. This is a nomadic form of thinking and doing that embraces, exceeds and redefines their “locatedness.”

Raqs’ shifting and mobile sense of themselves and their work is emblematic of the possibilities of the networked assemblages that constitute the contemporary moment. At the same time, their work clearly addresses the limits of global information communication technologies, while also using them as a productive and generative field of engagement. Trinh T. Minh-ha also reminds us of these limits and possibilities. Because of the continuity and simultaneity of shifting bodies, she is suspicious of claims about “new identities” and “borderless worlds” generated by cyberspace:

Yes, there’s a lot of talk about blurred boundaries or about a “borderless” world that seem to partake in such a corporate mentality. For me, the question of hybridity or of cultural difference has never been a question of blurred boundaries. We constantly devise boundaries, but these boundaries, which are political, strategical or tactical – whatever the circumstance requires, and each circumstance generates a
different kind of boundary – need not be taken as ends in themselves…It is not a question of blurring boundaries or of rendering them invisible. It is a question of shifting them as soon as they tend to become ending lines (2005, 130).

This strategy rejects claims about the liberatory new identity or world that is necessarily constituted by cyberspace. Against narratives that would code technology as either wholly liberatory or oppressive, against discursive constructions of technology natives and non-natives that are mapped on linear evolutionary lines, the work of the Raqs Media Collective points towards shifting, diverse and multiple constructions of people and tools, in and across particular sites, with differing ends.

Raqs’ multi-media installation, A Measure of Anaacoustic Reason, remaps the world from this location of cinematic mobility. The installation consists of one projection, four screens, four audio dialogues, four lecterns, four benches with embedded speakers and a lightbox, and was exhibited at ICON (India Contemporary), Venice Biennale, 2005. The work investigates what Paul Virilio asserts: “The technical apparatus has become the scientific proof” (1991, 42). In their questioning of geo-political mapping, the “technical apparatus” is recontextualized as only one of many possible forms of vision. The dynamic between the body, its field of vision, and its mobile or immobile locations is suggested by the presence of the empty lecterns and indicated spaces for spectators on benches. The four screens, with various unspecified images of maps, the doorway of a ruined jet, and other fragments of modernity, point towards the possibility of many different locations and forms of movement, for both the body and its field of vision. Brian Massumi discusses the indeterminate relationship between the body and vision:

It is assuming too much to interpret the variations from which perceptual unity and constancy emerge as “interactions” of “a body” and “objects,” as if their recognizable identity preexisted their chaos. Objectified body, object world, and their regulated in-between – the empirical workings of experience – arise from a nonphenomenal chaos that is not what or where they are (having neither determinate form nor dimensionality) but is of them, inseparably: their incipiency (2002, 151).

While modernity has conferred upon technology the capacity to make visible scientific, spatial, temporal and cosmological “truths” that cannot be seen with our eyes, replacing our eyes with apparati of power, the body is in constant motion and negotiation with an indeterminate world, from which vision is incessantly manifested. This indeterminacy is manifested in Raqs’ reflection on maps, which elicits the always partial, fragmentary nature of these maps of power. They insist on the incapacity of maps, and other technologies of seeing, to reflect the whole picture. The voice of collective member Monica Narula speaks the following on the soundtrack:

I find new places to think about. Are you planning journeys? No. But I like to think about how things and people move. Do you like old maps better or new ones? I like maps, not how old or new they are. What do you like about them? I like to see a picture and think. Where the ship changes course, where the country abruptly comes to an end. You can do it for hours at a stretch. And I like to think the way a place moves in and out of a map. I like the way the colors change. They use four colors to make a map of the world. Just four colors can take care of everything. But the map doesn’t say all there is. There are lots of things that a map doesn’t say. There are some names that are not on a map. You can look hard for them, but you won’t find them, not even with a magnifying glass. Perhaps it’s a question of scale. That is the explanation. I keep making mental maps, put all the missing pieces in, and all the rest out, just to see what it could look like.
Their proposal for a “mental map” constitutes an epistemological insurgency, a re-mapping, using the the mind, the dream. The contemplative tone of the speaking voice transfigures time into ritual time; we are invited to dream with her. Meditation and contemplation reverberate through the voice of Narula, who accesses other realities – reading the maps, but recognizing what the “map doesn’t say.” As listeners and interlocutors, we are invited to understand our own “missing pieces.” In this work, Raqs is attentive to the power of both visibility and invisibility. Rather than picturing an alternative, they construct a temporary collective “film.” Their concern is not simply the visibility of the Global South. While they assert the globality of issues of the South, rather than the relegation of those issues as simply local, regional or national, this is an insistence on interconnectedness with no fixed political or epistemological horizon.

The view of the world from here, and the collective ritual that engages us in producing that view, enables a re-thinking of global politics, scales of engagement, and strategies of cultural intervention in circuits of power. Immanuel Wallerstein’s world-systems analysis, with its inter-disciplinarity and commitment to transforming maps, is both resonant and dissonant with Raqs’ thinking and doing. Its fundamental basis lies in the critique of the disciplines:

The three presumed arenas of collective human action – the economic, the political, and the social or sociocultural – are not autonomous arenas of social action. They do not have separate ‘logics’. More importantly, the intermeshing of constraints, options, decisions, norms and ‘rationalities’ is such that no useful research model can isolate ‘factors’ according to the categories of economic, political and social and treat only one kind of variable, implicitly holding the others constant. (Wallerstein 1987, 313). This insight provides a ground for the analysis of humans and human environments as radically inter-meshed with multiple economic, political and social realities that cannot be understood in isolation. It also offers a vision of the complex inter-workings of economics, culture and politics. Rather than rely on the common sense notion of “society,” Wallerstein argues, “World-systems analysis makes the unit of analysis a subject of debate. Where and when do the entities within which social life occurs exist? It substitutes for the term ‘society’ the term ‘historical system’” (1987, 317). Shifting the unit of analysis entails the de-centering of the nation-state, moving towards a regional, global and inter-state analysis, and rejecting unified, linear, evolutionary, “progressive” approach to the understanding of human time, which in world-systems theory instead becomes “multiple instances of historical systems” (316). In this frame, social change is always occurring; sometimes it is for the betterment of humankind, other times for the worse. While there have been moments at which different historical systems have co-existed, we are now in a period in which one world system predominates, the capitalist world-economy. In the capitalist world-economy, the definition of localities and globalities is rethought, as the world is organized according to a logic of core, periphery and semi-periphery through which nation-states become actors on a global stage. Thus, Wallerstein creates an understanding of a global hierarchy in the world capitalist economy, while also putting this hierarchy in the context of a set of highly unstable, transitory, and multi-dimensional realities.

For Raqs, Wallerstein’s conception of the world system becomes both a platform for new theorizing as well as a discursive framework that requires constant revising. They re-work the implications of these geo-political locations:

A lot of the South suffer from that validation comes from the North, so you find in many places in the South the horizon is the North, because that is what has been historically constructed as the reference point. And that is the importance of creating
discursive frameworks, intellectual interventions, or aesthetic interventions that reposition some of these validations and arguments (Raqs, 2006).

This disposition is reflected in Raqs’ creation of material and discursive spaces that support further inquiries into the intertwined arenas of aesthetics, politics and economics in the Global South:

Monica: …I think we will see this more, but I think there is a sense of intellectual challenge that is coming. It’s not a defensive proposition. I think there is going to be a formulation of aesthetics that is… there is going to be a responding to its own reality as opposed to illustrating a reality that has been given to you as a condition.

Shuddha: The question is then to be able to create structures to enable people from the South to address themselves and the world not only in the terms of being people from the South. The reason I’m saying this is that if you’re an artist in North America, you can talk about life, aesthetics, beauty. But if you’re an artist from the South, every statement has to be about that. It’s as if the condition of deprivation is condemning you to talk about nothing other than deprivation. Whichever circle we inhabit, whether it’s the circle of the city, if we are in a dialogue with a neighborhood that is about to demolished, we talk about, we will try to ensure that the only conversation that happens in that context is not just about degradation and demolition. It will be a larger conversation (Raqs, 2006).

In this conversation, Raqs challenges the idea that being located in the space constructed as the Global South means that one would not have something to say about the rest of the world, reworking the hierarchical locations of “core” and “periphery.” Raqs values the knowledge and imagination that exists within marginalized communities and creates situations through their media production laboratory, Sarai, that enable these communities to share important ideas globally. Raqs works to create a new Southern horizon that re-maps the global cultural hierarchy.

This entails an acknowledgement as well as an intervention in the circulation of resources and access to technologies. Monica addresses their strategies in regard to the economic inequity between North and South:

Even though there are impediments, there are multiple diffuse conversations that we try to sustain whether it’s through using online technology, lists, or discussion formats. And this has been a very useful technological development; the fact that you can have conversations; the impediments don’t completely obstruct the possibility to have conversation. Through Sarai we have tried to open different kinds of channels and possibilities of hosting or inviting, or creating, which are face to face encounters. But this is where it comes down, and this is very important, we would say if you come from the South, we would try and host you, if you come from the North, we really don’t have the resources to do something like that (Raqs, 2006).

This commitment to a Global South to South dialogue, enacted on the level of institutional programming and allocation of resources is also expressed through the establishment of Sarai as a research and community production center. Sarai acts as a “think tank” not only for Raqs, but for the work of New Delhi-based as well as global artists and programmers. In addition, through residencies and the publication of the Sarai Reader, an Internet based journal, it works as a center for production. Providing a resting place and intersection of knowledge, images and sounds.

Trans-modern Time
Ravi Sundaram, a researcher at Sarai, discusses the multiplicity of new media cultures in urban spaces that escape the linearity of the historical time of “development”:

The cultures of distraction, of exhilaration and mobility, of loss and displacement were by no means new - they had been narrated by 1920s’ European modernism. What was different was as if in this new modern we were deprived of the ability to think, our ‘social body’ emptied out, prised open, “bodies without organs” as Deleuze and Guattari have argued, no time to reflect as in the old modernisms. It was as if we were forced kicking and screaming into a new space of flows with the rhetoric of smoothness and non-linearity. However the “place of spaces” was not, as some have argued, superseded by the space of flows. Along with the “smoothness” and the “place-lessness” of the shopping mall, the airport and multiplex, new localities were produced both as sites for work and imagination. Urbanity became the site of new disruptions by those rendered placeless in the Smooth City. New struggles and solidarities emerged, once again lacking the mythic quality of the old movements, but adapting, innovating and gaining knowledge through the practice of urban life (2006, 119).

These “new localities” produce new forms of time. Through their engagement and awareness of such forms of everyday practices, Raqs finds a path that reconnects multiplicities of temporalities. In their work, “bodies without organs” contribute to an emptiness and vehicularity of the space of the cinematic screen as a point of intersection of different temporalities. The screen is a surface upon which can be written many histories and times.

The potential for transformation that emerges from different forms of both spatial and temporal exteriority constitutes “trans”-modernity, a term offered by Enrique Dussel, which emphasizes the possibility of an epistemological alterity emerging from the multiple peripheries of the world-system. Enrique Dussel offers an image of these spaces of exteriority:

This modernity’s technical and economic globality is far from being a cultural globalization of everyday life that valorizes the majority of humanity. From this omitted potentiality and altering “exteriority” emerges a project of “trans”-modernity, a “beyond” that transcends Western modernity (since the West has never adopted it but, rather, has scorned it and valued it as “nothing”) and that will have a creative function of great significance in the twenty-first century (221).

“Trans”-modernity is not simply a given space and time, but it is a moment in which struggle is being constantly waged, a “globality” that counters globalization. While it may be nourished by non-Western ways and practices, it is also available to all who engage in the struggle to inhabit what has been the “omitted potentiality” of globalization. Dussel provides many critical tools with which to intervene in the construction of the past, present and future from these positions of alterity: “Philosophical intelligence is never so truthful, clean, and precise as when it starts from oppression and does not have to defend any privileges, because it has none” (1985, 4). Dussel’s insistence on a critique of spatial and temporal logics, as well as his discussion of the construction of the self and Other, the fundamental relationship that is expressed as an always moving towards, proposes another story, a story of self-as-Other, outside of Eurocentric history. Dussel re-orders our understanding of the “world,” de-stabilizing Eurocentric coordinates, and creating a new cartography for mapping geo-political and epistemological locations of knowledge production. He uses the world-systems perspective to understand European hegemonic strategies, and in doing so
underlines its limited temporal frame: “By limiting Europe’s “centrality” to the last five centuries, world-system theory removed the continent’s “aura” of being the eternal “center” of world history. “Modernity” is thus the management of the world-system’s “centrality” (Dussel 2002, 222). Aníbal Quijano further elaborates modernity as co-constructed with “America”: “…starting with America, a new space/time was constituted materially and subjectively: this is what the concept of modernity names” (2000, 547). What Quijano terms as the “coloniality of power” is a re-articulation and re-casting of the world-system with an attention to the way that racialization and coloniality are central to structures of power and domination:

What is termed globalization is the culmination of a process that began with the constitution of American and colonial/modern Eurocentered capitalism as a new global power. One of the fundamental axes of this model of power is the social classification of the world’s population around the idea of race, a mental construction that expresses the basic experience of colonial domination and pervades the more important dimensions of global power, including its specific rationality: Eurocentrism. The racial axis has a colonial origin and character, but it has proven to be more durable and stable than the colonialism in whose matrix it was established. Therefore, the model of power that is globally hegemonic today presupposes an element of coloniality (2000, 533). Quijano goes on to discuss the centrality of epistemic coloniality: “In effect, all the experiences, histories, resources, and cultural products ended up in one global cultural order revolving around European or Western hegemony” (540). This includes the production of mythologies of the other, which is characterized as Occidentalism, the naturalization of all forms of racial oppression, as well as the idea of the natural ascendance of Westerners due to the “culmination of a civilizing trajectory form a state of nature” that leads them towards their destiny of “the moderns of humanity” (530).

The crucial revelation of these conceptualizations of globality is that they make available conceptualizations of temporality in which other knowledges may be acknowledged and built, outside the epistemic centrality constructed by the modern/colonial/capitalist world-system. These are time-spaces of knowledge production, technics, that are resonant with Catherine Walsh’s terms, lo propio and ancestrality, ways of living that have genealogies other than that of colonialism. These terms describe knowledge as it can only be recognized without the colonial lenses of modernity, opening onto an infinite number of productive paths and possibilities. The possibility of trans-modern time and technics as a cinematic praxis may be productively understood through the following reflections of Trinh T. Minh-ha, who dwells upon the connections between rituals of everyday life, technology, and time. Discussing The Fourth Dimension, her digital film produced in Japan, she accentuates the interdependence of ritual and temporal experience:

But the reality is that, whether we’re Japanese or not, we all incorporate rituals and live by them in our everyday existence. Just look at rave culture (there’s a sequence of it at the beginning of the film) or other youth cultures of our time: tribalism and its rituals are definitely part of this “new form of kindness,” to use a statement in the film. Small and singular are what characterizes the faces of resistance in the age of globalization. Rather than seeing rituals only in terms of tradition and religion, it is interesting to widen the scope of our view and to expand the term to the daily activities of secular life (2005, 34).
Rituals are ways that we order existence, an activity that, contrary to being destroyed by modernity, finds new forms; she emphasizes the continuity and creativity of human rituals in the face of globalization. She expands on this in dialogue with Valentina Vitali:

We are all engaged in rituals in our daily activities, and by remaining unaware of their ritual propensity, we remain in conformity. Rather than giving ourselves agency in our everyday acts, we tend to carry them out passively. I’ve sometimes defined artists and activists as “pathmakers,” and “art,” as a way of marking moments in our lives….One should treat rituals as rituals if one is to step out of the servile one-dimensional mind and turn an instrument into a creative tool (74).

Here, Trinh imbues ritual with a temporal politics. To be aware of ritual, and enact rituals with agency, is to become more fully present in one’s body and the world – to be an “artist” and “activist.” As a connection to the artistic process, ritual provides a path towards understanding meaning-making as a sacred activity. Agency and intentionality are crucial. Rather than ritual as a “passive” act, which may or may not have a depth of meaning, Trinh calls for an active transformation of the tools of communication, both spiritual and material, through ritual. She also creates a radically open sense of the definition of ritual, including the act of engaging with digital culture as an instance of ritual. Ritual provides, for both Raqs and Trinh, a framework for understanding embodied knowledges and local cultural practices as deeply imbricated in new media practices. Experiences of time are political; ritual slowness becomes an act of resistance.

Senses of open-ended time, of infinite narrative, are also dependent on a sense of open-ended space. This opening of time-space is enacted in the Raqs Media Collective’s video installation, The Surface of Each Day is a Different Planet. Commissioned by the Tate Modern, London, in 2009, and exhibited at the eflux exhibition space in New York City, in 2010, the installation consists of a microphone, a chair, a video projection, and a row of empty seats. Multiple senses of time and space are explored. As they describe it, the installation engages in:

…combining historical photographs (from the Galton Collection at University College, London, and the Alkazi Collection, New Delhi) and incorporating video, animation, and sound. Stories leak, histories collide. Bones, bodies, faces, and handwriting blur. Crowds gather and move. Open-ended and anti-documentary, The Surface of Each Day is a Different Planet builds sequential scenarios that move across time and space, while considering collectivity, anonymity and the question of identity through history, fantasy and speculation. Presented within a setting suggestive of a lecture hall, there is the anticipation of discourse: chairs and microphones are found on raised platforms yet speakers are absent. The performance format commonly employed by the artists, but they, their bodies themselves, have somehow disappeared. Their voices are left behind, along with the cabinets of curiosities (2010).

The video projection, on a wall between the chairs and empty lectern, consists of three elements: archival photographs, an image of the cutting of a stone with a mechanized blade, and an animated depiction of an astronaut’s journeys. The sense of collaged time and technics is also evoked by the voice-over, which includes diary entries from a 19th century British military figure in India, as well as voices of the Raqs Media Collective engaged in meditations on time and history. In this collision of different elements, the cinematic text becomes not so much a container of history and stories, but a residual site for temporal shadows and apparitions. The screen itself, marked only by the frames of projection, seems remarkably partial and porous in this context. With multiple visual, aural, and spatial pauses,
there is a quietness and space of contemplation produced in the piece, allowing for reflection and deep engagement. The viewer/reader becomes an active agent in the comparative process of interaction with the different elements, all of which form the cinematic apparatus of the piece.

The radically disruptive possibility of such forms of transformational time is also elaborated by Trinh: “For such a path of change, there is no short cut. In this age of infomania, where one can travel endlessly in cyberspace, efficacy and rapidity of means of reproduction and destruction require that reaction times be shortened and reflection times almost nonexistent. But when events happen so fast that one becomes a witness before realizing it, one is bound to slow down and to take one’s time” (2005, 11). Rest, refuge, ritual and slowness open doors to the digital self as thoughtful, active, creative and taking her own good time, against the top speed of the flow of information of digital culture. This is a transformation of time, space, and technology, creating worlds for plural forms of Being. Raqs’ commitment to “syncretic languages and ways of being” suggests that an engagement with “new” media as a cinematic praxis does not only require a looking forward, but also a looking back, and a looking at the now. This now is not simply the contemporary moment, but a trans-modern time, a space of exiting modernity.

This radical sense of time is one that is produced in conversation with the particular locality of New Delhi. At the same time that they are working on building a dialogue within the Global South, and across the Global North, Raqs is building a dialogue with the diverse people with whom they inhabit their city. Amongst these are displaced and dispossessed young people in the urban centers. Raqs engages in an open-ended, participatory cinematic praxis with young people, and distributes the artworks produced in that conversation across the globe. Cybermohalla is a community-based technology center that Raqs has established in several different neighborhoods of New Delhi, which works “with young people living in slum settlements and working class neighbourhoods” (Raqs Media Collective 2006a).

Raqs describes the project in detail on their website:

The project works with young people living in slum settlements and working class neighbourhoods. It brings together the energies of community based social intervention, creativity with texts, sound & images and innovative uses of computers and digital technology, while remaining alert to the imperatives of social and cultural specificity and autonomy. The Cybermohalla project is three and a half years old. In this time, it has witnessed the confident articulation of the visions of two groups of young people (aged between 15 and 25 years old) at the mainly Muslim squatter settlement of the Lok Nayak Jai Prakash (LNJP) Basti, Ajmeri Gate, in central Delhi, and the primarily Dalit re-settlement colony of Ambedkar Nagar at Dakshinpuri in south Delhi. Both these spaces are witness to an increasingly contentious and violent pattern of life - which reflect the realities of the tense metropolis of Delhi. The LNJP Basti is a decades old illegal settlement in the heart of the city. The denizens of LNJP basti have no legal status as a result of which they face constant police harassment and the threat of eviction. The Dakshinpuri settlement is legal, but is home to endemic unemployment and low income jobs, and a culture of criminality born out of the desperate pressure to maintain the necessities of urban life. For groups of young people to find spaces for reflection and creativity in sites such as these is an act of everyday intransigence in the face of an increasingly cruel urban environment (Raqs Media Collective 2006a).

This register of engagement reflects Raqs’ political commitment to working on multiple fronts and “intervening” in global discourse, in this case, the apparatus of development.
This act of “everyday intransigence,” of providing access points and community technology centers is territory that might seem well trodden by development agencies that are focused on creating access to the Internet. As discussed in such forums as the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS), this global movement of creating technology access and production in the Global South has the following goals:

…to work together to develop principles and prioritize actions that would lead to democratic, inclusive, participatory and development-oriented information societies at the local, national and international levels; societies in which the ability to access, share and communicate information and knowledge is treated as a public good and takes place in ways that strengthen the rich cultural diversity of our world (International Telecommunications Union 2005).

In the milieu of transnational NGOs, the term ICT4D refers to the myriad ways that technology can be used for the human good, rather than exploitation. The logics of development persist in cyberspace. Modernity is equated with “development,” and “development” with access to and use of information communication technologies. Technology acquisition has been used to justify a new wave of modernization rhetoric. This is a form of coloniality that also creates new subject positions of the colonizer and the colonized. Yet, in the hands of “philosophers, activists or artists,” as Trinh T. Minh-ha argues, the novel forms through which cyberspace enacts colonization can be redirected:

Instead of colonizing by force territories exterior to our own, we are now colonizing and being colonized through monitors and passwords within our own territories. The technology that is being perfected continues to be geared toward economic ends and to serve the marketing mind that controls today’s societies. If technology is in the hands of philosophers, activists or artists, for example, its function and direction can be very different. It can be another creative tool rather than being a coded and coding tool through which the standardization of communication (with even greater speed and accessibility) is maximized despite the impressive proliferation of choices devised (2005, 130).

Here, Trinh contests the linearity of technological progress. Rather than understanding capitalism as an ideal new field for innovation, Trinh posits the “marketing mind” as being an homogenizing, colonizing force. She discusses the embodied effects of this colonization in the following passage: “The center of cyberworld is everywhere and nowhere, and the tragedy of this virtual decentralization is that it delocalizes work and our relation to the other” (10). Returning us to our bodies, she accentuates relational effects in time and space if it can be another “creative tool,” rather than a “coding tool.”

Raqs challenges the evolutionary schema of “modernity” that equates information communication technologies with “development.” They use the terms “old and new media” to describe their work, and invoke another discursive framework to imagine the benefits of information communication technologies. They imagine cinematic praxis as the construction of a network of associations across temporalities and localities. Raqs’ intervention challenges the narrative of global technology infrastructure that privileges corporate and government sectors and the logics of capitalist expansion, including the development of new markets, consumers and labor forces. De-centering “development” enables the valuing of multiple temporalities, languages, rituals and forms of local knowledge and technology. It also allows the question to emerge of how to address lack of access to information communication technologies, but without the imposition of a colonial schema on existing local knowledge.

This is a crucial moment for recognizing the contestation over global hierarchies of knowledge. The Internet, emerging in the context of globalization and the ideology of
modernization that emerged in the post World War II global order, is only the latest of a long series of global expansions of communications infrastructures, led in the 20th century by U.S. interests. Media scholar Herbert Schiller explains:

At the outset of what some hoped would be an American century, a vital doctrine was promoted: the free flow of information. Considered out of context, this principle seems unexceptional and indeed, entitled to respect. Yet when viewed alongside the reality of the early postwar years, it conferred unmatchable advantage on U.S. cultural industries. No rival foreign film industry, TV production center, publishing enterprise, or news establishment could possibly have competed on equal terms with the powerful U.S. media-entertainment companies at that time. And so it has gone to this day. The free flow of information, as implemented, has meant the ascendance of U.S. cultural product worldwide (1995, 19).

Schiller’s article was written at the very nascent moments of what was coined by Al Gore as “The Information Super-Highway” – what we now know as the Internet. At that point, Schiller made the following prognosis: “The launching of the global information superhighway project comes at a time when most of the preconditions for a corporate global “order” are in place …the extent of the concentration of economic influence in this global system cannot be overstated (21). As the Internet has expanded and transformed, however, it has proven to be a more multifaceted arena for communication. It is both more centralized and more open than could have been imagined. Along with being a surveillance technology, a means of product distribution, and an ideological apparatus, it is also an artists’ and activists’ tool for the sharing of resources and the practice of political communication and participation.

These characteristics are all embedded in the Internet’s unique and paradoxical characteristic – its possibility of networked, multi-centric communication. This has created another arena of struggle, Intellectual Property. One of many global responses to the centralization of information and the use of the Internet as a for-profit technology for product distribution has been the work of the Open Source Movement, in which Raqs has been actively involved. Media theorist Steven Weber defines open source in the following manner: “Open source software is fundamentally different, by definition “free”- that is public and non proprietary” (2005, 180). Weber also describes the wider meaning of the Open Source movement as an alternative political economy of the Internet:

Open Source is an experiment in building a political economy – that is, a system of sustainable value creation and a set of governance mechanisms tied to it. It is a system that holds together a community of producers around a counterintuitive notion of property (179).

Raqs works to develop, promote and distribute Open Source software. They understand themselves as part of a network of “free-software activists, hackers, coders on the fringes of code, and other free-floating intellectual and cultural artisans” (Raqs et al 2003, 41). They use Open Source software in all of their work, and distribute Open Source software via the Sarai website.

Their cinematic praxis engages Open Source software on multiple levels, as both a technic of production and an avenue of discursive intervention. They address the issues of Intellectual Property and Open Source software from an activist perspective that seeks to decriminalize cultural piracy and support free and open exchange of information across all sectors of the global Internet. In their Internet artwork The Network of No-des (2004), they explore the ramifications of a newspaper article that describes a police raid on a “pirate” operation in Delhi, focused on copying and distributing copyrighted works. The main page
of the piece consists of an image of the newspaper article. As one reads through the article, one has the opportunity to link to other texts that re-contextualize the assumptions of the news article. For example, one of the links—which is accessed through the word “piracy”—leads to a web-based poster produced by the San Francisco-based Electronic Frontier Foundation. The poster is a faux “Wanted” list of major developers of software; people who, from the perspective of Open Source activists, are taking what is public knowledge and privatizing it.

Intellectual Property impacts the everyday life of people globally, limiting access to publications, medicines, technologies and other resources. The Open Source movement is an international policy issue discussed by governments worldwide, and has been a central debate within the WIPO, the World Intellectual Property Organization. The following text, prepared by Argentina and Brazil and presented in 2004, demonstrates its import for countries in the Global South. It also demonstrates how ‘development’ is a term that can have contested meanings, as it is being used here to advocate for economic autonomy:

While access to information and knowledge sharing are regarded as essential elements in fostering innovation and creativity in the information economy, adding new layers of intellectual property protection to the digital environment would obstruct the free flow of information and scuttle efforts to set up new arrangements for promoting innovation and creativity, through initiatives such as the ‘Creative Commons’...In order to tap into the development potential offered by the digital environment, it is important to bear in mind the relevance of open access models for the promotion of innovation and creativity. In this regard, WIPO should consider undertaking activities with a view to exploring the promise held by open collaborative projects to develop public goods, as exemplified by the Human Genome Project and Open Source Software (World Intellectual Property Organization, 2004).

The future of Intellectual Property and Open Source software are central to the future of information communication technologies in the Global South. Sarai, its programs, and its website, co-produced by Raqs along with other researchers and programmers, might be considered as an “open collaborative project to develop public goods.” The website acts as a space for local and global discussion, and publishes new media research and philosophy, and videotapes and web-based art produced through the “Cybermohalla” project (Raqs Media Collective 2006c). This practice resonates with sociologist Saskia Sassen’s recent discussion of the possibility of activism within and against the “Electronic Markets” of the Internet. In this essay, she compares the formation of “knowledge communities” in both corporate and grassroots NGO contexts. Regarding practices amongst non-governmental organizations using Internet communications, she observes:

The types of political practice discussed here are not the cosmopolitan route to the global. They are global through the knowing multiplication of local practices. These are types of sociability and struggle deeply embedded in people’s actions and activities. They are also forms of institution-building work with global scope that can come from localities and networks of localities with limited resources and from informal social actors. We see here the potential transformation of actors “confined” to domestic roles into actors in global networks without having to leave their work and roles in their communities (2005, 83).

This description resonates deeply with the following description of Raqs’ sense of connection to both global and local realities:
The work that we do reflects the very specific conditions of a large, chaotic, industrial cosmopolitan city that is connected globally through flows of information, finance, and industrial processes to the whole world. While we may hesitate to use the term Indian to describe our work, we are certain that our work speaks to the specific, simultaneously global and local realities of working and living in a city like Delhi and of engaging with the diverse and complex histories of modernity in South Asia, as reflected in media cultures and practices. It is because we are strongly located in a city like Delhi that we also know that we are part of and contribute to, a global domain of aesthetic and cultural practice (2003, 45).

Raqs creates transformative connections that question the directionality and purpose of existing global information flows. Through the production of works that are distributed on the Internet, as well as other forms of cinematic praxis, they are able to communicate the interests and realities of localities and globalities, while also redefining these terms.
Chapter Four

Spectator/Specter
Figure 9. She doesn’t remember being there. Still from *What Will You Remember of September?* Cecilia Cornejo, 2004.
We should understand from here on that the body and the things of the body are also
elegant, and that material life is beautiful as well. We should understand that, in fact, the soul
is contained in the body just as the spirit is contained in material life, just as — to speak in
strictly artistic terms — the essence is contained in the surface and the content in the form.

-Julio García Espinosa, “For an Imperfect Cinema”

The multiple cinematic screens of contemporary life are surfaces that contain
essences, forms with content, organized with an implicit spectatorial position. The visual
technics that historically constitute the visuality of cinematic forms - three-point perspective,
the panoramic painting, the lens, the photograph – have emerged in tandem with multiple
geo-political and epistemological constructions of modernity. These technics materialize the
now, the present, as a delimited space of subjectivity that ends at the vanishing point of the
constructed horizon: “The word “horizon” first occurred in scientific contexts and
descriptions as part of a mathematical construction rather than as an objective fact. The
concept itself was developed as part of an effort to explore previously unknown territories.
The horizon is an important element in nautical reckoning of a ship’s position and thus in
precise navigation; without the concept of the horizon the discovery of the New World
would not have been possible” (Oettermann 1997, 8). This horizon, then, births the time-
spaces of the “Third World;” the vanishing points that eventuate (Latin) America, Africa and
Asia. Without the horizon, there would be no border between here and the unknown, and
there would be no “Third World.” The “Third World” is seen in and through its absence;
produced and enveloped in a double movement of epistemic and geo-political colonization.
The horizon is the line between the now, the here, and the beyond. The cinematic apparatus
is inscribed, then, with a time and a space, a chrono- and geo-politics. In Jean-Louis
Baudry’s theorization of the cinematic apparatus, its fixed perspective is an analog of the
Western episteme, with the lens inscribed with the logic of colonial cartography. The lens
situates a spectator as center, as “being” itself:

In focusing it, the optical construct appears to be truly the projection-reflection of a
“virtual image” whose hallucinatory reality it creates. It lays out the space of an ideal
vision and in this way assures the necessity of a transcendence – metaphorically (by
the unknown to which it appeals – here we must recall the structural place occupied
by the vanishing point) and metonymically (by the displacement that it seems to
carry out: a subject is both “in place of” and “a part for the whole”). Contrary to
Chinese and Japanese painting, Western easel painting, presenting as it does a

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4The Spanish crown could not call Indias Occidentales “America” because it was
not interested in continental identity but in the administration of the colonial possessions,
and the colonial possessions were both Indias Occidentales (today the Americas and the
Caribbean) and Indias Orientales (the Pacific Islands with the Phillipines as its center)”
(Mignolo 2000, 130).

5Paul Virilio discusses the differences between “chrono-politics” and “geo-politics”
in Pure War: “Today we’re in chrono-politics. Geography is the measuring of space. Now,
since the vectors of the post-Second World War period, geography has been transformed.
We have entered into another analysis of space which is linked to space-time” (1983, 6).
motionless and continuous whole, elaborates a total vision which corresponds to the idealist conception of the fullness and homogeneity of “being,” and is, so to speak, representative of this conception. In this sense it contributes in a singularly emphatic way to the ideological function of art, which is to provide the tangible representation of metaphysics (Baudry 1981, 45).

This is colonial ontology – “the thinking that expresses Being – the Being of the reigning and central system…” (Dussel 1985, 5). Just as Hegel fuses the epistemological with the historico-concrete; empire with “world,” the image produced by the lens fixes the spectator as “Being.” Further, in Paul Virilio’s account of the cinematic apparatus as war machine, it fixes the temporal space of “Being” as life, and the space of the beyond as death: “This city of the beyond is the City of Dead Time” (Virilio 1983, 6).

However, the lens, the screens it produces, and the spectators that are therein evoked, may be multiply situated, producing many time-spaces of the beyond, multiple thresholds, places where being and non-being mix, at which emerge spectral presences that are both dead and alive. Cinematic time-lags offer many potentialities of such crossings of audibilities and inaudibilities, disappearances and appearances. In Black Skin, White Masks, Frantz Fanon describes his own cinematic spectatorship as just such a spectral moment. Positioned as the colonial “Being,” the result is a moment of crisis between apparitions:

The Negro is a toy in the white man’s hands; so, in order to shatter the hellish cycle, he explodes. I cannot go to a film without seeing myself. I wait for me. In the interval, just before the film starts, I wait for me. The people in the theater are watching me, examining me, waiting for me. A Negro groom is going to appear. My heart makes my head swim (1967, 140).

Fanon dwells here on the threshold between invisibility and appearance, stereotype and human. Invisibility is a site of possibility; appearance, a moment of death. The “me” is the “me” as constructed in coloniality. Fanon’s consciousness is ill at ease with this positioning and refuses to be captured by it. He swoons. The invisibility of Fanon posits an other site of subject construction and moves towards a multiply (un)articulated subject as a threshold identity; a spectre. “Being,” at the threshold of cinematic construction, resists, self-destructing by “exploding.”

The exploding Being is a presence that is evoked in the cinematic apparatus that is infused with a knowledge of threshold existences. This presence, as a potential moment of decolonization and deterritorialization, of death and life understood differently, are also produced in and through the cinematic works of Michelle Dizon, Cecilia Cornejo and Fanta Régina Nacro. Their work, taken together, posit the production of not a fixed spectator, but a fleeting ghost, by the apparatus. Each of these authors of cinematic texts is sited differently in scenes of coloniality and global warfare, but their refashionings of the apparatus create interconnected spectral locations. In their cinematic assemblages, the lens becomes a mobile technic that enables and remembers multiple time-spaces; fragments of memory, locales, and stories. In these locations, a reconsideration of the borders of life and death occurs through a shifting spectatorial position, a borderlands subjectivity. Dizon, Cornejo, and Nacro transgress the horizon, enabling, as Baudry suggests, the “transcendence” of the spectator. But the spectator-spectres produced in their work travel in multiple time-spaces, not only out towards conquered lands.

This chapter addresses the final term of the apparatus: the spectator through an engagement with the work of these three artists. Echoing the sense of the trinity of the three terms of the apparatus, while also evoking the multiplicity of possible sites of the spectator, the three film authors each site their cinematic apparatus in spectral locations of global war.
At these sites, they both become and produce a spectator that moves across life and death. In their work, the metonymy of the spectator’s displacement effects a re-combination of discrete parts, rather than Baudry’s “motionless and continuous whole.” The lens, and its spectators, become infinitely mobile, with each placement a re-location and de-location of the lines between being and non-being. While the lens, agent of colonial visualities, may carry within it the very logic of its primary voyages across the sea, in the work of Dizon, Cornejo, and Nacro, the lens moves in multiple directions and effects an endless series of displacements and refusals. It carries the contradiction of its limits, infused with the multiplicities of its encounters. It not only has two sides, and two points of entry. It is made porous by the memories of all who have seen and traveled through it. This production of other locations of the filmic encounter also produces spectres, in the seams between their cinematic territories.

Spectral Crossings

As Women of Color, we cannot stand on any ground that is not also a crossing.

-María C. Lugones, Peregrinajes/Pilgrimages

To tell of travels in the spectral landscape makes no quaint travelogue. It is a dangerous crossing of dimensions, across time-spaces. How does one tell of these journeys? Spectres speak in many tongues. The ghost of a son hovers before a mother suffering in the aftermath of a genocidal war in Africa. Another ghost lingers over the place on the urban pavement where Rodney King lay. Multiple spectres slip between two September elevens, suffering both together. These spectres emerge in the multiple temporalities of the ruins of global war, where another form of difference emerges. To enter the time-space of these ghosts is to lose coordinates, and the technology of the geo-political map is no longer sufficient. Here another form of difference emerges. It is a crossing, and on this ground, the spectator-spectre is “world-traveling.” “World-traveling” is María Lugones’ term for a process of transformation effected by crossing into an/other’s world. She describes this as a necessity, with risks, for “women of color”:

To enter playfully into each other’s “worlds” of subjective affirmation also risks those aspects of resistance that have kept us riveted on constructions of ourselves that have kept us from seeing multiply, from understanding the interconnects in our historico-spatialities. Playful “world”-travel is thus not assimilable to the middle-class leisurely journey nor the colonial or imperialist journeys. None of these involve risking one’s ground (2003, 98).

The project of entering other “worlds,” and to see “multiply” in the context of the time-spaces of global war, is a crossing of geo-political, racial, and gendered horizons of sense. This crossing necessitates a process of transfiguration, becoming a spectre, a shadow of one’s stable identity as a spectator.

This destabilization is an epistemic rupture effected by the spaces between three projected screens in the work of Michelle Dizon. Mobilizing the spatiality of screens, Dizon’s installation, Civil Society (2008), uses three side by side projections, which could be understood as creating a sense of layered multiplicity that enables the spectator to be what Kate Mondloch calls “both here and there.” Mondloch discusses the spectatorial consequences of multiple screens used in recent video installation, which effect precisely
this kind of doubling, as an intervention in the unitary “Being” of the spectator. This intervention, however, in her inquiry, results in the possibility of a terrifying erasure:

Are we, as spectators of these present-day, screen-reliant installations, both here and there – or, perhaps, more ominously, are we neither fully here nor there? (2007, 44)

But while being neither fully here nor there may seem ominous to Mondloch, in the context of the colonial subject in the milieu of global capitalist media, it is a radical strategy of spectral spectatorship. Neither fully here nor there is a refusal to conform to the “Being” created by screens, whether they are singular or multiple, and it is a spectrality that is claimed as a mobile territory.

Alongside her discussion of “world-traveling” María Lugones also offers insight into the complex relationship between gender and coloniality that is helpful to understanding why the specter may be a liberatory figure for those of us seeking ways of theorizing spectatorship beyond the “here and there.” The binary of being both “here and there” is reflected in Lugones’ analysis of the binary of gender as a colonial construction.

Lugones describes the imbrication of race, gender, and class in her theorizing the oppression and resistance of women of color in “capitalist Eurocentered modernity”:

Intersectionality reveals what is not seen when categories such as gender and race are conceptualized as separate from each other. The move to intersect the categories has been motivated by the difficulties in making visible those who are dominated and victimized in terms of both categories. Though everyone in capitalist Eurocentered modernity is both raced and gendered, not everyone is dominated or victimized in terms of their race and gender...It is only when we perceive gender and race as intermeshed or fused that we actually see women of color (2007, 192).

In previous works, Lugones employs the terms “multiple oppressions” and “interlocking oppressions” (2003). These terms also emphasize the simultaneous and multiple character of oppressions, and the impossibility of understanding gender as a solitary identity or axis of oppression. Lugones offers, “Race is no more mythical and fictional then gender – both are powerful fictions” (2007, 202). In her account, consonant with the colonial/modern project, gender serves to define humanity according to naturalized lines of domination and subordination. Colonized women were not always gendered as “women,” they were only gendered as “women” as it fit the needs of Eurocentered capitalism. Lugones discusses the “dimorphism” of “reproductive biology.” This is a recoding of biological signs as technics of colonial domination. Sex as a binary construction is consonant with the “light side” of the modern/colonial gender system as she theorizes it. The “light side” is the system of binary gender definitions and relations that are determined by and for the colonizers and supported by the bourgeois family; the “dark side” is characterized by understandings of gender that are not dimorphic and reserved for the colonized. For the colonizers, “indigenous people of the Americas [were imagined as] as hermaphrodites or intersexed, with large penises and breasts with flowing milk” (195). The understandings of gender for many Indigenous peoples is, in
fact, not dimorphic, Lugones argues, suggesting the possibility of multiple understandings of
gender within and against colonial heterarchies. However, these knowledges have been
suppressed and criminalized. As heterosexuality is imposed along with gender dimorphism,
Lugones proposes gender plurality and a rejection of compulsory heterosexuality as
strategies of resistance; emerging from positions of exteriority, these practices enable other
worlds of sense and ways of being. What this means as a practice, then, is a negotiation of the
gender dimorphic world in ways that avoid being coded; being seen and heard differently.

This kind of seeing without being seen, heard without being heard, is what Michelle
Dizon effects in the construction Civil Society, which creates a space of world-traveling
beyond colonial, gendered binaries. While the installation consists of a multiplicity, the three
screens, and two space-times, Paris 2005, and Los Angeles 1992, Dizon writes the spectator
somewhere in-between, neither here nor there. Dizon writes the following about her video
installation:

In the asynchrony between these disparate times and spaces, she [Dizon] explores
the social and political reasons why a past might exist as loss, asks how a recognition
of loss might allow space for that which remains unspoken and unspeakable, and
asks toward how grief might transform the way one continues onward (2007).

In Civil Society, multiple voices index the geo-politics of bodies and subjectivities, but also
their mobile temporalities, effecting an emphasis on a chrono-politics of loss. As Virilio
describes it,

Today we’re in chrono-politics. Geography is the measuring of space. Now, since the
vectors of the post-Second World War period, geography has been transformed. We
have entered into another analysis of space which is linked to space-time. What we
call azimuthal equidistant projection is the geography of time. Geography of the day
by speed, and no longer geography of the meteorological day… (1983, 6).

What is the space-time of the memories represented here? Must we move backwards or
forwards? Here or there? Did that just happen or was it long ago? The sounds of these
voices, with their multiple speeds, linger at the edge

The video installation engages multiple interrelated movements, each of which
position the spectator as a world-traveler across space-times of the insurrections against
atrocities of the police state, in the United States and France. In the first movement, we
encounter Dizon’s struggle with her unstable memory of events surrounding the brutal
attack on Rodney King by the Los Angeles Police Department in 1991, and the ensuing riots
of 1992, which occurred after the police officers involved were acquitted. In voice-over, she
tells that she doesn’t remember the riots, although she was living there. On the screen, the
camera hovers over asphalt. There is nothing there. In this opening sequence, Dizon
addresses the spectator as an interlocutor across unstable worlds of sense. Rather than
inviting the spectator from one stable world into Dizon’s stable world, which might be
connoted by Lugones’ sense of world-traveling, Dizon invites the spectator from one
unstable world into another unstable world. In the sense of world-traveling as practiced by Dizon, the world is itself ungrounded as a process of travel by both author
and viewer/reader. Sliding across epistememes, neither has a stable ground from which to
travel. The world itself is in motion, without a fixed location.

This suspends normative conventions of cinematic storytelling and spectatorial
address in multiple ways. Dizon avoids the testimonial, direct address of the confessional,
autobiographical mode of documentary. If this is a testimony, to which time-space does it offer a testament? Of whose history does it provide evidence? Which atrocity? The story is left behind, narration abandoned. Dizon’s insistence on the present that is past, the living that is death, and the inversions of these, bring us face to face with time. How do we understand the time we are in? Who is with us, and where are we in that time? As we look in this mirror, we see that we are ghosts. We slip away.

Dizon demonstrates the transfigurations effected by world-travel. A fluidity between the singular and the collective – between the individual, history, and the discourses of identity that propel marginalization within the nation-state – is produced through the successive activities of presentation, reframing, and removal that Dizon’s frames enact. Throughout the video installation, images recorded from moving trains and cars are intercut, accentuating diaspora and its time-lags through this sense of mobility. This also draws attention to the metonymy of the spectator. The spectator is propelled, towards an unknown location, but the threads of narration, and the trajectory of travel, loop back on themselves. This loop is not seamless. The black lines between the two projections’ frames are shutters, or eyelids, or death, a death that brings life. We, the spectator-spectres, fall through the cracks as the unstable flows of images and sounds disrupt the spatial and temporal locations of the other scenes of the video. The moments of synchrony and asynchrony between the two screens become separate worlds; the here, and the beyond. At moments, this horizon between the screens is transgressed seamlessly, with images projected across both. At other moments, the images disperse in different directions across the two screens. The spectator is set free in these landscapes with multiple horizons.

In the midst of machines of global war, this spectral production is a form of revived life. But this is not simple matter. It is not a project of documentation, because to capture the images and sounds of ghosts is not necessarily make them live. As if to revive them, while it also preserves their suspension in dead time, the cinematic apparatus endlessly conjures ghosts, repeatedly and obsessively making them visible and their sounds audible. This project motivates the earliest filmmakers, with Lumiére initiating the horror genre with “The Haunted Mansion” in 1896. Early cinema, Paul Virilio observes, coincides with a return of “mesmerism” and other forms of spirituality that cross the border between life and death:

This climate soon gave rise to a flourishing ‘ghost industry’ which used not only human but also photographic mediums. Since, for the new illuminati, ghosts were phenomena of electrical energy, why should they not also give off light and even be actually photogenic? (1989, 37).

Ghosts, understood in popular culture as electrical pulses, lend themselves easily to cinema. Cinema becomes a surface upon which the line between life and death can be fiercely drawn. With cinema arises a consideration of not only the limits of the world, expressed through the line of the horizon, but of life itself. The appearance of the cinematic ghost is a reassurance that the spectator is alive.
Figure 10. Ruins of memory. Still from *Civil Society*. Michelle Dizon, 2009.
The capturing of phantasmatic energies is thus a practice of the cinematic war machine, and in the target zone of the lens, essences are surfaces. Who is amongst the dead, and therefore, when seen and heard, is a ghost? And who is amongst the living, and therefore, when seen and heard, would constitute, not a spectre, but flesh and blood? The border that separates these states must be trespassed to answer these questions. This situation requires another form of thinking in these borderlands, opening a passageway that allows the dead to enter into the living, the invisible to infect the visible, as well as those without bodies and forms to take them on, to become legible. This legibility has both spatial-material and temporal contours. To see, feel and hear these contours, we need to locate the ghost in emanations from the field of death. This is the territory of becoming explored by Michelle Dizon.

Gloria Anzaldúa’s thinking offers a sensibility that might be collectively invoked and constituted relationally. In *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) Anzaldúa discusses the difference between dead art and living art. She argues that: “Tribal cultures keep art works in honored and sacred places in the home and elsewhere. They attend them by making sacrifices of blood (goat or chicken), libations of wine. They bathe, feed, and clothe them. The works are treated not just as objects, but also as persons” (90). Art that is dead is art that is infused with the coloniality of power: “An Indian mask in an American museum is transposed into an alien aesthetic system where what is missing is the presence of power invoked through performance ritual. It has become a conquered thing, a dead “thing” separated from nature and therefore, its power” (91). Anzaldúa suggests that by placing the object back into nature, outside of the realm of what is known as the cultural institution, it would find meaning. She asserts that there is something beyond the binary of culture and nature; that nature may carry the meanings that culture has been infused with by the coloniality of power. Living art, for Anzaldúa, then, is art that is invoked through ritual outside the bounds of culture as it is known in the colonial/modern world system. Anzaldúa’s work suggests that it is only through our collective commitment and engagement with each other that we can create new identities, meanings and possibilities.

Dizon enacts her collective commitment to a living art in the borderlands by resurrecting her memory in relation to another moment; by finding its echo in a contemporary conversation with a woman who has shared a parallel experience, in a contiguous time and space. The second movement of *Civil Society* is woven through with an interview with Nacira Guénif-Souilimas, a Professor of Sociology at the University of Paris XIII. They speak together, reflecting on the riots that emerged from Clichy-sous-Bois, the eastern banlieu of Paris, in 2005. These riots followed the death of two teenagers as they were being chased by police and hid amongst the structures of a power plant. In this conversation, the speculative nature of the questions asked reject a confessional mode, creating instead a dynamic and creative relation between interior and exterior experience, action and speculation. The creative space of the questions also refutes the normative rules of oral history that minimize mobility beyond normative discourses of identity, location and politics. Dizon develops a deep and substantial conversation with her, and this becomes a transformative space in which a conversation emerges between the spectral presence of the spectator, and the spectral presences of Dizon and the interviewee. Each inhabiting different worlds, but focusing solely on each other. The lens and microphone become inter-subjective agents, enabling the construction of a “world” in which are crossed historico-spatial specificities. Together, spectres produce an other time-space, at 30 frames per second, the time of a spectral apparatus.
Throughout the conversation, the instabilities of linguistic and ontological milieu are invoked and performed. Junctures and disjunctures echo across the acoustic and visual spectrum, in an infinitely figured montage of different voices, historical moments and geopolitical sites. The conversation, translated, becomes another surface on the screen, another habitat for spectral presences. Words are dis-assembled and re-arranged. Echoing Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s dialectics, Dizon reconstructs language at the level of the syllable. They appear on the screen in separate pieces, and are reassembled to build new words. These dialectics spin out across a newly charted geography. In the shared refrains and mutual echoes of the voices, the voices themselves multiply, evoking multiple space-times and making simultaneous diverse geo-political sites of struggle. This simultaneity, however, rather than being posited as a utopian site of mediatized transnational solidarity, is left open. It is a fleeting moment of multiple temporality in which the connectedness of these sites of struggle, their similarities, as well as the distance of the spectator-spectre, from both the site of her own experience and the site of others’ experience. Dizon repeats that she does not remember being there. She repeats that she is an “immigrant daughter.” She is both there and here, and also not there, and not here. Dizon returns to the senses, beyond location, to a “hallucinatory reality.” This is not, however, a site of inaction or a place of respite from the violence of the police state. The spectator-spectre is transported out of the body through a transcendence, which, while disabling a sense of location, creates a necessary shared gaze, a sense of interconnection across time-spaces. Spectator is transformed into spectre, between being and non-being, and here, she is not alone.

There is an echo of this fleeting simultaneity in *What Will You Remember of September?* (2004). In this single-channel video, Cecilia Cornejo evokes another set of multiple time-spaces: September 11, 1973, the date of the overthrow of Salvador Allende in Chile by a C.I.A. supported coup, and September 11, 2001, the date of the attack on the World Trade Center’s Twin Towers in New York City.

Nelly Richard observes the following:
The subject of human rights abuses has sharply marked all Chilean narrative about the national body with images of human remains: of bodies that have not been found, bodies that have not been laid to rest. This lack of burial is the image – without recovery – of a historical mourning process, one that never completely assimilates the sense of loss, but rather conserves it in an unfinished, transitional version. It is also the metaphorical condition of an unsealed temporality: inconclusive, and therefore open to re-exploration in many new directions by our memory, increasingly active and dissatisfied (2004, 1).

In *What Will You Remember of September?* multiple spectres are unleashed in the “inconclusive” spaces produced by Cornejo’s “active and dissatisfied memory.” The video folds minor events and languages, occasioned by the disjunctures and destabilizations of state sponsored terrorism and global migration. The videotape produces multiple spectral presences, through the prism of a becoming-woman, a girl. As a Chilean diasporic subject in the U.S., Cornejo centers fragments of stories from her childhood and the September 11, 1973 coup in Chile, and her witnessing of the media and political spectacle of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center in the U.S., to create a meeting ground for the multiple spectres of both events.

The instability of memory is transformed into a site of possibility through the sign of girlhood in the video. Hovering between opacity and transparency, invoked in those in-between spaces, spectres find each other: ‘the spectre is a paradoxical incorporation, the becoming-body, a certain phenomenal and carnal form of the spirit’ (Derrida 1994, 6). If the
specter is a becoming-body, then to find her we must look to woman, and then to girl. The girl is becoming-woman:

The girl's becoming is stolen first, in order to impose a history, or prehistory, upon her. The boy's turn comes next, but it is by using the girl as an example, by pointing to the girl as the object of his desire, that an opposed organism, a dominant history is fabricated for him too. The girl is the first victim, but she must also serve as an example and a trap. That is why, conversely, the reconstruction of the body as a Body without Organs, the anorganism of the body, is inseparable from a becoming-woman, or the production of molecular woman. Doubtless, the girl becomes a woman in the molar or organic sense. But conversely, becoming-woman or the molecular woman is the girl herself (Deleuze and Guattari 1993, 276).

The girl, then, is a site of disruption, a place before the imposition of history.

There is a refrain of this girl in What Will You Remember of September? Early in the video, in voice-over, the film author addresses her young daughter, the girl, the becoming-woman: “I've been so busy being an American that I've almost lost sight of the true danger.” What is the “true danger”? Here Cornejo articulates a disjuncture between the major language of assimilation, the imposed history of the nation-state on the immigrant, and a memory of the past that causes her to look with caution upon this semiotic machine.

In response, Cornejo produces a minor language; she is a foreigner speaking English, she is a foreigner speaking Spanish. The camera stumbles, the cuts stop shots midway through movement, silence and sound anxiously circle. She accentuates a multiplicity of temporalities, narratives and points of view, actively pursuing disjunctures and fragmentation. Echoing Dizon’s spectral presence, she produces a diasporic positionality throughout the videotape with a recurring image of mobility; the scene of an urban landscape viewed from the interior of a moving train. The shot is intercut continually, enabling rhizomatic links between the different spatial and temporal locations of the other scenes of the video. This strategy of juncture/disjuncture is present throughout the video, in the montage of different voices, contradictory memories and historical moments.

The testimonio of political torture and execution is a central signifying machine of Chilean culture, of Latin America. Nelly Richard suggests that the testimonio was used by the dictatorship in Chile as the vehicle for consolidating its power. 7 By allowing the “giving of voice,” General Pinochet appears twice, in the question and in the answer. This makes the

7 Richard writes, “the Chile of the dictatorship made the testimonio a privileged format that “gave voice to the voiceless,” textualizing life stories and biographical narrations situated at the margins of those visions constituted and institutionalized through the master narratives of the social sciences and politics. Testimonio – as a subjectivized instance of knowledge that demythologizes the ‘totality’ – proposes a situated capturing of the real (relative, partial) that corrects the totalizing gaze of a macrosocial focus. But despite that partializing and relativizing quality of testimonial speech, which seeks to refute the universal fiction of an absolute subject, those exponents of testimonio that monopolized the attention of Chilean sociology during the period of reconstructing memory and national identity continued to portray characters (the political victim, the woman, the indigenous person, etc.) whose marginality and oppression symbolized a national consciousness sustained by the communal paradigm of denouncement, no matter how fractured its enunciative viewpoint” (2004, 15).
teller of the testimony disappear as his/her story is enveloped in the narrative of the dictatorship.

In the apparatus constructed by Cornejo, testimony is destabilized, and the memories of atrocity during the dictatorship are made contingent, left “unsealed,” through the figure of the girl and the instability of her memories. Catherine Walsh discusses ancestrality as a form of decolonial thinking: “… lived philosophies and collective memories that constantly reconstruct historical, cultural, and spiritual ties and energies and rearticulate feelings of belonging within everyday life” (2005, 14). This form of ancestral gnosis must be distinguished from testimony, understood as official, state-sanctioned speech that bears witness to atrocity and genocide. The uses and locations of testimony are varied, but its function as official speech that mirrors official ontology is constant. Back and forth, the consequences for the speaker and listener are immediate and final, positioning both as interlocutors within the state. The state here functions to enforce temporal and spatial stability, asserting the right of chrono-logical narrative and territorial authority in the stories of its citizenry, circumscribing their milieux. The ancestrality evoked by Cornejo however, is one of both rearticulations and disarticulations. If there is a “belonging” that is invoked, it is constructed in and through the negative horizon of the ruins, the echoes and aftershocks of the bombs.

An extensive videotaped interview with her father flows through the piece, in which he speaks of his imprisonment during the dictatorship. Cornejo mobilizes this testimonio with another set of variables. In one scene, her father tells of his imprisonment after the coup:

The funny thing is that when I arrived at Tejas Verdes, I saw a lot of old friends. Some of them were socialists, other communists. So once I found the person in charge I told him there was a mistake because I had been called. He said, But of course, what do you do? I told him I’m a teacher. That’s good but if you were called then you are one of the extremists, go over there. So I went. Then they made us kneel for four hours, hands behind the head and later they put us on a truck and took us to prison.

She follows her father with a scene of the World Trade Center site in ruins, post September 11, 2001, and the sound of her daughter whispering. The next scene is an exchange with the filmmaker’s daughter at their home in Chicago, who looks at the camera, and picking up two small toys, says “This is green! This is blue!” A new map of sense is articulated for her father’s testimonio. In fact, for Cornejo, her father’s imprisonment never happened. In a child’s voice, we hear the following: “I don’t remember my father being away.” The same moment, lived differently, points to the girl’s multiply layered grid of temporalities.

Indeed, temporalities of imprisonment shift across the video. Her mother recounts that her father was released only to another form of imprisonment:

Your father was home and we were all together once again. It was then that we began to learn to be afraid. There was the constant sound of gunshots at night and the noise of helicopters flying low, just over the rooftops. I was very afraid that one of us might be hit by a stray bullet. So I wanted all of us to sleep as close to the ground as possible. Because there was no way of stopping the bullets we put the beds on the floor.

This narrative of repression in 1973 invokes U.S. bombardment and house-to-house searches following September 11, 2001, which in turn echoes 1989, 1969, 1953, 1940…September 11 becomes infinity. Cornejo asks of her young daughter, “What will you remember of September?” This question echoes across the infinite registers of the
temporalities and spatialities that the film evokes. September is everywhere, September is nowhere.

In the New York Times obituary of Dec. 11, 2006 of General Augusto Pinochet, the role of the United States is elided:

General Pinochet seized power on Sept. 11, 1973, in a bloody military coup that toppled the Marxist government of President Salvador Allende. He then led the country into an era of robust economic growth. But during his rule, more than 3,200 people were executed or disappeared, and scores of thousands more were detained and tortured or exiled.

At the end of her videotape, Cornejo inserts a title sequence that is aimed squarely at this sequence in the General’s signifying machine. Her title states: “On Tuesday, September 11, 1973, the democratically elected government of Chilean president Salvador Allende was overthrown in a C.I.A. backed military coup” (Cornejo, 2004). The video, then, evokes the spectres of multiple September elevens. It is a reminder of them all. There are many September elevens for “Americans,” and they are both produced and elided by the nation-state. Cornejo writes that the film was made for the “average American.” “People here live at a great disadvantage; many of them unable to make basic connections between daily living/their actions and the pulse of history” (Cornejo, 2007). Evoking here a ghostly description of life disconnected from action, from the “pulse of history,” Cornejo provides, instead, a place of destabilized histories and spectral presences. The atrocity of which her father’s story gives evidence exceeds the frameworks of history, and the juridical discourses of the nation-state. The shared spectrality invoked by her in response is a form of belonging that is worldly, relational, that returns us to life. The spectator stops listening for testimony, and instead listens to the spectral girl.

Beyond the War Machine

Paul Virilio discusses the negative horizon, the battlefield as seen through the lens, as the ground zero of cinema. Those seen through this camera are already dead. This ground zero is everywhere. “In other words, there where we find the war machine, there is the war. But in reality, with respect to what specific site can we make reference to a machine of assault? War is everywhere, but the front is nowhere…”(2008, 124) Visual technologies and war are intertwined, such that “the observation machine and the war machine are conjoined…” (1989, 91) Through the permeation of images, war takes hold on visual life, becomes life. There is no seeing without the apparatus of war. The camera becomes the war machine, at the same time that it becomes a cover for it. The visibility that it effects is also a process of making invisible the many war machines and their pervasive operations.8 What is seen through the camera was already the front, before and after the bombing. To face this

8 Virilio writes: “The perceived, the visible, are subsidiary tactics; the secret is power, it is in delocalization that we find the parry. A supreme effort at disguising but this time a geostrategic disguise where the cosmic renews the cosmetic…the fate of women in make-up is shared by that of a world concealed beneath its arabesques traced indefinitely by the weapons of war so as to remain ’strategic’, that is, invisible, that is, ‘innocent’” (2006, 85).
ubiquity of war is to become open to its materialities as well as its many shadows. It is also to confront death and its interruption.¹

At the close of Fanta Regina Nacro’s film La Nuit de la Verite (2004), Totomo, the shamanic and troublesome character who is storyteller, conjurer and provocateur, releases a herd of goats. Hundreds of goats run across a field in all directions. Totomo chases them, yelling, “Go! Be free! Go!”

These goats are propelled forth by the interruption that is death. Totomo has acted on the orders of the dead colonel, who speaks to him from the grave. It is perhaps the spirit of the colonel that is carried by the goats. Destined for eventual slaughter, the goats escape the fate of the colonel, who has been roasted and basted by the vengeful mother of a child he has murdered. The child, the goats, the colonel, life, and freedom: The mother becomes the moment of struggle, a threshold between different forces. Rather than a fixed point of origin, she is a passage through which warring communities reach a precarious peace. The mother effects a cinematic operation of liberation and is sacrificed in the process. The intensities channeled by her body are released in a burst of gunfire.

In an interview about the film, Nacro asserts:

…its story came to me from watching the news. It was during the war in Yugoslavia, the testimony of women who’d been raped, and right after the rape, acid had been put into their vaginas. They had seen their husbands killed, their children killed. I began to truly reflect on these atrocities; I didn’t understand how one could take a malicious pleasure in seeing the suffering of another, especially someone with whom one might perhaps have shared a meal or a drink. It’s not as if this was a person unknown to them. It’s like during World War I, if a French soldier saw a German soldier and didn’t fire at him, it’s the German who would shoot. Following the Rwanda genocide and its aftermath, I started thinking again about the way my uncle died. His death was almost legitimized by the fact that he was a soldier and so he could die from one day to the next. But it was the manner of his death that spoke to me, not the fact that he died. One night some other soldiers built a fire and roasted him to death without anyone exactly knowing why (Elkaïm, 2009).

In this passage, Nacro intercuts scenes of global genocide. The location in which she thinks and works, Burkina Faso, becomes a global site from which she considers the atrocities that mark Africa and Europe. There is a simultaneous, double movement enacted by her engagements with figures from her memory and her engagements with particular figures in other scenes of war. War, then, becomes a mobile theatre for spectral presences across times and spaces. Here, we may consider the psychic and spiritual forces that are constructed in and by war, as they appear in the form of performed interactions, gestures and symbols. In Nacro’s meditation on her film, the globality of the violence with which her film is engaged is underscored. Its mobilities are women, the mothers, and her uncle. Nacro becomes the meeting point, the medium, the passage for these forms. These bodies and their

¹ Virilio elaborates the interruption of death: “Whether there’s scientific recognition of death, or whether it’s recognition by the philosopher and politician, is all the same to me. We must recognize death. We must recognize it as an organizer, and not as something repressed, something which would lead to a complete impasse, which would serve no end, about which it’s better not to speak at all” (1983, 131).
memories span the multiple space-times of global warfare, while also creating a freeze-frame, a stillness, in its midst. In her film, she collects these disparate moments of anguish in order to disperse them again, with the release of a herd of goats. In the filmic narrative, the encounter of these moments lies outside the line of action as defined by the central male characters, the generals and the colonels. The mother’s tears, and the immanence of her decisive revenge are distant on the horizon. She acts behind the backs of the men, yet more effectively and more definitively shapes their destinies.

As Fanta Regina Nacro remarks, “it is because I am a woman…that I can tell this story…” This does not indicate a fixed, essentialist gendered subjectivity, but rather evinces the term that Gayatri Spivak strategically invokes: Woman as catechresis. The woman who speaks in and through La Nuit de la Verite is no ordinary woman. She is a threshold, becoming-woman. Nacro is able to harness this figure precisely because of how she understands women’s symbolic value in war. When a woman is raped, it is not only the particular woman that is raped; it is the catechresis of woman as vector of nation/gender/enemy. But Nacro does not reduce her character who is a catechretic woman to a transparent abstraction. Rather, she transforms and rebirths her. The abstraction of woman that is symbolically crucified in the violence of warfare is rematerialized as shadows of possibility. The goats run free in the field.

This interrelation of the catechresis of woman across global landscapes of war evokes Édouard Glissant’s conception of “errantry” and “the Poetics of Relation.” These are tools to open our ears so that ancestors might be heard anew, without listening for testimony. Glissant’s errantry and the Poetics of Relation are thought alongside Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s notions of “root” and “rhizome.” The Poetics of Relation is an elaboration of rhizomatic thought: “The notion of the rhizome maintains, therefore, the idea of rootedness but challenges that of a totalitarian root. Rhizomatic thought is the principle behind what I call the Poetics of Relation, in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other” (1997, 11). The search for origins and roots as markers of spiritual power and identity construction is characteristic of Western civilization and its conquests. For those creating new epistemes beyond that history, it is necessary to reject the call for developing roots. Glissant asserts that the “Antillean soil” is a “rhizomed land” (146). The rhizome is itself deterritorialized; the space of the Caribbean is a rootless root. The Poetics of Relation emphasize knowledge that emerges from interaction amongst and between diasporic and decolonial subjects. It is from “rhizomed” territories that this possibility emerges. History is given to us through melancholic melodies such as these. Melancholia emerges as the shared music of spectral presence in the works of Dizon, Cornejo, and Nacro, becoming a collective inheritance. It sustains a profound interval, an abyss, in the time-space of the milieu of global war.

Glissant writes of the boat, and of the “womb abyss”: What is terrifying partakes of the abyss, three times linked to the unknown. First, the time you fell into the belly of the boat. For, in your poetic vision, a boat has no belly; a boat does not swallow up, does not devour; a boat is steered by open skies. Yet, the belly of this boat dissolves you, precipitates you into a nonworld from which you cry out. This boat is a womb, a womb abyss. It generates the clamor of your protests; it also produces all the coming unanimity. Although you are alone in this suffering, you share in the unknown with others whom you have yet to know. This boat is your womb, a matrix, and yet it expels you. This boat: pregnant with as many dead as living under sentence of death (1997, 6).
Figure 11. The ghost is multiple: her son, her uncle, and other women in scenes of global war. Still from *La Nuit de la Verite*. Fanta Régina Nacro, 2004.
This is the middle passage. The womb abyss is a living history that is a body-archive. It is the unknown that we share, the “nonworld” that is our world. It is not the knowing but rather the knowing of the not knowing that we share, looking in/out towards a vanished horizon, the belly of this boat. To know conjures its twin, the unknown; not knowing becomes another act of knowing that rejects the binary machine of the known/unknown.

This abyss, these films suggest, exists between the multiple, competing circuits of communication within a global system that has been determined by capitalist and territorial logics. This negative horizon is one that permeates a global mediascape, as discussed by Arjun Appadurai. Appadurai discusses contemporary culture and globalization as a series of landscapes of information and power. Appadurai’s terms mobilize an understanding of cinema as a praxis that spans multiple global contexts. In Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization (1996), Appadurai analyses culture and power in the context of globalization, which he understands as “disorganized capitalism” (33). He argues that power is a set of unstable and complex cultural relationships between individuals and collectives, within and across localities, neighborhoods and national and transnational economic and political forces. Appadurai emphasizes individuals and collectives as sites of power in the midst of global capital and nation-states. He articulates this individual and collective power as the power of imagination to shape lives, and argues that globalization has made possible new forms of individual identity and social formation. Appadurai posits these as new sites of power through the practice of imagination of ordinary people. This new practice of fantasy has political effects, mobilizing people in new communities: “communities that generate new kinds of politics, new kinds of collective expression, and new needs for social discipline and surveillance on the part of the elites” (54).

Appadurai develops the notion of criss-crossing forces, or scapes, to describe contemporary global cultural flows: ethnoscapes, made up of individuals and communities within and across geo-political localities; mediascapes, including television, cinema and other electronic media; technoscapes, consisting of the infrastructures and social systems concomitant to technological systems; finanescapes, which describes the economic structures and institutions of global capitalism; and ideoscapes, which includes the political space of imagination, such as the expression of nationalist, patriotic ideals, as well as capitalist ideas of consumption and production (33). With these new terms he creates a theoretical and methodological device to discern highly differentiated and nuanced articulations of power. Power is diffused amongst Appadurai’s multiple scapes and the imagination of multiple individuals within and across them.

The spectral cinema of Dizon, Cornejo and Nacro, then, becomes a site of possibilities of diasporic spectres, enacting disjunctures and destabilizations in the intersection of the mediascape and the ideoscape. Appadurai elaborates the mediascape as follows:

Mediascapes, whether produced by private or state interests, tend to be image-centered, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality, and what they offer to those who experience and transform them is a series of elements (such as characters, plots, and textual forms) out of which scripts can be formed of imagined lives, their own as well as those of others living in other places. These scripts can do get disaggregated into complex sets of metaphors by which people live (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) as they help to constitute narratives of the Other and protonarratives of possible lives, fantasies that could become prolegomena to the desire for acquisition and movement (36).
Thus, the mediascape, consisting of multiple “strips of reality,” are marked by different interests, which nevertheless form the basis of “scripts” and “protonarratives.” In this sense, these mediascapes put into play a highly original and unique set of images that together suggest an altogether different script than that suggested by the official ideoscapes of the government and major media. Appadurai defines the ideoscapes:

Ideoscapes are also concatenations of images, but they are often directly political and frequently have to do with the ideologies of states and the counterideologies of movements explicitly oriented to capturing state power or a piece of it. These ideoscapes are composed of elements of the Enlightenment worldview, which consists of a chain of ideas, terms, and images, including freedom, welfare, rights, sovereignty, representation, and the master term, democracy (36).

Homi Bhabha discussion of the interweaving of narration and nation is resonant with Appadurai’s discussion of the ideoscapes. Through Bhabha’s discussion of the film, *Handsworth Songs*, by John Akomfrah and the Black Audio Film Collective, he explores the collective memories that elude national stories, dwelling on this quotation from the film: “There are no stories in the riots, only the ghosts of other stories” (1986). Understood as well through Appadurai’s terms, we might understand the statement from the film as also suggesting that the Story, as officially told by the storytellers of the ideoscapes, which is the Story of the riots that threaten the nation, of the Blacks and the immigrants who are the foreign criminals and terrorists, is insufficient. If this is understood, then what becomes apparent, crucial to see and to hear, are the “ghosts of other stories” - the burdens and ancestralities that elude these frames. These in turn, produce distinct trajectories of narration, creating visibilities and invisibilities, silences and cacophonies, which resituate global warfare in its impossible intimacies. It also underscores what Appadurai’s terms elicit: the possibility of meanings being produced and distributed by communications systems – mediascapes - that contradict the ideologies – the ideoscapes - that have guided the production and distribution of the technology itself – the technoscapes. Returning to Glissant, “our boats are open, and we sail for everyone.” The stories of the ghosts and their ancestralities are “for everyone.” Imagining the possibility of shared spaces of spectrality, it is in this vast and unfixed territoruality that Dizon, Cornejo and Nacro unleash specters.

Yet, who will join them there? Each of these works is circulated in what Nestor García Canclini calls the “culture of the elites.” This is the circuit of independent film festivals and art galleries. How do works such as these propose other territories for the production of spectral presences? In *Consumers and Citizens: Globalization and Multicultural Conflicts* (2001), Canclini proposes different circuits of global cultural flow for analyzing the circulation of specific cultural products and opening new ways of understanding agency of spectators. These four circuits include the “historico-territorial circuit,” comprising knowledge tied to “ethnic, regional and national territories;” the “culture of the elites,” including literature and the visual arts; “mass communications,” including radio film, television and video; and “restricted systems of information of communication,” comprised of media “meant for the decision makers” (30). While these circuits are useful because they illuminate the multiple cultural contexts for the reception of independent media, at the same time, the flows of media are more molecular and hard to define than these circuits may allow. Thus, Canclini also theorizes a context of antagonistic, contradictory and unanticipated effects of individual consumers/citizens in global flows of information. Canclini defines consumption as “…the ensemble of sociocultural processes in which appropriation and use of products takes place” (38). Importantly, for Canclini, these processes do not necessarily serve the interests of the global capital:
…the macrosocial considerations of large-scale economic agents are not rationalities that shape consumption. Marxist studies of consumption, as well as earlier mass communications research (from 1950 to 1970), exaggerated the determining force of corporations on consumers and audiences. A more complex theory of the interaction of producers and consumers, senders and receivers, as developed in certain currents of urban anthropology and sociology, shows that consumption is also motivated by an interactive sociopolitical rationality (39).

In Canclini’s work, the activity of consumption is seen as a site of the production of multiple forms of agency. Thus, rather than seeing these two activities as mutually exclusive, he reconciles their co-existence and understands consumption as an active form of participation. Canclini’s situating of consumption as a site of interactive performance is part of his larger project of attempting to recoup what might be seen as irrevocable cultural, political and economic losses in ‘underdeveloped’ geo-political sites in which inhabitants are the recipients, rather than the producers, of the cultural content of global information flow, while simultaneously acting as the labor force – the producers - of its technological infrastructure and hardware. While Canclini does not address the paradox of Mexico – the nation and state from which he writes – as a key global site for production factories for the electronics industry, he does address the unevenness of flows from the U.S. to Mexico in the following passage:

In the past few decades, the intensification of economic and cultural relations with the United States has encouraged a model of society in which many state functions have disappeared or been assumed by private corporations, and in which social participation is organized through consumption rather than through the exercise of citizenship…This book attempts to understand why the argument that relations with the United States have intensified a new mode of dependency is inadequate for explaining the current transformations in our citizen and consumer roles…It is in this sense that I propose reconceptualizing consumption…as a site for good thinking, where a good part of economic, sociopolitical, and psychological rationality is organized in all societies (5).

The “good thinking” that is possible at the site of consumption, it seems, could also be extended to the act of reception media images and messages, including producing one’s own media images and messages. Consumption, becomes, in fact, an act of production through the “consumer” activities of blogging, podcasting, and videocasting through Internet sites such as Youtube.com, which incorporate multiple opportunities for individual production and netcasting. In the context of the Internet and consumer media production tools, including hardware, such as the home computer, video camera, digital camera, and Ipods, and software, which enable the editing of sound and video images, such as Garageband and IMovie, production becomes the interface – the only avenue of consuming – communications systems. Each of these artists are present in the space of the Internet, with clips of their videos available for viewing. But they also explore multiple tributaries of cinematic praxis, including the expanded spaces made available by the exhibition of video installations, as well as opportunities for engaging in cinema-house spectatorship in film festivals. The diversity of forms of exhibition of each artists’ oeuvre, which also includes television broadcast, in addition to museums, galleries, and festivals, and Internet viewings, make their sites of reception multiple and variegated. Artists such as Dizon, Cornejo and Nacro enact interventions in the systems that articulate the ideoscape. They produce another form of mediascape, a spectral scape, emerging from the multiple temporalities of the ghost.
Finding modes of distribution in molecular forms, they create ephemeral spaces that are indeterminate and shifting.

While Paul Virilio theorizes war and its cinemas as the defining dynamic of our times, while Sylvia Wynter describes the “war zone of our times” as the ongoing contestation of symbolic orders of global domination. Wynter describes this contestation in her Sergei Eisenstein’s Battleship Potemkin:

...a central part of the film’s aesthetic power and effectivity came from the fact that Eisenstein...was fully aware of the potential power of the cinema and of cinematic techniques to either further enslave humankind or emancipate it from the dictatorship of memory, orders of consciousness or, in Marxian terms, of ideology, that have hitherto induced all subordinated groups to acquiesce in their, in our, own subordination; of the power of the cinema and of cinematic techniques in effect, to engage spectators on one side or the other of the battle now being waged in the central intellectual ornament aesthetic frontier and war zone of our times (2000, 34).

The perpetual “war zone of our times” continues to be re-articulated in multiple cinematic, material and epistemological forms. As in the famous sequence of Battleship Potemkin, the glasses of the old women continue to shatter; the baby carriages incessantly fall down the stairs. In response, in the montage of encounters of lenses and timespaces, cinematic forms of emancipation erupt continuously and persistently. These eruptions are the “sail,” returning to Glissant:

The experience of the abyss lies inside and outside the abyss. The torment of those who never escaped it: straight from the belly of the slave ship into the violet belly of the ocean depths they went. But their ordeal did not die; it quickened into this continuous/discontinuous thing; the panic of the new land, the haunting of the former land, finally the alliance with the imposed land, suffered and redeemed. The unconscious memory of the abyss served as the alluvium for these metamorphoses. The populations that then formed, despite having forgotten the chasms, despite being unable to imagine the passion of those who foundered there, nonetheless wove this sail (a veil) (1997, 7).

This “continuous/discontinuous thing”, the “unconscious memory of the abyss” proposes other ways of seeing, knowing, and telling. The lens, the word, songs, these are “quickened” into something else. From these lands, former or imposed, this “alluvium,” Dizon, Cornejo and Nacro share fragments, which fold out onto others. Tales unfurl out onto others, producing our collective “sail (a veil).” This unending contest of signification is propelled by memories that emerge from disparate sources. These fragments represent a radical state of contingency. The disparate lands, the temporal disjunctures, the continuous/discontinuous memories, the horizon of horror.

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10 “The signified is distanced: the resulting time lag opens up the space between the lexical and the grammatical, between enunciation and enounced, in-between the anchoring of signifiers. Then, suddenly, this in-between spatial dimension, this distancing, converts itself into the temporality of the ‘throw’ that iteratively (re)turns the subject as a moment of conclusion and control: a historically or contextually specific subject. How are we to think the control or conclusion in the context of contingency?” (Bhabha 1994, 186)
This requires an attention to, a listening for, di
ssonances and resistances in narratives of ancestrality, revealing or adding new elements and forces as we consider the stories of our ancestors. There is no one moment of production, but an ongoing process of production. Together, these film authors’ multiple eyes/I’s look forward and backward, as well as inward and outward, up and down. Their seeing is the seeing of all of our eyes/I’s together, dis-inhabiting our worlds even as they claim us as their own. They see many mothers, many daughters, many sons. This multiplicity rejects a code of ‘ancestrality’ that might confine it within the boundaries of home, nation, race, gender, and the bureaucratic institutions across which these are symbolically mapped. These mothers, daughters, and sons exceed assigned bodies, space and temporality, losing themselves to each other, and others, recognizing the umbilical cord and the birth canal but refusing to close the meanings of motherhood; recognizing its universality, and also that birth, like signification, is always a re-writing of both mother and child.

Dizon, Cornejo and Nacro are mediums, passages. This is no easy task. As they linger in the spectral spaces of memory and global war, they are working on not only world This is a double movement of stories, inheritance and memory, towards novel articulations. The stories that resonate through spectral bodies arrive and exit; they carry in and they carry out. As they retell the stories of ancestors, they become new visual and sonic texts, offered towards a shared culture, an other story.

This sense of life permeated by cinema as a technology of death is rejoined by Djibril Diop Mambety’s retelling of the ancestrality of cinema permeated by life:

It is good for the future of cinema that Africa exists. Cinema was born in Africa, because the image itself was born in Africa. The instruments, yes, are European, but the creative necessity and rationale exist in our oral tradition. As I said to the children before, in order to make a film, you must only close your eyes and see the images. Open your eyes, and the film is there. I want these children to understand that Africa is a land of images, not only because images of African masks revolutionized art throughout the world but as a result, simply and paradoxically, of oral tradition. Oral tradition is a tradition of images. What is said is stronger than what is written; the word addresses itself to the imagination, not the ear. Imagination creates the image and the image creates cinema, so we are in direct lineage as cinema’s parents (Ukadike 1999, 1).

Mambety creates a trans-disciplinary lineage of word and image creation, upon which he builds an ancestrality of cinema, drawing upon traditions of image and story, deeply original, localized, dispersed. The emphasis on orality suggests the omni-presence of human narrative and its tools and a direct relationship between human imagination and cinema.

The transparencies of cinema, the direct immediacy that are its claims for life against death, are, however, precisely the lenses of war to which Virilio insists we attend. Death appears as a mask of life, life as death. The ghost emerges, then, as the shape of an in-betweenness, a mobility that might escape the death machine. It is on this transparent, looking glass surface between cinemas of life and death that we might locate the testimony of those speaks from the negative horizon. But in the work of Dizon, Cornejo and Nacro, these resituations are also relational, with multiple cinematic moments forming the conditions for moving across negative horizons and invoking the ancestralities of their ghosts. Rather than transparencies, the specters produced in these cinematic texts are durational apparations, ephemeral and fleeting. Seen with the collective ancestrality produced, the final shot of Fanta Regina Nacro’s film appears as shared horizon. There are no Stories here, only the ghosts of Other stories, which echo across other cinematic
moments. These moments perform an operational escape in the milieu of technology, visuality and war. What is left? The ghosts of this *mise-en-scene*. Ghosts emerge in the multiple temporalities of the milieu of global warfare.

These moments move towards not just a past or a present, or a remembered or forgotten history, but the impossible now that is the gnosis of global warfare. This is our ancestrality, the shared burden. And with this knowing, another form of difference emerges. The dis/apparition of the bodies that speak, the bodies that have yet to tell or have already told, becomes all-important in a collective process of refiguring. In the time-spaces of ‘pure war,’ these works sustains both a multiplicity of visibilities and an acceptance of invisibility. At the same time that these artists insist on foregrounding the experiences of war, they strenuously work to make those stories not seen or heard, courageously conversing with other ghosts who exist in between the frames.
Chapter Five

Herramientas Colectivas (Collective Tools): Three Propositions
Fanon’s decolonial cosmopolitanism was grounded on the struggle for decolonization of the Algerian people. His cosmopolitanism did not sacrifice the commitment with local struggle. Rather than cosmopolitanism as such perhaps his project should be characterized as an attempt to give expression to a consistent decolonial consciousness. Decolonization is not for Fanon only about the achievement of national liberation. Decolonization is about the creation of a new symbolic and material order that takes the full spectrum of human history, its achievements and its failures, into view.

- Nelson Maldonado-Torres,
“The topology of being and the geopolitics of knowledge: Modernity, empire, coloniality”

An overarching concern with the “full spectrum of human history” is expressed through a slogan that Cecilia Cornejo paints on a wall in an urban landscape in her video. This public art action is intercut throughout her videotape. At the end, the complete painted phrase is revealed: “America: Not the world but part of it.” This manifesto is a call to epistemic action, to de-center “America.” While the meaning of “America” remains ambiguous in the statement – referring to either the U.S. or the continent – in either case it calls for renewed connection and accountability across national and continental divides. With this statement, she makes a solitary and bold claim, in a public space, that we must think with and across the globe. Alongside Fanon’s equally bold, and possibly solitary cosmopolitanism, it emphasizes that national borders must not limit our thinking. National borders must fade in a larger philosophical context, which is the global, human struggle for emancipation and self-realization. As understood by Nelson Maldonado-Torres in the above epigraph, it is precisely this transnational move that asserts Fanon’s “decolonial consciousness.” The naming of this as a consciousness emphasizes the epistemic dimension of coloniality and decoloniality. Coloniality induces the imposition of borders, of geopolitical and epistemic dimensions. Decoloniality, Maldonado-Torres suggests, with Fanon, entails their undoing, producing worlds that no longer conform to existing maps. Using Fanon’s sense, a global “decolonial consciousness” is dependent on a terrain that exceeds current understandings.

Returning to the phrase introduced by the artist Minerva Cuevas in my introduction, contemporary forms of cinematic media constitute “herramientas colectivas,” collective tools for knowledge production towards an other world. For the artists discussed here, the cinematic apparatus is the method for creating this terrain, this new globality. This globality resonates with what Enrique Dussel calls a “globality against globalization,” as well as Arjun Appadurai’s sense of “sodalities,” but it is also something else. It is a globality that constructs multiple, contemporaneous worlds, and an infinite possible inscriptions of life. This sense of endless possible inscriptions is resonant with another Fanonian term: “sociogeny.” Fanon posits “sociogeny” as the rewriting of the colonial subject in the social world, enabling both the acknowledgement of experiences of racialization and colonization, as well as a moving forward towards other possibilities. “Sociogeny” entails a movement from the past, with a commitment to the present and future. It requires an existential transcendence. Rather than using the present, or the past, situation to determine one’s analysis and politics, one must act on possibility, towards a present and future subjectivity: “I am not a slave of the Slavery that dehumanized my ancestors” (1967, 230). Building on Fanon, Paul Gilroy suggests that this
kind of decolonial globality is a “planetary humanism” that emerges from a confrontation with the presence of colonial legacies in the contemporary moment (2005, 80). This humanism, resonant with Fanon’s decolonial consciousness, is a reconceptualization of the self and other in interdependence, outside of the symbolic orders of colonialism. But in Gilroy’s argument, the current moment requires a renewed commitment to putting race thinking at the center of analysis, because it has been actively covered over by contemporary political culture. Fanon’s “sociogeny,” as well as his concept of “dis-alienation” are crucially important, but dis-alienating ourselves requires an intervention into history that contends with colonialism, as all current forms of race-thinking have antecedents in previous imperial encounters in the colonies, which functioned as laboratories for human brutality, military strategy and race thinking. A frank encounter with this imperial history is the only way that clear thinking about contemporary race can occur, Gilroy contends, because the designation of certain bodies as infra-human and expendable is a consequence of imperialism. Racial hierarchy is a product of territorial expansion and imperialist governmentality. While contemporary political imaginations have faltered in the face of new forms of race thinking, race thinking is central to the construction of the present. We cannot approach a contemporary analysis of race through a dichotomy or inversion; anti-racism is not adequate, a new humanism is required.

In her consideration of this possibility, Sylvia Wynter argues that cinema and other audio-visual practices are a privileged site of this sociogenesis. They form the basis for an epistemic transformation that moves us beyond the construction of “Western Man” in the modern/colonial/capitalist world system. She writes of the promise of the “cinematic text, and its audiovisual spin-off, the texts of TV/video, as the medium of the new iconography of the homo culturans as a self-instituting mode of being, in the reoccupied ground of homo oeconomicus…” (2000, 60) and elaborates this in the following:

If the novelistic text and its medium, print, was the quintessential genre/medium by which Western Man and its then epochally new, because secularizing, Renaissance ‘understanding of man’s humanity’ was to be inscribed and enacted, the cinematic text, conceptualized in terms outside those of our present biocentric understanding, will be the quintessential genre of our now de-biologised conception of the human; the medium, I propose, of a new form of writing which reconnects with the writing of the rock paintings of Apollo Namibia, some 30,000 years ago, and beyond that, with the origin of the human in that first governing code of symbolic ‘life’ and ‘death’ about which, in the wake of the species’ rupture with purely organic life, all other human forms of life were to enact their/our poiesis of being, together with the self-organising social systems to which each such poesies give rise (2000, 60).

Wynter proposes a poiesis of our times – a symbolic order that reflects, supports and develops epistemologies that re-order our governing symbolic codes of life and death, employing the ‘sociogenic principle,’ creating an infinite number of possible iterations of humans after “Man.”

But the artists whose work is discussed here teach us that all such utopian promises of the technics of communication – as encompassed by the multiple forms that they use, captured only partially by the terms of “cinema,” or “information communication technologies” – are to be wary of, as they may also be sites of reinscription of colonial hierarchies. They do not approach the technics of communication with gratitude or astonishment for its gifts. They understand it as one tool amongst many that are at hand, and with multiple possible results, not necessarily an instant rebirthing of the self, or instantaneous connection with other transformed beings. This is in stark contrast to the
totalizing conception of the “Global Village,” the term coined by Marshall McLuhan: “The new electronic interdependence recreates the world in the image of a global village” (McLuhan & Fiore, 1967). In McLuhan’s discussion, which precedes many subsequent iterations in this vein, the globalization of information communication technologies, including cinema, television, radio, telephone, and more recently, the Internet, is envisioned as an opportunity for an expanded consciousness and egalitarian social relations. Amongst the multiple images that he produced of the “global village” with his collaborator, Quentin Fiore, they create images that draw from the colonial archive, of tribal peoples engaged in meetings. McLuhan and Fiore image communal storytelling as a primal scene, and electronic technologies as a form of both modernization and a return to humanity’s roots. McLuhan describes this return:

Primitive and pre-alphabet people integrate time and space as one and live in an acoustic, horizon-less, boundless, olfactory space, rather than in visual space. Their graphic presentation is like an x-ray. They put in everything they know, rather than only what they see. A drawing of a man hunting seal on an ice floe will show not only what is on top of the ice, but what lies underneath as well. The primitive artist twists and tilts the various possible visual aspects until they fully explain what he wishes to represent...Electric circuitry is recreating in us the multi-dimensional space orientation of the “primitive” (18-19).

The compressed time and space of global electronic communication ensures a return to a past that is crucial for the present; an orderless utopia. This requires, however, gendered and racialized bodies as their starting point – “the primitive.”

While Sylvia Wynter’s commitment is clearly to the inscription of gendered and racialized bodies beyond colonial discourses, the return to “Apollo Namibia” must be clearly demarcated from McLuhan’s colonial return to “the primitive.” The problem of this return imbues all utopian visions that valorize cinematic and information communication technics, ignoring how they are imbued with the colonial memories and practices with which conceptions of technology and the global are intertwined. Yet, while Wynter emphasizes the ability of ancient people to code, McLuhan emphasizes that the “multi-dimensional” space of the global village is linked to the fundamental inability of the “primitive” to code. “Pre-alphabet people” exceed the fixed vanishing point of Renaissance perspective, the flat surfaces of Western visuality: “Their graphic presentation is like an x-ray.” The visuality of the “primitive” is captured in the aspiration of modernity’s technological graphing, to see deeply, to see all, through a lens. The “global village” requires hardware and an imperial map, to distribute the electronic communication tools essential for creating communication networks. Tools must be distributed, and to know where to send the tools, a cartography of technology access is created. This cartography echoes another one, graphs another return. It is the return of the Mapa Mundi, the world map - a map of absences. It is the “Digital Divide.” Knowledge, civilization, is not shared equally around the world, and these maps show where it is needed. Where it is needed is also where communication is not happening. This is where people need communication tools. It is forgotten that other communications and knowledges surround them, existing before and after their arrival. These other knowledges do not register on the cartographical apparatus of information communication technologies. This is like other forms of erasure enacted by the writing of colonial histories.

The question of seeing differently, to see across, to see through, and out, is of crucial importance to the cinematic praxis of the artists discussed. This, however, is linked not to a return to “primitive” ways of being, but rather, it is a seeing from the multiple present, with its never-vanished pasts, towards an infinity of futures; to developing what Deleuze calls
“new eyes.” The world as a site for interconnectivity, as a circuit board, is a vision that is decisively not pursued by these artists. In the works studied here, the tools and their stories are re-ordered in each context and instance in which they are used, because communication, knowledge, and being are already there. So the tools are re-signified again and again by the different bodies that use them. These bodies are gendered and racialized differently in each instance; encoded with meanings and temporalities. But these identities are not stable; they travel. While the tools bring with them rules and stories about how they might be used, the film authors disobey, locating them in assemblages of subjectivity, citizenship, nation-states, juridical zones, and local and global economies. Across these different scales, the directionality, speed and duration of communication are not consistent or predictable. The tools used to communicate are many, and the time-spaces of the apparatus is produced differently in multiple assemblages of tools, ideas, people and locales. The bodies and the tools code and re-code each other. Multiple forces intersect and influence this incessant codification. Communication moves quickly at some points, sometimes not. There are many ways to communicate, many technics, electric and non-electric, machinic and non-machinic, digital and non-digital. In each instance, there is a new meaning and a new movement, another transformation of being across consciousness and the apparatus. They are porous and infect each other. In different geo-political sites, with different bodies, the “global village” disassembles.

These instances are assemblages of technics - representational, epistemological and relational practices - that exceed, and make apparent the gaps in, totalizing narratives of race, gender, and nation. As technological production, artistic creation, and relational exchange, they are constructions of cinema that avoid the consolidation of the modern/colonial capitalist world-system. The poesis of the artists discussed here constructs humanity after “Man.” But this is unstable, a disordering of given arrangements, positing new relationships between enunciative positions. In contrast to the fundamental ordering of the apparatus – film author, film, and spectator – they impose upon each position a set of expanded definitions and complex relationships that both expand and blur their edges. How each work is conceived, produced, and received is disobedient to conceptions of the cinematic apparatus by global capital, as well as Marxist conceptions of the apparatus as producer of ideology, and finally, utopian visions of the technics of “technology” – information communication technologies – as liberators of humanity. The force of this reordering echoes across the multiple dimensions of representation of each cinematic text, as well as its conditions of production and reception. They are unruly and transient. What guides them are the terms of their specific conversations with the locality, and, equally, globality, as produced by the collective assemblages of the apparatus in which they are engaged. They challenge the established discourses that claim to have explanatory power over them, and map new pathways of media production and reception, creating other forms of liberatory discourse.

While these may be contingent and partial, they nevertheless are the very real products of struggle, no more and no less than the struggles of the “Third World,” and its ensuing Third Cinema, as proposed by Getino and Solanas. Yet the multiple third spaces and worlds created by these artists propose temporal and spatial frames that move not towards a future revolution, but a contemporaneous globality. Nevertheless, Third Cinema, in variable forms, echoes across each artist’s work. For some, it provides a epistemic point of departure. Cornejo directly invokes the strategies of this movement in this statement:

I am one of those artists who believes in changing the world for the better.
I read Getino and Solanas and they sound to me as lucid and relevant as they
were in the 1960’s. In a way, my commitment to bringing works from Latin America [curating programs of Latin American film and video] corresponds to my desire to find out WHAT happened with/to the Latin American avant-garde. WHO is making work in the spirit of the new Latin American cinema movement nowadays? WHAT is going on with Latin American film/video as a whole? What is the general direction? I guess what I want the most is to find my brothers and sisters... so, the idea of curating is first and foremost a selfish endeavor; and then yes, I also would love for other people to see these works and challenge their notions of what Latin America is (personal communication, 2007).

Cornejo’s invocation of Getino and Solanas is a call for collective solidarity; for connections across history towards a shared sense of a transformed world, achieved through the cinematic apparatus.

Colonialism and its legacies are threaded through contemporary landscapes of globalization, and are crucial to understanding the conditions of contemporary cinematic practices. The worlds created by these practices, are, however, contemporary and multiple, not unified. The coloniality of power, which has been discussed with different inflections, is a method for identifying the echoes of colonialities that impel technologies, but the responses exceed its explanatory power. The technologies enacted by these artists is an interruption of colonial technologies, the stories about technics that limit their capacity and assemble tools towards colonial orders. In this sense, they tell a story about technics that necessarily escapes those orders and calls for other narratives. Cecilia Cornejo’s manifesto is a call to think and act in diasporic dialogue with other human beings around the planet, to form a “planetary humanism,” a space of transformed globality, not simply a call to action for the “Third World.”

Towards this, the work discussed here opens onto infinite assemblages of the apparatus, demanding an engagement with both old and new ways of seeing and hearing. While the movement from the past – from colonialism’s global orders of humanity, Third Cinema’s hierarchies – to the future is important, these works also insist on a reckoning with the past that is in the present, and the present that is in the future. These assemblages of technics produce a decolonizing epistemology that exceeds existing symbolic systems, but does not do so by either seeing them as always within or always positioned against those systems, or after them. Their temporalities are contemporaneous, and the worlds that they create, the senses of globality that they project, are mobile and planetary.

II. Temporary Revolutions

Comprehending these imaginaries requires a reassessment of how revolution is understood. Returning to Solanas and Getino, their claim is that the apparatus of Third Cinema is an integral process of revolution. This releases the masses from their status as “digesting object”:

The cinema as a spectacle aimed at a digesting object is the highest point that can be reached by bourgeois filmmaking. The world, experience, and the historic process are enclosed within the frame of a painting, the stage of a theater, and the movie screen; man is viewed as a consumer of ideology, and not as the creator of ideology (42).

Bourgeois filmmaking, then, according to this passage, fixes the masses in their position as spectator, only “digesting object” and “consumer of ideology.” According to this logic, the production of the “indigestible” is the goal of revolutionary filmmaking: “Every image that
documents, bears witness to, refutes or deepens the truth of a situation is something more
than a film image of purely artistic fact; it becomes something which the System finds
indigestible (46).” To produce this, the film author, theorized as a member of the “educated
strata,” separate from the masses, is put in a position of exteriority, capable of providing
“thrust” or “rectification:” “Furthermore, revolutionary cinema is not fundamentally one
which illustrates, documents, or passively establishes a situation: rather, it attempts to
intervene in the situation as an element providing thrust or rectification. To put it another
way, it provides discovery through transformation (47).” Intervention in situations is
certainly one of the threads that ties together the work discussed here. But if the masses are
understood in the transformed sense in which they are iterated throughout the work
discussed here, as always sites of possibility, of insurgent subjectivity, with or without the
film author, then “revolutionary cinema” is one amongst many possible insurgent cinemas. It
is a temporary moment in a series of endless revolutions, taking place on micro-scales
throughout different registers of global cinema.

This potential is limited by understanding the “masses” as recipients. The work
discussed here offers a multiplicity of ways of understanding others in relation to the
apparatus and the film author. When thought together as a field, the work of these artists
becomes an entangled site of aesthetic, political, and economic arrangements across a range
of digital media and Internet practices that forge many different relationships between the
spectators and authors. These practices reconstruct relations of power in and through global
media, but also refigure the articulations of that power, including the discourses about global
media and digital culture that figure prominently in notions such as “development,” the
“global village,” the “Third World,” and the “Global South.” The hierarchy of geo-politics
is reconfigured as simply one aspect of the re-arrangement of the film author and spectator.
Further, the reconfiguring of time-spaces that occurs across these works effects a shift in the
genealogies of the cinematic apparatus, and the imagining of the history of technology and
global society. The cinematic apparatus is no one’s property, including the discourse known
as “apparatus theory.” Strikingly, this work reveals that the cinematic apparatus is being
reconstructed continuously in various global sites. These particular film authors are evidence
that beyond the theorization of the digital divide is inadequate. Beyond this imaginary border
lies another set of digital fields of production that far exceed the explanatory capacity of the
“knowledge society.” The theorization of the “information society” has layered another
order on this already stratified world, creating digital, and “knowledge” have-nots and have-nots.
The work of the artists discussed here shifts the geo-politics of theorizing contemporary
digital cultures, creating a resonant field of multiple practices in those arenas that have been
produced by the digital order as non-digital; as only sites of receivers, but not transmitters, of
digital information; or as producers, but not consumers, of digital hardware.

In the midst of a world-system dependent on cinematic information, their work
produces plural genealogies through which we remember, write and access memories,
histories, and hopes and dreams, intercepting and creating different cinematic streams. If
understood as a pluralistic archive of cinematic practices, these works suggest the presence
of other vehicles of knowledge towards a plurality of inscriptions of life. Each instance
represents a reformulation of cinematic and information technics– a movement and a
transformative engagement that are specific to each instance but speak to forms of human
communication and relationality against the both receding and reinscribing divides of
information communication technologies in the modern/colonial/capitalist world-system. In
this sense, they claim the technics of communication of globalization towards symbolic
orders of life that are not supported by the priorities of transnational capital that have been
theorized as the driving forces of communication. In the activities of production and reception, these cinemas create possibilities for relationships built on transformed and redirected flows of communication. The ongoing rearrangement of the communication flows through the construction of the cinematic apparatuses by these artists – the fluidity of positions of artist/author, spectator/specter, and cinematic screen/texts - enable a field of cinematic engagement that is vast and accommodating of multiple globalities.

The call for solidarity across the “Third World,” but towards a different world, is precisely at the center of Solanas and Getino’s manifesto. This is a response to their analysis of current social conditions, their analysis that the “Third World” is at the forefront of world revolution, as well as their desire for a transnational solidarity. This desire, expressed by “Towards a Third Cinema,” is discussed by Zuzana Pick as follows:

Through the refusal of hierarchical models of creative labor, Solanas and Getino envisioned a practice that operates simultaneously within the imperatives of a militancy and critical creativity, technological scarcity, and aesthetic inventiveness. Striving for a cinema that “dissolves aesthetics in the life of society” – knowledge into consciousness – they advocated a practice that values the collective over the individual, the “operative group” over the author (Pick 1993, 58).

Strategies of collectivity are clearly important for Cornejo. But she states that her videotape is the work of an “artisan,” since she was the primary producer of all aspects of the videotape, acting as the writer, cameraperson, sound mixer, and editor (Cornejo 2006). Paradoxically, then, Cornejo’s work departs from the goals of Solanas and Getino’s manifesto in precisely this mode of solitary production. While Getino and Solanas advocate for the involvement of filmmakers in all aspects of production and distribution, they also advocate for a collective process. In Cornejo’s work, the collective act of making meaning is conceptual, an epistemic act, and is iterated across multiple moments in her apparatus. She offers, then, an expanded sense of what it might mean to work in collectivity. While it may mean, in some instances, a collaborative process of production, as evidenced in the work of Cao Fei, it may also mean solitary production, while being mindful of others. Even in the work of Cao Fei, her collaborative process is one that exceeds the framework of Solanas and Getino’s conception of collaborative work. It is not one that rejects one hierarchy for another – the “hierarchical mode” of production traded for the film author being subservient to the “operative group” – but instead it is a process of negotiation, a collective assemblage of subjectivities, gathered and enunciated in a specific time-space of both local and global dimensions.

Rather than what has been discussed as the compression of time and space (Sassen 2006), I have examined how these texts and practices de-compress time and space, expanding out onto multiple pasts, presents and futures. I propose that these texts image a “trans”-modern spatiality and temporality, emphasizing qualities such as stillness and continuing journeys, as well as multiple forms of movement, including sound, light, smells and bodies, across re-figured territorialities, including gender. They invoke ancestral and rhizomed, diasporic knowledges through memory and ritual, emphasizing return trips and echoes of the past, and the far away, in the present and the here. These cinematic texts also create new social relations, circuits of exchange between unexpectedly interconnected people and localities, in digital and non-digital forms, through their production, distribution and reception. The strategies that are mobilized in each instance, as this is accomplished differently depending on the strategic and creative responses of the author(s) to local and global conditions, and formulating and naming the connections between them, produce an
other archive, an archive for the future, of multiple cinemas that counter the totalizing archive of digital knowledge production as construed by the “global village.”

III. The Future Apparatus

The world’s earliest archives or libraries were the memories of women.
- Trinh T. Minh-ha

The body holds memories and knowledge. It also moves, across times and spaces. The globality that is enacted by these works is the mobile consciousness of diasporic subjects. Border-crossings and border-dwellings mark the identities constructed in each apparatus. This mobility is captured by Gloria Anzaldúa’s notion of the new mestiza: “From this racial, ideological, cultural and biological cross-pollinization, an “alien” consciousness is presently in the making – a new mestiza consciousness, una conciencia de mujer. It is a consciousness of the Borderlands” (Anzaldúa 1987, 99). In these works, there is neither an instrumentalization nor a valorization of the bodies and subjectivities of the author/artists, or of the cinematic apparatus and its imaginaries. They map each other, a series of conjunctures of specific intimate localities and conversations, a “consciousness of the Borderlands.” This consciousness emerges in the intersection of the technics, the film author, the film, and the spectator. The body and its technics form the starting point for these assemblages. It is a place, itself a site of porosity, of movement between registers of meaning. The body is also an archive, as a site of knowledge. Resonating with Walter Mignolo’s further theorization of a “border gnosis” and “an other thinking:” “…what I characterize as border gnosis, an other thinking from and beyond disciplines and the geopolitics of knowledge imbedded in area studies; from and beyond colonial legacies; from and beyond gender divide and sexual prescriptions; and from and beyond racial conflicts. Thus, border gnosis is alonging to overcome subalternity and a building block of subaltern ways of thinking” (2001, 95). These forms of knowledge are sited at criss-crossing movements of global flows and local histories. In the work discussed here, this knowledge is not a condensation, but takes on an ephemerality and mobility, evidenced by the flexible strategies of each film author. Importantly, these bodies are not fixed, but are part of a consciousness on a global scale, which exceeds the limits of the local.

Throughout my discussion of their work, the inter-connected problems of geopolitics, bio-politics, and modernity resonate. This is alternately understood as a question of women’s identities in globalization, the hierarchies of a global order expressed by the terms the “Third World” and the “Global South,” and modernity and trans-modernity. While these have been approached through different frames, what these questions perhaps ultimately lead to is a consideration of senses of gender and belonging, globality and woman. The archive of women’s memories becomes a radical opening onto other forms of knowledge if thought in the context of the colonial archive that serves to enframe forms of human experience. Linda Tuhiwai Smith discusses the construction of knowledge and the West’s cultural archive: “Western knowledges, philosophies and definitions of human nature form what Foucault has referred to as a cultural archive and what some people might refer to as a storehouse of histories, artefacts, ideas, texts and/or images, which are classified, preserved, arranged and represented back to the West.” In this sense, then, the West, with its central metaphor as a repository of all human knowledge fundamentally bound up with its sense of
itself, the archive is a colonial technology that serves to gather, classify and preserve knowledge about colonized others.

McLuhan’s picture of the “global village” is dependent on another inscription: “Woman.” In the assemblage of significations that constitute the “global village,” women’s bodies are reoccurring. The evolutionary past, the naked, the non-signifying, the sensorial immersion produce a time-space of primitivized sexuality represented by the body of “woman.” The global village electifies desires. But by clothing “women” with language and circuitry, they will be allowed to speak. “Women” will join history and tell stories. It is clear that the digitization of knowledge has now become a privileged praxical site of this archive production. Digital archive production is a discourse, a set of practices, and institutional locations. At these discursive sites, knowledge that is non-digital is de-valued. The speed of production, the mass-ness of the production, and the depth and breadth of a population engaged in digital knowledge production have become the key indicators of what has been deemed a knowledge society, or information, society by researchers and importantly, by the U.N. in its recent formulation of the millennium goals and other policy statements. Information and communication technologies, global capitalism and the ceaseless construction and reconstruction of the West as meta-archive, and its praxis of archiving, are intertwined. The idea of the knowledge society valorizes the use of information communication technology towards further global consolidation of the modern/colonial capitalist world-system. Its most popularized ideology, the notion of “digital divide,” echoes the colonial binaries of the Western episteme; the West and the Rest, the self and the Other, male/female, order and disorder, knowledge and ignorance, literacy and illiteracy. The “digital divide” is posited as a global obstacle to “development” and has been used as further evidence towards a naturalized world economic and epistemic order based on evolutionary stages of man. “Knowledge societies” exhibit all the signs of having achieved complete development.

Understood in this context, women’s memories, which trespass historical time and geopolitical space, constitute a site of ongoing counter-archival production. Seen from the other side of this constructed “digital divide,” both the notion of the West as an archive, and its archival practices, including its digital archive, are dwarfed by the vast complexities of knowledges, their mobilities in bodies, and their infinite technics of cultural, artistic, sexual or archival practices. Rather than an archive, however, perhaps the project here is to create an intercultural conversation, a platform for the exchange of technics that themselves transform the terms of gender, while understanding the archive of women as a basis for other thought, qi zuì bá she. The possibilities of these cinemas do not propose the construction of an homogenous technol-ogy that valorizes particular identities and constructions of bodies, but rather creates the conditions for an intercultural dialogue, like the women’s space in the factory – an instance of a decolonial interculturalidad – as discussed by Catherine Walsh and others across multiple sites. Walsh discusses interculturality, which emerges from Afro-Ecuadorian and Indigenous activism in the Andes, and also from Arab Islamic scholar Abdelkebir Khatibi (2001, 75) as follows:

More than just a simple concept of interrelation (or communication as it is generally understood in Canada, Europe, and the United States), interculturality marks and signifies the processes of construction of an ‘other’ knowledge, an ‘other’ political practice, an ‘other’ social power (and State), and an ‘other’ society; an ‘other’ way of thinking about and acting in relation to and against modern/coloniality, an ‘other’ paradigm that is thought through political praxis. Not one knowledge, practice, power, or paradigm more, but rather a thinking, practice, power, and paradigm of
and from difference that deviate from and radically challenge the dominant norms, opening up the possibility for decolonization (Khatibi 2001).

Understood in this way, these cinemas reach across colonial difference, and building on the rich traditions of their local/global locations, point to multiple possible collective futures stemming from the epistemes, legacies of struggle, and traditions of cultural production using old and new technics.

Interculturality enables the envisioning of the global realm of cinematic production as a vast platform for conversation, for border-crossings and cyborgian discourse. The work discussed here, gathered together, form a temporary affiliation, a set of relationships, that create a particular horizon for conversation. Attending to this, this project has engaged in a close analysis of audio visual texts that is attentive to their epistemologies; the elaboration of a theoretical approach that uses elements from decolonial thinking, postcolonial studies and semiotic analysis; and an attention to questions of specificity in time-space, including questions of regional formations of culture, economics and power. Further, it has been centered on a commitment to a belief that cinema is indeed a locus of transformation, of bodies and spaces, a field of affiliations and sodalities. The conversation is only possible if it moves beyond the polarization of the terms of the apparatus, of gender, and of geo-political location, the binaries that keep it, and us, prisoner, negotiating between multiple poles that are seen to be mutually exclusive.

The crucial question, as the work of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, whose critical cinematic praxis initiated this study, addresses, is whether the technics of the cinematic apparatus are seen as infinitely malleable, or over-determined by capitalism. Seeing the apparatus as a moment of transformation in the hands of the author is the gift that Cha offers. This may be difficult to see, however, in the contemporary moment. As echoed by Irmak Ertuna (2009), the contemporary moment is polarized between two forms of neo-liberal ideology: Either technophilia or technophobia. In a discussion of Stiegler, Ertuna elaborates the stakes for the contemporary debate on technology and the human. Technology may be construed, beyond this either/or-ness, as pharmakon:

In order to posit ways of reinventing our relationship to the world, one needs to think of technology as pharmakon, a term that Stiegler borrows from Jacques Derrida. The concept of pharmakon proposes an understanding of technology as being simultaneously poison and remedy, rather than positing it as a form of enframing that reduces humans to raw material (par. 3).

This conception of technology as pharmakon evokes the essential contingency of technology in specific historical situations and localities: “The technical object is the horizon of possibility - but only within a given historical moment. As opposed to bourgeois political economy, Marx's historical method allows a conception of the successive modes of production within their particularity, not as manifestations of universal laws (par. 5).” This discussion of Stiegler and Marx opens, for Ertuna, the possibility of re-articulations of technology and transformations of milieu, pointing to the possibilities of “…the spontaneous creation of new technologies and a subversion of the ways in which technologies of power operate” (par. 15). These two poles of thinking about technics, this understanding of techno-logy, are both inadequate to the task of accounting for the multiplicity of forms of contemporary cinema and its mobile locations across the landscapes of the global. This points to the necessary commitment to the possibility of transformations of milieu, and the machines within them, in order to imagine life in multiple forms, either in the interstices of global capital or beyond capitalism. In Cha’s own filmmaking, and her
engagement with other theorists and film authors, in the form of *Apparatus*, this possibility is endlessly enacted.

The enduring role of artists in effecting such transformations, of technics, of the apparatus, and of the global, is crucial. Although not the only pathway for such change, the artists discussed here are located precisely in this conjuncture of capitalism and technology. Effecting the transformation of the technology – *pharmakon* - through an instantiation of other subjectivities and sodalities is necessarily a transformation of a milieu. This transformation is not one step towards a distant revolution, but is rather a transformation of the present situation in which the artist is located. An important aspect of this real situation is the geo-political context of the artist, and the role this context plays in globalization and the capitalist world-system. These contexts are themselves not fixed and are also open to redefinition and transformation by the artist. Nevertheless, it is in these localities that the historical traces of capitalist expansion, through colonialism and imperialism, can be found, operating through codes and practices that effect racialized, gendered, cultural, economic and geo-political hierarchies. This suggests, then, that this transformation of milieu is one that has resonances across numerous fields of signification and materialities. This sense of the transformation, of *pharmakon*, is also evident in Chela Sandoval’s discussion of the cyborg, whose technics are an aspect of daily survival: "...colonized peoples of the U.S. have already developed the cyborg skills required for survival under techno-human conditions" (408). Differential consciousness; intertextuality; movement between multiple registers of meaning; re-signification; these are all strategies of the cyborg. The artists studied here use these strategies to assemble the cinematic apparatus in the midst of the scopic regimes of modernity. Dussel’s understanding of transmodernity, the space/time, perhaps multiple space/times inhabited by the West’s others, is useful here, as in this struggle, cinema is not an end in itself. It is a location and a process, a site in which there are many available technics of communication. Most importantly, it is a site for the inscription of the multiple imaginaries of the present towards multiple futures.

With these and other terms that signify transformed identities, technics, and cinemas, the artists addressed in this study rupture and re-signify the aesthetic and political projects of Third Cinema, producing multiple trajectories and genealogies of the cinematic apparatus. This multiplicity exceeds the notion of the cinematic apparatus as a stationary machine in modernity. Rather, it has emerged and nurtured in many different locales, and may be understood, most expansively, as emancipatory cinematic insurgencies, pre- and post-dating the idea of the “Third World” and expanding its geo-political and time-space boundaries. The cinematic apparatus as discussed here in its multiple assemblages, both emerges from and produces third technics, and third spaces, which are epistemic, political, and economic interventions, but are also locations beyond the world-system as it is currently theorized. They are liminal, but not peripheral. Rather, as Sylvia Wynter addresses them, they are located in liminality as a space of possibility. She writes: “In other words, it is the very liminality (on the threshold, both in and outside) of our category-structure location within the present “field of play” of the discursive symbol-matter information system that gives us the cognitive edge with respect to such a far-reaching transformation [the de-objectification of our present systems of theoretical absolutism]” (Wynter 1987, 235). Cinema may be a mode of producing worlds, epistemologies, that re-order governing symbolic codes of life and death, employing the ‘sociogenic principle’ towards a “Second Emergence.” This second emergence is a moment both in and beyond the current one: the future apparatus. The cinemas discussed here, both in their presents and futures, are mobile assemblages with which to understand, imagine and name ourselves, our knowledges and futures. They
suggest a transformation of the cinematic apparatus as a set of infinite technics, a tool with open-ended symbolic possibilities, unleashing the sociogenic – the human creating – symbolic capacities of cinema. In this study I hope that I have created the beginnings of a conversation with the multiple realms of meanings, effects and conditions of production of this and other important work by contemporary cinematic practitioners. There are many questions that require further research, and the work opens up many more new theoretical and political terrains than I have been able to address. I will end, then, with this beginning, which also masked itself as an ending, from the final voice-over of Solanas and Getino’s epic 1968 documentary, *The Hour of the Furnaces*:

The conclusions at which you may arrive as the real authors and protagonists of this history are important. The experiences and conclusions that we have assembled are of relative worth; they are to be used to the extent that they are useful to you, who are the present and future of liberation…This is why the film stops here; it opens out to you so that you can continue it.
References


Further reading


Center for Contemporary Art, Kitakyushu. “Cao Fei.”
http://www.cca-kitakyushu.org/english/project/caofei_project.shtml


