THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

JOHN FRANKENHEIMER'S UNTIMELY MEDIA

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF CINEMA AND MEDIA STUDIES

BY

COOPER LONG

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

AUGUST 2023

© Copyright 2023 Cooper Long

Table of Contents

List of Figures iv

Abstract v

Acknowledgments..vii

Introduction
John Frankenheimer's Untimely Media 1

Chapter One
The Great Chain of Mistakes 26

Chapter Two
After Videophobia 67

Chapter Three
Image-Generating Bodies 107

Chapter Four
In the Zone of the Blockbuster 152

Bibliography 196

List of Figures

Figure 0.1: A family photo (containing another photo) from a 1989 AT&T commercial.....2

Figure 1.1: A visible CBS television camera in the (bottom left) background of "Forbidden Area" (*Playhouse 90*, John Frankenheimer, 1956) 39

Figure 1.2: A mistake by a camera operator who "went in too far" from "The Comedian" (*Playhouse 90*, John Frankenheimer, 1957) 49

Figure 1.3: The deliberate obstruction of the camera by an extra in "The Comedian" (*Playhouse 90*, John Frankenheimer, 1957) 50

Figure 1.4: The final shot of *Path to War* (John Frankenheimer, 2002) 66

Figure 2.1: Photograph of John F. Kennedy at the 1960 Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles by Garry Winogrand 67

Figure 2.2: Mrs. Iselin watches her husband on television in *The Manchurian Candidate* (John Frankenheimer, 1962) 69

Figure 2.3 Colonel Jiggs looks at (and past) the television screen in *Seven Days in May* (John Frankenheimer, 1964) 80

Figure 2.4 A split-screen composition with embedded flashback from *Grand Prix* (John Frankenheimer, 1966) 95

Figure 3.1: Rock Hudson wearing a body-mounted camera on the set of *Seconds* (John Frankenheimer, 1966) 111

Figure 3.2: Illustrations from *American Cinematographer* 44, no. 5 (May 1963): 285 116

Figure 3.3: Arriflex ad from *American Cinematographer* 46, no. 3 (March 1965): 145 120

Figure 3.4: A chest-mounted extreme close-up of the Man in the Station from *Seconds* (John Frankenheimer, 1966) 127

Figure 4.1 A non-actor caught on hidden camera obstructs the cast in *French Connection II* (John Frankenheimer, 1975) 162

Figure 4.2: Kabakov (center, with white lapels) descends the stadium steps in *Black Sunday* (John Frankenheimer, 1977) 171

Figure 4.3: The forward-facing, bumper-mounted camera from *Ronin* (John Frankenheimer, 1998) 186

Abstract

My dissertation argues that the work of John Frankenheimer (1930-2002) provides a series of lenses for looking differently at several crucial turning points in media history. Each chapter takes up one or more moments of media change, showing how specific works directed by Frankenheimer can enlarge our thinking about these moments, thereby opening up new theoretical, historical, and aesthetic questions. I argue that Frankenheimer's oeuvre can serve this function because the director was so frequently out of synchronization with large-scale trends in media culture, resulting in a collection of what I call "untimely media," which either rushed ahead or lagged behind what other media makers were doing and thinking at the same historical moment. Rather than providing a biographical study of Frankenheimer, my dissertation instead mobilizes his untimely media as a critical toolkit, one that derives its explanatory power from the fact that Frankenheimer causes so many problems for the standard historical narratives and theoretical frameworks that cinema and media scholars depend on.

My four chapters proceed roughly chronologically, though several juxtapose media from different moments of Frankenheimer's career. Chapter one, "The Great Chain of Mistakes," considers Frankenheimer's beginnings as a director of live television drama in the 1950s, at a moment when this programming format was already in precipitous decline. Chapter two, "After Videophobia," brings together several Frankenheimer films from the early 60s that prominently feature television, including *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962), and contextualizes them in the media-historical moment immediately after television becomes the dominant media technology in the United States. Chapter three, "Image-Generating Bodies," focuses on a single Frankenheimer film, *Seconds* (1966), in order to show that its body-mounted camerawork fills a gap in the history of cinematography between the handheld camera and the Steadicam. And,

finally, chapter four, “In the Zone of the Blockbuster,” treats Frankenheimer’s varied engagements with the Hollywood blockbuster as a means of tracking significant shifts in blockbuster aesthetics, especially changes in blockbuster effects practices.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I must thank the chair of my dissertation committee: Dan Morgan. At certain points in what follows, I have included a footnote that reads something like: "Thank you to Dan Morgan for this formulation" or "This idea emerged in conversation with Dan Morgan." In truth, some version of this sentiment should be appended to every single page. Dan's careful readings and challenging comments have made me a better scholar. His kindness has made me a happier and healthier person.

I am also deeply grateful to the other two members of my committee: Allyson Field and David Rodowick. The archival component of this dissertation, which became one of my favorite parts of the project, would not exist without Ally's inspiration and example. Responses from David, always delivered with astonishing speediness, were invaluable sources of encouragement throughout the writing process. I felt that he was at my side, whether he happened to be across the park or across the world.

Thank you to all the faculty and staff at the University of Chicago, in the Department of Cinema and Media Studies and beyond, who have supported me in various ways. I am grateful to Maria Belodubrovskaya, Jane Bohnsack, Marc Downie, Tom Lamarre, Richard Neer, Ben Ruder, Joel Snyder, Jacqueline Stewart, Traci Verleyen Hope, and especially Tom Gunning. At the Franke Institute, Margot Browning organized an Affiliated Fellows group that was essential to the writing of chapter one. And I would not be here without Brian Price, who treated me with remarkable generosity, and seriousness, when I was an MA student at the University of Toronto.

The archival research for this project depended on the support of archivists and administrators at several institutions. Thank you to Louise Hilton at the Margaret Herrick Library; Mark Quigley and Maya Montañez Smukler at the UCLA Film and Television Archive;

and to Ron Simon and Jane Klain at the Paley Center for Media. Closer to home, Nancy Spiegel at the Regenstein Library also helped me track down several elusive items.

I could not imagine a better cohort of colleagues than Tanya Desai, Pedro Doreste, Gary Kafer, Ritika Kaushik, Leah Li, Cinta Pelejà, and Amy Skjerseth. More broadly, I am fortunate to have learned with and from Sean Batton, Wolfgang Boehm, Dave Burnham, Katerina Korola, Hunter Koch, Emma Lunbeck, Steven Maye, Noa Merkin, Erin Nunoda, Kate Russell, Aurore Spiers (who also checked my French translations), Joel Sutherland, Josh Trubowitz, and Fan Wu. In the neighborhood, I have been sustained by the proximity of Max Bean and Tanya Desai (and now Rhea Bean-Desai); Emma Lunbeck and Jacob Eigen; and Joel Sutherland and Eleanor Ford.

I hope the most important people in my life know that I could not have reached this point without them. Let me reaffirm my gratitude to my parents, Briar and Greg, for a lifetime of support, and to my sister, Remi, for the same, minus about fifteen months. And, finally, my deepest thanks to Silvie Senauke for loving me so well. In a sense, this dissertation is the reason that I originally came to Chicago seven years ago. But the most important project that I have undertaken here is the life that we are making together.

Introduction

John Frankenheimer's Untimely Media

La seule chose que l'on peut faire, c'est de vivre avec son temps, qui, lui, change à une allure effarante. (The only thing that we can do is to live with the times, which are changing at an alarming rate.)

John Frankenheimer, *Cahiers du cinéma* (February 1967)[1]

In October 1989, AT&T launched a new advertising campaign to highlight its expanding range of telecommunications products and services. A series of seven commercials told the story of an American reporter, on assignment covering the Bicentennial of the French Revolution in Paris, who overcomes professional and personal challenges through the global interconnectivity availed by AT&T technology.[2] At the beginning of the minute-long spot, we swoop past the reporter, who is speaking into a television camera in the bottom right corner of the frame, and observe a parade of Republican Guards crossing the Seine. Other festivities appear as the reporter explains, via voiceover, that this exciting foreign posting has a drawback: "Trouble is, it meant I was going to miss my folks' 50th anniversary. But I got this idea..." Based on a faded old photograph, faxed to the newsroom by his wife back home, the reporter locates the Parisian restaurant where his parents celebrated their wedding, and then surprises them with a recreation of the event, complete with another photo shoot on the same spot (figure 0.1). We look over the shoulder of a photographer who captures the elderly couple standing next to a poster-sized print of themselves as newlyweds. This literally picture-perfect ending initiates a concluding montage

[1] Axel Madsen, "*Recontre avec John Frankenheimer*," *Cahiers du cinéma* 187 (February 1967): 12 (my translation). This interview is entirely in French, though Frankenheimer presumably answered in English. He later became fluent in the language, which he began studying around the release of *The Horsemen* (1971).

[2] The seven commercials that comprised the campaign varied in length, from 30 seconds to three minutes. The following discussion is based on the minute-long version. Richard Miller, "John Frankenheimer Realizes a Longtime Interest and Begins to Direct Commercials," October 6, 1989, 40.

of electronic interfaces. As multiplying screens, keypads, and handsets flash before our eyes, we hear an announcer intone: "AT&T Long Distance. No one else gives you this remarkable power to manage your world. No one." While this tagline refers to long distance telephone service in particular, the specification actually understates the profusion of media technologies that we have just watched the protagonist employ in his successful effort to be both a capable journalist and a dutiful son.

Figure 0.1 A family photo (containing another photo) from a 1989 AT&T commercial

The uncredited director of this commercial was John Frankenheimer. Best known as the director of *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962), Frankenheimer had announced his interest in making commercials a year earlier, though this AT&T campaign marked his first work in the

format.[3] Executives at the advertising agency that recruited Frankenheimer cited a number of reasons that the director was an ideal choice for the campaign, including his storytelling skills and his experience shooting amid large-scale public events.[4] No one noticed that the obligation to flaunt media technologies also accorded with his particular skillset. From the beginning of his directorial career in the mid 1950s, Frankenheimer had frequently, even characteristically, incorporated such technologies into the mise-en-scène of television programs and films, resulting in frames that abound with cameras, screens, microphones and other audiovisual equipment. His enduring interest in the representation of media-making meant that Frankenheimer was ideally suited to an advertising concept where the protagonist pleases his bosses and his parents by using media technologies to create all kinds of images, from exciting live remotes to a sentimental family photo.

Many of the media technologies on display in this commercial promise instantaneous connection, but the ad also involves several other temporal modes and structures. From our present-day vantage point, of course, many of the technologies in this commercial now appear quite dated. Certain objects like the fax machine and the answering machine, each spotlighted in close-ups during the concluding montage, are no longer parts of our everyday media environment. And those devices that have persisted now look much different than the objects we see here, like the "mobile phone" that is tethered to a hip-mounted transceiver unit with an aerial extending above the wearer's head. Yet the sense of pastness that pervades this commercial is not entirely the product of our historical distance. Besides the fact that it centralizes the celebration of not one but two distant anniversaries, the commercial takes place amid an event –

[3] "John Frankenheimer to Direct Commercials through Gibson, Lefebvre, Gartner," *Back Stage*, September 16, 1988: 4; Miller, "Longtime Interest," 40.
[4] Miller, "Longtime Interest," 40.

the Bicentennial celebrations – that, by the time the campaign premiered on October 29th, had been over for more than three months. The broader context for the imagination of media-enabled, instantaneous connection that runs throughout this commercial is an occurrence that was basically "old news," a months-old commemoration of a centuries-old historical turning point.

The temporality of the commercial is still more complex. Besides its orientation toward the past, the spot also looks ahead to its future, and not only because some of the technologies that it contains, such as email and videoconferencing, would not be widely adopted until years later. This commercial finds Frankenheimer contending with a creative challenge that would become more pressing in subsequent decades, specifically the representation of a social world that is organized around and through transnational communications networks. Scholars have argued that artists initially confront the challenge of the network society in the mid 90s, during the rise of the commercial Internet, and that the problem became even more urgent in the mid 00s, with the popularization of social media. [5] Here, several years before either of these developments, this AT&T campaign compelled Frankenheimer to formulate a visual language for comprehensively networked sociality. Indeed, with its double plot about balancing professional and personal responsibilities, the campaign was predicated on showing that, besides their importance in the working world, transnational communications networks were a means of maintaining and deepening social relationships.

To be clear, Frankenheimer did not take on this challenge because his creative mind thrilled at the possibilities involved or because he foresaw the massively expanded role of

[5] For example, all of the central case studies in Patrick Jagoda's *Network Aesthetics* date from between the late 90s and early 2010s. The two earliest works to receive extended analysis, both novels, are Don DeLillo's *Underworld* (1997) and Neal Stephenson's *Cryptonomicon* (1999). Patrick Jagoda, *Network Aesthetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

networked communication in social life. He simply needed the work. When he first announced his interest in directing commercials in 1988, Frankenheimer explained that “It’s not easy finding film projects that creatively justify taking a year-and-a-half of my life.”[6] He neglected to mention that this dearth of satisfactory material was related to his recent track record as a Hollywood filmmaker, which included a string of critical and box-office failures. Unlike the reporter in the AT&T commercial, Frankenheimer was struggling to produce images that others wanted to see, and he responded to this downturn with a pragmatic shift between media industries, from filmmaking to advertising.

My dissertation, “John Frankenheimer’s Untimely Media,” argues that the director continuously found himself in situations of this kind, working at the intersection of multiple media – and media technologies – on creative projects that are strangely caught between past and future. Throughout a career that stretched from the 1950s to the 2000s, Frankenheimer was recurrently out of synchronization with broader developments in media culture, resulting in a collection of films, television programs, advertisements, and other objects that variously rush ahead or lag behind what other media makers were doing and thinking at the same historical moment. As such, his body of work provides a series of lenses for looking differently at several crucial turning points in media history, such as the reorganization of the television industry in the 1950s, the aftermath of the Old Hollywood studio system in the 1960s, the consolidation of the blockbuster strategy in the 1970s, and the development of digital cinema in the 1990s. Each chapter of my dissertation examines one or more such moments of media change, showing how specific works directed by Frankenheimer can enlarge our thinking about the parameters of these moments, opening up new aesthetic, historical, and theoretical questions with consequences that

[6] “Frankenheimer to Direct Commercials,” 4.

reverberate beyond the oeuvre of a single filmmaker. My project thus mobilizes Frankenheimer's untimely media as a critical toolkit, one that derives its explanatory power from the fact that Frankenheimer causes so many problems for the standard historical narratives and theoretical frameworks that cinema and media scholars depend on.

Career Overview

Born in 1930, Frankenheimer made his first films for the United States Air Force in the early 50s while serving in a film squadron based in Southern California. His first assignment was a film about an asphalt factory that Frankenheimer claimed was inspired by the cream separator sequence from Sergei Eisenstein's *The General Line* (AKA *Old and New*; 1929).[7] During his Air Force service, Frankenheimer also gained his first experience in television, working as a writer-director for a local program entitled *Harvey Howard's Ranch Roundup.* After his discharge, he became an associate director at CBS in New York City, where he worked on live dramatic anthology series, such as *You Are There* (1953-1957), among several other programming formats, including the variety show (*The Garry Moore Show*; 1950-1967), celebrity interview show (*Person to Person*; 1953-1961), and Sunday religious show (*Lamp Unto My Feet*; 1948-1979). He quickly rose through the ranks at CBS and returned to the West Coast in 1955 as one of two alternating directors on *Climax!* (1954-1958), which originated from the Television City studio complex in Hollywood. The success of *Climax!* brought the twenty-something Frankenheimer some degree of public attention, and his profile continued to grow during his four years directing for *Playhouse 90* (1956-1960), beginning with the premiere episode. Yet by the

[7] This claim is difficult to verify, because Frankenheimer's film is non-extant. Curiously, he refers to the Eisenstein film as "a classic short [sic] on this dairy in the Soviet Union." Charles Champlin, *John Frankenheimer: A Conversation* (Burbank: Riverwood Press, 1995), 6.

end of the decade, live anthology series like *Playhouse 90* had been almost entirely supplanted on primetime schedules by filmed programming ("telefilm"), and Frankenheimer responded to this industry-wide conversion by transitioning to another media industry altogether.[8]

Frankenheimer directed his first Hollywood film, *The Young Stranger* (1957), while still active in television. The experience was unpleasant, mainly due to conflicts with the crew, and Frankenheimer did not return to feature filmmaking until 1961 with *The Young Savages*. When he did, success came quickly. The 1962 *Film Daily* critics' poll provides one notable indicator. Critics voted *The Manchurian Candidate* as the best film of the year and ranked another Frankenheimer film, *Birdman of Alcatraz* (1962), in seventh place.[9] The director followed *The Manchurian Candidate* with several other thrillers, notably *Seven Days in May* (1964), earning him a reputation as a specialist in the genre and even some comparisons to Alfred Hitchcock.[10] While the science-fictional *Seconds* (1966) struggled with critics and audiences, *Grand Prix* (1966), a 70mm Cinerama spectacular about Formula One racing, was a top-ten box office hit that also received three Academy Awards in technical categories. Though Frankenheimer would consistently claim that he only entered the film industry out of necessity, by the mid 1960s he belonged to the first rank of what was ostensibly his second choice profession.

And then things started to go wrong. Beginning with *The Extraordinary Seaman* (filmed

---

[8] The description of *Playhouse 90* as a "live anthology series" is admittedly a slight misnomer. *Playhouse 90* was only ever *mostly* live. When the series began in 1956, roughly every fourth episode was filmed, and, by 1958, certain instalments were being recorded on videotape. I return to the role of tape in "live" television production in a subsequent section of this introduction.
[9] "Ten Best Pictures of 1962," in *The 1963 Film Daily Year Book of Motion Pictures* (New York: Film Daily, 1963), 119.
[10] For instance, in his review of *Seven Days in May*, the critic Richard Gertner wrote, "If Frankenheimer, who also made *The Manchurian Candidate*, keeps this up, the illustrious Hitchcock may find himself with a real rival in the suspense field to contend with at long last." Richard Gertner, "*Seven Days in May*," *Motion Picture Herald*, February 5, 1964, 985.

in 1967 but not released until 1969), Frankenheimer directed a series of critically and commercially unsuccessful films that stretched into the mid 1970s. Several of his projects during this career downturn were slightly eccentric, including an independent art film shot in France (*The Impossible Object* [AKA *Story of a Love Story*; 1973]) and a four-hour adaptation of *The Iceman Cometh* (1973) for a short-lived film series called “The American Film Theatre.” Frankenheimer returned to the mainstream with the sequel *French Connection II* (1975) and the would-be blockbuster *Black Sunday* (1977). But when the latter underperformed at the box office, he lost whatever professional momentum he had regained, and he would spend the next decade directing mostly mid-budget action-adventure films for independent production companies. In later years, Frankenheimer often attributed his struggles during this period to alcoholism, as well as the lingering aftereffects of his involvement with Robert F. Kennedy’s ill-fated 1968 presidential campaign. Besides directing campaign films for Kennedy, Frankenheimer befriended the candidate and was waiting to meet him outside the Ambassador Hotel on the night of his assassination.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, television provided a refuge for Frankenheimer during this long slide. Even before he moved into advertising with the AT&T campaign, Frankenheimer had directed television movies for both cable and broadcast networks. A professional turning point came with *Against the Wall* (1994), a dramatization of the 1971 Attica Prison Rebellion for HBO, which inaugurated a series of well-reviewed cable productions that cumulatively earned Frankenheimer four Primetime Emmy Awards for directing.[11] The results of his theatrical films in this resurgent period were more mixed. *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1996) was a troubled

[11] Frankenheimer had previously been nominated for four directing Emmys between 1956 and 1959, but never won. “John Frankenheimer – Emmy Awards, Nominations, and Wins,” Television Academy, accessed June 14, 2023, https://www.emmys.com/bios/john-frankenheimer

production that *Variety* declared "an embarrassment for all concerned," but the thriller *Ronin* (1998) received moderate critical praise, especially for its car chases.[12] As his opportunities expanded, Frankenheimer remained active as a director of commercials, including a short film for BMW (*Ambush* [2001]) that premiered online, making him an early practitioner of both streaming media and branded content, though the director would not live to see their rise. Frankenheimer died of a sudden stroke in 2002, at the age of 72, only seven weeks after his Lyndon Johnson biopic *Path to War* (2002) debuted on HBO.

Creative Personae

One of the challenges of studying Frankenheimer is the sheer amount of attention that he received throughout his lifetime. He was already a public figure by the mid 50s, making frequent appearances in both the entertainment industry trade press and mainstream magazines and newspapers. Behind-the-scenes accounts of Frankenheimer at work in the television studio appeared in general interest periodicals including *Life*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *The New Yorker*.[13] He was also a regular participant in roundtable discussions about the current state of television or film. In 1961, he spoke with authority about each medium, joining a *Playboy* panel on "TV's Problems and Prospects," as well as a *Saturday Review* panel entitled "Film Directors at Work."[14] By the mid 1960s, major film magazines were not only reviewing Frankenheimer's

[12] Todd McCarthy, "Few Delights in Unearthly *Island*," *Variety*, September 6, 1996, 59.
[13] "Another Toll for a Famous Bell," *Life*, March 16, 1959, 95-100; "Backstage at *Playhouse 90*," *Time*, December 2, 1957, 43-46; "She's the Greatest," *Newsweek*, October 19, 1959, 64; "Governess," *New Yorker*, October 10, 1959, 36-37.
[14] "The *Playboy* Panel: TV's Problems and Prospects," *Playboy* 8, no. 11 (November 1961): 35-50, 126, 130-139; "Film Directors at Work," *Saturday Review*, December 23, 1961, 33-36. The other participants in the latter panel were Michael Gordon, Stanley Kramer, Otto Preminger, Denis Sanders, and Fred Zinnemann.

films, but, under the rising influence of auteurist criticism, also publishing essays on his individual directorial style.[15] Indeed, the epigraph for this introduction originates in a 1967 interview with *Cahiers du cinéma*, which further testifies to his stature – commercial and critical – in international film culture at this moment.[16] The first book-length study of the director would appear soon after in 1969.[17] Frankenheimer even maintained a public profile during his troubled middle years. He was a frequent interview subject over the 1970s and 1980s, then became increasingly voluble after his mid-1990s upswing, recording oral histories for the Director's Guild of America and the Television Academy Foundation, with the latter running approximately six hours. This period coincided with the introduction of home-video special features, and Frankenheimer became a prolific provider of audio commentaries.

The persona under construction in these voluminous materials underwent a series of shifts over the decades. Frankenheimer began as a wunderkind. A 1958 profile from the *Los Angeles Times* describes him as "TV's enfant terrible. Twenty-eight years old and one of the finest directors the electronic labyrinth has produced."[18] Descriptions of Frankenheimer as a "boy wonder" or "boy genius" were so common that his lofty reputation in the press soon became newsworthy in its own right. A 1961 headline in the *Los Angeles Examiner* announced:

---

[15] J. H. Fenwick, "Black King Takes Two," *Sight and Sound* 33, no. 3 (Summer 1964): 114-117; John Thomas, "John Frankenheimer: The Smile on the Face of the Tiger," *Film Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (Winter 1965-1966): 2-13; Alan Casty, "Realism and Beyond: The Films of Frankenheimer," *Film Heritage* 2, no. 2 (Winter 1966-1967): 21-33.

[16] In 1959, when has was still primarily a television director, Frankenheimer also published a short essay in the magazine. John Frankenheimer, "*L'acteur Paresseux*," *Cahiers du cinéma* 16, no. 94 (April 1959): 35-36.

[17] Gerald Pratley, *The Cinema of John Frankenheimer* (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1969). This book was later updated and reissued as *The Films of Frankenheimer: Forty Years in Film* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 1998).

[18] Cecil Smith, "Frankenheimer Helps Drama Live," *Los Angeles Times*, May 22, 1958, A10.

"'Boy Genius' Label Irks Frankenheimer."[19] While this article claims that "in movies he is free of the boy genus stigma," he was, in fact, often discussed as a particular standout in a larger cohort of television-trained directors that also included Sidney Lumet, Robert Mulligan, Delbert Mann, and Arthur Penn. In an essay on the making of Lumet's *The Group* (1966), Pauline Kael argues that television is an inauspicious training ground for filmmakers, but she singles out Frankenheimer as "the only movie director specifically trained in TV who has at times transcended this limitation."[20] Yet Kael soured on Frankenheimer by the early 1970s, a period when his persona was redefined around on the contrast between his early highs and recent lows.[21] He was now the wunderkind *who struggled*. A positive review for a Frankenheimer film, or sometimes even just the announcement of a new directing assignment, was an occasion for commentators to declare a comeback. After his cable television work actually did turn his career around, Frankenheimer settled into the role of the world-weary veteran, whose disappointments had left him stronger and wiser. A 1997 *Los Angeles Times* headline referred to him as "The Mature Candidate."[22] When he died five years later, the obituaries published by the *New York Times* and *Variety* both attested to his "resilience" in their titles.[23]

After his death, it became common for critics memorializing Frankenheimer to argue that

---

[19] Vernon Scott, "'Boy Genius' Label Irks Frankenheimer," *Los Angeles Examiner*, July 11, 1961, 14.

[20] Pauline Kael, "The Making of *The Group*," in *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* (Boston: Bantam, 1969), 104.

[21] In her review of *I Walk the Line* (1970), Kael wrote: "What was good about Frankenheimer's early films was a straightforward, ingenious approach to pace and craft and entertainment values. But the man who directed the workmanlike *The Manchurian Candidate* and *Seven Days in May* now loiters over every shot trying to squeeze art into it." Pauline Kael, "Worlds Apart," in *Deeper Into Movies* (Boston: Bantam, 1974), 252.

[22] Susan King, "The Mature Candidate," *Los Angeles Times*, August 21, 1997, CAL 10:3.

[23] Bernard Weinraub, "John Frankenheimer Is Dead at 72; Resilient Director of Feature Films and TV Movies," *New York Times*, July 8, 2002, A17; Kathy Lyford, "Brilliance, Resilience Marked Director's Life," *Variety*, July 8, 2002, 4.

his middle-period films were under-appreciated. Stephen Bowie, in an instalment of *Senses of Cinema*'s "Great Directors" series, celebrates the flops *The Gypsy Moths* (1969) and *I Walk the Line* as "back-to-back masterpieces." Disputing the critical disparagement that Frankenheimer endured around his "peak," which Bowie heretically dates to the late 1960s, the author writes that "A reappraisal is in order."[24] Film scholars have since taken up this task. The one scholarly anthology of essays about Frankenheimer is plainly committed to his rehabilitation. In their introduction, co-editors Murray Pomerance and R. Barton Palmer write:

> Indeed, if there ever was so dismal a contest, John Frankenheimer would closely contend for the title of Hollywood's most under-appreciated director. The common academic and critical view of Frankenheimer as he drifted into old age was that he was a genius somehow manqué, a talent puzzlingly wasted due to personal weakness or ill fortune, someone from whom more was expected, a disappointment. And yet, the contributors to this volume feel that his films cry out for another chance to work their magic and thrill viewers with their technical mastery, intellectual depth, and fervent passion.[25]

This statement suggests that the films will be primarily treated as standalone works whose aesthetic excellence (that is, their "mastery," "depth" and "passion") has not been sufficiently honored. But many of the collection's contributors also attempt to vindicate specific Frankenheimer films on the grounds that they contribute to the expression of an abiding worldview, as in several essays addressing one of Frankenheimer's most relived works: *The Island of Dr. Moreau.* For Christine Cornea, it belongs to a career-spanning trio of "science fiction/horror films" in which the director "pursue[s] his ongoing interrogation of institutional power," while Bill Krohn situates it in a quartet of later films that reflect Frankenheimer's deeply

---

[24] Stephen Bowie, "John Frankenheimer," *Senses of Cinema* 41 (November 2006), https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2006/great-directors/frankenheimer/.

[25] Murray Pomerance and R. Barton Palmer, "Introduction: Why Don't You Pass the Time by Playing a Little Solitaire?," in *A Little Solitaire: John Frankenheimer and American Film*, eds. Murray Pomerance and R. Barton Palmer (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 3.

personal interest in "revolution."[26] But however the authors establish the value of the films under discussion, the anthology as a whole, like most posthumous scholarship on Frankenheimer, fundamentally seeks the redemption of its subject. The evolution of his creative persona hereby undergoes one final permutation, from industry veteran to critical victim.

Auteurism and Emergence

My dissertation eschews two common conceptual frameworks for thinking about the work of Frankenheimer and about media more broadly. The first is auteurism, and, more specifically, an auteurist approach to Frankenheimer focused on his critical rehabilitation. I am not concerned with supporting or overturning the conventional wisdom that the aesthetic quality of Frankenheimer's work started to decline sometime around 1966. Nor am I seeking to demonstrate that his filmography contains hidden gems. Though I discuss several teleplays that have never been officially released on home video, most of the films that I address in detail are among Frankenheimer's best known. And while I do analyze certain recurring stylistic elements of his output, especially his penchant for what we might call "media exhibitionism," I do not correlate these formal techniques to a set of highly personal beliefs and values that constitute a distinctive worldview. In fact, when I discuss Frankenheimer's proclivity for "onscreen screens" in chapter two, I show that this trope actually reflects the *absence* of a strong commitment to one

[26] Christine Cornea, "Frankenheimer and the Science Fiction/Horror Film," in *A Little Solitaire: John Frankenheimer and American Film*, eds. Murray Pomerance and R. Barton Palmer (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 231; Bill Krohn, "Jonah," in *A Little Solitaire: John Frankenheimer and American Film*, eds. Murray Pomerance and R. Barton Palmer (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 269. This type of argument is a familiar move in auteurist criticism, dating back at least to Andrew Sarris' "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962," where the second premise of his "auteur theory" is "the distinguishable personality of the director as a criterion of value." Andrew Sarris, "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962," in *Auteurs and Authorship: A Film Reader*, ed. Barry Keith Grant (Malden: Blackwell, 2008), 43.

fixed idea about the medium-defining characteristics of television.

Instead, I am more interested in the various ways that Frankenheimer was caught up in media-historical transitions that he also thematizes and explores. Take his early involvement with live television drama, which postdates the heyday of the format, coinciding instead with a period when television critics were increasingly doubtful about its chances for survival.[27] During live broadcasts, Frankenheimer would sit facing a bank of control-room monitors that displayed live images from the multiple cameras inside the studio. Based on a thoroughly annotated script, he would instruct control room personnel when to change the image source that was being transmitted to viewers, an operation that was accomplished with a piece of equipment known as a "switching system."[28] In chapter one, I show how switching functioned within a larger practice of "directing as coping," whereby Frankenheimer managed mistakes committed by the crew, even as he also simulated errors, in order to prevent the meticulously planned production from appearing staid. Through switching, Frankenheimer strategically modulated viewers' perspective on the events unfolding inside the shooting space. My claim is that he can operate similarly in my dissertation: as a figure who changes our viewpoint on the major confluences of industrial, aesthetic, and technological change that marked his career.

Part of the reason that Frankenheimer can serve this role is that he was often working

---

[27] Frankenheimer enters the television industry in 1953 and directs his first teleplay in 1954. William Boddy writes that "Television critics grew pessimistic about the future of live drama around 1954, in part in reaction to a flood of thirty-minute telefilms modeled after the successful *I Love Lucy* and *Dragnet*." William Boddy, *Fifties Television: The Industry and Its Critics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 191.
[28] Television production manuals from this period make the point that "switching" more accurately describes the process of constructing a live television program than does the more film-specific term "cutting," though practitioners like Frankenheimer often spoke about "cutting" their teleplays nonetheless. See Rudy Bretz, *Techniques of Television Production,* 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962), 95.

asynchronously with significant shifts and flows in media culture. This is most obvious when Frankenheimer first enters the film industry on an ongoing basis, which he does just after the collapse of the Old Hollywood studio system in the late 50s – but just before the expansion of creative freedoms associated with the New Hollywood of the late 60s and early 70s, a period increasingly referred to as the "Hollywood Renaissance."[29] In the same tribute where he calls for a "reappraisal" of Frankenheimer's work, Bowie declares him "the key transitional figure between the two [Hollywood] eras."[30] Corey Creekmur likewise treats Frankenheimer as a "transitional figure," albeit between much different historical moments, arguing that his later films (specifically *Black Sunday*, *Year of the Gun* [1991], and *Ronin*) bridge the gap between the Cold War and the War on Terror. Creekmur claims that these films work towards techniques for representing terrorism and counter-terrorism that, in the period immediately following Frankenheimer's final theatrical release (*Reindeer Games* [2000]), diffuse throughout commercial cinema.[31]

But Frankenheimer was not a one-time transitional figure. He repeatedly arrived too early or too late to take full advantage of the media transitions that were happening around him. This claim might seem hard to reconcile with my description of Frankenheimer's renown during his early television career. But his reputation as a wunderkind actually incorporated the fact that he excelled in a programming format that was in terminal decline. The same 1958 *Los Angeles*

---

[29] Though Frankenheimer missed the heyday of the studio system, he nonetheless had influential encounters with a number of its key figures. For instance, he claimed that he was encouraged to enter the television industry by none other than John Ford. Champlin, *Conversation*, 9.
[30] Bowie, "John Frankenheimer." In particular, it is relatively common to discuss *The Manchurian Candidate* and *Seconds* in terms of a convergence between Old and New Hollywood. My discussion of these films, in chapters two and three, revisits such claims.
[31] Corey Creekmur, "John Frankenheimer's 'War on Terror,'" in *A Little Solitaire: John Frankenheimer and American Film*, eds. Murray Pomerance and R. Barton Palmer (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 103-116.

Times profile that describes Frankenheimer as "TV's enfant terrible" also records, in a subsection titled "John's View on the Dying of Live TV Drama," his feelings about the looming expiration of his preferred media practice.[32] When *Variety* reported on Frankenheimer's activities in 1960, it combined acclaim for his talents with the lament that they increasingly lacked an outlet: "Original television drama, the field in which he has fashioned so many outstanding hours in the past, has steadily been whittled away by vid-economics, until it is now about to disappear completely."[33] Frankenheimer may have been at the center of live television drama, but he was being pushed to the margins of network television as it reorganized more generally around a programming model (that is, telefilm) that Frankenheimer had no particular expertise or interest in. The boy wonder was already a man out of time.

As a result, Frankenheimer often had an unconventional view of media technologies and their attendant aesthetic possibilities. This brings us to the second conceptual framework that my dissertation avoids. A number of works on media change and media ecology propose that media are especially complex and interesting at the moment when they first appear. Geoffrey B. Pingree and Lisa Gitelman, for instance, speak of "a moment, before the material means and the conceptual modes of new media have become fixed, when such media are not yet accepted as natural, when their own meanings are in flux."[34] David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins make a similar point, though they shift emphasis from the ontological instability of a new medium to the instability of the larger media environment that it enters. They write that "complex synergies…always prevail among media systems, *particularly* during periods shaped by the birth

[32] Smith, "Drama Live," A10.
[33] Larry Tubelle, "Out of the Tube," *Variety*, July 20, 1960, 10.
[34] Geoffrey B. Pingree and Lisa Gitelman, "Introduction: What's New about New Media?," in *New Media, 1740-1945*, eds. Geoffrey B. Pingree and Lisa Gitelman (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), xii.

of a new medium of expression."[35] This same premise, that intermedial relations multiply and diversify under conditions of emergence, informs Paul Young's study of three media "rivals" that have confronted Hollywood cinema, namely radio, television, and the Internet. Young declares his intention to "address films from the emergent period of each of my chosen new media, that is, the period between the first wave of heavy speculation about it and its reification into a stable, institutionalized set of forms."[36] As with Pingree and Gitelman's claim that the meanings of a new medium eventually become "fixed," Young's reference to a "stable, institutionalized set of forms" supposes that media lose much of their dynamism once their "emergent period" comes to an end.

Frankenheimer's engagement with media in their maturity demonstrates how media remain dynamic beyond emergence. He was keenly aware of inheriting infrastructures and techniques that were already established. In his Television Academy Foundation oral history, Frankenheimer is quick to correct the suggestion from the interviewer that, when his television career began in 1953, he was entering a media industry in its infancy. Frankenheimer clarifies that "It wasn't like this was the beginning."[37] Elsewhere, he made a similar clarification about the split-screen cinematography in *Grand Prix*. Asked whether he invented the technique, Frankenheimer instead situates his usage in a longer film-historical lineage, explaining that

---

[35] David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins, "Introduction: Towards an Aesthetics of Transition," in *Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition*, eds. David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 3. The authors say something similar earlier in the same paragraph: "convergences [between media] occur regularly in the history of communications and…are *especially likely to occur* when an emerging technology has temporarily destabilized the relations among existing media" (emphasis mine; 3).
[36] Paul Young, *The Cinema Dreams Its Rivals: Media Fantasy Films from Radio to the Internet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), xxxi-xxxii.
[37] Television Academy Foundation, "John Frankenheimer Interview Part 1 of 13 – EMMYTVLEGENDS.ORG," uploaded July 27, 2011 [interview conducted March 21, 2000], *YouTube* video, 30:07, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LU2lE0x6hto.

"Abel Gance did [it] in *Napoleon* in 1927, and [so did] several other directors since then."[38] While Frankenheimer may not have witnessed the emergence of many of the tools with which he worked, his oeuvre nonetheless abounds with what Thorburn and Jenkins call "complex synergies" between media. In chapter two, for example, I describe how the split-screen from *Grand Prix*, besides building on cinematic precedents, also took inspiration from television sports coverage. Through such examples, Frankenheimer's work challenges the widespread notion that media become relatively fixed and stable entities post-emergence.

In other cases, Frankenheimer takes up media technologies in advance of their full emergence. As we have already seen, his AT&T campaign represents everyday embeddedness in global networks, including computer networks, shortly before the Internet enters general public consciousness and network aesthetics become a cultural dominant. Similarly, in chapter three, I discuss several key sequences from *Seconds* that were filmed with body-mounted camera systems several years before the popularization of body-braced camera stabilizers like the Steadicam and Panaglide. Frankenheimer's (mis)timing is particularly complex in this case, because while the body mounts from *Seconds* anticipate Steadicam and Panaglide technology, the crew of *Seconds* did not invent this equipment, instead adapting it from camera rigs that were already in general use for shooting sports. In other words, Frankenheimer took up an established media technology, translating it into mainstream narrative cinema, and this redeployment subsequently emerged as a film industry-wide norm, but only after a years-long delay.

Forms of Untimely Media

[38] Pratley, *Films of Frankenheimer*, 218.

Industry or production history does not fully capture the uniqueness of Frankenheimer's activities across media. As I show throughout the chapters that follow, his alternately advanced or delayed appearance on the scene of media change has an important aesthetic dimension. Consider what is perhaps the most famous shot in his entire filmography: the 360-degree camera movement near the beginning of *The Manchurian Candidate*. After a dissolve indicating a transition into the recurrent nightmare of Korean War veteran Bennet Marco (Frank Sinatra), we see Marco seated alongside the other members of his platoon in a greenhouse. The camera begins to pan right, and we observe that the incongruous military men surround a woman delivering a pedantic lecture about the cultivation of hydrangeas. Continuing its rightward pan, the camera moves past an audience of matronly garden club members, ultimately completing a full rotation and returning to its original position. But something has changed. The soldiers are now seated on a stage dressed with posters of Stalin and Mao, while the lecturer has been replaced by a dapper East Asian gentleman, who explains that the soldiers have been "brainwashed."[39] A low-angle shot from behind the platoon completes the transformation of onscreen space. Chinese and Russian cadres now look down from steeply raked seats inside a sterile room resembling a hospital operating theater.

This camera movement has an obvious precedent in Frankenheimer's television work. Evans Frankenheimer, interviewed after her husband's death, claimed that the shot was modelled on another circular pan that appeared in the teleplay "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" (*Buick-Electra*

---

[39] Frankenheimer explained that this effect was accomplished by building the two sets where the platoon appears on a "railroad track" that enabled the sets to slide into and out of place while the camera rotated. Production designer Dick Sylbert was an important collaborator in this effort. Television Academy Foundation, "John Frankenheimer Interview Part 12 of 13 – EMMYTVLEGENDS.ORG," uploaded July 27, 2011 [interview conducted April 13, 2000], *YouTube* video, 29:53, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4aRlnfnzyTg.

Playhouse; March 25, 1960).[40] Though Evans Frankenheimer does not mention it, this earlier camera movement was the solution to a practical problem that arose during the production process. “The Snows of Kilimanjaro” was originally supposed to be produced on videotape, but shortly before rehearsals began the teleplay shifted to a live format, because Fox owned the film rights to the source material and forbid a recorded version.[41] This shift made the teleplay more difficult to stage, because the narrative consists of several flashbacks, meaning that lead actor Robert Ryan would have to move from one time period to another (that is, one set to another) without any break in shooting. The solution was to place Ryan and the camera on a turntable. At the beginning of each flashback, the camera would move into a close-up of Ryan, the turntable would rotate, and then the camera would pull back to reveal Ryan in another location.[42] The similarity to *The Manchurian Candidate* is heightened by the visual discrepancy between the past and present sets. While the present scenes take place in a “realistic,” albeit studio-bound, African campsite, several of the past sets are abstract, constructed primarily from black and white paper.

---

[40] Murray Pomerance, “’He Loved What He Did So Much!’ An Interview with Evans (Evans) Frankenheimer (2010),” in *John Frankenheimer: Interviews, Essays, and Profiles*, ed. Stephen B. Armstrong (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2013), 232.

[41] Jonah Horwitz extensively analyzes the introduction of videotape into “live” television production, including the advent of entirely taped teleplays, in the second chapter of his dissertation “Live Television Drama and Its Cinematic Legacies,” PhD diss. (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2019): 139-245.

[42] To be clear, the circular pan was not the *only* possible solution to this creative challenge. Indeed, other live teleplays directed by Frankenheimer handle flashbacks in different ways, notably “Winter Dreams” (*Playhouse 90*; May 23, 1957), where there is often an interval before Dexter Green (John Cassavetes) appears in his own flashback. Champlin, *Conversation*, 40; Television Academy Foundation, “John Frankenheimer Interview Part 11 of 13 – EMMYTVLEGENDS.ORG,” uploaded July 27, 2011 [interview conducted April 13, 2000], *YouTube* video, 28:39, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-u4shROhtY.

Yet the resemblance between these two circular pans does not exhaust the relationship between *The Manchurian Candidate* and live television. Consider the opening shot of "The Comedian" (*Playhouse 90*; February 14, 1957), which begins with a sequence set inside a television studio. Though it does not complete a full rotation, the camera turns right, first showing us chorus girls on a stage, then a bank of monitors displaying those same chorus girls, and then the interior of a television control room, where the harried director oversees the production. Beyond the fact that the camera moves in the same direction, the resemblance to *The Manchurian Candidate* depends on how the mobile camera juxtaposes two different versions of the same original event, in this case, a performance and its televisual reproduction. The figures who open and close this shot also strikingly contrast. The line of smiling chorus girls is ultimately replaced by grim-faced, all-male control room personnel. (Recall, of course, how *The Manchurian Candidate* similarly switches the gender of the orator over the duration of the unbroken take.) Nor do the connections to "The Comedian" stop here. When Charles Ramírez Berg claims that Frankenheimer's television work prepared him for the bravura camera movement from *The Manchurian Candidate*, the author singles out *another* scene from the teleplay, in which the same television director from the opening shot dashes between the control room and a dressing room while the camera follows along in a careful choreography.[43]

With the circular pan from *The Manchurian Candidate*, then, Frankenheimer is clearly drawing on his live television background. And yet, as the *multiple* precedents for the shot make clear, the crossover between media extends beyond a simple citation or reference. Frankenheimer is not recreating one specific moment from his live television career, so much as a reworking an

[43] Charles Ramírez Berg, "*The Manchurian Candidate*: Compromised Agency and Uncertain Causality," in *A Little Solitaire: John Frankenheimer and American Film*, eds. Murray Pomerance and R. Barton Palmer (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 36-37.

overall approach to camera mobility that developed under the unique production regime of the live teleplay, where the movement of the camera unites disparate figures and spaces, constructing visual resonances and dissonances with means other than editing.[44] Through this crossover with film, live television drama demonstrates the flexibility, not to mention the propensity for intermedial joining and borrowing, that commentators on emergent media frequently attribute to their objects. But live television drama was not emergent in 1962; it was almost extinct. The circular pan demonstrates that the medium of live television drama, understood (in part) as a repertoire of approaches and techniques, persisted beyond its disappearance from the audiovisual mainstream, and, moreover, that it continued to enter into new configurations with other media form and practices. With its startling power to combine different elements into an "impossible" amalgamation, the circular pan provides an appropriate figure for this unlikely conjunction of film and (live) television.

In my dissertation, I repeatedly refer to Frankenheimer as engaged in "untimely media" in order to describe the numerous ways that his work falls into media-historical niches, appearing in-between certain signal events and therefore putting those events into relief. Like my analysis of the circular pan from *The Manchurian Candidate*, each chapter emphasizes the visual form of his untimely media, since the strange rhythms of his career are frequently reflected in anomalous (for their time) formal strategies. Chapter one focuses on Frankenheimer's teleplays. I situate these teleplays in a historical moment when the continued existence of live television drama became an urgent concern for television critics and practitioners, who frequently championed

[44] This connection to live television *technique*, as opposed to a particular teleplay, is something that Stephen Bowie gets at when he writes that the circular pan from *The Manchurian Candidate* "utilised [sic] the 'wild' sets which allowed TV cameras to move into seemingly impossible positions," though the opening shot of "The Comedian" shows that 'wild' sets were by no means essential to this effect. Bowie, "John Frankenheimer."

live programing on the basis that, in contrast to the hollow "perfection" of telefilm, it contained *mistakes*. Based on several examples of mistakes from Frankenheimer teleplays, I connect this discussion of televisual mistakes to a contemporaneous cultural conversation about mistakes in the context of the Cold War, including the possibility of an accidental nuclear apocalypse. Frankenheimer's teleplays enable me to move between these different discourses, as I elaborate a historically specific mode of thinking about mistakes that bridges the television industry and the defense establishment.

Chapter two opens with analyses of two Frankenheimer films from the early 60s – *The Manchurian Candidate* and *Seven Days in May* – in which television screens are central components of the mise-en-scène. These films appear immediately after television surpasses cinema as the most prominent moving-image medium in the everyday life of the average American, and I argue that both films work through this recent realignment of the media environment. Drawing a contrast with an earlier cinematic phenomenon that Paul Young calls "videophobia," I describe an "alternate televisual imaginary" under construction in these two screen-filled Frankenheimer films, then extend this analysis to *Grand Prix*, more specifically its split-screen sequences. While these sequences do not directly represent television screens, they nonetheless incorporate televisual models, while also taking inspiration from multimedia installations, making these sequences particularly complex intermedial nodes.

Chapter three narrows focus to a single Frankenheimer film: *Seconds*. This extraordinarily stylized film includes several sequences that were shot with body-mounted camera systems, an approach that I locate between two turning points in the history of Hollywood cinematography: the popularization of handheld shooting in the late 40s and the innovation of the Steadicam in the early 70s. During this interval, body-mounted cameras

proliferated in the field of sports media, before being repurposed by Frankenheimer and his collaborators for *Seconds*, a film that is also thematically invested in the image-generating power of the human body. I trace the longer history of body-mounted camerawork over the 60s, describe its unique application in *Seconds*, then jump ahead to the mid 90s, when this same approach suddenly reappears in music videos and feature films, after several decades on the margins of cinematographic practice.

Chapter four considers several Frankenheimer films from the mid 70s onward that exist in what I call "the zone of the blockbuster." These films each permutate key developments in the evolution of the Hollywood blockbuster, including the appearance of what Julie Turnock terms "the expanded blockbuster" in the late 70s and the rise of computer-generated imagery (CGI) in the early 90s. As I describe Frankenheimer's idiosyncratic engagements with each of these developments, I construct an alternate history of blockbuster aesthetics, one that is not based on massive successes or ignominious failures, but rather comprises films like *French Connection II*, *Black Sunday*, and *Ronin* that illuminate major shifts in the form of blockbuster cinema by working through alternatives to those changes.

Each of these four chapters finds Frankenheimer struggling to accomplish the task that he set for himself in his 1967 interview with *Cahiers du cinéma* – "to live with the times." After making this statement, Frankenheimer confides his hope to direct films that are "not just going to be shown in the attic once every ten years."[45] Besides reflecting Frankenheimer's career-long concern about reaching a mass audience, this imagined scenario involves media that ambiguously belong to the past and future, both consigned to a storehouse of things that have

[45] In the original French: "*Il faut faire un film…et espérer qu'il ne sera pas seulement montré dans votre grenier une fois tous les dix ans.*" Madsen, "*Recontre*," 12 (my translation).

outlived their usefulness and regularly reappearing in a decennial screening series. These hypothetical films evince a complex temporality that connects them with so much of the media that Frankenheimer actually did make, rather than just imagine, over his fifty-year career. As my dissertation demonstrates, his is a body of work with the power to tell us what happened during this half century of media change and why it mattered.

Chapter One
The Great Chain of Mistakes

"I've made a lot of mistakes in my life."

John Frankenheimer, *The Guardian*, November 20, 1998[1]

Although film theorists and critics, not to mention viewers, have always been interested in moving images of chance events, during the 1950s such images became a preoccupation for commentators on more than one media technology. In discussions of film and television alike, the power to capture chance events was not just a feature but a *defining* feature of the relevant medium. Siegfried Kracauer exemplifies this tendency in the context of film. His *Theory of Film* (1960) designates "the fortuitous" as one of five "inherent affinities" of motion pictures.[2] While cinema inherits this affinity from photography, hence filmmakers and photographers' shared enthusiasm for certain subjects like city streets, the addition of movement also opens up new areas of visual exploration. Beginning in the preface, Kracauer repeatedly recounts early viewers' fascination with the random movement of windswept leaves fluttering in the background of the Lumière Brothers' actualities.[3]

Yet the section of *Theory of Film* entitled "The Fortuitous" does not begin with the wind in the trees. Kracauer opens instead with Harold Lloyd's famous climb up the side of the Bolton Building in *Safety Last!* (Fred C. Newmeyer and Sam Taylor, 1923). According to Kracauer, silent comedy assigns a major role to chance, because the protagonists are consistently more

---

[1] John Frankenheimer, "My Not So Brilliant Career," *The Guardian,* November 20, 1998, A11.
[2] Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997 [1960]), 62-63.
[3] Kracauer, *Theory of Film,* xlix. For a useful discussion of this oft-repeated film-historical anecdote, see Jordan Schonig, "Contingent Motion," in *The Shape of Motion: Cinema and the Aesthetics of Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 19-42.

likely to be saved by luck than skill. Kracauer writes, "Take Harold Lloyd on the skyscraper: what protected him from falling to his death was not his prowess but a random combination of external and completely incoherent events which, without being intended to come to his help, dovetailed so perfectly that he could not have fallen even had he wanted to. Accidents were the very soul of slapstick."[4]

We have good reason to raise our eyebrows at this choice of example. Rather than considering the sequence as a model of the fortuitous on film, as Kracauer does, we would be justified in thinking about it as an archetype of orchestration. The convincingness of the illusion that Lloyd was risking death depended on the painstakingly precise placement of the camera, which stood on a series of rooftop platforms, from which position it filmed Lloyd clinging to partial facades of the Bolton Building, so that he appeared to be suspended much higher than he was in reality. Of course, Kracauer was not naïve about camera trickery. He surely knew that he was watching an elaborate stunt. The selection of this sequence as an example of the fortuitous, notwithstanding the considerable artifice involved, shows Kracauer to be focused on chance events as narrative elements. His account of the fortuitous builds, rather perversely, to a complete negation of alternative possibilities ("he could not have fallen even had he wanted to"), because Kracauer is concerned with the experiences of a character in the fiction, as opposed to a living human agent with the power to choose. The fortuitous manifests as an impression or appearance of a story world, one in which inadvertently stepping into a pile of rope fastens it tightly around the ankle.

[4] Kracauer, *Theory of Film,* 62. This passage appears almost verbatim in an earlier article where it is followed by the larger claim: "This too was intrinsically cinematic, for it conformed to the spirit of a medium predestined to capture the fortuitous aspects of physical existence." Siegfreid Kracauer, "Silent Film Comedy," *Sight and Sound* 21, no. 1 (August/September 1951): 32.

Television critics took a different approach to the fortuitous. They argued that, rather than constituting the "very soul of slapstick," accidents were the quintessence of live programming. As filmed series increasingly supplanted live performances on primetime television schedules during the 1950s, participants in debates over this industrywide shift, both proponents and opponents, claimed that live television was defined by the unavoidable existence of mistakes.[5] Some champions of live programming suggested that mistakes were a necessary trade-off for the much vaunted "immediacy" or "spontaneity" of the format. But others went further by claiming that mistakes were desirable in their own right. In his 1952, "Plea for Live Video," *New York Times* television critic Jack Gould wrote, "The supporters of Hollywood films for TV are raising a false cry – and sponsors are being seriously misled – if they think the uncertainties of a 'live' show are to be avoided: they are what makes true television. No human being is always letter perfect and no viewer expects everyone on television to be. The unforeseen occurrence or the occasional mishap on stage are the best possible testaments of television's power to transmit actuality. Take away the actuality of television and you take away the heart of TV."[6] Rather than merely tolerating mistakes, Gould celebrates them as moments when television fully realizes its medium-defining potential.

The type of "unforeseen occurrence" that Gould has in mind differs markedly from the fortuities under consideration by Kracauer. For television critics, the prototypical chance event is

---

[5] For an overview of responses to this shift, see William Boddy, "'The Honeymoon Is Over:' The End of Live Drama," in *Fifties Television: The Industry and Its Critics*, 187-213 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990). Although I focus on the longer-running critical conversation about the shift from live broadcasting from telefilm, Jonah Horwitz notes that, beginning around 1956, there is also a related critical discourse, involving many of the same participants, regarding the relation between live and taped programming. See Horwitz, "Live Television Drama and Its Cinematic Legacies," PhD. diss. (University of Wisconsin Madison, 2019), 216-222.
[6] Jack Gould, "A Plea for Live Video," *New York Times*, December 7, 1952, X17.

the production error, like the flubbed line that Gould invokes with his reference to actors not always being "letter perfect." The critic and practitioner Gilbert Seldes provides several additional examples in his manual *Writing for Television*. After describing the advantages of live television, Seldes concedes that "Errors may occur; the microphone may drop into a picture of Cleopatra on the Nile and in the commercial an announcer may have a fit of coughing in the middle of his praise of a soothing cigarette. The director may call a wrong shot and an actor may turn his back at the wrong time."[7] Whereas Kracauer emphasizes the narrativization of the fortuitous, Gould and Seldes seize on those incidents that are not explicable in narrative terms, like the appearance of sound recording equipment in ancient Egypt. From this perspective, rather than befalling fictional characters, mistakes are committed by members of the production team, including personnel, such as the announcer or director, who never even appear to the viewer. We could contrast these two ways of thinking about the mediation of chance events by distinguishing between the deliberate "production of error*"* and, simply, "production errors."[8]

In what follows, I argue that the television practice of John Frankenheimer compels us to integrate these two conceptual frameworks. The approximately 60 live dramatic teleplays that Frankenheimer directed between 1954 and 1960 both engage in the production of error and contain production errors.[9] While some of these dynamics are characteristic of live television in general, Frankenheimer's individual directorial style introduces a number of complexities that

---

[7] Gilbert Seldes, *Writing for Television* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1952), 32.
[8] I thank Daniel Morgan for the original version of this formulation: "the staging of error" versus "errors of staging."
[9] This number comes from the "videography" compiled by Charles Champlin (*John Frankenheimer: A Conversation* [Burbank: Riverwood Press, 1995], 213-226), and accords with Frankenheimer's credits on the IMDB. Other sources make different estimates. It is important to note that not all the teleplays Frankenheimer directed in this period were live. My figure includes teleplays containing filmed or taped inserts, but not productions that were taped in their entirety.

are specific to his body of work. Furthermore, in addition to bridging different kinds of errors, Frankenheimer's teleplays also draw together mistakes at radically different scales. In the 1950s, besides emerging as a fixation in media theory and criticism, mistakes were also incessantly discussed in the context of the Cold War, amid rising fears about an accidental nuclear war. These discourses involved a common set of terms and concepts for thinking about mistakes, which I demonstrate by moving through a series of errors from Frankenheimer teleplays, following a "great chain of mistakes" that gradually ascends from blowing a line to blowing up the world.[10]

Ambiguous Mistakes

While television critics shared an interest in the way that live productions could go wrong, it is important to note that they lacked a common vocabulary for talking about such moments. While Seldes generally speaks of "errors," with a single mention of "howlers," "error" does not appear in Gould's "Plea for Live Video," which mentions "fluffed lines, forgotten cues, and other unpredictable mishaps," before using "uncertainties" as a catch-all for these various problems.[11] "Mistake" is absent from both Gould and Seldes' accounts, even though it was certainly also in circulation. A few months before Gould made his "Plea," *New York Herald Tribune* radio-television critic John Crosby also lamented the increasing amount of "Hollywood film" on television, referring to the false promise "that film is better than TV because you can eliminate the mistakes."[12] Returning to Kracauer only adds more possibilities to the mix,

[10] Again, I thank Daniel Morgan for this turn of phrase.
[11] Seldes, *Writing for Television,* 31-32; Gould, "A Plea for Live Video," X17.
[12] John Crosby, "The Rush to Hollywood," *New York Herald Tribune*, August 15, 1952, 13.

including not only “accidents” but also “contingencies,” a key term in more recent film theory.[13] I do not intend to systematize this terminological variety, by distinguishing, for instance, between “fluffed lines” and “flubbed lines.” Instead, I will predominantly use “mistake,” with the understanding that it belonged to a capacious cluster of terms with overlapping but not necessarily identical meanings.

Mistakes on live television are not only difficult to put into words. They can also be troublesome to perceive. Consider an example from the beginning of “Days of Wine and Roses” (*Playhouse 90*; October 2, 1958). At a boozy corporate reception, Joe Clay (Cliff Robertson) watches Kirsten Arnesen (Piper Laurie) refill her drink and playfully asks, “Where you been storing that stuff?” After some banter, Kirsten replies “Hollow egg,” before quickly making a correction: “Hollow *leg*.” At first, we are likely to hear this malapropism as a blown line, as Laurie’s failure to be “letter perfect.” Then again, we might note that this verbal lapse is completely appropriate for a character who is supposed to be slightly tipsy after several trips to the open bar. With this context in mind, it becomes difficult to decide whether the person who stumbled over her words was actually Piper Laurie or Kirsten Arnesen. Put differently, we struggle to recognize this line as either a production error or the production of error. Matters only become more complicated from here. Recovering her poise, Kirsten continues, “Did you ever try to say that?” and Joe replies, “No. Not lately,” before changing the subject. In the moment, it seems entirely possible that this exchange is a bit of improvisation initiated by Laurie and ably sustained by Robertson, with the intention of naturalizing her earlier error. But we are compelled to check this assumption a few seconds later. The character introduces herself as “Kirsten

[13] See, for instance, Mary Anne Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

Arnesen," only to repeat the line "Did you ever try to say that?" and, once again, Joe answers, "No. Not lately." It becomes evident on this recurrence that the exchange is – and always has been – a motif in the script.

What we experience during this sequence is less a mistake than an *ambiguous* mistake. It poses an interpretative challenge that continues over approximately two minutes, as we repeatedly reconsider what we have seen and heard. We are uncertain, but not in the way that television critics writing about mistakes generally emphasized. In 1956, when Gould revisited the competition between live and filmed television (or, as he also calls it, "natural television against canned television"), he uses "uncertainty" to designate the state of mind that binds together performers and viewers of a production where retakes are impossible. Gould writes, "Even the hardened viewer cannot be immune to the contagion: he commits himself to the excitement or apprehension of the moment. Will there be triumph or disaster? Uncertainty is the priceless stimulus on both sides of the screen."[14] Whereas Gould stresses uncertainty about whether something will go wrong in the future ("Will there be triumph or disaster?), ambiguous mistakes, like the one from "Days of Wine and Roses," involve uncertainty about whether a problem has *already* occurred. In short, ambiguous mistakes make us uncertain in retrospect.

Although you would not know it from reading television criticism, ambiguous mistakes of this kind were a common occurrence in live teleplays. In the above example, dialogue causes our confusion, but performers' actions could also become interpretative puzzles. Let us move to another drinking party. We are inside a crowded Spanish bar, near the beginning of "The Death of Manolete" (*Playhouse 90*; September 12, 1957).[15] The matador Marquez (H.M Wynant) sits

---

[14] Jack Gould, "'Live' TV Vs. 'Canned,'" *New York Times Magazine*, February 5, 1956, 27.
[15] The matador Manolete was among the subjects of the documentary *The Bullfight* (Pierre Braunberger, 1951), which prompted André Bazin to reflect on the repeatability of the "unique

down at a table and, as he does so, his hand knocks over a glass with an audible clink, spilling dark liquid that runs across the tabletop. Without hesitation, Wynant rights the glass, flicks away some droplets, and resumes looking at his companions around the table, whose conversation has continued uninterrupted all the while. When it occurs, the spill appears to be a self-evident mistake. But Wynant's response shifts our perception, considering that his nonchalance, even gracefulness, befits his character, a talented bullfighter relaxing after another triumphant performance in the ring. This example involves a different variety of ambiguity than the slip of the tongue from "Days of Wine and Roses," because at no point do we ever suppose that the spill might have been intentional, that is, an instance of the production of error. Instead, it is an ambiguous mistake in the sense that something obviously unscripted gets rapidly recuperated as part of the fiction, as the behavior of a character whose physical ease has already been established.

Of course, the basic observation that live television performers can turn mistakes to their advantage is nothing new. In their 1951 handbook *The Television Program: Its Writing, Direction, and Production,* co-authors Edward Stasheff and Rudy Bretz claim that such responses are one of the medium-specific pleasures of live television. They write that:

> The television audience will not only accept, but even enjoy, a production error or a comedian who blows his lines and admits it, or who asks his straight man to feed him a cue once again, so that he can make another try at getting the gag to come out right. This leniency on the part of the audience is caused by the increased feeling of spontaneity and immediacy which minor crises create. The audience loves to admire the adroitness with which the performer "pulls himself out of a jam."[16]

---

moment" in cinema, including the moment of death, a topic that is obviously also pertinent to live television, even though the practice does not enter into Bazin's account. See "Death Every Afternoon," trans. Mark A. Cohen, in *Rites of Realism: Essays on Corporeal Cinema*, ed. Ivone Marguiles (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 27-31. I address some of Bazin's remarks about live television at the end of this section.

[16] Edward Stasheff and Rudy Bretz, *The Television Program: Its Writing, Direction, and Production* (New York: A.A. Wyn, 1951), 22.

While “adroitness” aptly describes Wynant’s response, in contrast to the examples highlighted by Stasheff and Bretz, where the production error is explicitly acknowledged, in the case of “The Death of Manolete,” our enjoyment has more to do with the lack of separation between getting into a jam and getting out of it. The glass gets knocked down and stood up in a seamless set of movements that we can attribute, in its entirety, to the character of Marquez.

The existence of a kinescope recording of “The Death of Manolete” means that we can appreciate Wynant’s quick thinking over and over again. Rewatching his resourcefulness does not diminish the pleasure described by Stasheff and Bretz, which survives even in the filmed version of the live performance. At the same time, we should remember that viewers watching “The Death of Manolete” on its original airdate lacked the ability to repeat (or pause) what they had seen. While it is entirely possible that members of the original audience could have noticed the mistake and savored its overcoming, considering that this ambiguous mistake happens in about two seconds near the bottom of the screen, it is also possible to imagine another group of viewers left wondering “Did that actor just knock over his glass?,” without any way to answer the question. In live television, mistakes were not reversible, but neither were the images on viewers’ screens, introducing another possible source of ambiguity.

In each of the above two sequences, we are confronted with different ways of understanding the activities of the cast. But another moment from “Days of Wine and Roses” raises questions about the behaviour of the crew. During a late-night drinking binge, Joe destroys a greenhouse in search of a hidden liquor bottle. He uproots plants, overturns tables, and smashes windows in a rampage that finally ends with him sucking from the elusive bottle while writhing on the debris-strewn floor. Midway through the sequence, Joe yanks a plant from its pot in a way that sprays dirt directly at the camera. Given how uncommon it is for objects to strike the camera

in commercial film and television, this moment initially registers as a mistake. The staging of the shot contributes to this impression because Joe faces away from the camera when the impact occurs, raising the possibility that the actor did not realize how close he was to the equipment. But other qualities of the image incline us toward the opposite conclusion. The camera never flinches. The moment would feel more like a mistake if the camera operator attempted to dodge the fusillade and then hurriedly reframed Joe. Instead, the camera stands still. Importantly, this immobility conforms to the overall visual design of the sequence up to this point. From the moment that Joe stumbles into the greenhouse, the camera makes only a few minor movements, and these adjustments are uniformly smooth. Rather than reproducing or "expressing" his haphazard manner of movement, the relatively impassive camera counterpoints the wild aggression of the figure before it, making his pointless violence seem all the more ineffectual, hence pathetic, because the camera does not *do* anything in response.

The corresponding sequence from the 1962 film adaptation of "Days of Wine and Roses," directed by Blake Edwards, underscores the distinctiveness of this approach. In the film version, as Joe (now played by Jack Lemmon) becomes increasingly hysterical, so too does the camera, until both are whipping around the greenhouse in tandem. We might say that the camera participates in his outburst, rather than observing it, as in the teleplay. In the latter instance, where the camera is deliberately restrained, if the barrage of dirt was a mistake, then it was an exceedingly appropriate one, because the unflinchingness of the camera, in the face of this collision, brings its continuing impassivity to a perfect apotheosis. The camera remains unresponsive *even when things are hitting it.*

In this case, our uncertainty results from the interaction of someone onscreen and someone offscreen. The ambiguous mistake comprises both an action by Robertson and a

response (or, more accurately, non-response) by the camera operator. This observation stands in contrast with certain remarks by André Bazin, whose writings about live television repeatedly insist on the isolation of the struggling performer. In a footnote to his essay "Theater and Cinema – Part Two," Bazin claims that missed lines are more painful on television than in theater, because the television viewer, who is not present to the actor, cannot possibly render any assistance.[17] The powerless spectator becomes "aware of the unnatural solitude of the actor."[18] Bazin makes the same basic point in a column about "memory lapses" by television actors, writing that "the incapacitated actor not only makes us suffer for him, he makes us suffer our impotence. Just at the instant he is so close to us, he becomes once again the inaccessible prisoner of the electronic tube that gave him birth!"[19] These descriptions of the insurmountable separation between actor and viewer omit any mention of the collective that exists *inside* the television studio, among cast and crew members whose co-presence is not merely an electronic illusion. We might say that the "inaccessible prisoner of the electronic tube" is not in solitary confinement. Each of the ambiguous mistakes that we have discussed to this point involve a collective dimension, even the example from "The Death of Manolete," where part of the reason that Wynant's response feels so nonchalant is that his scene partners are similarly indifferent to the spill, neither pausing their conversation nor even looking down. Because they tend to draw in multiple members of the production team, ambiguous mistakes push us to think about errors as collective action, shifting our attention to a set of interpersonal relations that exceeds the non-reciprocal spectator-actor relationship that fascinates Bazin, even as it pains him.

[17] André Bazin, "Theater and Cinema – Part Two," trans. Hugh Gray, in *What Is Cinema?*, Vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 97-98.
[18] Bazin, "Theater and Cinema," – Part Two," 98.
[19] André Bazin, "False Improvisation and 'Memory Lapses' on TV," in *André Bazin's New Media*, ed. and trans. Dudley Andrew (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 84.

Ambiguous Authorship

In her materialist analysis of American cel-animated cartoons, Hannah Frank theorizes mistakes as testaments to the otherwise invisible labor of (mostly female) below-the-line animation practitioners. According to Frank, when we examine a cartoon frame by frame and discover, for instance, a stray thumbprint on the image, an animated world that might otherwise appear self-generating suddenly becomes recognizable as a human construction, as the product of creative *work*. Mistakes hereby become "the index of the artist."[20]

Something quite different happens in the context of live television. Understood as collective action, ambiguous mistakes raise difficult questions about individual contributions to the production process. Rather than pointing toward some original creative agent, in the manner of an index, ambiguous mistakes are problem cases for the assignment of creative responsibility, pointing in multiple directions at once. The greenhouse sequence from "Days of Wine and Roses" exemplifies these difficulties, especially when we consider that, besides the actor and camera operator, there is another as-yet unmentioned participant in the sequence: John Frankenheimer. It seems clear that the director devised an overall visual approach to the sequence based on counterpointing frenzy and restraint. As already discussed, the imperturbability of the bombarded camera perfectly aligns with these formal procedures. And yet, because the dirt shower may have been an accident, we cannot definitively credit Frankenheimer with this brilliant addition to the overarching visual pattern that he has designed. If the spray was an accident, then credit more properly belongs to the camera operator, because, intentionally or not, he handled the surprise in a way that maintained the established aesthetic of

[20] Hannah Frank, *Frame by Frame: A Materialist Aesthetics of Animated Cartoons,* ed. Daniel Morgan (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019), 52-53.

the sequence as a whole. These alternative interpretative possibilities show how the ambiguous mistake makes authorship ambiguous as well.

By raising questions about the role of the director in the commission of an ambiguous mistake, this example moves us away from modes of ambiguity that are characteristic of live television in general, toward those that are specific to Frankenheimer's individual television practice. Consider another example occurring at the climax of "Forbidden Area" (*Playhouse 90*; October 4, 1956), when coffee thermoses rigged to explode have brought America and the Soviet Union to the brink of nuclear war. On the catwalk outside an air traffic control tower, Colonel Price (Charlton Heston) confronts the Communist agent Stanley Smith (Tab Hunter), whose sabotage campaign has left America vulnerable to a Soviet first strike. As the characters trade blows in the foreground, we glimpse two hunched-over crew members hurriedly wheel a pedestal camera through the background (figure 1.1). Their appearance is especially startling, because they pass behind the guardrails around the catwalk, traversing an area of the frame that we understand to be a pocket of air high above the ground. A quick reframing suggests that the camera operator also spotted his two incongruous colleagues. The camera adjusts right, so that the section of the screen that the crew members just crossed gets obscured by Hunter's backside.

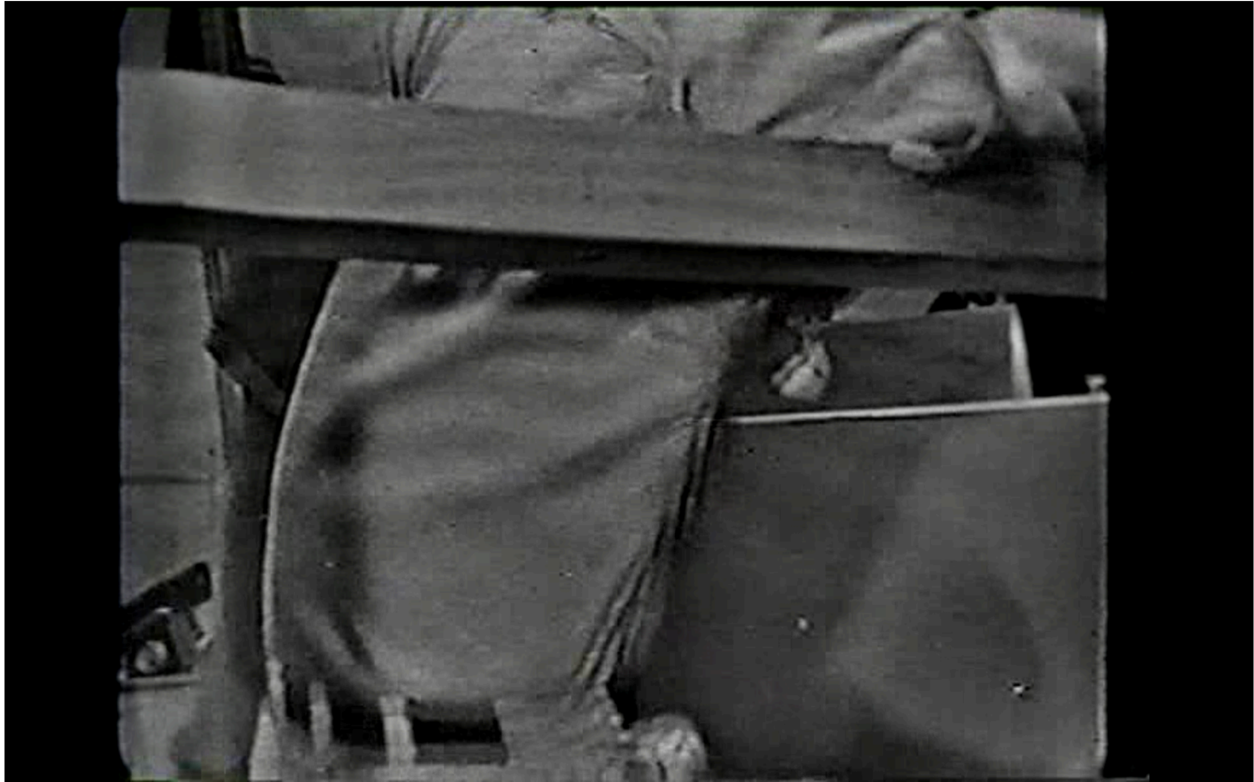

Figure 1.1 A visible CBS television camera in the (bottom left) background of "Forbidden Area" (*Playhouse 90,* John Frankenheimer, 1956)

We have witnessed a moment akin to the appearance of a microphone next to Cleopatra. There is no possible way to understand these technicians and their equipment as part of the narrative that we are watching. The production of error this is not. That said, even though this mistake is not explicable in narrative terms, it is nevertheless consistent with certain visual techniques from the final act of the teleplay. Shortly after we spot the camera rolling through the background, Frankenheimer repeatedly shows us the technological basis of live television production. Several minutes after the fight on the catwalk, as the Soviet sneak attack falters, the President of the United States speaks to the American people about the successful defense effort. We look out from behind the president at a group of reporters, including a television cameraman, who pushes his equipment forward as the speech begins, so that the camera becomes the centerpiece of the composition. Frankenheimer shows us even more production equipment a few

seconds later. Inside a television studio, a news anchor sits behind a desk, speaking rapidly into a camera with a CBS logo on its side. The following shot reveals that this is an actual working camera, not a prop. Over the shoulder of an anxious viewer, we see a television screen displaying a live image of the same anchor, framed from a distance and angle that perfectly corresponds to the position occupied by the camera from the previous image. (In the next chapter, I specifically address Frankenheimer's career-long interest in the "onscreen screen," but, for the moment, I am concerned with his display of media technologies more broadly.) With the next pair of shots, Frankenheimer gives us a second chance to recognize that the onscreen camera is operational. We return to our original view of the anchor in the studio, before switching to a medium close-up of the character, which means that the image feed from the onscreen camera is now being transmitted directly to us. We are now looking *through* the camera that we were just looking at.

This profusion of television hardware transforms our earlier sighting of the camera beyond the catwalk into an ambiguous mistake. The visible camera accomplishes by accident what Frankenheimer proceeds to do on purpose: display the tools involved in making the teleplay that we are currently watching. Importantly, the direct representation of media technologies is a technique that recurs across Frankenheimer's teleplays (and later his films). The most notable example is certainly "The Comedian" (*Playhouse 90*; February 14, 1957). Set during the production of a live television comedy spectacular (a "comicular"), "The Comedian" places even greater emphasis on the visibility of working cameras and their operators, some of whom even receive small speaking roles. But we might also think of "The Last Tycoon" (*Playhouse 90*; March 14, 1957), one of many Frankenheimer teleplays that take place behind the scenes of the American film industry. Besides containing extensive rear projection, which simulates the oceanfront view from the titular tycoon's estate, the teleplay also features a sequence set on a

rear projection stage, disclosing the mechanics of its own special effects. Frankenheimer's consistent interest in this type of media reflexivity sets the ambiguous mistake from "Forbidden Area" apart from the greenhouse sequence in "Days of Wine and Roses." In both cases, we experience an ambiguous mistake as part of some larger stylistic system, but, in the example from "Forbidden Area," the scale of the relevant system has significantly expanded. The conspicuous camera is not merely consistent with the visual parameters of a single sequence, nor even with the visual conception of an entire teleplay, but rather with a way of doing things that persists across multiple teleplays and ultimately films. Ambiguity thus becomes the function of a directorial "signature."

The ambiguous mistake from "Forbidden Area" also makes clear something that is true about each of the cases discussed above: the ambiguity of the mistake depends on its relation to what happens before or after it. Besides involving multiple participants, ambiguous mistakes also comprise multiple moments, which may be separated by mere seconds, as with the spill and its clean-up in "The Death of Manolete," or by several minutes, as with the cocktail party conversation from "Days of Wine and Roses," or across an even more expansive (and complex) time scale, as with the resignification of the wayward camera in "Forbidden Area" by subsequent Frankenheimer teleplays. Put simply, ambiguous mistakes are processes unfolding over time. This point was already implicit in our earlier observation that ambiguous mistakes make us uncertain in retrospect. Looking back, we reconsider what we have seen on the basis of what *else* we have seen.

The processual character of ambiguous mistake helps us understand why this type of mistake does not feature in 1950s television criticism, despite critics' strong interest in, and even appreciation of, production errors. Writing amid the conversion to filmed programming, critics

sought to forestall the decline of the live format by championing its unique capacity to eliminate the delay between production and reception. An important consequence of this rhetoric is the association of duration with telefilm in particular. We can recognize this link being forged when Gould writes that, "In filmed TV, one of the two vital parties concerned – the player – has completed his emotional involvement perhaps weeks or months earlier; the audience, in effect, is catching up."[21] Seldes writes along similar lines when he describes filmed television as something "taken and cut and dried which has the feel of the past."[22] The ambiguous mistake threatens to collapse this critical framework, because it is a specifically live phenomenon that nonetheless does involve a form of "catching up," orienting viewers towards the past as they seek a solution to their confusion across the fuller span of a sequence or beyond. This critical framework can accommodate discrete, eruptive mistakes, but it leaves out ambiguous mistakes that enchain multiple actions and reactions in succession. Ambiguous mistakes remind us that live television also involves structures that last beyond the instant.

This point, destabilizing an ostensible distinction between live and filmed television, aligns with arguments by Philip Auslander about the untenability of any absolute ontological difference between liveness and what he calls "mediatized" (that is, technologically reproduced) performance.[23] He understands live and non-live forms to be necessarily imbricated. For my part, I am less concerned with deconstructing the ontological purity of liveness than I am with reconstructing the media-historical circumstances in which 1950s television critics came to associate filmed television with a heightened awareness of elapsed time, thereby removing

---

[21] Gould, "'Live' TV Vs. 'Canned,'" 27.
[22] Seldes, *Writing for Television*, 32.
[23] Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 7.

ambiguous mistakes from consideration. This critical framework was intended as a bulwark against the disappearance of live programming amid the rise of telefilm, but, with its disavowal of ambiguous mistakes, it also failed to provide a complete account of the live television viewing experience.

These defensive measures by critics were not successful. The 1960 fall season marked the first time that the major networks did not introduce any new regularly-scheduled live programs in primetime hours.[24] Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media* (1964) shows how quickly the discourse about television changed in the aftermath of this industrial reorganization. The distinction between live and filmed programming is utterly irrelevant to McLuhan, who jumps between the two throughout his chapter on television, from the Nixon-Kennedy debates to *Perry Mason* (1957-1966). Eschewing liveness, McLuhan instead describes the medium-specificity of television in terms of an aptitude for the presentation of processes, writing that "the most effective programs are those which consist of some process to be completed."[25] On these grounds, McLuhan explains the popularity of various television genres, notably the western, with the claim that all westerns fundamentally thematize the process of making a town.[26] Though he does not mention ambiguous mistakes, McLuhan might have adduced them as yet more evidence of the affinity (we might also say "inherent affinity") between the televisual and processual.

At the same time, incorporating mistakes into McLuhan's theory of television requires us to extend his thinking in other directions, bringing questions about authorship back to the fore. For McLuhan, the orientation of television toward processes is closely related to its status as a

---

[24] "'Live TV:' It Went Thataway," *Variety*, May 4, 1960, 23.
[25] Marshal McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994 [1964]), 319.
[26] McLuhan, *Understanding Media,* 320.

"participant medium."[27] Against the assumption that television viewers are passive observers, McLuhan insists that audience members are actively involved in the processes unfolding on their screens, writing that "TV is above all a medium that demands a creatively participant response."[28] Mistakes are an impetus to think even more expansively about the participatory nature of television, beyond the audience participation that McLuhan makes his main focus. As we have noted, Frankenheimer participated in the teleplays under his direction by making plans in advance of the broadcast, like the decision to restrain the camera in "Days of Wine and Roses" or to reveal it in "Forbidden Area." But preplanning was not the full extent of his participation in these works. From his position inside the live television control room, Frankenheimer could also intervene in the production as it was happening, which meant that, like the actors and technicians on the studio floor, he too could respond to mistakes in real time. McLuhan speaks of the "creatively participant response" elicited by television, but live programming also involved a *creatorly* participant response on the part of the director.

Directing as Coping

While Gould believed that mistakes were the basis of "true television," we should recall that he did not want them happening all the time. Returning to his statement that "The unforeseen occurrence or the occasional mishap on stage are the best possible testaments of television's power to transmit actuality," we should note that "occasional" is a key term.[29] A mistake-filled shambles is not the "true television" that Gould has in mind. In their production manual, Stasheff and Bretz make a similar qualification when they refer to the audience's

[27] McLuhan, *Understanding Media,* 311.
[28] McLuhan, *Understanding Media,* 336.
[29] Gould, "A Plea for Live Video," X17.

enjoyment of specifically "minor" crises.[30] They too reserve their approval for mistakes within limits.

None of these commentators develop the implications that such claims hold for our understanding of live television direction. If mistakes are desirable, but only when they are limited in frequency and severity, then effective direction is less about preventing mistakes than it is about preventing them from multiplying or escalating. On this model, the live television director practices what we could call directing as coping, tolerating a certain number of mistakes, so long as their effects can be contained. While ambiguous mistakes are processual by nature, the director nonetheless seeks to prevent mistakes from enduring in this way, reducing them to punctuation in a production that breaks down *just enough* to excite the audience and thereby mark its difference from filmed television. In this schema, rather than announcing the incompetence of the director, mistakes function as a prime opportunity for the demonstration of competence, which the director enacts by ensuring that every crisis remains a minor one.

Elsewhere in *The Television Program*, Stasheff and Bretz come close to articulating this model. In their chapter on "The Television Director," after an opening contrast with the theater or film director who "makes every decision weeks before the running of a show," the authors explain that the television director must be uniquely capable of recovery.[31] On their account, "Besides being prepared for the next action in the show, the director must always be prepared for something to go wrong. A great many people are integrated together and must all function smoothly or the show will jump its trolley. Someone, somewhere, can always fluff, and if the director does not make a quick recovery, other errors can follow in the wake of the first one like

[30] Stasheff and Bretz, *Television Program*, 22.
[31] Stasheff and Bretz, *Television Program*, 215.

the traditional row of dominoes."[32] (I will have more to say about the Cold War resonances of this televisual "domino theory" later.) While the prevention of mistakes is important, Stasheff and Bretz ultimately conclude that "the real trick is in recovery."[33] Yet the authors do not connect these remarks with their earlier observation that viewers "will not only accept, but even enjoy" a production error. To extend their own metaphor, while the director must not let the entire row of dominoes topple, by the authors' own admission, one or two fallen dominoes can actually enhance the viewing experience.

Furthermore, because Stasheff and Bretz do not revisit their claim that some degree of imperfection is enjoyable in live television, another element that goes missing in their account is the contrast between the smooth functioning of the production team and the sought-after "roughness" of the program itself. If we assume that, given the pleasure of the production error, live television should not strive for total perfection, then the task of the director becomes more complex than simply ensuring that a group of creative workers functions smoothly, because this smoothness needs to result in a finished product that is not over-polished, retaining what Gould calls "the stimulus of uncertainty," the ever-present feeling that some member of the production team could falter without warning. In other words, the smoothness with which the production team functions needs to belie itself to some extent.

To be clear, when Frankenheimer spoke about directing live television, he did not ascribe value to production errors, even minor ones. The trope of the mistake as desideratum, though widespread in critical and production discourse, never entered into his own self-descriptions.[34]

---

[32] Stasheff and Bretz, *Television Program*, 222.
[33] Stasheff and Bretz, *Television Program*, 223.
[34] On the contrary, during rehearsals of "For Whom the Bell Tolls" (*Playhouse 90;* March 12 and March 19, 1959), a two-part taped production, Frankenheimer stated: "for every live show I've directed that may have given me, in its entirety that extra something, there have been 10 that

Instead, Frankenheimer was more likely to emphasize the meticulousness of the production routine. He often framed this point as a corrective to the misconception that live television was highly improvisatory. In the mid 1990s, when an interviewer suggested that his live television background must have taught him "how to roll with the punches," Frankenheimer disputed the idea, replying "No, no, no. People think that live television was spontaneous, but everything from the camera's movements to the actors' motions was totally planned to make it look spontaneous."[35] With this rejoinder, Frankenheimer emphasizes the contrast that Stasheff and Bretz write around, between the discipline exercised by the practitioners on the one hand, and the volatility conveyed to viewers on the other. For Frankenheimer, the spontaneity of live television is analogous to the fortuity of the Bolton Building sequence, an aesthetic effect or "look" at variance with the painstaking methods required for its realization. That said, while Frankenheimer was quick to refute any suggestion that his teleplays were impromptu, he also acknowledged that, notwithstanding all this preplanning, directing sometimes required snap decisions. In his Television Academy Foundation oral history, Frankenheimer reflected, "When it went wrong, which wasn't very often, then you had to really improvise. You had to be quick. You had to have very, very cool nerves. I mean, you really had to have cool nerves. And you had to have your wits about you, you had to be on top of it, to know what to do."[36] While not valuing

---

would have been better had they been taped, so that we would have had a chance to correct *mistakes* or build up a soggy acting spot." Cecil Smith, "Hemingway's 'Bell' on Spring Agenda," *Los Angeles Times,* February 17, 1959, A6 (emphasis mine). Frankenheimer makes similar comments in John P. Shanley, "Tape: Two Views," *New York Times*, August 30, 1959, X11. See also Horwitz's discussion of these comments in "Live Television," 235.

[35] Mary Hardesty, "The Burning Season of John Frankenheimer: Four Decades of Directing," in *John Frankenheimer: Interviews, Essays, and Profiles*, ed. Stephen B. Armstrong, 113-118 (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2013), 115.

[36] Television Academy Foundation, "John Frankenheimer Interview Part 6 of 13 – EMMYTVLEGENDS.ORG," uploaded July 27, 2011 [interview conducted March 21, 2000], *YouTube* video, 30:02, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oaJKhnO3cu4&t=972s.

the mistake, with his remark about being "on top of" infrequent problems, Frankenheimer moves toward a description of directing as coping.

"The Comedian" provides an example of Frankenheimer being "on top of it." In an audio commentary, Frankenheimer explains that one of four cameramen who shot the teleplay was less skillful than his peers, and the director notes several moments where the cameraman "misses" the shot that has been assigned to him.[37] Early in the teleplay, the camera reframes Julie (Kim Hunter) and Lester (Mel Tormé), on the verge of another quarrel about the humiliations that Lester tolerates from his brother Sammy (Mickey Rooney), the titular comedian, who delights his fans even as he terrorizes those around him. For a split second, we are uncomfortably close to the unhappy couple (figure 1.2). The edges of frame cut into their enormous faces, producing a mishmash of eyes and noses, before the camera pulls back to a more flattering two shot. Frankenheimer notes, "The cameraman makes a slight mistake there. He went in too far."[38] Another "slight mistake" occurs several scenes later, during another confrontation between Julie and Lester. As she crosses the room, Lester follows her, but the camera lags behind him, so that we momentarily see only his cardigan-clad back at the left edge of the moving frame. In this case, Frankenheimer took action in response to the mistake. He recalls speaking to the cameraman from the control room through a headset: "I remember talking to the guy saying 'look, forget it, put it behind you, everything's OK. You just have to think about what you got to do now.'"[39] This is an intervention that is specifically intended to prevent a problem from having knock-on effects. The encouraging words are supposed to help the cameraman avoid another

[37] John Frankenheimer, "Commentary ("The Comedian")," *The Golden Age of Television,* DVD (New York: Criterion Collection, 2009).
[38] Frankenheimer, "Commentary."
[39] Frankenheimer, "Commentary."

missed shot due to jangled nerves. Later in the sequence, when Frankenheimer notes that the cameraman "made" his next shot, a difficult composition staged on a stairway, the implication is that the directorial pep talk was effective. The dominoes stopped falling.

Figure 1.2 A mistake by a camera operator who "went in too far" from "The Comedian" (*Playhouse 90*, John Frankenheimer, 1957)

The nature of the mistakes that the cameraman committed in these two sequences matters for our analysis. Frankenheimer faults the technician for pressing too close to the actors or letting them slip out of frame, but, at other points in "The Comedian," the director stages the action in ways that closely resemble these missed shots, with their awkwardly fragmented faces and bodies. We see several examples during the frantic final moments before the comicular starring Sammy goes on the air. A hard cut suddenly confronts us with a canted extreme close-up of the comedian, whose snarling mouth dominates the frame, as he yells for "that idiot with the idiot cards." When we eventually gain some distance from Sammy, we see a soundstage crowded with

harried members of the cast and crew, whose shouts combine into a heavy din. As the camera begins to navigate this commotion, two extras pass directly in front of it, at a proximity that reduces them to headless torsos in suits. Another faceless extra, entering from the opposite side of the frame, momentarily obscures our view with his back, only to be hidden from view himself, behind a clothing rack being pushed through the foreground, so that the hanging costumes become a sudden blur of ruffles and sequins. Similar intrusions continue for the remainder of the sequence. At one point, we can see nothing but the lapels of an extra who lingers in front of us (figure 1.3). Later, when we watch a bent-over back pass through the bottom of the frame, it recalls not only the missed shot of Lester-as-back from earlier, but also the two stooping camera operators whose posture failed to conceal them in "Forbidden Area."

Figure 1.3 The deliberate obstruction of the camera by an extra in "The Comedian" (*Playhouse 90*, John Frankenheimer, 1957)

Frankenheimer made clear that these obstructions were a deliberate directorial decision, a case of the production of error. On his telling, "I tried to make this [sequence] as cluttered as I possibly could…I wanted to get the excitement, the nervousness that goes before one of these shows…I wanted the extras very close to the camera."[40] Later, during another scene with bodies brushing against us, he reiterates, "extras close to the camera and actors close to the camera gives you that kind of frenzied, crazed thing." Frankenheimer seeks to imbue the teleplay with a "crazed, frenzied" energy, and, in order to achieve this effect, he uses a specific technique, pressing performers "very close to the camera," that, at other points in the same teleplay, counts as a mistake, as the camera going in "too far." This is another situation where, as with the "trick" of recovery, the mistake presents an opportunity for the demonstration of skillfulness. By deliberately including "mistake-like" images, Frankenheimer displays his ability to achieve a mood through visual stylization.

At the same time, in this pre-comicular sequence, Frankenheimer is doing something more complicated than just staging a mistake. He simulates precisely what the practice of directing as coping is supposed to avoid, not the individual mistake, but the cascade of mistakes. We continually lose and regain a clear view of the situation on the soundstage, as Frankenheimer imitates both the diminution of control over the image and the *ongoing* failure to re-impose it. The soundtrack works in parallel with this visual approach. Dialogue repeatedly lapses between intelligible and unintelligible, with characters' speech sometimes breaking down into indistinct chatter mid-sentence, only to become decipherable again a few seconds later. The effect suggests that the microphone, like the camera, is struggling to maintain the proper distance from the actors.

---

[40] Frankenheimer, "Commentary."

The pre-comicular sequence is complicated for yet another reason. It prominently features the director of the comicular, a minor character named Byron (King Donovan), meaning that the sequence also dramatizes the work of directing live television.[41] It is not a particularly flattering representation. The character mostly flails in his attempts to impose order on the chaos swirling around him, which he exasperatedly refers to as a "menagerie." After discovering him in tense conversation with a cameraman, we track Byron around the soundstage, as he breathlessly delivers last-minute notes to several dismissive listeners. Sammy does not appreciate the reminder to hit his marker, cutting the director off mid-sentence, while a second cameraman gets annoyed at the request for a higher angle, waving Byron away before being wheeled out of the frame. The camera finally backs away as the director struggles into a circle of chorus girls, at which point his entreaties become inaudible amid the clamor. His floundering in this sequence is consistent with his limited effectiveness throughout the teleplay. Early on, he complains to the head writer that the comicular is "crummy" without offering any suggestions for improvement, implying that his directing cannot possibly overcome bad writing. Later, when Lester crashes the comicular, slapping his brother in front of millions, we see Byron in the control room desperately shouting for someone to "please do something," before Sammy, acting on his own initiative, rushes Lester backstage and subdues him with a brutal beating. While this crisis is ultimately contained, it is not the director who restores order. Performing as coping saves the comicular.

Rather than aggrandizing the director as an ultra-competent authority figure, Frankenheimer instead shows us a director who struggles through the ordeal of making live television. That said, this representation of directorial struggle is complex, because it also

---

[41] The character received the full name Byron Ford in the Ernest Lehman novelette that Rod Serling adapted for television. See Ernest Lehman, "The Comedian," in *Sweet Smell of Success: The Short Fiction of Ernest Lehman*, 123-176 (Woodstock: Overlook Press, 2000), 172.

fundamentally depends on Frankenheimer's own expertness at coordinating a large-scale live production with multiple moving parts. In the pre-comicular sequence, a 90-second long take, as we watch the director being repeatedly rebuffed, we also see shifting arrangements of bodies that indicate Frankenheimer's facility with blocking and staging. When Byron implores the heedless Sammy to hit his marker, for instance, it is an ironic moment, because in order to be in position for this exchange, Mickey Rooney had to hit his own mark, in synchronization with the movement of another actor, who leaves the frame to reveal Rooney standing behind him. Byron appears to stumble into Sammy unexpectedly ("Oh, uh, Mr. Hogarth"), but, if we watch carefully, we can notice Rooney in the background beforehand, waiting to enter the section of the screen that the other actor makes available. This choreography an example of what Frankenheimer meant when he insisted that live television was "totally planned," and yet, despite bristling at any suggestion that live television was a laissez-faire enterprise, when presented with an opportunity to directly represent the hard work of directing a live production, Frankenheimer instead figures the director as basically ineffectual. This is not simply a matter of carrying over a characterization from Rod Serling's script either. Frankenheimer's visual approach heightens our sense that Byron is out of his depth. The notion of directing as coping involves a tolerance for (minor) mistakes, and, with the character of Byron, Frankenheimer practices a slightly different kind of tolerance, accepting a fictional counterpart who lacks the talent for making plans, and coping with their failure, that Frankenheimer habitually credited to himself when looking back on his live television career.

While the idea of directing as coping emerges from the specific dynamics of live television, this model can also shift our thinking about film directing, because it moves us beyond the tendency to classify filmmakers as either detail-driven perfectionists, methodically

realizing preconceived ideas, or open-minded intuitives, flexibly responding to flashes of inspiration. Classifications along these lines remain a habit of thought in film theory.[42] Take the comparison that Dudley Andrew stages between Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Francois Truffaut in his *What Cinema Is!* Andrew describes a key sequence from Jeunet's *Amélie* (2001) where the protagonist watches Truffaut's *Jules and Jim* (1962) and takes special pleasure in the presence of a fly in the background of a love scene. Andrew finds her appreciation of the incongruous insect to be completely at odds with the visual style of the film that she inhabits, which Andrew claims has been fastidiously prettified using digital tools. Drawing implicitly on Bazin's famous distinction between "those directors who put their faith in the image and those who put their faith in reality" from "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema" (1958), Andrew sets Jeunet and Truffaut in direct opposition to one another, writing that, with a shooting style that encourages "miracles of happenstance" like the fly, "Truffaut avoids the kind of obsessive pre-planning that Jeunet stands for."[43]

Yet, when Andrew describes the actual shooting of *Jules and Jim*, we see that this opposition, where Jeunet stands for preplanning and Truffaut its absence, runs the risk of flattening certain nuances in Truffaut's directorial method. Recalling a conversation with the cinematographer Raoul Coutard about capturing the fly on film, Andrew writes, "It was, [Coutard] claimed, the by-product of a miracle where nature (an unexpected and extraordinarily

[42] One exception to this tendency would be discussions of Otto Preminger by the critics of *Cahiers du Cinéma* during the 1950s. See, for instance, Jacques Rivette's description of Preminger exploiting "to its limit the cinema's capacity to capture the fortuitous (but a fortuity that is willed), to record the accidental (but the accidental that is created)." Jacques Rivette, "The Essential," trans. Liz Heron, in *Cahiers du Cinéma, The 1950s: Neo-Realism, Hollywood New Wave*, ed. Jim Hillier (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 134.
[43] Dudley Andrew, *What Cinema Is! Bazin's* Quest *and Its Charge* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 19.

beautiful morning light) lined up with the fiction. Working hastily before the light evaporated, Coutard framed the lovers in silhouette only to have the insect make its unbidden entry. The shot was so expressive that Truffaut never considered a retake."[44] We should pause over Coutard's claim that the crew was "working hastily before the light evaporated." Clearly, even though Truffaut was open to an element that did not exist in his original conception of the shot, the director *did* have a definite idea about how he wanted the shot to be illuminated. He was not equally content with any kind of light whatsoever. The relaxation of control (including the fly) went hand in hand with the assertion of control (insisting on the light). Truffaut's refusal of a retake involved a similar give-and-take. The appearance of the fly before the camera may have been a "miracle of happenstance," but its presence in the finished film was a conscious choice. Because Truffaut had the option to eliminate the fly, removing rather than managing an unforeseen occurrence, this anecdote is not quite an example of directing as coping. That said, it is an account of the simultaneous adherence to and deviation from a plan. And this is the entanglement that live television directing, understood as directing as coping, forces us to reckon with.

Domino Theories

When Stasheff and Bretz write, "if the director does not make a quick recovery, other errors can follow in the wake of the first one like the traditional row of dominoes," the authors invoke one of the central metaphors of Cold War foreign policy. The so-called "domino theory" held that the achievement of Communist rule in any single country would quickly lead to the Communist domination of its neighbors. While versions of this theory were already in circulation

[44] Andrew, *What Cinema Is!*, 19.

soon after WWII, it was invoked more frequently in the 1950s, before becoming one of the central justifications for the escalation of the Vietnam War over the 1960s. In 1954, the same year that Frankenheimer directed his first live teleplay, President Eisenhower warned about the spread of Communism in Southeast Asia, telling reporters, "You have a row of dominoes set up, you knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly."[45] This shared metaphor, with dominoes alternately signifying production errors and Communist takeovers, alerts us to a wider set of resonances between live television production and Cold War geopolitics, specifically related to the conceptualization of error. Remarkably, this crossover occurred even though the consequences of the mistakes under discussion in each case were essentially incommensurable. Besides worrying about region-wide Communist victories, Cold Warriors frequently invoked the possibility that, in the era of nuclear weapons, a single mistake could end the world. Speaking to the United Nations General Assembly in 1961, President Kennedy stated that "Every man, woman and child lives under a nuclear sword of Damocles, hanging by the slenderest of threads, capable of being cut at any moment by accident or miscalculation or by madness."[46] The management of error, the *sine qua non* of directing as coping, was now a matter of civilizational survival.

An essential context for these fears about "the nuclear sword of Damocles" was the automation of American military systems. A 1962 *U.S. News and World Report* article entitled "Will 'Computers' Run Wars of the Future?" illustrates some of the recurring tropes in

---

[45] Dwight Eisenhower, "President Dwight Eisenhower, the 'Falling Domino' Theory in Indochina, 1954" in *American Foreign Relations Since 1898: A Documentary Reader*, ed. Jeremi Suri, 103-105 (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 104.
[46] John F. Kennedy, "Address by President John F. Kennedy to the UN General Assembly," delivered September 25, 1961, U.S. Department of State, https://2009-2017.state.gov/p/io/potusunga/207241.htm.

discussions about the increasingly mechanized American defense apparatus.[47] The article reports the discontent of "military men" with the growing role of scientists and other non-military experts in defense planning, but it imagines war-by-mistake as beginning with a mechanical failure, rather than with human error, stating that "Recent false alarms of missile attack, given by such [computer] systems, raised the question whether a breakdown in a machine could set off accidental war."[48] The final section of the article provides specific examples of these false alarms, including a 1960 incident where radar misidentified the reflected light of the moon as ballistic missiles hurtling toward the United States. In this case, the "computer misinformation" was soon "spotted and fixed" by commanders, which means that the outcome depended on the recognizability of the mistake as such.[49] In contrast to the ambiguous mistakes of live television, where the identification of the mistake is in doubt, this was an error that did not pose an insuperable perceptual problem. The non-ambiguity of the mistake was the precondition for its containment.

The final section of this article refers to the pioneering cyberneticist Norbert Wiener's concept of a "push-button war," where the push-button initiates computer operations that outpace even the fastest human reflexes.[50] Beginning in the 1950s, Wiener warned about push-button war in a number of settings, including the widely read *Science* article "Some Moral and Technical Consequences of Automation" (1960).[51] Here, Wiener reconfigures the idea of a mechanical breakdown, as he describes how disaster, including one that threatens "national survival," could

---

[47] "Will 'Computers' Run Wars of the Future?," *U.S. News and World Report*, April 23, 1962, 44-48.
[48] "Will 'Computers' Run Wars of the Future?," 44.
[49] "Will 'Computers' Run Wars of the Future?," 48.
[50] "Will 'Computers' Run Wars of the Future?," 48.
[51] Norbert Wiener, "Some Moral and Technical Consequences of Automation," *Science* 131, no. 3410 (May 6, 1960): 1355-1358.

be caused by a learning machine that works towards its programmed purpose by any means necessary.[52] In this case, fault lies with the designers and operators who supplied the machine with its ill-considered purpose in the first place. Despite this shift of responsibility, the legibility of the mistake remains a central concern, with Wiener warning that human beings may find themselves unable to alter the workings of a machine, because they are not humanly comprehensible. He writes, "To avoid a disastrous consequence, it is not enough that some action on our part should be sufficient to change the course of the machine, because it is quite possible that we lack information on which to base consideration of such an action."[53] In this disaster scenario, what is ambiguous is the steps between an initial mistake and its final result, as though the dominoes between first and last were hidden from view.

Many Cold War thrillers dramatized fears of push-button war. Released mere months apart in 1964, *Dr. Strangelove* (Stanley Kubrick) and *Fail-Safe* (Sidney Lumet) are two canonical cinematic examples.[54] In each case, an American nuclear bomber group receives an erroneous order to strike Moscow, forcing the President to practice a version of directing as coping, with massively raised stakes, as he desperately struggles to prevent the error from causing an all-out nuclear exchange. While *Dr. Strangelove* ends with the destruction of the world, as a result of a "doomsday device" designed (but unfortunately not yet publicized) by the Soviet Union, in *Fail-Safe*, the President (Henry Fonda) apparently averts the worst-case-scenario, albeit at terrible cost. After the American aircraft obliterate Moscow, he orders a

[52] Wiener, "Consequences of Automation," 1357.
[53] Wiener, "Consequences of Automation," 1357.
[54] Paul N. Edwards describes these two films as "The first major popular works to treat the role of electronic machines (not only computers, but electronic communication and coding devices) in nuclear war." Paul N. Edwards, *The Closed World: Computers and the Politics of Discourse in Cold War America* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 316.

corresponding strike on New York City, in order to balance the scales and prevent an even greater loss of life. The film ends with freeze frames of oblivious New Yorkers that are rapidly magnified, that is, “blown up,” an appositely named cinematic device in this context.

Produced about a decade earlier, “Forbidden Area” does not quite follow the narrative formula of these later Cold War thrillers. There is some concern over automation. The Soviets launch their preemptive strike in order to head-off perfection of the American intercontinental ballistic missile network, at which point, Colonel Price explains, “our retaliation will be automatic.” The unstated implication is that automatic retaliation brings about the very attack that it was supposed to prevent. But the major decision that the President makes in “Forbidden Area” is not constrained by inflexible, preprogrammed battle plans. After the Soviets’ misadventure leaves them vulnerable, the President rejects military advice to “eliminate them now and forever,” in favor of a peaceful solution. Unlike his mid-1960s cinematic counterparts, who must contain a mistake by their own forces, this President instead copes with an error on the other side, successfully preventing it from ramifying. At the same time, ambiguous mistakes are prominent in the lead-up to this happy ending. The saboteur Stanley Smith plots to ground the American B-99 fleet, leaving the country without a deterrent air force, by blowing up these planes in a way that cannot be attributed, with certainty, to either sabotage or mechanical failure. His bombings are calculated to put American officials in the position of live television viewers, making them uncertain whether they have witnessed a mistake or not, hence reluctant to keep the potentially faulty planes flying.

When the President in “Forbidden Area” does not answer Soviet aggression in kind, he practices forgiveness, both in the general sense and in the more specific sense developed by

Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition* (1958).[55] Arendt was yet another Cold War intellectual fixated on the transformed status of the mistake in the nuclear age. Against this background, she theorizes forgiveness as the human capacity to stop a sequence of actions that would otherwise continue in perpetuity. Arendt contrasts it with vengeance, writing that "forgiveness is the exact opposite of vengeance, which acts in the form of re-acting against an original trespassing, where far from putting an end to the consequences of the first misdeed, everybody remains bound to the process, permitting the chain reaction contained in every action to take its unhindered course."[56] Her reference to the "chain reaction" stands out for several reasons. Besides obviously alluding to nuclear physics, this metaphor shows that Arendt too is concerned with automation, with processes that, once initiated, seem to happen by themselves. While Wiener emphasizes the incapability of human beings to intervene in the functioning of mechanical automata, Arendt stresses how forgiveness can free us from the "relentless automatism" of the action process.[57] This many-layered reference to the "chain reaction" is only one moment where Arendt appropriates the language of science and technology for her analysis. At another, she refers to forgiveness, along with promising, as "control mechanisms" for human action, evoking not only the control mechanisms of cybernetics, but also the live television control room.[58]

In "Forbidden Area," the practice of forgiveness is successful. After the President overrules his hawkish generals, the teleplay ends with an unidentified narrator explaining, "So there never was a D-day, or an X-day, or an H-hour. The cities lived," as the roar of overflying jet aircraft mixes with church bells ringing in Christmas morning. Yet something that goes

---

[55] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998 [1958]), 236-247.
[56] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 240-241.
[57] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 241.
[58] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 246.

undeveloped in Arendt's treatment of forgiveness is the possibility that it can fail. In reference to forgiveness and punishment, Arendt writes that both "attempt to put an end to something that might otherwise go on endlessly."[59] The word "attempt" implies that this conclusion is not guaranteed. This was a standing possibility in the context of directing as coping as well. Although, on his telling, Frankenheimer's words of support to his struggling "Comedian" cameraman successfully averted any more missed shots, the cameraman could also have continued to spiral downward, in spite of the directorial "forgiveness" delivered via headset.

Frankenheimer's final film, the HBO television movie *Path to War* (May 18, 2002), takes up the idea that forgiveness might not achieve the closure that it seeks. *Path to War* could also be described as a Cold War thriller, although the catastrophe that it narrates actually happened. A Lyndon Johnson (Michael Gambon) biopic, the film recounts how his administration, with its promise to build a "Great Society," was gradually consumed by the military quagmire in Vietnam, ultimately leading Johnson to withdraw from the 1968 presidential race. Production coincided with the 9/11 attacks and the ensuing invasion of Afghanistan, leading many to comment on the timeliness of the film, including Frankenheimer himself, who noted that these parallels put him in an unaccustomed position, saying "I've been accused of making movies ahead of their time, like *Manchurian Candidate*. It would be nice to make a movie that could conceivably be of its time."[60] With the release of Errol Morris' similarly titled documentary *The Fog of War* (2003), consisting of interviews with former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, *Path to War* took its place in a boom of media revisiting the Vietnam disaster at the outset of the

[59] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 241.
[60] Dana Calvo, "A Familiar *Path*," *Los Angeles Times,* November 7, 2001, F1.

War on Terror, a trend that continued with several documentaries about the Vietnam service of presidential candidate John Kerry in the run-up to the 2004 election.[61]

Despite these assertions of its timeliness, *Path to War* has important ties to the past, extending beyond its status as a 1960s period piece. Like "Forbidden Area," the film thematizes a version of the ambiguous mistake so common in 1950s teleplays. Throughout the film, Johnson makes decisions about the war effort that he only belatedly recognizes as bad decisions, that is, mistakes. He repeatedly endures a variation of the uncertainty that we experience after Piper Laurie (or is it Kirsten Arnesen?) misspeaks in "Days of Wine and Roses," where it takes time to determine whether something counts as a mistake or not.

Notably, Frankenheimer stages many of these belated moments of recognition as encounters with media, especially television, another instance of his longstanding predilection for the display of media technologies. *Path to War* immediately establishes Johnson as a voracious television viewer, with a scene of him watching his own inaugural address, replayed on not one, but three, screens. Then, during the second half of the film, he watches many of the most famous "television moments" of the Vietnam era, including the declaration of a "stalemate" by Walter Cronkite on the CBS Evening News. Vietnam is commonly described as the first "television war," usually in the context of arguments about how graphic combat footage affected public opinion, but Frankenheimer makes a somewhat different point here, suggesting that the conflict was also a highly televisual phenomenon for the people who oversaw it.[62]

---

[61] Mistakes are a major theme in Morris' film. The first thing that we hear McNamara say is: "We all make mistakes." Soon after, he states, "They'll [sic] be no learning period with nuclear weapons. You make one mistake, you're going to destroy nations."
[62] See, for instance, Michael Mandelbaum, "Vietnam: The Television War," *Daedalus* 111, no. 4 (Fall 1982): 157-169.

To this point, I have mostly used “mistake” interchangeably with related terms, in line with the non-systematic nomenclature of 1950s television criticism, but this is a situation where the shades of meaning that separate these terms are crucial.[63] While Johnson’s decisions are “mistakes,” “accidents” would be a misnomer, making it sound as though he had no choice in the matter. On the contrary, unlike those Cold War thrillers anxious over automation, where mechanized defense systems leave the President with a limited number of bad options, *Path to War* emphasizes that Johnson was free to choose, albeit choose wrong. His cabinet meetings consistently include skeptical voices, who warn about the dangers of escalation, only to be overruled. Wiener states that “the human brain is a far more efficient control apparatus than is the intelligent machine;”[64] *Path to War* shows that the former remains eminently fallible.

It is during its final scene that the film returns to questions of forgiveness, staging them in the context of a live television broadcast. In a televised presidential address, Johnson makes the surprise announcement that he will not seek a second term in office. We cut to this depiction of television production from a scene of its consumption. Alone before the small screen, Johnson looks on the verge of tears as he silently watches a scrolling list of American casualties, creating the strong impression that these images convinced him to abandon electoral politics. A straight-on medium close-up of Johnson brings us inside the Oval Office as his address begins. While millions of television viewers were stunned to hear the President abandon his re-election campaign, Frankenheimer makes no attempt to express this state of shock in visual terms. We

[63] We could say that this case confirms J.L. Austin’s claim that “field work,” that is, engagement with particular cases, makes it possible to differentiate the statements “It was a mistake” and “It was a mistake,” no matter “how readily these *appear* indifferent, and [that they can] even be used together.” J. L. Austin, “A Plea for Excuses,” in *Philosophical Papers*, 3rd ed., eds. J. O. Urmson and G. J. Warnock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 183-184.
[64] Wiener, “Consequences of Automation,” 1357.

occasionally look out from behind the President into the red-light-topped camera, recalling the similar past-the-President, into-the camera shot from "Forbidden Area" almost fifty years earlier, but we mostly see Johnson in centered, static close-ups at slightly different scales. The whole sequence feels restrained, even enervated, with Gambon's exhausted mien adding considerably to the effect.

As we have seen, Frankenheimer was skilled at making things "look" spontaneous, but in this case, even though the subject matter – a political earthquake – might seem to warrant such an aesthetic, the director does not imbue the sequence with the crackling energy of "The Comedian." We can understand the appropriateness of this approach if we regard it as aligned with how Johnson experiences his own abdication. The announcement was not a bombshell for him. His speech was written in advance.[65] In other words, the visual restraint of the sequence conforms with his state of mind, rather than with the psychology of the television viewer taken by surprise. Frankenheimer's task in live television was to make the deliberate execution of a plan look spontaneous; here, he makes the deliberate execution of a plan look deliberate.

By ending his re-election bid, Johnson responds to a sequence of events that has been unfolding, at least, since he approved Operation Rolling Thunder in 1965.[66] This is an attempt at forgiveness in the Arendtian sense. Johnson apparently believes that his decision will contribute to ending the cycle of violence in Vietnam. We watch him substitute "peace in Vietnam" for

---

[65] The peroration containing his announcement was omitted from the speech draft precirculated to the press. Tom Wicker, "Johnson Says He Won't Run," *New York Times,* April 1, 1968, 27.
[66] The precise origin of the "path to war" is actually a matter of some debate in the film. Early on, Secretary of State Dean Rusk (John Aylward) complains that "We never should have allowed the French to reclaim their colonies in '45." Later, Johnson blames his predicament on his failure to purge "those fucking Kennedy lovers" after his elevation to the presidency. These moments suggest how the search for origins can become a problem of infinite regress.

“war in Vietnam” in a draft of his speech. But this action process is not so easily stopped.[67] As the abdication sequence ends, onscreen text, scrolling upward like the casualty list that Johnson was watching earlier, informs us that “it would be four more years of war before a settlement [between the United States and North Vietnam] was finally reached, by which point more than 58,000 Americans and more than two million Vietnamese were dead.” It is not clear what would constitute forgiveness under these circumstances, but Johnson’s announcement is not it. Besides demonstrating that forgiveness can fail, this sequence also enlarges on Arendt’s account by showing how the same attempt at forgiveness might be inserted into more than one sequence of events, resolving some and failing to resolve others. Johnson’s decision does not stop the killing in Vietnam, but it does bring *Path to War* to an apt conclusion, bookending the ebullient 1965 inaugural ball that opened the film. The failure to bring the war to a close nonetheless operates as the instrument of narrative closure.

There is one more line of development that Johnson’s withdrawal brings to a conclusion. This sequence is also the capstone to Frankenheimer’s filmography; the director died seven weeks after *Path to War* premiered. In its final shot, as Johnson exits the Oval Office alongside his family, the camera slowly cranes upward, to show several workers taking apart the assembled broadcasting equipment (figure 1.4). Television lights click off one by one. This image is obviously a fitting epitaph for a director who began his career making live television, and who consistently delighted in flaunting its material basis. But there is more to be said about the

[67] One factor in the failure of Johnson’s peace initiative may have been interference by the Nixon campaign, which worked against negotiations between North and South Vietnam, in order to deny the Democratic presidential candidate, Vice President Hubert Humphrey, a “peace bump.” Johnson eventually became aware of the sabotage, but did not publicize it. See Peter Baker, “Nixon Looked for ‘Monkey Wrench’ in Vietnam Talks to Help Win Race,” *New York Times*, January 3, 2017, A11.

suitability of this ending. What is appropriate, here, is not just this image, but the entire sequence that precedes it, and not simply because this sequence represents the production of live television, but because it thematizes the struggle to provide an adequate response to an unfolding problem, one that can neither be reversed nor trusted to resolve itself. This was Johnson's folly – and the live television director's art.

Figure 1.4 The final shot of *Path to War* (John Frankenheimer, 2002)

Chapter Two
After Videophobia

Figure 2.1 Photograph of John F. Kennedy at the 1960 Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles by Garry Winogrand

A photograph by Garry Winogrand, taken at the 1960 Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles, pictures John F. Kennedy twice over (figure 2.1). We see then-Senator Kennedy, who is delivering his acceptance speech upon his nomination as the Democratic presidential candidate, alongside an electronic likeness of the future President, which appears on a television monitor located behind the lectern. While the "real" Kennedy stands with his back to Winogrand's camera, the monitor displays a medium close-up of his face, as well as several

fingers from his upraised right hand. With this juxtaposition, Winogrand show us the transformation of a human being into a television image available for consumption by a mass audience.

Based on this photograph, it is not entirely clear what attitude we should take toward television and its operations. To be sure, the composition of the photo emphasizes how the monitor image is an incomplete view of a larger situation, thereby figuring how television can omit context for the messages that it carries. Along similar lines, the televised Kennedy is inverted compared to his counterpart, with the result that he appears to gesture both left and right, a possible allegory for how television distorts its referent. The blurriness of the monitor image, in contrast to the sharply-focused figure standing at the lectern, might support this same reading. Yet the historical knowledge of Kennedy's assassination adds several other nuances. With this fact in mind, the brilliant glow that limns the "real" Kennedy makes him into an angelic presence, and the blurry luminosity of the monitor image fits into this overall impression, rather than merely signifying television's lack of visual richness. The Kennedy assassination also inflects the meaning of the photograph because it inclines us to think about how media images, including the television image seen here, can become bearers of historical memory. From this perspective, the photograph shows us how a televisual transformation can also be a form of historical *preservation*. Ultimately, what Winogrand captures with this photograph is the remarkable complexity of television, the impossibility of limiting the medium to one definitive operation that we might judge positively or negatively.

Now let us consider another representation of television that probably seems, at least initially, to be more straightforward. In a famous sequence from *The Manchurian Candidate* (John Frankenheimer, 1962), Senator John Yerkes Iselin (James Gregory) interrupts a press

conference in order to harangue the Secretary of Defense with Joseph McCarthy-like accusations of harboring "known" members of the Communist Party. As Senator Iselin rises, we see him doubled on a television monitor next to his wife Mrs. Iselin (Angela Lansbury), who we know to be the mastermind behind this publicity stunt (figure 2.2). As Senator Iselin and the Secretary of Defense shout at each other from across the briefing room, their rage-contorted faces appear on several additional monitors placed around the space by the television news crews in attendance. As in the Winogrand photograph, these monitors reverse the orientation of the figures who appear on them, resulting in several shots where Senator Iselin and the Defense Secretary each seem to be shouting or pointing at themselves, rather than their decrier.[1]

Figure 2.2 Mrs. Iselin watches her husband on television in *The Manchurian Candidate* (John Frankenheimer, 1962)

[1] Although the Kennedy photo dates from 1960, it was not printed until "years later," so it could not have been a direct influence on Frankenheimer's mise-en-scène. See Leo Rubinfien and Erin O'Toole, in *Garry Winogrand,* ed. Leo Rubinfien (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2013), 294.

Commentators on this sequence have not struggled to discern its attitude toward television. It is commonly understood as a warning about how the medium can be exploited by wrongdoers seeking to manipulate an ingenuous public. Charles Ramírez Berg speaks for many when he writes:

> Although Senator Iselin has been presented to us as a mindless buffoon, his televised image could be read as just the opposite: a forceful, assured, seemingly knowledgeable crusader and patriot. What the TV cameras miss – but Frankenheimer's shows, in the extreme foreground – is the senator's wife…choreographing the whole thing. In the rush to report events, the media get the apparent story but overlook the deeper one, something smart media-manipulators like Mrs. Iselin rely on.[2]

Though he only alludes to the press conference sequence, *Manchurian Candidate* screenwriter George Axelrod, who adapted the Richard Condon novel, described the overall message of the film similarly in a 1962 article, writing that the film "is not simply about the brainwashing of a captured American in Korea, but, indeed the far more savage, lurid, and melodramatic story of the brain-washing of an entire nation by a United States Senator acting with the full and terrifying powers of our over-communicated society at his disposal."[3] Drawing on the work of Paul Young, we can refer to this line of thinking about the role of television in *The Manchurian Candidate* as a "videophobic" approach. According to Young, ever since the mid 40s, when television was about to become widely available to American consumers, Hollywood has made films exhibiting a cluster of anxieties about the "rival" medium, especially its non-theatrical mode of reception.[4] Young does not include *The Manchurian Candidate* in his videophobic

---

[2] Charles Ramírez Berg, "*The Manchurian Candidate*: Compromised Agency and Uncertain Causality," in *A Little Solitaire: John Frankenheimer and American Film*, eds. Murray Pomerance and R. Barton Palmer (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 39.
[3] George Axelrod, "Satirist's Profitable Progress," *New York Times,* October 21, 1962, 135.
[4] Paul Young, *The Cinema Dreams Its Rivals: Media Fantasy Films from Radio to the Internet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 137-191. The concept of videophobia pertains to representations (and allegorizations) of television in Hollywood films, not the actual

canon, which primarily comprises 50s films like *The Glass Web* (Jack Arnold, 1953) and *It's Always Fair Weather* (Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen, 1955), but the concept of videophobia nonetheless sets out the basic terms on which commentators like Berg, and even participants like Axelrod, have discussed the depiction of television in the film.

But there is a problem with this reading, and it is a simple one. John Frankenheimer, one of the preeminent television directors of the 50s, is an unlikely purveyor of videophobia. To be sure, at the beginning of the 60s, Frankenheimer was disillusioned about the state of television in several respects. Live television drama, the programming format in which he had thrived, had been almost entirely supplanted by telefilm series, forcing him to make a reluctant transition to feature filmmaking. And Frankenheimer voiced related grievances about the power of television advertisers, telling a 1961 *Playboy* panel on "TV's Problems and Prospects" that the medium's "primary purpose now is that it is an electronic supermarket."[5] But this is not the same thing as a wholesale dismissal of the medium. Indeed, in that same *Playboy* panel, Frankenheimer says that he would be excited to return to television under the right circumstances, before stating "I really, sincerely love television."[6] This swirling mixture of feelings – abiding "love" in the face of deep disappointment – gets flattened out when Berg, Axelrod, and other upholders of the videophobic approach discuss *The Manchurian Candidate* as an anti-television film.

In what follows, I approach *The Manchurian Candidate*, alongside the Frankenheimer films *Seven Days in May* (1964) and *Grand Prix* (1966), on the model of the Winogrand photo, arguing that they are complex engagements with television that cannot be reduced to a

relations that existed between the film and television industries in the postwar period, which involved many forms of mutually beneficial cooperation, as well as competition.

[5] "The *Playboy* Panel: TV's Problems and Prospects," *Playboy* (November 1961): 39.

[6] "Problems and Prospects," 132.

videophobic warning about its potential for co-optation by nefarious “media-manipulators.” The timing of these three films, spanning the years 1962 to 1966, is crucial for my analysis, because this is the moment *just after* television becomes the dominant moving-image medium in the everyday lives of most Americans. While it is difficult to date shifts in the relative cultural importance of specific media with precision, we can note that, in 1955, around two-thirds of American homes owned a television set, and, by 1960, this number had increased to nearly 90 percent, with the average American watching approximately five hours of television each day.[7] Around this time, the looming possibility that television might displace cinema from its preeminent position in the media environment, which Young understands as a central dynamic in videophobia, moves from anxious speculation to accomplished fact. My claim is that, in the aftermath of this media-historical turning point, Frankenheimer is able to work through a set of ideas about television that markedly differ from the videophobia that coursed through Hollywood cinema of the previous two decades. His films demonstrate an extremely capacious and flexible conception of television – what I call an “alternate televisual imaginary” – that, in addition to eschewing videophobia, also repeatedly avoids or undoes two qualities that are commonly presumed to found the medium-specificity of television: distant viewing and live transmission. Frankenheimer’s post-videophobic films are thus not only filled with representations of television but, more than that, they abound with idiosyncratic ideas about what the medium can be and do.

Onscreen Screens

---

[7] Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 1.

It is relatively common to think about *The Manchurian Candidate* as a film that signals the beginning of something different. In the late 60s, when films such as *Bonnie and Clyde* (Arthur Penn, 1967) and *The Graduate* (Mike Nichols, 1967) appeared to herald a new level of visual and thematic boldness in mainstream commercial cinema, commentators regularly mentioned *The Manchurian Candidate* as a precursor to this burst of youthful energy. A *Time* magazine article from 1967 entitled "The Shock of Freedom in Films" counted *The Manchurian Candidate* among only a handful of films from the early 60s with the "qualities of classics," made during a fallow period in American cinema "when the creative impulse in film [had] seemed to be the province of European directors."[8] Pauline Kael made a similar point in her influential *New Yorker* review of *Bonnie and Clyde.* The second sentence declares, "*Bonnie and Clyde* is the most excitingly American American [sic] movie since *The Manchurian Candidate"* – only the first of four occasions in the review where she invokes Frankenheimer's film by name.[9] When critics like Kael needed to make sense of the changes that were underway in American cinema during the late 60s, they found that *The Manchurian Candidate* could help them provide some context for the developments that we now associate with the Hollywood Renaissance. It was a film that could explain what happened between the gradual collapse of the studio system and the similarly slow-motion death of the Barrow gang.

In the same way that critics have long understood *The Manchurian Candidate* as a fulcrum between Old and New Hollywood, I consider the film, alongside *Seven Days in May*, an inflection point in the cinematic representation of television, when videophobia gives way to an expanded range of possibilities. Let us begin with the aesthetic dimension of Frankenheimer's

[8] "Shock of Freedom in Films," *Time*, December 8, 1967.
[9] Pauline Kael, "*Bonnie and Clyde*," *New Yorker*, October 21, 1967.

alternate televisual imaginary. What kinds of images of television production and reception do we see in his films? What does this alternate televisual imaginary *look* like?

The sheer number of onscreen screens in his films makes it difficult to give a comprehensive answer. Frankenheimer began using television screens as elements of visual design when he was still active in the television industry.[10] As we would expect from a teleplay partially set inside a live television studio, screens are particularly prominent in "The Comedian" (*Playhouse 90*; February 14, 1957). Soon after an opening shot that features multiple control room monitors, we see a composition that clearly anticipates the televisual doubling in *The Manchurian Candidate.* In the right background, the megalomaniacal comedian Jerry Hogarth (Mickey Rooney) stands shouting at someone offscreen, while a television monitor in the left foreground blares a head-on close-up of his highly expressive face. After recurring in *The Manchurian Candidate,* this type of staging with screens reached an extreme in *Seven Days in May*.[11] Set in the (then) not-too-distant future of 1970, the film imagines a semi-science-fictional Washington D.C., where military leaders consult wall-sized video displays at the Pentagon, and the president communicates by videoconference from the Oval Office. The television-based videoconferencing system showcased by the film obviously never entered common use, but technological change in the real world did repeatedly provide Frankenheimer with new opportunities to organize shots around onscreen screens. For instance, his neo-noir *52 Pick-Up* (1986) reflects the rise of home video during the 80s. In addition to several scenes where the

---

[10] See my discussion of "Forbidden Area" (*Playhouse 90*; October 4, 1956) in chapter one for another example.
[11] This aspect of *Seven Days in May* was highlighted in reception discourse. For instance, *Newsweek*'s review contains an entire section entitled "The Grainy Image," which states, "For the first time in films, the weird immediacy of a public event shines forth in every room." "Plot on the Potomac," *Newsweek*, February 24, 1964, 89.

protagonist is forced to watch incriminating videotapes, we repeatedly see the villain, a pornographer-turned-blackmailer, wielding a shoulder-mounted video camera alongside television screens that carry the live feed. Later Frankenheimer films contain both television screens and computer screens. *Ronin* (1998) features a car chase where the vehicles are tracked on digital maps, as well as a standoff inside a television control room, a screen-filled environment that Frankenheimer remained interested in visualizing forty years after "The Comedian."

If we narrow our focus to just those television screens that appear in *The Manchurian Candidate* and *Seven Days in May*, we can observe them serving several basic functions at the level of visual style. In many cases, onscreen screens provide an alternative to conventional editing figures. In *Seven Days in May*, for instance, individual shots of President Jordan Lyman (Frederic March) speaking by videoconference to his enframed enemies and allies function much like shot/reverse shot constructions. In a suspenseful moment from the same film, the presence of an onscreen screen also eliminates the need for crosscutting. The treasonous Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General James Mattoon Scott (Burt Lancaster), makes his way toward an office where he will catch Colonel "Jiggs" Casey (Kirk Douglas) committing an act of betrayal. Rather than cutting back and forth between the two military men, Frankenheimer instead shows Scott slowly advancing on a surveillance monitor beside Jiggs, which the film viewer can clearly see, but the distracted colonel does not. The editing pattern that Frankenheimer plays with most frequently in these compositions is surely the eyeline match. In the press conference sequence from *The Manchurian Candidate*, faces on screens are involved in several strange relays of looks, most notably in the shots where Senator Iselin or the Defense Secretary furiously confront their onscreen selves. But the earlier shot of Mrs. Iselin watching her husband on the monitor

also contains a glance that is confused by the presence of a television screen. Her line of sight is perpendicular to the monitor at her side, resulting in the strong impression that the device has been "cheated out" toward the film viewer (a detail that I will return to momentarily).

This shot, featuring Mrs. Iselin in the foreground, shows us an event alongside its televisual representation, and this type of twofold composition stands out as a Frankenheimer favorite. As we have seen, he experiments with this technique as early as "The Comedian," and he never tired of the device over the decades. As in the Winogrand photograph, one striking effect of this composition is to make the viewer particularly aware of television images as abstractions, since we see a wide shot of an environment filled with details, as well as a close-up (or close-ups) of particular people and things that have been singled out for attention. With such compositions, Frankenheimer consistently heightens our sense of the television image as a cropped view of the wider world, but it would be a mistake to assume that this technique has one simple meaning across his body of work, or, more narrowly, across his early-60s output. The part-whole relations that Frankenheimer constructs using onscreen screens are more varied than they might appear.

In the case of the press conference sequence, for instance, the selectiveness of the monitor image could initially seem to be in the service of a straightforward polemic about the televisual distortion of reality. This is the claim advanced by Berg, who writes that television cameras "miss" Mrs. Iselin orchestrating the entire confrontation with the Defense Secretary.[12] His description implies that, if the televised image *did* include Mrs. Iselin, her machinations would be revealed to the world. As plausible as this argument might be on its face, it does not quite track, because, even if television news cameras pulled back to show Mrs. Iselin fixated on

[12] Berg, "Compromised Agency," 39.

the monitor, the television viewing public would simply see a political spouse watching her husband's moment in the spotlight. Nothing so suspicious about that. Expanding the perspective available to the television audience would not meaningfully expand its understanding. To be sure, there are other Hollywood films about television that involve a version of this scenario, where a problem is solved by getting the television camera into the proper position. For instance, toward the end of *It's Always Fair Weather*, the cameras inside a television studio pan away from dancing boxes of dish soap to discover Gene Kelly under threat from gangsters, who incriminate themselves by boasting about their crimes. But this is not the scenario that Frankenheimer stages. There is no obvious misconduct occurring just outside the limits of the (necessarily partial) televisual frame.

The climax of *Seven Days in May* takes a similar approach to shooting television screens, while all but eliminating even the possibility of a connection between televisual selectiveness and deceptiveness. In the final minutes of the film, President Lyman enters a screen-filled briefing room, much like the one in *The Manchurian Candidate*, where he makes a presentation to the news media that narrowly averts a military coup. During his televised address, we repeatedly see his close-up multiplied on monitors in the vicinity of the podium where he speaks. As usual, these shots generate visual interest from the selectiveness of the small screen, but, in this case, the decontextualized television image is emphatically *not* a deceptive image. The president's message to the public is entirely consistent with the values and beliefs that he has expressed in private up to this moment. Furthermore, according to the narrative logic of the film, it is an entirely good thing that this decent, noble authority figure has the technological capability and cultural capital to broadcast his image so widely so quickly. Though the planned coup had centrally involved seizing control over television networks, meaning that the medium did have

some role in the threat to democracy, the multiplication of (partial, selective) television images is a necessary condition for the happy ending of the film.[13] Television does not cause a problem that it cannot solve.

Even though the onscreen screen does not mean just one thing to Frankenheimer, what is consistent – and important – about this type of shot is that it appears highly *planned*. The arrangement of people and things in relation to the onscreen screen is precise to a degree that makes us feel the hand of the filmmaker at work.[14] The "cheated out" monitor beside Mrs. Iselin, oriented more toward the film viewer than toward the internal television viewer, is central to this impression of deliberate visual organization. The combination of depth staging and deep focus reinforces the same effect. Frankenheimer precisely aligns the profiles of Mrs. Iselin, in the foreground, a quizzical journalist, in the middle ground, and her husband, in the near background, so that the multiple layers of this composition, including the onscreen screen, interlock like puzzle pieces.[15] In this case, our strong sense that the mise-en-scène has been carefully designed and executed is entirely appropriate to the content of the shot, which shows Senator Iselin giving a performance that has likewise been planned in advance. The orchestration

---

[13] Alan Casty is another commentator who notes that this happy ending depends on the ubiquity of television, though he suggests that Frankenheimer's intentions might be ironic. See Alan Casty, "Realism and Beyond: The Films of John Frankenheimer," *Film Heritage* 2, no. 2 (Winter 1966-1967): 28-29.

[14] This observation, about the precision of Frankenheimer's compositions, has been made by other authors. In an auteurist "director essay" on Frankenheimer's individual style, J. H. Fenwick describes his "geometrical approach to the disruption of order" and how "Confusion is portrayed with extreme clarity and very precise compositions within the frame," before citing the press conference sequence as a central example. I take a slightly different approach by highlighting the appropriateness of this precision to the plotting by the Iselins. J. H. Fenwick, "Black King Takes Two," *Sight and Sound*, 33 no. 3 (Summer 1964): 116.

[15] The intricacy of the mise-en-scène is especially impressive in light of the fact that Frankenheimer claimed to have directed much of the press conference sequence from a television truck parked outside the set, from which he coordinated the television camera crew working inside the briefing room.

of the frame befits the orchestration in the story.

This same visual impression of effortful planning recurs in a range of situations involving screens. In a stylish shot from *Seven Days in May*, Jiggs tunes into a televised rally for the archconservative American Veterans Order. After a close-up of Jiggs switching on his set, the camera follows him to a nearby armchair, which happens to be placed in front of a full-length mirror that reflects the television from the opposite side of the room (figure 2.3). As we have come to expect from Frankenheimer, the presence of an onscreen screen playfully confuses who is looking at what. We see Jiggs staring beyond the right edge of the frame, but the object of this gaze appears behind him, with the result that he appears to be simultaneously looking at and looking past the television. (If we were to encounter the still image of Jiggs-as-viewer in isolation from the rest of the shot, which reveals the presence of a mirror, the composition would be extremely difficult to parse.) Besides this fun with eyelines, we can note other similarities to the shot of Mrs. Iselin in the briefing room. In both instances, an internal viewer watches a television on his or her right with unsmiling intensity. But these obvious similarities aside, what makes this moment from *Seven Days in May* truly reminiscent of the corresponding shot from the press conference sequence is the strong feeling that we are watching the various elements of the mise-en-scène take positions and follow paths that have been carefully coordinated beforehand. Neither of these shots feel as though they just *happened.* Douglas' protruding hand, which grips the wing of the armchair on the far left side of the frame, exemplifies this effect. It is hard to imagine that this could be a comfortable position for the character to hold. (Who sits in a chair like this?) Yet his splayed fingers, which tense and relax in atmospheric half-shadow as he watches, add one additional point of visual interest to an already dense frame. As with *The Manchurian Candidate*, where Mrs. Iselin watches a monitor that we are not sure she can even

see, we find a representation of television spectatorship where overall visual impact has clearly taken precedence over any concerns about the "naturalness" of the mise-en-scène. In each case, live television, which promises to show us something that could potentially go wrong at any moment, appears within a complex cinematic configuration that makes us feel as though nothing has been left to chance.

Figure 2.3 Colonel Jiggs looks at (and past) the television screen in *Seven Days in May* (John Frankenheimer, 1964)

Conceptual Dynamism

This point about the evident planning involved in the representation of television is significant, because it relates Frankenheimer's handling of onscreen screens to broader descriptions of his personal visual sensibility. Frankenheimer has often been described as a director who strains for effect. These kinds of judgements begin to appear during his live television career, as we can see from a *Time* magazine review of his teleplay "The Violent Heart" (*Playhouse 90*; February 6, 1958):

> Far flashier [than the calm protagonist] was Director John Frankenheimer, whose busy directorial conceits – trick angles, mirror shots, closeups to the pore, camera peeps through iron grilles, even the little photographer's aperture – often upstaged the work itself while accenting its hollow passion. Sometimes the tricks of the director, working in tandem with the star-crossed lovers and their rococo surroundings, were more attention-catching than the story.[16]

Similar claims about Frankenheimer's propensity for visual "tricks" carried over when he transitioned from television to film. In his compendium of director essays *The American Cinema* (1968), Andrew Sarris places Frankenheimer in a group of directors who share a "Strained Seriousness" and writes that "A director capable of alternating shock cuts and slow dissolves is obviously sweating over his technique."[17] Even Pauline Kael, who, as we have seen, championed *The Manchurian Candidate*, would later criticize Frankenheimer for his habit of attempting to "squeeze art" into every shot. In a negative review of his *I Walk the Line* (1970), she complains that "When [Gregory] Peck has a line of dialogue to speak, he isn't allowed to just say it; the camera has to discover him sitting on a staircase, with a piece of the banister carefully cut out to provide a frame for his haggard misery as he talks."[18] Although Kael does not make a connection with imagery of television from earlier Frankenheimer films, her description of a (too) "carefully cut out" frame-within-the-frame cannot help but recall the meticulous shots of Mrs. Iselin and Jiggs alongside enframed television images. These "screen shots" from *The Manchurian Candidate* and *Seven Days in May* can thus be seen as consistent with an overall laboriousness at the level of film form for which Frankenheimer was frequently faulted.[19]

---

[16] "Review ['The Violent Heart']," *Time*, February 17, 1958, 77.
[17] Andrew Sarris, *The American Cinema: Directors and Directions, 1929-1968* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1996 [1968]), 193.
[18] Pauline Kael, "Worlds Apart," *New Yorker*, December 5, 1970.
[19] For yet another criticism of Frankenheimer along these lines, as a director prone to "disproportion between the effect produced and the means employed to produce it," see V.F. Perkins' discussion of *The Train* (1964) in V. F. Perkins, *Film as Film: Understanding and Judging Movies* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1993 [1972]), 87. Though I am focusing on the

For many authors writing about Hollywood in the 60s, Frankenheimer was far from the only filmmaker of his era to overindulge in what *Time* magazine called “directorial conceits.” The years following the breakdown of the Old Hollywood studio system tend to be remembered as period when directors increasingly (and, in the eyes of many commentators, unfortunately) came to regard visual stylization as an end in itself. In his volume on the 60s for the *History of the American Cinema* series, Paul Monaco summarizes that the varied changes in Hollywood filmmaking underway across the decade are coherent insofar as they herald a new “cinema of sensation,” a film aesthetic “largely premised on the goal of creating sheer visual stimulation, even if such sensation was created at the cost of narrative consistency and dramatic continuity.”[20] For Stanley Cavell, the heightened visual stimulations of 60s cinema come at the expense of what he often calls “significance.” Cavell notes the proliferation of once-marginal cinematic effects like slow motion, “flash insets,” and freeze frames, but he argues that this “mechanical intensification” gives only a false impression of artistic exploration or advancement, because these displays of technique exist for their own sake, without discovering anything about the limits and possibilities of cinema as a medium.[21] While Cavell’s understanding of “significance” in the visual arts is complex, his basic claim about the indiscriminate showiness of post-studio-

---

critical discourse about Frankenheimer’s ostensibly overwrought visual style, some of his collaborators made similar statements. The cinematographer James Wong Howe, who shot *Seconds* (1966), referred to Frankenheimer as someone who “goes overboard,” for instance by using “handheld camera when you don’t need it.” Scott Eyman, *Five American Cinematographers: Interviews with Karl Struss, Joseph Ruttenberg, James Wong Howe, Linwood Dunn, and William H. Clothier* (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1987), 83.

[20] Paul Monaco, *The Sixties: 1960-1969*, History of the American Cinema, vol. 8 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 2001), 261.

[21] An example of such a discovery would be the suitability of slow motion for aestheticizing bodies in free fall, as demonstrated, for instance, by the diving sequences in Leni Riefenstahl’s *Olympia* (1938). Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*, enlarged ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979 [1971]), 133-146, 62.

era Hollywood is a familiar lament, one that echoes the more-targeted criticism of Frankenheimer as a director whose high-powered visual style lacks commensurate substance.

As we have seen, Frankenheimer's onscreen screens tend to appear in the context of shots that place a premium on visual strikingness. But, rather than being impoverished of meaning, like the self-conscious assertions of technique discussed (and dismissed) by Cavell, these moments of heightened visual impact are consistently also moments of heightened conceptual interest. In short, the presentation of the onscreen screen is visually and conceptually dynamic at once. The conceptual dynamism of these shots derives from their surprising disinterest in certain aspects of television technology that were often presumed to constitute the essence of the medium at the time of its emergence, and which, to some extent, still structure our commonsense ideas about the distinctiveness of television in the present.

Across a range of discourses about television, it is familiar to find formulations of its medium-specificity that emphasize two closely connected affordances: distant viewing and live transmission. For instance, William Boddy summarizes that, according to 50s television critics, "the essential technological feature of television versus the motion picture was the electronic medium's capacity to convey a *simultaneous distant* performance visually."[22] This same two-part (simultaneity-plus-distance) approach to the medium identity of television also appeared in production discourse from the same period. In *The Television Program: Its Writing, Direction and Production* (1951), co-authors Edward Stasheff and Rudy Bretz advise that, in order to "accentuate" its difference from film, television should "make the most of its frequently described power of 'immediacy,' which is its ability to transport the audience to the site of

[22] Though Boddy refers to a singular "feature" here, it is reasonable to understand simultaneity and distance as two separate features, and as I will show, this uncoupling is one part of Frankenheimer's alternate televisual imaginary. Boddy, *Fifties Television,* 80 (emphasis mine).

events taking place elsewhere at the same moment."[23] This conception of television persists beyond the 50s, even as less and less programming actualizes the technological possibility of liveness. In his *Audiovisions* (1989; English translation 1999), Siegfried Zielinski differentiates film and television in terms that fully accord with the thinking of 50s television critics and practitioners: "in contradistinction to the [cinematic] preservation of images for the purpose of processing and presenting them, the lineage of television is concerned essentially with overcoming spatial distance without any loss of time."[24] My point is not that this is the only way authors have formulated the medium-specificity of television, merely that this twofold definition, based on the dual possibilities of distant and instant reception, has remained in circulation over decades and across both theory and practice.[25]

Frankenheimer's alternate televisual imaginary repeatedly nullifies both of these ostensibly medium-defining features. Let us begin with distant viewing. (I address liveness more directly in the subsequent section.) Frankenheimer often closes the spatial gap that so many authors have considered constitutive of television itself. Again and again, he compresses the distance traversed by the television transmission to almost nothing. The press conference sequence from *The Manchurian Candidate* exemplifies this tendency to collapse the space where

[23] Edward Stasheff and Rudy Bretz, *The Television Program: Its Writing, Direction, and Production* (New York: A.A. Wyn, 1951), 22.
[24] Siegfried Zielinski, *Audiovisions: Cinema and Television as Entr'actes in History*, trans. Gloria Custance (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999 [1989]), 50.
[25] For instance, in his pre-history of broadcast television, Doron Gallili takes a slightly different approach, emphasizing distance, over and above liveness, as the quality that unites the varied phenomena that have been called "television: "Whether we think of television as an analog or digital technology; as broadcast, narrowcast, or point-to-point communication device; as based on cable or wireless transmission; as delivering 'live' events or prerecorded material; or as a domestic or public viewing medium, we principally address a media practice that involves the transmission of images to a *distant viewer*." Doron Galili, *Seeing by Electricity: The Emergence of Television, 1878-1939* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 6.

televisual images are produced with the space where they are received. The briefing room serves as the site of production and reception alike. The close-up of Senator Iselin that appears on the monitor under close inspection by Mrs. Iselin has travelled mere feet to reach her watchful eyes. Furthermore, at no point in this sequence does Frankenheimer cut away to "average" television viewers who are watching the press conference elsewhere. We do not see, for instance, anyone nodding along with the anticommunist invective being beamed into their living room. This formal decision explains why Berg has to hedge in his description of the sequence, writing that television viewers merely "could" mistake the buffoonish Senator for a principled political champion.[26] The omission of any cutaways to distant viewers is especially notable because this editing pattern is commonplace in Hollywood films of the 50s. *A Face in the Crowd* (Elia Kazan, 1957), a canonical anti-television film, contains several examples of the form. We repeatedly cut from Lonesome Rhodes (Andy Griffith) in the television studio to reaction shots of his distant viewers, whether these viewers are being beguiled by his persona (at the beginning of the film) or recognizing its hollowness (at the end).

Put simply, in the press conference sequence from *The Manchurian Candidate*, Frankenheimer negates the "tele-" (derived from the Greek for "far off") in "television." And, importantly, this unorthodox conception of the medium, as something *other* than a machine for instantaneous seeing and hearing from afar, emerges in tandem with an intensification of visual style. As we have seen, the densely-layered shot of Mrs. Iselin alongside the two Senator Iselins amounts to a highly-wrought display of cinematic craftsmanship, but, at the same time, this eye-catching shot warrants the attention of media scholars, because it figures television in a way that runs against the grain of so much thinking and writing about the medium. Frankenheimer's

[26] Berg, "Compromised Agency," 39.

characteristic way of handling onscreen screens demonstrates how the same technique, in this case, the juxtaposition of an event and its image within the film frame, can provide both visual stimulus and a stimulus to thought. Like the villainous married couple conniving before our eyes, visual and conceptual dynamism work in alliance with one another.

The conceptual implications of Frankenheimer's disinterest in the distant viewer can be elaborated even further. The omission of the distant viewer also voids the idea, so common in exemplars of videophobia, that distant viewers have a diminished capacity to understand or appreciate whatever they are seeing and hearing, in comparison to eyewitnesses experiencing the same phenomena at close range.[27] The videophobic canon regularly extols the privileges of physical proximity. For instance, the overcoming of distance ultimately leads to the downfall of the singing-cowboy-turned-demagogue Lonesome Rhodes in *A Face in the Crowd.* Marcia (Patricia Neal) realizes that she can break Rhodes' hold over his nationwide viewership if she can show these faraway audience members what she directly observes in the television studio, that is, Rhodes' contempt for his own followers, whom he declares a bestiary of "guinea pigs" and "trained seals." Moira knows Rhodes' true nature from being in his presence and she ultimately harnesses the distance-conquering power of television to spread this knowledge among the millions of people who do not travel in Rhodes' entourage. In *All that Heaven Allows* (Douglas Sirk, 1955), distance does not degrade the possibility of knowledge so much as

[27] In a discussion of 50s films that mount a "critique of television," Christopher Anderson generalizes that "The TV audiences imagined by these movies are oblivious to the false appeals taking place on the TV screen and to the machinations taking place just offscreen." Note how closely this description of "machinations taking place just offscreen" conforms to Berg's reading of the press conference sequence from *The Manchurian Candidate*. We might say that Berg oversimplifies the sequence because he projects onto it a structure that is more proper to 50s anti-television films, rather than addressing the specificity of Frankenheimer's post-videophobic approach. Christopher Anderson, *Hollywood TV: The Studio System in the Fifties* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 17.

pleasure. The film treats television as an intolerable substitute for the erotic fulfillment that Carrie (Jane Wyman) denies herself upon leaving her young gardener/lover Ron (Rock Hudson). When a television salesman promises Carrie that his merchandise will put "life's parade at your fingertips," we understand that this minimal distance is still too much for her heart to bear. According to the melodramatic logic of the film, we should walk in life's parade, not watch it.

Frankenheimer, though, does not presume that proximity confers such advantages. When he shows dramatic events being captured by television cameras, as in the press conferences from either *The Manchurian Candidate* or *Seven Days in May,* he does not indicate that bystanders present on the scene are more perspicacious than those viewers sitting before a screen. Once again, while Berg makes much of the fact that Mrs. Iselin goes missing from television coverage of her husband, her involvement in his grandstanding is also not obvious to anyone in the immediate vicinity. The Defense Secretary does not call for her to be thrown out of the room "bodily" along with her husband. Later in the film, Mrs. Iselin reveals that the Senator's outburst was merely a prelude to an even more dramatic (and even more calculated) moment in the media spotlight. After Senator Iselin secures the vice-presidential nomination, the presidential candidate atop the ticket will be assassinated on stage at the party convention, at which point, she explains, "Johnny will really hit those microphones and those cameras with blood all over him, fighting off anyone who tries to help him, defending America even if it means his own death, rallying a nation of television viewers to hysteria, to sweep us into the White House with powers that will make martial law seem like anarchy." Her monologue emphasizes the essential role of media, especially television, in the formation, or manipulation, of public opinion, but we should recall that those people present inside the convention hall who look upon the charade as it happens are just as likely to be galvanized by Senator Iselin's mock heroics. The conventioneers closest to

the stage, who may themselves be spattered with the blood of the fallen candidate, will not be in a better position to understand what has happened than the far-flung "nation of television viewers." The microphones and cameras invoked by Mrs. Iselin operate in a world where even the absence of televisual mediation does not guarantee access to the truth.

The same principle applies in the sequence from *Seven Days in May* where Jiggs watches General Scott address the American Veterans Order. This instance of the onscreen screen differs from the press conference in *The Manchurian Candidate*, not to mention many other scenes from Frankenheimer films, because it *does* involve television programming transmitted over significant distance, specifically the distance between New York and Washington D.C. That said, this representation of television aligns with Frankenheimer's larger pattern of thought about proximity and distance, insofar as the sequence denies the relation between directly observing and deeply knowing. It accomplishes as much by contrasting the composure of Jiggs-the-viewer with the delirium of the crowd that surrounds General Scott as he speaks. When General Scott takes the stage, the editing of the film, as well as the television broadcast within the film, begins to accelerate. Shots of the quietly brooding Jiggs are intercut with close-ups of the onscreen screen, which shows unflattering footage of rallygoers in states of wild-eyed, open-mouthed over-excitement. In a notable reversal of Mrs. Iselin's plan to rally "a nation of television viewers to hysteria," in this sequence, it is actually the live audience that has been whipped into a mindless frenzy, while the lone television viewer maintains his dispassionate detachment. Jiggs experiences only those views of the rally that are selected for him by television cameras, but this mediation do not at all inhibit his capacities for reasoned judgment and action. On the basis of this televised spectacle, Jiggs correctly concludes that General Scott cannot be trusted and he immediately makes an appointment at the White House to share his concerns with the president.

In this case, the physical distance between viewer and event coincides with critical distance.

Why did Frankenheimer think so differently about the role of distance in television reception? Where did this aspect of his alternate televisual imaginary come from? The production practices of live television are one probable source. As we have seen, in *The Manchurian Candidate* and *Seven Days in May*, Frankenheimer tends to represent television as a short-range communications device, in situations where proximity is not necessarily empowering. And this is also a description of how Frankenheimer experienced television in the control rooms from which he directed so many live productions. Within the control room, Frankenheimer was surrounded by monitors displaying events unfolding in the immediate vicinity. The distance "conquered" by these control-room monitors was slight indeed. Their function was to bring close-by events closer still. And yet, while these monitors provided Frankenheimer with multiple views of whatever was taking place just outside the control room window, his power to influence this unfolding situation was always incomplete. He regularly spoke about mistakes that occurred during live teleplays that he oversaw. In the previous chapter, I described the activity of the live television director in terms of "directing as coping," a model where the primary responsibility of the director is less the complete avoidance of mistakes than their containment and management when they inevitably occur. This is an account of live television directing that makes the term "control room" something of a misnomer. Despite being so close to his cast and crew as they worked, Frankenheimer only ever exerted partial "control" over the television images for which he received directorial credit. Through his years working inside the control room under these conditions, Frankenheimer was habituated to an idiosyncratic mode of engagement with television that emphasized the experience of the proximate viewer, but which deflated an idealized view of proximity as necessarily the best possible position from

which to know and to act. *The Manchurian Candidate* and *Seven Days in May* lend visually and conceptually dynamic expression to this mode of engagement with television, and, in so doing, these two films both change the channel from videophobia.

Splitting the Screen

In the same review of *Bonnie and Clyde* where she repeatedly pays tribute to *The Manchurian Candidate*, Pauline Kael also finds fault with another, more-recent Frankenheimer film, the Formula-One racing epic *Grand Prix* (1966). Kael writes, "Anyone who goes to big American movies like *Grand Prix* and *The Sand Pebbles* [Robert Wise, 1966] recognizes that movies with scripts like those don't have a chance to be anything more than exercises in technology, and that is what is meant by the decadence of American movies."[28] For Kael, *Grand Prix* exemplifies an aesthetic trap that snared many "serious" directors of the time, where simple, formulaic scripts, which might have been filmed as low-budget B-pictures during the studio era, were instead mounted as lavish super-productions with the most advanced filmmaking technology that money could buy. The result was a disorienting disproportion between the humbleness of the script and the enormity of the resources consumed by its realization. (Indeed, "A Sense of Disproportion" was the title of the column in which her reviews of *Grand Prix* and *The Sand Pebbles* had originally appeared a few months earlier.)[29] Whereas *The Manchurian Candidate*, and *Bonnie and Clyde* after it, belong to a tradition of Hollywood cinema that can viscerally affect its audience, even as it entertains them, *Grand Prix* and other case studies in "the decadence of American movies" leave the audience worried that it must have missed

[28] Kael, "*Bonnie and Clyde*."
[29] Pauline Kael, "A Sense of Disproportion," *New Republic*, January 14, 1967.

something, because there is no apparent justification for all the extravagance on the screen.

While Kael places *The Manchurian Candidate* and *Grand Prix* in two separate lineages of Hollywood filmmaking – one vigorous, one decadent – I understand these two Frankenheimer films as continuous with one another, based on a shared relationship to television. *Grand Prix* also engages with aspects of television other than those that are most commonly presumed to constitute its medium specificity. And yet, while *The Manchurian Candidate* and *Seven Days in May* primarily eschew assumptions about the spatial relations between the received televised image and its point of origin, in the case of *Grand Prix*, Frankenheimer is unbound by assumptions about the particular *temporality* of television. More specifically, Frankenheimer's interest in the temporality of television ranges beyond the possibility of liveness. Instead, he explores the potential for television to overlay different temporalities, into a temporal collage that has its origins in television, but, as *Grand Prix* demonstrates, could be creatively adapted across media for the cinema. In this way, Frankenheimer continues his habit of looking differently at television, even as his interest shifts somewhat from questions of space to questions of time.

These questions of time are particularly salient in several sequences from *Grand Prix* that feature split-screen cinematography. *Grand Prix* was a relatively early entry in an approximately decade-long cycle of Hollywood films with prominent split-screen effects.[30] While the technique has its precedents in silent cinema, including the famous triptych from *Suspense* (Lois Weber and Phillips Smalley, 1913), split-screen became increasingly widespread toward the end of the studio era, in such films as *Indiscreet* (Stanley Donen, 1958) and *Pillow Talk* (Michael Gordon,

[30] For an overview of this cycle, see Bradley Schauer, "The Auteur Renaissance, 1968-1980," in *Cinematography*, ed. Patrick Keating (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2014), 97-100.

1960), before reaching even greater heights of popularity in the late sixties, as demonstrated by *The Thomas Crown Affair* (Norman Jewison), *Charly* (Ralph Nelson), and *The Boston Strangler* (Richard Fleischer) – to give three notable examples from 1968 alone.[31] Yet, even amid this split-screen boom, as experiments with the device began to stabilize into a set of recurring forms and functions, such as the split-screen presentation of a telephone call, Frankenheimer retained a conception of the technique that was remarkably eccentric. He recognized that split-screen provided the filmmaker with yet another means for controlling how the viewer experienced time, but unlike so many other practitioners of the technique, in the 60s and throughout film history, Frankenheimer concluded that split-screen was most effective when the internal frames represented events that were *non-simultaneous*. After the release of *Grand Prix*, he stated, "I don't think that split screens will ever be used dramatically to tell, for example, a suspense story, which, more than any other type of film, requires one thing after the other. I do think it can be done for something like *Grand Prix* when you're dealing with *past and present*, doing a kind of minuscule examination of an entire season of racing, trying to portray five characters on the screen without enough time to get into each one of them as deeply as you would like."[32]

We should pause over the strangeness of this comment about "dealing with past and present" in the context of split-screen aesthetics. With his denial that split-screen can be an effective means of building suspense, Frankenheimer draws the opposite conclusion from the overwhelming majority of filmmakers who have tried to tell stories with split-screen imagery. This is an extremely jarring claim to make about suspense, not least because one of the most

[31] Recall, from my introduction, that Frankenheimer was entirely aware of these earlier film-historical precedents for split-screen, citing Abel Gance's *Napoleon* (1927) as an example.
[32] Gerald Pratley, *The Films of Frankenheimer: Forty Years in Film* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 1998), 65 (emphasis mine).

renowned examples of split-screen cinematography appears in a film of precisely that name. Besides *Suspense*, there are numerous other examples of filmmakers using split-screen for exactly the dramatic purpose (that is, telling a suspense story) which Frankenheimer deems misguided. Norman Jewison uses the technique in this way near the beginning of *The Thomas Crown Affair*, for instance, where we see several bank robbers in position to receive instructions over the phone, including one thief who struggles to find an unoccupied phone booth in time to answer the critical call. Brian DePalma does likewise in *Sisters* (1972), where we watch a man and a woman on opposite sides of the divided screen race to cover up a murder and summon the police respectively. The list goes on. As a prediction about the subsequent development of film style in the 60s and 70s, Frankenheimer's claim about the incompatibility of split-screen and suspense obviously misses the mark. But it does indicate the existence of a fundamentally different way of thinking about split-screen – and about the *time* of split-screen in particular.

This idiosyncratic approach to split-screen is on display during the opening race from *Grand Prix*. The contest in Monaco follows a credits sequence, designed by Saul Bass, that exemplifies Andrew Sarris' description of Frankenheimer films as "a veritable glossary of film techniques."[33] The last-minute preparations at the starting line are represented with extreme close-ups, whip pans, superimpositions, and even step-printing, which momentarily slows the drivers' movements as they each lower their racing goggles. Split-screen effects are also prominent in this sequence, but, for the moment, they are limited to the multiplication of the same image. At one point, an extreme close-up of a hand tightening a bolt with a T-angle socket wrench quadruples into a four-by-four grid, and then quadruples twice more in quick succession, which ultimately transforms the screen into a massive checkerboard containing sixty-four

[33] Sarris, *American Cinema,*" 193.

identical shots of clenching flesh and whirling metal. This composition wows the viewer with its overwhelming graphic impact, while also serving as an ingenious visual figure for the massive amount of repetitive physical labor performed by hard-working members of the pit crew. That said, because reproducing the same shot necessarily involves reproducing the same instant in time, this composition, along with others like it featuring exhaust pipes and engine gauges, never achieves the manipulation of time that Frankenheimer regarded as the special aptitude of the split-screen image.

Frankenheimer waits to explore this potential until the race begins. After a few minutes of action shots, including several extended takes from helicopter-mounted cameras, Frankenheimer uses voiceover (another film technique from the "veritable glossary") in order to delineate the personalities of the four main drivers in the ensemble: the Italian Nino Barlini (Antonio Sabàto), the American Pete Aron (James Garner), the Englishman Scott Stoddard (Brian Bedford), and the Frenchman Jean-Pierre Sarti (Yves Montand). In the first of the four voiceovers, Barlini likens Formula-One racing to being strapped inside a bomb. As he speaks, we see a series of triptychs showing different views of and from his speeding vehicle. In the first of these compositions, footage from a car-mounted camera pointed at Barlini appears within the central panel, between close-ups of his feet on the pedals and his hand on the gearshift. Barlini's remarks are quickly followed by a voiceover from Aron, who begins, "You have to remember that at Monte Carlo, because of the nature of the circuit, you switch gears over 2600 times during the race." Already something has changed. Whereas Barlini's voiceover could have been a transcript of his own internal monologue, Aron's words are apparently directed at some unknown auditor ("You have to remember…"). But who is he talking to? This confusion gets resolved with another triptych that also marks an important turning point in Frankenheimer's approach to

split-screen cinematography (figure 2.4). In between two identical panels that contain low-level forward-looking footage from camera mounted on the nosecone of his vehicle, we see Aron sitting trackside for an interview with a microphone-wielding sportscaster, and a television sportscaster in particular, as we discern from the camera lens that obtrudes into the left side of the central panel. With this triptych, we come to understand Aron's voiceover as a statement to the media, rather than a private meditation, and, more importantly, as a statement that he made *before* the race ever began. He speaks of the looming challenges that he faces "today." Frankenheimer has divided the screen into both multiple images and multiple *times.*

Figure 2.4 A split-screen composition with embedded flashback from *Grand Prix* (John Frankenheimer, 1966)

This triptych is only the first of several split-screen compositions with embedded flashbacks.[34] After Aron tells the sportscaster that he faces mean competition from his teammate

[34] *Grand Prix* is not the only film to feature split-screen compositions of this type. Another example would be *Wicked, Wicked* (Richard L. Bare, 1973), a slasher film entirely presented in "Duo-Vision," that is, two-panel split-screen. I am not proposing that Frankenheimer is the inventor of this composition, but rather that it reflects a non-dominant approach to split-screen that, as I will go on to show, derived from a complex adaptation of techniques across media.

Stoddard, we are shown another triptych with a flashback as its centerpiece. In the middle third of the screen, we see Stoddard taking a meditative walk around the circuit, which, based on his voiceover, we understand to be pre-race ritual that Stoddard has inherited from his older brother, a fellow driver who recently died in a crash after uncharacteristically neglecting to walk the course beforehand. On either side of this central image, we see rapidly intercut shots of the race in progress, including several quick glimpses of tension-filled crew members violently clicking stopwatches, all of which counterpoints Stoddard's unhurried pace down the (for now) peaceful streets of Monaco. As with the previous triptych featuring Aron, Frankenheimer shows us past and present alongside each other, in the context of an interview with a sportscaster who we understand Stoddard to be addressing with his voiceover, even though, unlike in the previous triptych, the interviewer does not actually appear onscreen. By keeping this figure offscreen, Frankenheimer creates a degree of uncertainty about the status of the central panel in the composition. On the one hand, it is possible to understand this centerpiece as an excerpt from television coverage of the Monaco Grand Prix. We can easily imagine a racing fan tuning into the competition, seeing the central image of Stoddard walking the course, and hearing interview audio where he explains that he has become "rather superstitious" about the habit. On the other hand, there is nothing that definitely marks the central image as mediated in this way. These centerpiece shots of Stoddard could just as easily be understood as private moments of reflection that are on display for the viewer of *Grand Prix*, but that occurred out of the sight of television cameras within the diegesis. In the case of this second triptych with an embedded flashback, then, we understand that we are seeing something that transpired before the race began, but it remains ambiguous whether this pre-race imagery is also *television* imagery.

Frankenheimer does not limit himself to variations on this multi-image, multi-time

composition. The remainder of *Grand Prix* experiments with a wide range of other split-screen effects. Frankenheimer, in collaboration with "visual consultant" Bass, mostly reserves such effects for racing sequences, but, within these sequences, Frankenheimer and Bass vary the number, size, shape, and layout of panels, as well as the logic of their combination. For instance, the compositions during the second race at Clermont-Ferrand correspond to the dreamy mental state of the journalist Louise Frederickson (Eva Marie Saint), whose magazine profile of Sarti has developed into a love affair. The split-screen effects during this race present soft-focus, slow-motion footage of the vehicles in an arrangement of identical panels that, unlike in the opening sequence, are not delineated with geometric black borders, which complements the blurriness of the imagery and adds to the overall impression of lyrical romantic reverie. A subsequent race at Circuit Park Vandvoort uses split-screen cinematography as a substitute for glance-object cutting. We sometimes see medium shots of key spectators, like Aron's benefactor Yamura (Toshiro Mifune) or Barlini's girlfriend Lisa (Françoise Hardy), in stacked square panels on the left side of the screen, next to rectangular panels that show the associated driver in action on the track. These spectators look to their right, as though they are watching the vehicle in the panel beside them, resulting in a series of eyeline matches across panels, in which the looking subject and looked-at object appear together at once, rather than being shown in succession.

These examples go to show that Frankenheimer recognized split-screen could serve a variety of different creative purposes. During the climactic Italian Grand Prix, however, Frankenheimer returns to his special interest in the temporality of split-screen, with a series of non-simultaneous compositions that extend certain techniques from the opening sequence. As the drivers complete their first laps, we hear them speaking, in voiceover, about the unique challenges of the track at Monza. These voiceovers clearly originate from press interviews. We

hear an anonymous interviewer ask Stoddard about “particular problems in driving on the Monza banking,” for instance, and then listen to Stoddard’s response, where he likens the experience to “a series of punches in the back.” Split-screen effects do not appear until several minutes later, and, when they do, they reprise the same embedded-flashback technique from the opening race at Monte Carlo. We see a series of two-panel compositions that juxtapose car-mounted footage from each driver’s vehicle with a flashback to an intimate moment from his personal life. Barlini reassures Lisa during a tryst on a rocky beach; Aron speaks candidly to Yamura as they stroll the grounds of the latter’s estate; Stoddard struggles up a staircase on crutches (an incident that we *heard* happen offscreen earlier in the film, but did not see); and Sarti kisses Louise goodbye on the sidelines of an earlier competition.

These compositions do more than simply reconfirm that split-screen can provide a means of “dealing with past and present.” As in the earlier triptych centered on Stoddard walking the course at Monte Carlo, these compositions also involve a slippage between individual privacy and mass-mediated publicity. The four embedded flashbacks have no obvious connection to the act of being interviewed. Each driver speaks to an intimate, rather than to a sportscaster. We do not see any microphones or camera lenses jutting into the frame. Instead, we are strongly inclined to understand these flashbacks as memory images that show us what the drivers are thinking about during the race. And yet, for multiple reasons, each of these private moments from the past nonetheless retains the latent feeling of a public appearance in the media spotlight. From the beginning of the film, the initial race at Monte Carlo has trained us to understand the juxtaposition of past and present as a technique with a special connection to the act of speaking to the press. And, once again, these split-screen compositions during the climactic race immediately follow a series of voiceovers that are obviously excerpted from conversations with

inquisitive sports journalists. The strange sense that we are witnessing both a private intimacy and a public appearance is heightened even further by the fact that each flashback involves the driver being posed a question ("Are you never afraid?"; "Why do you drive racing cars? Or do you not think about it?"; "Can you manage alright?"; "What do you feel?"). The result is a series of memory images that also have the underlying feeling of media images. They seem to grant us direct access to the drivers' unguarded thoughts, while simultaneously recalling moments where the same characters are deliberately constructing or maintaining a public persona.

There is another important reason that these compositions might feel like media images. They were directly inspired by certain conventions of television sportscasting. It is certainly true that Frankenheimer's distinctive approach to split-screen had a number of inspirations and that the technique was a natural choice for a filmmaker with a penchant for internal frames. The onscreen screens from *The Manchurian Candidate* and *Seven Days in May* are obvious precedents. And Frankenheimer also gave credit to multi-screen installations at the 1964 New York World's Fair, especially Francis Thompson and Alexander Hammid's *To Be Alive!,* a three-screen installation about childhood around the world; and Ray and Charles Eames' *Think,* which used twenty-two screens to showcase IBM computers. Such installations were a frequent reference point for commentators on *Grand Prix* at the time of its release. Indeed, when Kael originally reviewed the film, she bemoaned the "little World's Fair-type documentaries, simple-minded and square, that pad out the three hours."[35]

Yet Frankenheimer consistently, and curiously, pointed to the crucial importance of television sports for his conceptualization of split-screen cinematography. According to Frankenheimer:

---

[35] Kael, "Sense of Disproportion."

> I also got it, strangely enough, from the World Series on television. I watched and saw the technique they used. Naturally, it was not split screen but they would have, say, the batter at the plate, and they would show the pitcher winding up against tremendous tension and throwing the ball as hard as he could to him. The stands would be filled, you could feel the tension in the scene, but they had recorded an interview with either the pitcher or batter beforehand and they played this against the image of the immediate event…I thought it was a good technique and I incorporated it in *Grand Prix.* I introduced the drivers this way with 'an interview' which had taken place before the race. Combining this with the possibilities of the split screen led to the method and style that I used.[36]

To say, on the basis of this statement, that Frankenheimer got the idea for split-screen from television sports risks understating the complexity of the adaptation across media that he describes here. Frankenheimer did not see split-screen effects on television and then aim to reproduce them on film. In fact, he immediately dismisses the possibility that the World Series broadcast would have featured split-screen ("Naturally, it was not split-screen"). Instead, Frankenheimer describes noticing a special type of relationship between sound and image, which he reworked as a model for the relationship between adjacent split-screen panels. Fascinatingly, an image-sound relationship on television becomes an image-image relationship on film. The split-screen cinematography of *Grand Prix* thus remediates a specific convention of television sports, but not the convention of split-screen per se.

Even more importantly, this statement shows Frankenheimer taking a particular interest in the possibility for television to combine live and prerecorded material. This brings us to Frankenheimer's negation of the second quality in the two-part formulation of television's media identity as a distant, simultaneous viewing technology. While we might assume that liveness loses its centrality in the media identity of television after the early 60s, when live programming on network television becomes relatively scarce, Jane Feuer has influentially described how

---

[36] Pratley, *The Films of Frankenheimer,* 65.

televisual liveness persists as ideology.[37] Writing in the early 80s, Feuer notes that, while literal live programming has mostly been replaced by a "collage of film, video, and 'live' [programming], all interwoven into a complex and altered time scheme," the *idea* of television as an essentially live medium remains powerful in various respects.[38] It is perpetuated by specific television programs that flaunt their live components, such as *Good Morning America* (a program "obsessed with its own liveness"), as well as by a number of authors writing about television, who mistake an ideology constructed and maintained at the level of discourse for an ontological fact about the medium itself.[39]

Frankenheimer's account of taking inspiration from a World Series broadcast demonstrates that he did not think about television in the medium-essentialist terms that Feuer finds so misguided. Several decades before she would declare current network television to be a heterogeneous "collage" of content with varying degrees of literal and rhetorical liveness, Frankenheimer had already seized upon the fact that television was capable of combining – we could also say "collaging" – something happening in the present with something out of the past. What interested Frankenheimer about the World Series broadcast in the first place was precisely its status as a collage of live images and prerecorded sounds.

Of course, although Frankenheimer found the World Series broadcast particularly striking, the basic idea that television could layer liveness with other temporalities would have

---

[37] Jane Feuer, "The Concept of Live Television: Ontology as Ideology," in *Regarding Television: Critical Approaches – An Anthology*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan (Los Angeles: American Film Institute, 1983), 12-22. Michele Hilmes specifies 1965 as a tipping point in the decline of live programming on American airwaves. She states that "By 1965, the era of live TV was virtually over." Michele Hilmes, *Hollywood and Broadcasting: From Radio to Cable* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 166.
[38] Feuer, "Live Television," 15.
[39] Feuer, "Live Television," 17.

come as no surprise to him. After all, he had crafted similarly complex time schemes throughout his television career. Many of his live teleplays included some filmed elements. “The Comedian,” for instance, contains several different types of film footage. During the climactic live comedy showcase, Frankenheimer includes extensive stock footage of clapping studio audience members and dancing chorus girls, which is frequently combined, via superimpositions and lap dissolves, with live footage of Hogarth performing his act on stage. (Note that, as in the press conference sequence from *The Manchurian Candidate*, Frankenheimer does not cut away to distant television viewers of the comicular, showing us the studio audience instead). Stock footage also appears earlier in the teleplay as part of a rear-projection effect. Frankenheimer stages a tense conversation inside a restaurant in three planes, so that we see the main characters sitting at a window seat in the foreground, extras passing by the window on the sidewalk in the middle ground, and rear-projected stock footage of a city street in the background. Furthermore, besides appropriating pre-existing film footage shot by others, Frankenheimer also filmed his own inserts based on the specific needs of the teleplay. The climactic performance by Hogarth is bookended by nighttime exteriors of a theater (actually CBS-TV Studio 50) with an illuminated marquee announcing “The Sammy Hogarth Comicular.” The fact that the marquee names a fictional character in the script makes it clear that Frankenheimer did not simply source preexisting footage from a film archive.

The eventual introduction of magnetic videotape into television production after about 1956 provided still another way for Frankenheimer to make television that was both live and not.[40] Frankenheimer first incorporated prerecorded videotape inserts into his teleplay “Bomber’s

[40] For an extensive account of this process, with discussion of several Frankenheimer teleplays, see Jonah Horwitz, “Live Television Drama and Its Cinematic Legacies,” PhD diss. (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2019): 139-245.

Moon" (*Playhouse* 90; May 22, 1958). This WWII-combat drama contained several sequences set in the cockpits of American bomber aircraft, which Frankenheimer taped on the day before the scheduled airdate and then integrated with live sequences set at an airbase for the actual broadcast.[41] Furthermore, during the taped cockpit sequences, rear-projected film footage appears on screens outside the transparent cockpit canopies, as in the restaurant sequence from "The Comedian," which adds yet another time scheme to the collage of "Bomber's Moon." Live images bookend pre-recorded (taped) images that themselves contain other prerecorded (filmed, rear-projected) images.

Another notable Frankenheimer teleplay from later that same year, "Days of Wine and Roses" (*Playhouse* 90; October 2, 1958), provides a particularly interesting example of videotape inserts in the context of a live performance. The teleplay features a frame narrative where Joe Clay (Cliff Robertson) addresses an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. These remarks precipitate a series of flashbacks that depict, in stages, the painful dissolution of his marriage to his wife (and fellow alcoholic) . The framing story with Robertson was taped in advance, while the flashbacks were performed live-to-air, meaning that, for viewers of the original telecast, the "present" (in the chronology of the story), had already happened in the past, while the "past" (again, in the chronology of the story) was happening in the present.[42]

---

[41] Another time-related complication was introduced by the fact that videotape inserts had a relatively long nine-second roll cue, as compared to a four-second roll-cue for film inserts, which meant that videotape playback had to begin almost ten seconds before the insert was supposed to appear on viewers' screens. Frankenheimer recalled that this extended roll cue made the inclusion of videotape inserts extremely challenging. The procedure that I have described as "collaging" times also required precision timing on the part of the director in the control room.

[42] Horwitz makes a similar observation and provides a detailed discussion of the taped inserts. He notes that these inserts actually include the first shot of each flashback, in order to enable a dissolve from present to past, which would not have been technically possible if Frankenheimer was switching between taped and live material. See Horwitz, "Live Television," 186-189.

The line of connection that I am drawing out here – from the multi-time compositions of *Grand Prix,* to the temporal manipulations of television sports, to the similarly complex time schemes of live teleplays like "Bomber's Moon" and "Days of Wine and Roses" – enables us to recognize a continuity between *The Manchurian Candidate, Seven Days in May,* and *Grand Prix*, one that goes beyond Frankenheimer's continuing interest in the aesthetics of the internal frame. The split-screen imagery from *Grand Prix* can certainly be understood as an extension of his earlier experiments with onscreen screens as mise-en-scene. But this is not the only thing being extended by split-screen cinematography. What *Grand Prix* continues from those earlier political thrillers is a remarkably non-reductive, non-essentialist engagement with television that downplays or negates some capability of televisual media that is frequently assumed to stabilize its identity. In other words, Frankenheimer is consistently energized and inspired by powers of television that reverse or oppose its presumptively medium-defining characteristics. What is consistent across these three films is an alternate televisual imaginary – another way of thinking about how television operates and why these operations are interesting. We have already seen how *The Manchurian Candidate* and *Seven Days in May* substitutes a proximate viewer for the distant viewer who is central to so much television theory and criticism. Likewise, *Grand Prix* derives its split-screen aesthetic from an awareness and understanding of live television as a temporal collage. In her account of liveness as ideology, Feuer goes to great lengths to demonstrate that a show like *Good Morning America* is actually a "mosaic" of filmed, taped, and live elements that all become similarly charged with a heightened sense of immediacy, presence, and directness (that is, of liveness), whether the images and sounds in question are literally live or not.[43] Feuer wants to show that all those theories of television which are founded on the

[43] Feuer, "Live Television," 16.

technological possibility of live transmission overlook the various ways that the impression or sensation of liveness can be maintained as in its literal absence. Yet this point would have been second nature to someone like Frankenheimer. He fully understood that “live television” could name a television practice that incorporated various different recording technologies. No one needed to tell him that live programming could be a “mosaic” where the differences between film, video, and live components are strategically effaced. This awareness was part of his alternate televisual imaginary. And it finds visual expression in the multi-time, multi-image mosaics of *Grand Prix.*

My argument in this final section has focused on the ways in which *Grand Prix* adapts a set of ideas and techniques from television to film. But the fact that Frankenheimer incorporated film inserts into his live teleplays makes clear that the line of influence also runs in the opposite direction. His 50s television practice had already bridged film and television, long before he reworked television techniques for *Grand Prix*. It might be tempting to think about Frankenheimer’s 60s films as hybrids of film and television, and while there is some truth in this approach, it is also an oversimplification. The more nuanced position would be a recognition that Frankenheimer was already mixing and matching film and television long before he made the transition to feature filmmaking. In other words, the ideas and techniques that Frankenheimer adapted from television to film were derived from a television practice that was never entirely separate from film in the first place.

More broadly, the connection between split-screen and live television mounts one final challenge to the usefulness of videophobia as a conceptual framework for understanding the film-television relationship in Frankenheimer films and in 60s cinema more generally. According to Young, the videophobic media fantasy films that appear during the postwar rise of television

are evidence of a process that has repeated itself multiple times throughout media history. Upon the appearance of any medium (be it radio, television, or the Internet) with an identity that is based on models of reception and address that differ from the "classical cinematic model" (meaning, roughly, theatrical filmgoing), cinema responds with media fantasy films that obsess over these points of distinction.[44] But Frankenheimer's films do not map onto a structure of rivalry and competition between media struggling to construct and maintain individual identities for themselves, in large part because, for Frankenheimer, the media identity of television is extremely open-ended and adaptable. In simplest terms, videophobia names the anxiety that television can do things which film cannot. It is the anxiety that cinema will be supplanted by a medium that involves a *specific* set of operations and experiences that are not available to film viewers sitting inside an auditorium. This anxiety becomes incoherent in the case of a director for whom television is not one specific thing. It is certainly not reducible to one viewing position or to one temporality. While Young speaks of videophobia making an "eternal return" in Hollywood cinema, even after the emergent phase of television comes to an end, Frankenheimer's films make clear that something has already changed by the early 60s.[45] Rather than videophobia, what makes its "eternal return" in these works is an alternate televisual imaginary that continually manifests onscreen – or, in the case of *Grand Prix, onscreens* – whether or not a television set appears within the frame

---

[44] Young, *Cinema Dreams Its Rivals*, xxiii.
[45] Young's examples are films like *Network* (Sidney Lumet, 1976), *Poltergeist* (Tobe Hooper, 1982), and *Batman Forever* (Joel Schumacher, 1995). Young, *Cinema Dreams Its Rivals*, 188.

Chapter Three
Image-Generating Bodies

The critic Stephen Farber concludes his positive review of *Seconds* (John Frankenheimer, 1966) with a warning. "One word of caution," he writes. "The titles are played against Saul Bass' design of monstrous distortions of eyes, noses, mouths, ears – a crude vulgarization of all that the movie examines with subtlety and intelligence. It would be smart to arrive two minutes late."[1] With this "one word of caution," Farber not only finds fault with the credits but describes a viewing experience that maps onto the basic narrative structure of the film: the protagonist of *Seconds* will likewise flee a way of life that he considers deeply unpleasant in the pursuit of a more meaningful and satisfying alternative.

As the film begins, the late-middle-aged suburbanite Arthur Hamilton (John Randolph), desperately unhappy at work and at home, finds himself receptive to the sales pitch of a mysterious corporation, known only as "The Company." For a price, The Company will fake his death and provide him a completely new identity, including an unrecognizable physical appearance, a service that it refers to as "rebirth." Hamilton signs a Company contract and, after extensive cosmetic surgery, he is reborn as the handsome painter Antiochus "Tony" Wilson (Rock Hudson). Unfortunately, Wilson soon discovers that he is no happier than he was before. He pleads with Company representatives for yet another identity, but, instead, the firm transfers its unsatisfied client to CPS – "Cadaver Procurement Services" – so that his body can be used to fake the death of some other customer. There is no second chance at a second chance.

It is strangely fitting that Farber would experience this film all about doubles as a combination of two irreconcilable parts. His warning about the credits of *Seconds* also has

[1] Stephen Farber, "*Seconds*," *Film Quarterly* 20, no. 2 (Winter 1966-1967): 28.

another edge, an element of physical unease. Although the critic complains that the credits lack "subtlety and intelligence" compared to the film as a whole, his warning seems to be motivated not only by how this sequence travesties the themes of *Seconds*, but also by how it travesties the human body. The designs of Saul Bass are not just unsubtle; they are "monstrous."

What does happen to the body in this sequence? The film begins with an image of trembling gray forms that are initially unrecognizable as anything – let alone a body. Only gradually do they congeal into familiar shapes and textures. We detect the circularity of a pupil, the moistness of the sclera, and the curl of some lashes. Confronted with an extreme close-up of a human eye that darts back and forth beneath the credit for Hudson, we watch the image stretch and bend back into a state of abstraction, as though the organ were being pulled like taffy. As Farber notes, several other facial features receive the same visual treatment. Sometimes these distortions are rendered still stranger by split-screen effects, which stitch together three stacked sets of lips or implant a protuberant nose into an eye socket. As the credits come to an end, a face wrapped in surgical bandages appears and enlarges, so that the open mouth of this unidentifiable figure, spanned by a glistening strand of saliva, threatens to swallow the camera whole. This dark void is the background for the final credit: "directed by JOHN FRANKENHEIMER."

While Farber regards these credits as self-contained, and therefore missable, they are continuous with *Seconds'* broader preoccupations. The representation of a malleable body obviously aligns with the narrative and themes of the film – a point that Farber himself grants, with his claim that the two parts of *Seconds* are examining the same ideas with disparate degrees of sophistication. And Saul Bass, who designed the credits alongside his wife Elaine, likewise

understood the credits sequence to be working through the larger concerns of the film. Bass stated that the credits were intended to establish the concept of "tampering with humanity."[2]

Yet I contend that the credits of *Seconds* are integral to the film for another reason, one that depends on knowing how they were created. Bass and his collaborators achieved such disturbing defamiliarizations of the human form by projecting undistorted footage onto an aluminum sheet that was flexible enough to be manipulated by the filmmakers. This means that, in addition to representing a body that bends and twists before the viewer, the sequence also *originates* from a moving body, which grasped and contorted the aluminum "screen" from a position outside the visual range of the camera. In short, the fluxing of the onscreen body is the result of flexing by an offscreen body.

In what follows, I argue that image-generating bodies are at the heart of *Seconds*. After the credits, the film continues its exploration of the image-generating body at the level of visual style, in three key sequences where Frankenheimer employs body-mounted camera systems. These apparatuses, and their capacity to transform bodily movements into camera movements, are the central focus of this chapter. Adapted from the field of sports media, the body mounts used by Frankenheimer anticipate later body-braced camera systems like the Steadicam, while also achieving a strikingly different body-mounted aesthetic, one that differs from both the smooth glide of the Steadicam or the documentary-style roughness of the handheld camera. But *Seconds* does more than just harness the body as a filmmaking tool. The possibilities and

---

[2] Jennifer Bass and Pat Kirkham, *Saul Bass: A Life in Film and Design* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2011), 217. Besides being continuous with the remainder of *Seconds*, these credits are also consistent with other title sequences designed by Bass and associates, perhaps most notably the face-filled credits for *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958) and *Spartacus* (Stanley Kubrick, 1960). Jan-Christopher Horak notes Bass' "almost obsessive use of body parts in all his design work." Jan-Christopher Horak, *Saul Bass: Anatomy of Film Design* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2014), 189.

limitations of image-generating bodies are also a crucial thematic concern. What I will call the "painting subplot" of the film, where Wilson fails to achieve happiness through artistic practice, stages questions about the body of the artist, especially the relation between physical activity and psychic life. This two-track engagement with the image-generating body – both aesthetic and thematic – constitutes yet another of *Seconds*' many uncanny doublings.

The film holds another lesson as well. In histories of Hollywood cinema, the mid 60s tends to be remembered as a period when, due to the decline of the Motion Picture Production Code, commercial filmmakers gained new freedoms to represent explicit sex and violence, meaning that bodies could be pictured in heretofore impermissible states of arousal and injury.[3] *Seconds* shows that, in addition to this shift in the representation of bodies, the relations between body and image were also being renegotiated at other levels. This included film technology and film industry trade and technical discourse, areas in which the central concern about the body was less its status as an *object* of representation than its potential to become the active *subject* of image production – a source from which images could emanate. From its opening credits onward, *Seconds* brings together these two dynamics, creating a film that abounds with disturbing images of bodies and, importantly, images that derive *from* bodies. It teaches us to think about developments in media technology alongside shifts in representation, at a moment when these processes were intimately conjoined.

---

[3] For instance, in the conclusion to his volume on the 60s for the decade-by-decade History of the American Cinema series, Paul Monaco summarizes that "Portrayals of violence and sex became more graphic, paving the way for the future." Paul Monaco, *The Sixties: 1960-1969*, History of the American Cinema, vol. 8 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 262. *Seconds* faced difficulties obtaining approval from Production Code administrators, who demanded cuts to a sequence involving an orgiastic wine-making festival, though Frankenheimer claimed that these cuts made the sequence more, rather than less, sexually suggestive.

Between Handheld and Steadicam

Production photos show us what the body-mounted cameras used to shoot *Seconds* looked like. In one such image, Frankenheimer appears to be giving instructions to Hudson, who wears the camera on his back (figure 3.1). He has been strapped into a harness with anchor points for multiple protruding struts, which are joined into an armature that supports the camera as it peers down over his shoulders. This contraption does not look particularly comfortable for Hudson. The actor hunches forward while stretching his arms backward, like counterbalances. The splayed fingers of his left hand only add to the overall impression of unsteadiness. Hudson looks deep in concentration, but his awkward body language suggests that, besides listening intently to his director, he is also concentrating on the simple task of remaining upright under the burden of the body-mounted equipment.

Figure 3.1 Rock Hudson wearing a body-mounted camera on the set of *Seconds* (John Frankenheimer, 1966)

This camera system looks much different than the wearable cameras that are most familiar to us today, such as the GoPro product range, or police "bodycams," all of which are designed to be compact and unobtrusive. Not surprisingly, the camera weighing down Hudson more closely resembles the Steadicam camera stabilizer, which was developed in the mid 1970s, around a decade after the release of *Seconds*, as a smoother alternative to handheld camerawork.[4] Both the Steadicam and the *Seconds* mount involve an armature that extends from a central harness. But whereas the self-articulated support arm of the Steadicam connects the camera to the body in a way that makes it possible for the Steadicam operator to remain hidden from view at all times, each of the body mounts from *Seconds* position the camera so that the head and shoulders of the operator are continuously onscreen.

This is a meaningful difference for several reasons. The presence of the operator in the frame results in a unique visual effect that is entirely absent in Steadicam cinematography. The effect generated by the body-mounted equipment from *Seconds* is difficult to describe, but, generally speaking, it involves a strange contrast between the steadiness of the camera-equipped body and the unsteadiness of the world that it inhabits. As viewers, we understand that someone is moving through space, but we see the opposite – that is, space moving around someone who (apparently) stands still.[5] The visibility of the camera-equipped body also flagrantly defies one of

[4] A 1976 article by Ed DiGuilio, President of Cinema Products Corporation, which purchased the rights to the Steadicam from inventor Garret Brown, opens with the claim that "this is the era of hand-held [sic] shooting for professional cinematography," and then presents the Steadicam as a "new and revolutionary" solution to certain problems with handheld operation. Ed DiGuilio, "Steadicam 35 – A Revolutionary New Concept in Camera Stabilization," *American Cinematographer* 57, no. 7 (July 1976): 786.

[5] This effect also differentiates the body-mounted camerawork in *Seconds* from a technique common in horror cinema, especially slashers of the 1970s and 1980s like *Black Christmas* (Bob Clark, 1974), where hands, often wielding a knife or other weapon, protrude into images that are marked as POV shots. These shots lack the strange relation between body and world that make

the central ways that Steadicam operators define competence in their field. Katie Bird writes that, after a brief exploratory period, Steadicam operators converged on an invisible style, which induces operators to minimize any recognizable signs of their physical presence, such as camera jitters that too-obviously correspond to footsteps.[6] The body mounts from *Seconds* prevent the operator from ever achieving the self-effacement that would come to define Steadicam craftsmanship in the years ahead.[7]

The visibility of the camera-equipped body constitutes a break with earlier techniques as well. During the 1940s, handheld camerawork became increasingly common in Hollywood cinema, due in large part to the influence of World War II combat documentaries shot with handheld cameras like the Eyemo. The wartime integration of handheld cinematography into the stylistic vocabulary of commercial cinema marks a period of active experimentation with the relations between bodies and cameras. Patrick Keating reminds us that, although it now seems natural to use shaky handheld camerawork in a fictional war film, as a means, for instance, to simulate the concussion of a bomb blast, this application had to be discovered by enterprising cinematographers, who did not know whether the purposes that they conceived for the new

---

the body-mounted cinematography of *Seconds* so distinctive. In chapter four, I discuss some examples from the climactic chase sequence of Frankenheimer's own *French Connection II*.

[6] Katie Bird, "'Dancing, Flying Camera Jockeys:' Invisible Labor, Craft Discourse and Embodied Steadicam and Panaglide Technique from 1972 to 1985," *The Velvet Light Trap* 80 (Fall 2017): 49.

[7] The self-effacement achieved by Steadicam operators is complex, because even though they seek to eliminate obvious signs of their own embodiment, operators also frequently describe themselves as playing a "character," which reflects an intention to make viewers feel as though the camera is an embodied presence in the scene. For example, the veteran operator Ted Churchill describes how the Steadicam can function "as an intimate observer or specific personality." This practitioner discourse still involves a type of self-effacement, however, because the "character" in question never appears onscreen. It is effaced in the sense that it does not exist in the diegesis. Ted Churchill, "Steadicam: An Operator's Perspective," *American Cinematographer* 64, no. 4 (October 1983): 115.

technique would become conventions or not.[8] Yet these experiments with the handheld camera had limits. Hollywood cinematographers did not turn the cameras in their hands back on their own bodies, even though this was always a standing possibility of the technology.

This is not to claim that the body-mounted cameras from *Seconds* are entirely *sui generis*. On the contrary, many cinematographers, inside and outside Hollywood, had previously converted the human body into a camera dolly. During the silent era, Karl Freund filmed part of a dream sequence from *The Last Laugh* (F.W. Murnau, 1924) with a chest-mounted camera.[9] And John Seitz used a similar chest mount for a vertiginous shot from *The Lost Weekend* (Billy Wilder, 1945), in which the alcoholic protagonist, in the grip of delirium tremens, topples down a flight of stairs.[10] By the early 60s, after decades of one-off experiments like these, body mounts were fast becoming a standard piece of filmmaking equipment, a development that can be traced in the pages of *American Cinematographer*. While the body mounts from *Seconds* occupy a media-historical niche between the handheld camera and the Steadicam, film industry technical discourse shows that they do not fill this gap on their own.

A 1963 *American Cinematographer* article entitled "Designed for Shootin' from the Shoulder" reports on the rising popularity of body-mounted equipment.[11] The article explains that "heavier Auricon sound cameras and the Arriflex" have recently increased the need for camera support apparatuses among handheld camera specialists. These same apparatuses are also said to have special advantages for "TV newsfilm cameramen and documentary and travel film

[8] Patrick Keating, *The Dynamic Frame: Camera Movement in Classical Hollywood* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 228.
[9] Keating, *Dynamic Frame*, 26.
[10] Christopher Beach, *A Hidden History of Film Style: Cinematographers, Directors, and the Collaborative Process* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 106.
[11] "Designed for Shootin' from the Shoulder," *American Cinematographer* 44, no. 5 (May 1963): 285.

producers," because, besides making the camera more comfortable, these devices make it possible "to work faster and more freely in crowds or confined locations."[12] The article profiles two specific body mounts with their own additional selling points; the German-made Prenzel shoulder-pod enables the camera to be operated entirely hands-free, while the American-made S.O.S. Body-Brace has a collapsible design for convenient storage. An adjacent photo of the Prenzel unit highlights its potential to free up the hands of the operator (figure 3.2). The model wears a crisp white shirt that makes the aluminum tubes hooked over each of his shoulders especially prominent. The camera sits on a platform near his left shoulder while the model places his hands on his hips, just below an adjustable belt. This confident pose sharply contrasts Hudson's hunch on the *Seconds* set.

[12] "Designed for Shootin' from the Shoulder," 285.

SHOOTIN' FROM THE SHOULDER

THE MOBILE CAMERMAN who works mostly with a hand-held 16mm camera created a need for an efficient and dependable support for his camera, especially when he switched to the heavier Auricon sound cameras or the Arriflex. For a long time he had to make his own, but more recently some excellent supports called shoulder-pods or belt-pods have appeared on the market.

THE SHOULDER-POD PICTURED AT RIGHT is a German-made import that fits all conventional light-weight motion picture cameras such as the Auricons and Arriflex 35mm and 16mm. It leaves the operator's hands entirely free to handle instruments, make camera or sound level adjustments during shooting, or to support himself in precarious situations. Head to which the camera is attached is adjustable for height, direction and distance between operator and camera finder. The supporting bar is also adjustable to allow camera to be used at either left- or right-hand side of operator. Constructed of lightweight aluminum tubing, the shoulder-pod is anchored to operator's waist by means of an adjustable belt.

TV NEWSFILM CAMERMEN and documentary and travel film producers are discovering the advantages of the shoulder-pod, which not only eases the load and provides more comfortable balance of the camera, but enables them to work faster and more freely in crowds or confined locations.

MEETING THE NEED of peripatetic cameramen for a simple, lightweight shoulder-pod is the S.O.S. Body Brace pictured at right. It offers the double support of a shoulder-pod plus a body brace, providing steadiness, comfort for the cameraman and the ability to aim, tilt, and pan the camera with the same ease as when tripod-mounted. Made of lightweight cast aluminum, it weighs 4½ pounds, and is furnished with standard 3/8" X 16 camera tie-down screw. As pictured, it will easily support the heavier professional 16mm cameras such as the Auricon Pro-600, Arriflex, Maurer, etc. An important feature is collapsible design of the brace, permitting it to be folded compactly for easy storage in camera equipment case.

For source information, see page 294.

Figure 3.2 Illustrations from *American Cinematographer* 44, no. 5 (May 1963): 285

The Prenzel shoulder-pod and the S.O.S. body-brace are described in "Designed for Shootin' from the Shoulder" as two of the first camera support apparatuses to appear on the commercial market, which means that filmmakers seeking this type of technology no longer had to design and build it for themselves. These two products were only the first of many, as ads for body mounts proliferate in *American Cinematographer* during the second half of the decade. The company Birns & Sawyer marketed something that looked almost identical to the Prenzel shoulder-pod (though American-made) under the name "Twi-Pod."[13] Other body mounts departed from a Prenzel-type configuration, but nonetheless made similar promises about hands-free filming. This feature was an explicit selling point in ads for Leopold Enterprises' Leo-Pod and Gordon Enterprises' Gordon-Eclair shoulder brace.[14] One ad for the latter also repeated the basic visual presentation of the Prenzel system in "Designed for Shootin' from the Shoulder." Solid black components stand out against the (again) crisp white shirt of a model confidently posed with arms akimbo.

This same ad for the Gordon-Eclair shoulder brace also exemplifies another significant trope in technical discourse about the body-mounted camera, namely an emphasis on the vulnerability of the camera-operating body that is not properly armored with technology. The ad touts how the product "Permits Hours of Filming Without Fatigue" and lets the operator look through the viewfinder "Without Having to Strain Neck Forward." These claims about avoiding "fatigue" and "strain" are predicated on the idea that the unsupported camera can pose a physical danger to its operator. In order to market a product that augments the body, Gordon Enterprises

[13] Birns & Sawyer, advertisement, *American Cinematographer* 48, no. 10 (October 1967): 737.
[14] Leopold Enterprises, advertisement, *American Cinematographer* 48, no. 12 (December 1967): 908; Gordon Enterprises, advertisement, *American Cinematographer* 49, no. 10 (October 1968): 793.

and other sellers persistently point up the fallibility of the body under normal circumstances. An ad for the Leo-Pod ("the finest body brace without exception") draws a particularly strong contrast between the hardened durability of the product for sale and the susceptibility of the flesh enclosed within. The ad first describes the Leo-Pod as "practically indestructible," and then, with a claim about preventing "strain to the cameraman's muscles," the ad quickly reminds us that human beings are not so impervious.[15]

Despite the widespread availability of factory-made body mounts by the mid 60s, custom-designed models remained common among a group of practitioners who took a special interest in body-mounted equipment. At the same time that it was running ads for mass-produced products like the Leo-Pod, *American Cinematographer* also featured a number of purpose-built body mounts created by sports cinematographers. In some instances, sports cinematographers designed equipment that was fitted to an athlete, as in the case of a rotating waist-mounted rig, constructed for the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, which could shoot a soccer player's feet or face depending on its orientation.[16] In other cases, sports cinematographers wore their own equipment while shooting from the sidelines. This was true for some of the so-called "moles" who filmed professional football games at ground level. A mole named Harvey Weber told *American Cinematographer* that he designed his own "'Rube Goldberg' rig," consisting of a unipod socketed in a leather sling worn around the neck, because nothing on the commercial market could meet his unique demands. His mount alone provided "the freedom of movement

[15] Leopold Enterprises, advertisement, *American Cinematographer* 48, no. 2 (February 1967): 130.
[16] Benjamin Montano, "Gammas, Gadgets and Gizmos," *American Cinematographer* 49, no. 12 (December 1968): 952-953.

and the camera steadiness" necessary to capture exciting game footage.[17] Of course, this is an achievement of "freedom" that is strangely contingent on being bound.

Among these various sports-specific body mounts, one model bears a particularly striking resemblance to the back-mounted camera borne by Hudson. It appears in an advertisement for Arriflex Corporation of America from March 1965 – only a few months before *Seconds* went into production (figure 3.3). An Arriflex 35mm camera sits above the head of a determined-looking downhill skier. The ski poles clasped in his gloved hands mirror the rigid struts that form a roof-truss-like support structure behind his back. The ad copy identifies this camera-equipped figure as "30-year old ski expert and second cameraman or operator" John Stephens, who used this self-designed rig to shoot a ski sequence for a television commercial.[18] The text goes on to mention Stephens' plan to film surfing and water skiing with the same equipment, which confirms the breadth of applications that sports cinematographers found for body-mounted technology in the 60s.[19]

[17] Robert V. Kerns, "How Professional Football Is Filmed," *American Cinematographer* 50, no. 2 (February 1969): 211. To be clear, Weber's assignment was to shoot *film* footage that could be included in televised sports highlight shows like "This Week in the NFL." This footage was not broadcast live on television.
[18] Arriflex Corporation, advertisement, *American Cinematographer* 46, no. 3 (March 1965): 145. This same picture of Stephens would appear in several other Arriflex ads over the course of the decade. Some of these other ads differ in terms of their layout and copy. See, for instance, Arriflex Corporation, advertisement, *American Cinematographer* 48, no. 3 (March 1967): 202.
[19] A short film about Stephens entitled "The Man Who Makes the Difference," released as part of the marketing for *Ice Station Zebra* (John Sturges, 1968), on which Stephens served as a second unit cameraman, contains examples of his skiing and surfing cinematography. "The Man Who Makes the Difference," uploaded November 8, 2013 (1968), *YouTube* video, 7:13, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DoW4T0CikOw.

ARRIFLEX at work — ONE OF A SERIES*

ARRIFLEX® masters schuss and slalom for spectacular TV ski sequence

"We need some unusual and exciting ski scenes for an important TV account," the ad agency executive said. "Can you get them for us?"

John Stephens could ... and did. The 30-year old ski expert and second cameraman or operator with Local #659, International Photographers of the Motion Picture Industries, packed his ski gear, his self-designed camera rig and his Arriflex 35mm and headed for Utah.

Stephens, rig and Arriflex proved an intrepid trio, schussing down steep Utah slopes, skirting trees and fellow skiers, maneuvering into hairpin turns and executing sudden stops. Extraordinary angles of action were possible with the rugged, reliable Arriflex, equipped with wide angle lens, mounted in a variety of unique shooting positions — rigged to balance above Stephens' head, from the tip of a ski or behind a clamped ski boot.

The finished footage was fantastic, far exceeding the ad agency's demands for the unusual. TV viewers who caught the commercial were suddenly on skis, sharing the sensation of whizzing down perilous mountains paths and knifing through deep powder snow. Stephens' efforts were hailed as "the most spectacular ski scenes ever filmed."

But he's not resting on his laurels. He's ready now to ride the sea with rig and Arriflex on surf board and water skis. He's expert at that too. So's the Arriflex.

Photos courtesy of International Photographer Magazine

First Choice of Professionals ... Lightweight, compact, rugged and versatile, the **new** Arriflex 35 2C masters every filming assignment from hand-held newsreel shots to "blimped" sound shooting. Arriflex 35 rates "first choice" for motion picture assignments in Industry, Science, Education, News, Sports and Entertainment.

• MIRROR-SHUTTER REFLEX VIEWFINDER • OPTIONAL: BUILT-IN SIGNAL GENERATOR AND AUTOMATIC START MARKER • TACHOMETER • 3-LENS TURRET • WEIGHS ONLY 12½ LBS. WITH 400 FT. MAGAZINE • COMPLETE ACCESSORY SYSTEM ... lenses, standard and special-purpose electric drives, power supplies, time-lapse equipment, film magazine, sound blimps, tripods.

Write for catalog on the NEW Arriflex 35 2C.

***YOU ARE INVITED** to send us a description of **your** special use of Arriflex equipment.

ARRIFLEX CORPORATION OF AMERICA
257 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, N. Y. 10010

"THE ARRI STORY"— An absorbing 32 minute color sound film depicting the step by step manufacture of Arriflex precision cameras and their applications to varied cinematographic assignments. Available without charge for group showings. Write (on letterhead, please) Arriflex Corporation of America for bookings.

AMERICAN CINEMATOGRAPHER, MARCH, 1965 145

Figure 3.3 Arriflex ad from *American Cinematographer* 46, no. 3 (March 1965): 145

While the design of this back-mounted camera system closely resembles the *Seconds* rig, the body language of Stephens and Hudson provides a study in contrast. Stephens betrays no awareness of the unnatural outgrowth on his back. Like Hudson, Stephens hunches forward, but, rather than looking pained under the weight of the apparatus, he seems to be poised in a ready position. He might be on the verge of another descent down the slopes, but he is certainly not about to fall over. The ad copy only heightens this visual impression of adroitness. It describes Stephens as "schussing down steep Utah slopes, skirting trees and fellow skiers, maneuvering into hairpin turns and executing sudden stops."[20] This is a claim that the body-mounted camera can do more than just show athletic feats. It can also communicate what it *feels like* to have a body that is capable of such incredible exertions. With its claim about "sharing…sensation" – a claim that, importantly, implies something more than merely a shared optical point of view – the ad conceptualizes the body-mounted camera as an effective means of transferring the embodied experience of physical prowess from one person to another.

The description by an unknown Arriflex copywriter brings to mind work by a number of film theorists, many writing under the influence of phenomenology, who emphasize the embodied nature of spectatorship. While these theorists generally argue that all moving images, qua moving images, exert effects on the physiology of the viewer, they also highlight specific films, genres, scenes, and techniques, especially camera movements, which engage the body with particular intensity.[21] The sensation elicited by Stephens differs in kind, however, from the

---

[20] Arriflex Corporation, advertisement, *American Cinematographer* 46, no. 3 (March 1965): 145.
[21] Some major monographs in this theoretical literature include Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); Steven Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); and Jennifer Barker, *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

physiological responses that tends to be stressed in these accounts. When theorists want to demonstrate the visceral power of the moving image, they frequently call upon examples that involve out-of-control bodies responding involuntarily to overwhelming surges of feeling. This is the approach that Linda Williams takes in her influential account of "body genres," for instance, where she links the palpable physical effects of pornography, horror, and melodrama, and observes that, in each of these genres, physical impact is exerted through the representations of "*uncontrollable* convulsion or spasm – of the body 'beside itself' with sexual pleasure, fear and terror, or overpowering sadness."[22] The Arriflex ad proposes an alternative model, describing instead a transfer of sensation that originates from an in-control body. Stephens' movements are sudden without being convulsions or spasms. His is a disciplined dynamism. With the aid of the body-mounted camera, the television viewer partakes in a sensational experience that may not be ecstatic in the manner of the body genres, but is nonetheless exhilarating.

From Discipline to Distress

The resemblance between the camera equipment attached to Stephens in the Arriflex ad and to Hudson in the production photo can be easily explained by the fact that Stephens worked as a camera operator on *Seconds.* Another production photo confirms that Stephens was specifically involved in the implementation of the body-mounted camera, as we see Stephens using both hands to manipulate a mount on the back of the actor John Randolph, while Frankenheimer, who also has both hands on the contraption, looks through the camera eyepiece. It was a productive partnership, which led Stephens and the director to reunite for

[22] Linda Williams, "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, Excess," *Film Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (Summer 1991): 4 (emphasis mine).

Frankenheimer's Formula One-racing epic *Grand Prix* (1966). According to *Popular Mechanics,* when Frankenheimer was seeking someone to design the car-mounted cameras necessary to realize his intentions for *Grand Prix*, he recollected that Stephens had already created a "torso camera harness" for their earlier collaboration.[23]

Seconds was not the first Hollywood film that benefitted from Stephens' unique skillset. After training in the photographic unit of the Navy, and working as a still photographer at the Sun Valley ski resort, Stephens moved between narrative feature films, documentaries, television programs, and commercials over a wide-ranging career that spanned the 50s to the 00s.[24] Besides his skill at conjoining cameras and bodies, Stephens also excelled at mounting cameras on vehicles. In addition to the car-mounted cameras that he developed for *Grand Prix*, which would earn him a Technical Achievement Award from the Society of Operating Cameramen, Stephens also designed submarine-mounted cameras for *Ice Station Zebra*, and even bicycle-mounted cameras for the climactic chase from *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* (Steven Spielberg, 1982).[25] Cinematographers, let alone camera operators, are seldom heralded as auteurs, but Stephens' credits make it possible to imagine a study of film authorship where the personal "signature" of the author in question is a preoccupation with joining the camera to complex machines, including the human body.

---

[23] Richard Dempewolff, "Those Great Pictures in *Grand Prix* – How They Were Made," *Popular Mechanics* 127, no. 3 (March 1967): 79. This article incorrectly claims that Rock Hudson wore the "torso camera harness" for a scene in Grand Central Station, when, in fact, Frank Campanella wears the camera during the scene in question.

[24] Mike Barnes, "John M. Stephens, Action Cinematographer and Cameraman, Dies at 82," *Hollywood Reporter*, July 6, 2015, https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-news/john-stephens-dead-grand-prix-806729/

[25] "Technical Achievement Award," *The Operating Cameraman* 5, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 48-49.

The body-mounted camera is not the only attention-grabbing technique on display in *Seconds*. Its maximalist visual style combines jump cuts, handheld camerawork, extreme high and low angles, *Caligari*-esque forced-perspective sets, and, in particular, wide angle ("fisheye") lenses as short as 9.5mm that frequently transform the faces of the cast members into grotesque masks. While this flashiness is consistent with Frankenheimer's reputation as a sometimes overbearing stylist (as discussed in the previous chapter), many commentators have connected the visual flamboyance of *Seconds* to its cinematographer: James Wong Howe. In her negative review of the film, Pauline Kael wrote that Howe "displays his camera pyrotechnics as if they were going on sale in the nation's supermarkets."[26] Though he is more sympathetic to Howe, Todd Rainsberger makes a similar assessment in his book on the cinematographer, claiming that *Seconds* contains "some of the most blatantly unnatural photography and the most striking camera artifice of any feature film ever made."[27]

For Rainsberger, this strident stylization raises questions about Howe's role in the production. Throughout an illustrious Hollywood career that lasted from the 20s to the 70s, Howe frequently spoke out against the type of technical showiness that *Seconds* takes to an extreme. Yet the body-mounted camera allows us to recognize affinities between *Seconds* and other films that Howe shot, especially a longstanding interest in harnessing the body as a source of camera mobility – or, we could also say, in the image-generating body. According to Patrick Keating, the handheld camera became a convention of Hollywood war films and boxing films soon after Howe used it to shoot parts of *Air Force* (Howard Hawks, 1943) and *Body and Soul*

---

[26] Pauline Kael "Epics: *The Bible* and *Hawaii*,*" The New* Republic, October 22, 1966: 34.
[27] Todd Rainsberger, *James Wong Howe: Cinematographer* (San Diego: A.S. Barnes, 1981), 231-232.

(Robert Rossen, 1947) respectively.[28] *Seconds* was not even the first Howe film to incorporate body-mounted footage. For some bullfighting scenes in *The Brave Bulls* (Robert Rossen, 1951), Howe attached a 16mm camera to the chest of a real matador. Howe recollected that "the camera moved with his movements; the bull horns almost brushed the lens."[29] When Howe joined the crew of *Seconds,* he, like Stephens, already had prior experience with the body-mounted camera, and, more specifically, with using it to capture a skillful athletic performance.

Production records indicate that, in the case of *Seconds,* the body-mounted camera entered Frankenheimer's visual conception of the film at a relatively late stage. His personal papers contain an annotated draft of the script dated March 21, 1965, but which includes revised pages from as late at July 1, 1965 – several weeks after production had already begun.[30] This draft begins with a sequence where Hamilton is stalked through Grand Central Station by a mysterious pursuer, one of the three sequences from the final film that would ultimately feature body-mounted camerawork. Screenwriter Lewis John Carlino (adapting a novel by David Ely) provides a number of ideas about the visual presentation of the sequence, including descriptions of framing ("We go to an OVER-THE-SHOULDER SHOT of a MAN'S POV"), and camera movement ("As he walks past the man watching him, the CAMERA SWINGS AROUND and FOLLOWS.") But none of these directions refer to a body mount. Nor do Frankenheimer's annotations. Frankenheimer does, however, add the handwritten marginal note "treadmill on

---

[28] Keating, *Dynamic Frame*, 226-228, 234-235.
[29] Charles Higham, *Hollywood Cameramen: Sources of Light* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), 91.
[30] "Seconds – Script," file 113, John Frankenheimer papers, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

dolly/test/all in one shot."[31] This annotation suggests that Frankenheimer was actively thinking about ways to dynamize the look of the sequence, but had not yet hit on the body-mounted camera as the way to do so. It also suggests that, even before the choice of the body-mounted camera, Frankenheimer was already interested in how camera equipment could estrange the characters' physical movement. Although there is no extant footage of the treadmill-on-a-dolly approach, we can speculate that it would have presented us with a character who makes the micro-movements involved in normal locomotion, like a bobbing head, but also appears to glide with unnatural (dolly-assisted) smoothness.

The body-mounted camera achieves a somewhat different effect. The Grand Central chase begins with a high-angle establishing shot looking down on the concourse at rush hour. The shot scale suddenly changes with a cut to an off-center extreme close-up of the actor Frank Campanella, who portrays a character identified in the cast list only as "The Man in the Station" (figure 3.4). This is the first shot from a body-mounted camera (a chest-mounted camera, to be exact) and we can immediately notice an exaggerated degree of coordination between figure movement and camera movement. When the Man in the Station sways, even slightly, so does the frame. This coordination becomes even more pronounced as the sequence continues. The Man in the Station spots Hamilton at a newspaper stand, follows him onto a commuter train, and hands him a message from The Company just before the doors swing shut. At various points during this pursuit, we see additional shots from the chest-mounted camera looking up at the Man in the Station, along with two over-the-shoulder shots from a camera on his back. In each case, the close coordination of body and camera makes even the simplest movements visually striking, as

[31] "Seconds – Script," John Frankenheimer papers, 1. The audio commentary that Frankenheimer recorded for the home video release of *Seconds* makes clear that, in the end, the body-mounted camera was used to shoot the sequence, rather than a "treadmill on a dolly."

well as somewhat disorienting. When the Man in the Station first turns to follow Hamilton down a stairway, the body-camera conjunction momentarily negates our sense that the Man in the Station is moving at all. He appears to be the axel around which the wheel that is the world turns.

Figure 3.4 A chest-mounted extreme close-up of the Man in the Station from *Seconds* (John Frankenheimer, 1966)

This disorienting effect is the direct result of bringing the camera-equipped body onscreen. Whereas the ski cinematography rig pictured in the Arriflex ad positioned the camera above and in front of Stephens' head, this mount slightly shifts the back-mounted camera into an over-the-shoulder position, a minor adjustment that has an exaggerated effect on the visual quality of the resulting footage: it gives the appearance of steadiness and stillness to an onscreen body that we nonetheless understand to be in motion. With this modification, a device for locking the camera to the body becomes, in addition, a means of locking the body in the frame.

We should pause over the fact that our disorientation depends on a type of fixity. This is not a typical, or intuitive, combination. Film theorists, especially those working in a

phenomenological tradition, more commonly attribute disorientation to the absence of fixed relations. This is the approach that Jennifer Barker takes at the beginning of *The Tactile Eye*, for instance, in her account of the opening sequence from *Mirror* (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1975). Barker claims that this sequence confuses our perception because there is no obvious connection between the movement of the camera and the movement, or even existence, of the characters. She writes, "Tarkovsky's framing and camera movements place us too close to the characters for us not to be intimately involved in the scene, and yet it refuses us an 'anchor' and a single direction that our intention and attention might take…We are immersed and involved in the space and time of the events of the film, but without a single body with whom to align ourselves unequivocally."[32] Based on this account, we might think that an unequivocal alignment between the moving camera and a single body would rule out the possibility of a disoriented viewer who momentarily struggles to make sense of the onscreen image. But *Seconds* demonstrates that it is possible to play with perception by tightening, not breaking, the alignment between camera and character. In *Seconds,* the camera is literally, not just metaphorically, anchored to an individual body, and it is precisely this anchoring that, rather than grounding and organizing our perception, renders it problematic instead.

The body that the *Seconds* mount brings into view is much different than the body being presented in the Arriflex ad featuring Stephens. The Man in the Station is not an able-bodied athlete. On the contrary, when we first see the character, he looks like he might be in some kind of medical distress. The extreme close-up that introduces Campanella cuts off his face below the nose, making it difficult for us to evaluate his expression, but his drooping right eye and sweaty brow convey a general impression of unwellness. Although he successfully tracks Hamilton

[32] Barker, *Tactile Eye,* 6.

through a crowd of commuters, we do not experience this movement as a display of agility, akin to Stephens skirting around trees on the ski slopes, because repeated chest-mounted shots of his sweaty, dead-eyed face make the character look less like an expert tail and more like a sleepwalker. The chase concludes when the Man in the Station hands a message to his target, but we would not have been surprised if it ended with him collapsing in a shivering heap instead. A camera technique that emerged, in the context of sports media, as an instrument for aestheticizing the in-control body has been reworked – reversed, even – by Frankenheimer into a technique for representing bodily distress.

An association between the body-with-camera and the body-in-distress continues when the technique makes its second appearance. After a circuitous journey, Hamilton arrives at the headquarters of The Company, where he unwittingly drinks a drugged cup of tea. Soon, extreme close-ups of Hamilton losing consciousness begin to intermix with chest-mounted shots of the character in a bizarre bedroom. Looking as vacant as the Man in the Station, Hamilton laboriously advances toward a young woman in a nightgown and, despite her panicked attempts to resist, he presses her beneath his bulk, as we watch from a back-mounted camera looking over his shoulder.[33] The character awakens with a start. He soon comes to understand that, while he was unconscious, Company agents used his pliant body to shoot an incriminating amateur film, in which he appears to sexually assault the young woman. The footage will be released if Hamilton refuses to sign a Company contract.

As in the Grand Central sequence, rather than glorifying the capabilities of an athlete, body-mounted camerawork once again provides the visual corollary for physical *incapability*.

---

[33] This is the camera system that we see in the production photo of Stephens and Frankenheimer working alongside each other, referred to at the beginning of this section.

The drug-addled Hamilton moves with even less grace than did the Man in the Station. It takes an inordinate amount of time for him to cross the short distance to the bed. His movements appear particularly bizarre in the over-the-shoulder shot that ends with Hamilton atop the young woman. As in the earlier shot of the Man in the Station turning to follow his target, body and camera are coordinated in a way that makes the character appear strangely immobile, as though Hamilton was being slowly lowered onto the young woman by an unseen crane. As before, the disorienting effect of the body-mounted camera is appropriate to the stupefied condition of the character. In this case, however, the appropriateness is further heightened by the fact that the body-mounted camera makes Hamilton look inert, like he is *being moved*, rather than moving under his own power, which, as we soon learn, is also a description of what happened to the character during his blackout, when he was manipulated into a series of incriminating positions. The language of "sharing…sensation," from the Arriflex ad featuring Stephens, also applies here, and we can now specify the nature of the sensation that binds character and viewer with an even higher degree of precision. We share something beyond disorientation. The body-mounted camerawork communicates, in visual terms, how it *feels* (and not just how it looks) to be treated like a life-sized human doll.

The body-mounted camera makes its final appearance in *Seconds* during a drunk scene. Hamilton, reborn as the painter Antiochus "Tony" Wilson, hosts a cocktail party for his new neighbors in Malibu. Two over-the-shoulder shots from a back-mounted camera appear amid handheld footage of Wilson drunkenly stumbling through groups of partygoers. In a variation on all the over-the-shoulder shots that we have seen up to this point, Hudson turns his head toward the back-mounted camera, so that we can see his face, which shows him, in the first instance, scowling at his guests and, in the second instance, smiling at his new lover Nora (Salome Jens).

His feelings toward her will change before the evening is over. When Wilson giddily refers to his previous existence as Hamilton, he discovers, to his horror, that Nora is an undercover Company agent assigned to ease his reintegration into society.

In order to make his drunken antics in the lead-up to this revelation more credible, Hudson received permission from Frankenheimer to go on a multi-day bender while shooting.[34] But the production photo of Hudson with the back-mounted camera suggests another possible explanation for the convincingness of his performance. Perhaps the body-mounted camera burdened Hudson in a way that helped him play a character who is unsteady on his feet. If Hudson did strain himself by wearing the camera, this would fly in the face of ads for products like the Leo-Pod, which specifically promoted body-mounted equipment as a way to *preven*t physical injury to the camera operator. One way to understand the role of body-mounted camerawork in *Seconds* would be to observe that the film, like these ads, takes a special interest in the vulnerability of the body. It likewise figures the body as something prone to giving out or breaking down. But whereas these ads present body-mounted camera equipment as a way to safeguard the vulnerable body, Frankenheimer deploys the same equipment as a means of indicating physical vulnerability. From its "monstrous" opening credits to its downbeat final sequence, where The Company executes the bound-and-gagged Wilson in an operating room with a surgical drill, *Seconds* confronts the viewer with bodies in crisis. The body-mounted camera always appears in combination with this theme, as a technique for incarnating the body that struggles. To be sure, *Seconds* is not the only film in which body-mounted camerawork indicates something physically wrong with a character. (Recall the delirium-tremens-induced fall

[34] Rock Hudson and Sara Davidson, *Rock Hudson: His Story* (New York: William Morrow, 1986), 142.

down the stairs from *The Lost Weekend,* for instance.) But, in *Seconds,* this combination of camera technique and subject matter is repeated with a frequency and consistency that transforms the pairing into a central motif.

The Painting Subplot

At first, the "painting subplot" of *Seconds* might seem like an incidental element. But despite occupying only a few minutes of screen time, Wilson's artistic strivings have an outsize importance, because they are another site of inquiry into the image-generating body. The subplot begins midway through the film when Wilson, still in recovery from rebirth, meets with his Company appointed "guidance advisor" Davalo. (The fact that Davalo is played by Khigh Dhiegh, who portrayed the jovial brainwasher in *The Manchurian Candidate*, will make anyone who has seen the earlier film immediately suspicious.) Davalo surprises his advisee with a tape recording where Wilson, in a drug-induced state of psychic regression, responds to the question "what would you like to do most of all?" As we listen to this recording, we hear Davalo dismiss Wilson's first answer, "I'd like to be a tennis pro," but the guidance advisor enthusiastically seizes upon his advisee's second answer: "I guess I'd like to paint stuff." We learn that Davalo and his Company colleagues have made elaborate plans for the former banker to begin a new career as an up-and-coming artist with a fully-equipped studio in Malibu, where he will have everything he needs to realize a desire that he does not remember expressing.

This *fait accompli* takes Wilson by surprise. "You mean I…I ought to be a painter?" he asks in confusion.[35] His incipient artistic career also comes as a surprise to the viewer. Before

[35] The character is considerably more obstinate in the source novel by David Ely, where Wilson tells his advisor "it sounded to me like my real desire was to play tennis. This business about painting seemed pretty tenuous." David Ely, *Seconds* (New York: Signet, 1964), 55.

this moment, the film has not given us any reason to think that the protagonist has a special interest in making art – or even looking at it.[36] In fact, until now, the only aesthetes in the film have all been employees of The Company. The office where Wilson literally signs his life away is decorated with paintings and sculptures. (He drinks the drugged tea beneath Picasso's "Mother and Child" [1921], for instance.) And the Old Man acclaims Wilson's new appearance as a "masterpiece," an aesthetic judgment that causes the head surgeon to swell with obvious pride in his creative accomplishment. While Davalo does not necessarily think of himself as an artist, he nonetheless leaps at Wilson's half-formed desire to "paint stuff," based on the stated belief that artistic practice can be therapeutic. The guidance advisor enthuses that "Painting allows a basic creative outlet, as well as an environment in which these sublimations will have free vent." He appears to have complete confidence that painting can soothe the soul.

This conception of painting as catharsis, as a "vent" for sublimated thoughts and feelings associates Davalo – and, more broadly, The Company – with a historically specific mode of thinking about the psychic life of the artist. In the years after World War II, art critics converged on a rough consensus about recent abstract painting in America, according to which advanced abstraction was an assertion of individual freedom in the face of a postwar world that sapped the human spirit in multiple ways.[37] One influential critic who wrote along these lines was Harold

---

[36] We have not seen, for instance, anything like the early moment in *Scarlet Street* (Fritz Lang, 1945), where the Sunday painter Chris Cross (Edward G. Robinson) works on a canvas in his bathroom, which clearly establishes his hobby as a means of escape from his otherwise dreary existence. For a discussion of this scene, see Tom Gunning, *The Films of Fritz Lang: Allegories of Vision and Modernity* (London: British Film Institute, 2000), 326-328.

[37] As many revisionist art critics and historians have noted, this position aligned nicely with American statecraft during the Cold War, because the individualist abstract painter could be adduced as evidence of American tolerance for freethinking, in contrast to the repressive cultural climate in the Soviet Union. For an influential version of this argument, see Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

Rosenberg, originator of the term "action painting."[38] While numerous critics shared Davalo's confidence in the psychic benefits of artistic practice, action painting provides a particularly productive frame of reference for the painting subplot in *Seconds*, because Rosenberg emphasizes a connection between these psychic benefits and the bodily movement of the artist. My decision to concentrate on action painting is also guided by the fact that, when *Seconds* was released, the influence of this concept was in precipitous decline. By the early 1960s, Rosenberg had lost considerable ground to his critical rival Clement Greenberg, whose more formalist mode of analysis, with its emphasis on qualities like "flatness," would ultimately displace action painting as the dominant paradigm for studying abstract art in America.[39] Therefore, in addition to marking a transitional moment in Hollywood cinematography, between the popularization of handheld camerawork and the introduction of the Steadicam, *Seconds* also bears witness to a turning point in art criticism. The film engages with the tenets of action painting at the moment when these ideas were losing their former authority.

In "The American Action Painters," Rosenberg claims that recent work by certain (unidentified) abstract painters demands a critical approach that focuses on the action undertaken by the artist in the throes of the creative process.[40] On this approach, the formal features of the artwork are interesting to the critic insofar as they are signs or traces that refer back to the proper

[38] Harold Rosenberg, "The American Action Painters," *Art News* 51, no. 8 (December 1952): 22-23, 48-50. The essay was subsequently anthologized in Harold Rosenberg, *The Tradition of the New* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 1994 [1960]), 23-39. All quotes are from the latter version.
[39] Irving Sandler gives some reasons for this shift in the art-critical balance of power in "Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg: Convergences and Divergences,"
[40] Rosenberg later stated that, in an early draft of the essay, he had named artists "like [Jackson] Pollock, [Hans] Hoffmann, and [Willem] de Kooning." Debra Bricker Balken, "Harold Rosenberg and the American Action Painters," in *Action/Abstraction: Pollock, de Kooning, and American Art, 1940-1976*, ed. Norman L. Kleeblatt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 211.

object of criticism, which is the action that brought the canvas into existence in the first place. This focus on action obligates the critic to develop a new vocabulary. Rosenberg writes:

> Criticism must begin by recognizing in the painting the assumptions inherent in its mode of creation. Since the painter has become an actor, the spectator has to think in a vocabulary of action: its inception, duration, direction – psychic state, concentration and relaxation of the will, passivity, alert waiting. He must become a connoisseur of the gradations between the automatic, the spontaneous, the evoked.[41]

The reference to "psychic state" in the context of a "vocabulary of action" confirms that action, for Rosenberg, also has a psychic dimension. The critic of action painting needs to attend to the physical movements that transform the surface of the canvas, as well as the transforming process that happens *within* the action painter as they actively handle their materials. This latter process of inner transformation can be a balm for the action painter, as Rosenberg makes clear in a subsequent essay, when he writes that, in action painting, "the act of painting is a catharsis – theoretically at least, it is able to reach the deepest knots of the artist's personality and to loosen them."[42] These same words could have been spoken by Davalo to Wilson.

This is not the only moment when Rosenberg chooses words that would also fit in the mouth of a Company employee. Rosenberg observes that many of the action painters arrived at their present work after a crisis in their personal and artistic past, which leads the critic to write that "Their type is not a young painter but a *re-born* one." Here, Rosenberg uses one of the most notable terms in the corporate lingo of The Company. "Rebirth. Life again. Begin again, all new, all different," says the Old Man, as he describes what The Company can do for Hamilton. The lofty language of "rebirth," so appropriate to the existentialist inflection of Rosenberg's essay, with its emphasis on struggle and liberation, proves to be just as effective as part of a corporate

---

[41] Rosenberg, "Action Painters," 29.
[42] Harold Rosenberg, "Toward an Unanxious Profession," in *The Anxious Object*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 15 (emphasis mine).

sales pitch. Near the end of his essay, Rosenberg warns that works in the style of action painting, and even the painters themselves, can become commodities, but, in this instance, it is his own critical language that has been co-opted by (fictional) corporate interests.

The connections with action painting multiply when the reborn Wilson arrives at his new home in Malibu. He makes an earnest attempt to paint, presumably in pursuit of the psychic relief that Rosenberg specifically associates with action painting and which Davalo generalizes to painting in general. His efforts are entirely contained in an approximately three-minute montage that shows the character adjusting to his new circumstances. Only four relatively short shots show him at work in his studio. The sequence begins with a close-up of paint being mixed on a palette. A handheld camera follows the loaded brush up to a blank canvas, where Wilson makes a few simple marks. Most of his body remains outside the frame, until a cut to a medium shot, also handheld, reveals his intense, unsmiling face. A few moments later, we return to the studio, where the character looks even less pleased than before. He makes some halting gestures toward his sketchpad, paces around the room, and then finally crumples up his unfinished drawing of an androgynous human figure. The fourth and final shot does not even show the content of the work underway. Due to the camera position, we can see Wilson standing in front of the canvas, with brush in hand, but not the surface of the canvas itself. The film makes us aware of our restricted view through dialogue, when Wilson's Company-provided manservant John (Wesley Addy) comments "That's very good, sir" – an evaluation with which we can neither agree or disagree (and, furthermore, which we cannot assume to be unbiased). These four shots are interspersed with images of Wilson engaged in other solitary activities outside his workspace. Frankenheimer shows him dining alone (and rebuffing John's suggestion to meet the neighbors), walking on the beach, and studying his face in a tri-fold mirror. The montage ends

with another such shot, which shows Wilson lying awake in bed at night, with his arms folded neatly across his chest, in the manner of a corpse awaiting burial.

Despite the high hopes of Davalo, Wilson does not thrive as a painter. We do not see him finish a single artwork, which means that the painting subplot is perhaps better described as the *not-painting* subplot. Nor does Wilson achieve the catharsis that he was promised by his guidance advisor. On the contrary, rather than allowing him to discharge his difficult emotions, painting seems to add to his unhappiness, an impression that we primarily develop based on the way that the character behaves in his studio, as opposed to the form or style of the objects that he produces there. This is particularly true in the case of the final shot of Wilson at work, in which the canvas has been deliberately withheld from the viewer.

This emphasis on Wilson's movements aligns the painting subplot with Rosenberg's call for a mode of art criticism where the creative process takes priority as the primary object of analysis. Precisely because it denies us access to any finished artwork made by Wilson, the film compels us to shift our attention in the direction advised by Rosenberg. At the same time, when we recall Rosenberg's contention that this critical mode requires a "vocabulary of action," one which is acutely sensitive to the physical – and, importantly, psychical – activity of the artist, we realize that Wilson's movements entirely lack the subtly and complexity that would make such a vocabulary necessary. The obviousness of his movements eliminates the need for viewer to exercise the connoisseurship of action that Rosenberg describes. For example, consider the third shot of Wilson in his studio, where he destroys his work in a fit of frustration. One can hardly imagine a more transparent (we could also say "clichéd") enactment of artistic angst. When he paces the studio with his hand on his chin, we do not feel the need for an expansive "vocabulary of action" that would put words to the fine details of his conduct. Furthermore, the obviousness

of his movements inside the studio are matched by the obviousness of his movements outside it, where the character acts out his loneliness in strikingly literal terms. Once again, it does not take a connoisseur of action to recognize the acts of walking alone on the beach and lying awake in bed as displays of ennui. In this montage, whatever Wilson happens to be doing, his poses and gestures have been evacuated of the subtleness that Rosenberg attributes to the exertions of the action painter.

It would be easy to understand the lack of subtlety as a failure of imagination on the part of the people who made *Seconds* – especially Hudson. Yet the obviousness of the imagery in this sequence actually works to the advantage of the film, because it indicates the comprehensiveness of Wilson's creative incapacity. From this perspective, his creative limitations are so severe that, besides being unable to finish a single artwork, he is unable to embody these difficulties in an original or interesting way. He does not merely fail as an artist; he fails to *move* like an artist – that is, to move in a way that would demand a connoisseurship of action on the part of the critic concerned to analyze the artistic process. Because Wilson experiences his deficient creativity as a set of limitations on his bodily movement, the painting subplot works in tandem with the body-mounted camerawork, which, in its three appearances, also becomes associated with physical incapacity. (Think of Hamilton struggling to make forward progress in the bedroom sequence). The painting subplot, like the cinematography, introduces an image-generating body in a context where bodily movement has become a problem.

As many commentators have noted, the influence of action painting as a critical concept was heightened by the circulation of films and photographs that showed Abstract Expressionist painters "in action," as it were. These documentary images functioned as visual corroboration for Rosenberg's account of the painting process as a strenuous trial for the mind and body. The most

famous of these images are undoubtedly those captured by Hans Namuth, who, beginning in 1950, shot two films and approximately five hundred photographs of Jackson Pollock.[43] While these images have been studied for their influence on art movements emergent in the 1950s and after, such as process art and body art, Namuth's work, especially the second film of Pollock – entitled simply *Jackson Pollock* (1951) – can also reveal much about *Seconds*.[44]

Painting is a solitary activity for the protagonists of *Jackson Pollock* and *Seconds* alike. The Namuth film immediately positions the artist as someone withdrawn from the wider world, with a slow pan across a rural landscape, which Pollock identifies, in voiceover, as his home on Long Island. No human beings appear in this establishing shot – not even Pollock himself. As the film continues, not a single person shares the screen with Pollock, with the exception of one unidentified woman (actually his wife and fellow artist Lee Krasner), who momentarily appears in a gallery with her back to the camera. While the beaches of Malibu make for a strong contrast with the woods of Long Island, Wilson's own combined living space/workspace on the opposite coast is equally secluded. Yet, in contrast to the Namuth film, where the conduciveness of social isolation to artistic excellence is never in doubt, Wilson does not become a better painter by cutting himself off from the world. By representing the painter as an antisocial genius-recluse, *Seconds* follows in the tradition of media like *Jackson Pollock*, only to raise doubts about whether this figure stands for a viable model of artistic creativity. This skepticism affiliates *Seconds* with larger-scale changes that were then underway in documentary representations of the artist's studio. According to Caroline A. Jones, in the 1960s, non-fiction film and television

---

[43] These numbers are taken from Francis V. O'Connor, "Hans Namuth's Photographs of Jackson Pollock as Art Historical Documentation," *Art Journal* 39, no.1 (Autumn 1979): 48.
[44] For the significance of the Namuth photographs for body art in particular, see Amelia Jones, "The 'Pollockian Performative' and the Revision of the Modernist Subject," in *Body Art/Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 53-102.

about living artists increasingly shifted away from depicting the studio as a closed, sacred space where an individual creator labored in solitude, in order to reimagine the studio as a lively social world, exemplified by Andy Warhol's Factory.[45] While *Seconds* does not explicitly ratify this alternate conception of the studio, the film certainly casts doubt on the individualistic model of artistic creation that this highly social studio would come to replace.

In *Jackson Pollock*, after the isolation of his Springs studio has been established, we watch the artist work on several paintings in this desolate environment. He begins with a canvas lying on a concrete platform, and then, in the best-known sequence of the film, he paints on a plate of glass that has been suspended horizontally above the camera. In each of these sequences, Pollock's painting practice abounds with idiosyncrasies that test our powers of description. When Rosenberg advised the reader to cultivate "vocabulary of action," he had mind a critic who was looking at an artwork, rather than a recording of the artmaking process. Yet *Jackson Pollock* demonstrates the value of Rosenberg's advice, because, in the absence of a rich "vocabulary of action," one would be hard pressed to describe what is happening onscreen or why it matters. For example, at one point in the first painting sequence, Pollock is performing a near-grapevine along the edge of the canvas, flinging paint onto its spattered surface as he moves back and forth, when the artist suddenly stops to dispose of the cigarette dangling from his lips, which he launches into the air like another of his liquid skeins. The movement feels significant in ways that are hard to put into words. Jones makes an attempt, when she suggests that this gesture is an "illustration of [Pollock's] fearless abandon," since he tosses the lit cigarette toward a patch of

[45] Caroline A. Jones, "Filming the Artist/Suturing the Spectator," in *Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 60-113. Jones, who discusses several Namuth films in detail, claims that this reconceptualization of the studio is evident from differences between *Jackson Pollock* and Namuth's later film *The Painter Willem de Kooning* (1964).

dry grass, where, we suppose, it could start a brushfire.[46] Whether or not we find this interpretation convincing, the ineffable interestingness of the gesture is confirmed by the fact that Jones could read it in such an unorthodox way, and, moreover, in a way that follows Rosenberg, by bringing together a physical movement with a psychic state ("fearless abandon").

The Namuth film also puts the visual style of the painting subplot into relief. In the first segment of *Jackson Pollock*, Namuth has remarkable success at keeping his subject in frame, even though the artist is in near constant motion. At various points, Namuth pans incrementally left or right and Pollock immediately steps into the empty onscreen space that has been created by the adjustment. It is typical for authors to describe Pollock's movements as dance-like, but this metaphor can be extended with the observation that this is a partnered dance, in which the camera continually responds to the movements of its enframed partner-subject. While the camera moves much more stiffly than does Pollock, this mechanical character never detracts from or interferes with the liveliness of the figure before the lens, unlike the body-mounted footage in *Seconds*, where, as a result of donning the camera, the actor moves like an automaton, with some means of propulsion other than natural human locomotion. Namuth's repeated reframings also stand in contrast to the relatively immobile shots of Wilson in his studio. The first pair are handheld, with some minimal shakiness, but the third and fourth shots are filmed from a static camera locked down on a tripod. The stillness of the camera in these latter two shots is noteworthy, because *Seconds* otherwise contains so many "camera pyrotechnics." The film repeatedly detonates these "camera pyrotechnics," most notably in the form of body-mounted

---

[46] Jones, "Filming the Artist," 73. For another example of an author grappling with the problem of putting words to Pollock's painting practice, see Francis V. O'Connor's comments about the relative advantages and disadvantages of "drip," "flow," and "pour" as descriptions of his technique. O'Connor, "Hans Namuth's Photographs," 48-49.

camerawork, in order to visualize visceral states of physical distress, and yet, even though, as we have already observed, Wilson experiences his creative difficulty as a physical struggle – as a struggle to move like an artist – the camera nonetheless remains unusually still. Unlike in *Jackson Pollock*, where the fancy footwork of the painter provides the impetus for adjustments and re-adjustments of the frame, Wilson's movements, such as they are, do not occasion a response from the camera. The character and the camera are similarly inert.[47]

After the montage that ends with Wilson lying awake in bed, there are only sporadic references to the painting subplot. At his catastrophic cocktail party, Wilson gives a slurred, rambling account of his creative process that sounds like a parody of Rosenbergian art criticism. "I paint naked," he tells one of his guests. "In this way, my inner essence is revealed and I am presented to the canvas in direct relationship in my primeval state without its sociological trappings."[48] This pastiche of "The American Action Painters" attests to fact that, after fifteen years, these ideas were open to parody, if not outright mockery. In the aftermath of the cocktail party, Wilson violates Company policy by returning to the home that he had lived in as Hamilton, where, without revealing his true identity, he asks his former wife for some watercolors that he had painted before his rebirth. (This is our first indication that Hamilton had painted anything at all in his former life). It is not perfectly clear why Wilson wants to recover

---

[47] The enervation of the camera, here, recalls the strategy that Frankenheimer used in the greenhouse sequence from his teleplay *The Days of Wine and Roses* (Playhouse 90; October 2, 1958), where the camera does not respond in-kind to the haphazard movements of Cliff Robertson. I discuss this sequence in more detail in chapter one.

[48] In particular, we can compare this line about freedom from "sociological trappings" to Rosenberg's famous statement that, for the action painters, "The big moment came when it was decided to paint…just TO PAINT. The gesture on the canvas was a gesture of liberation, from VALUE – political, esthetic, moral." Rosenberg, "Action Painters," 30. This travesty of Rosenberg is original to the screenplay. In the equivalent scene from the source novel, Wilson only states that he paints "stark naked" to "get at the truth." Ely, *Seconds*, 91.

these items, or whether he thinks they can help him overcome his present inability to paint, and we never receive an answer to these questions, because his wife has long since thrown the artworks away. The painting subplot recedes even further after this point. When The Company takes their disobedient client into custody, Wilson complains about "mistakes" that were made in the handling of his case, but he does not specifically fault Davalo or anyone else for setting him up to fail as an artist. The painting subplot seems to have run its course by the time that Wilson makes his final journey to the operating room.

Then again, the final moments of the film can also be understood as the painting subplot's true conclusion. Inside the operating room, blank-faced Company surgeons administer anesthesia to the bound-and-gagged Wilson, who ceases his futile struggle against his restraints. The head surgeon, who had been so buoyed by the earlier compliment to his "masterpiece," now speaks to Wilson with bitter regret: "You were my best work. I'm sorry it all has to end like this." Wilson is evidently not the only person in the film to know creative frustration. A few moments later, the head surgeon executes his unsalvageable human masterpiece with a cranial drill. As he lowers the death-dealing drill to Wilson's temple, the film cuts away from the procedure to a close-up of an overhead light. A change in the sound of the drill indicates that it has met flesh and bone, at which point the close-up dissolves into a long shot of an unidentifiable man, who walks along a beach that resembles the oceanfront vistas of Malibu. The distant figure carries a child on his shoulders, while a dog plays at his feet. After quivering for a few seconds, this image appears to pull itself apart, just like the ebbing and flowing orifices of the opening title sequence. The credits begin to roll.

One way to understand this final shot would be to say that, at long last, Wilson has succeeded in the struggle dramatized throughout the painting subplot, that is, the struggle to

generate an image. The final of shot of the man and child on the beach seems to have originated from within the character, who, until this point, has been unable to bring a single original image to completion. On this account, the final shot manifests a creative will that Wilson had heretofore been unable to actualize. Two additional points need to be made about this possibility. On the one hand, if this image *did* originate from Wilson, then it must necessarily be understood as the creation of an image-generating body, because, by the time that this shot appears, the body is all that remains of the character. After all, we have already heard the cranial drill end his life. On the other hand, we must concede that, as a representation of happiness, this idyllic image is just as generic as the various shots where Wilson literalized his loneliness by walking alone on the beach or lying awake in bed. Does this final shot represent a triumph for Wilson, who has finally exercised the powers of image-making latent within his body, or does this shot sadly confirm his fundamental un-creativity, his inability to ever do or make anything original? This is the choice that Frankenheimer leaves us with.

Second Comings

Seconds was neither a critical nor commercial success upon its original release. Despite his distaste for the credits sequence, Stephen Farber was actually kinder to *Seconds* than most of his fellow critics. When the film premiered at the 1966 Cannes Film Festival, something that Frankenheimer insisted upon, it was booed by the audience. Over time, however, the critical reputation of the film has improved, and many of these appreciative re-evaluations have focused on its cinematography.[49] In November 1997, *American Cinematographer* published a multi-page

[49] Though *Seconds* had already developed a cult following by the 70s, a turning point in its reception history occurred in the mid 80s, when it became public knowledge that Hudson was not straight. This disclosure made it possible to understand various aspects of the narrative, like

tribute to the film, which posited *Seconds'* "liberation of the motion picture camera" as the true starting point for the American New Wave (meaning, roughly, the Hollywood Renaissance).[50] The article also predicted that, with the film now available on home video in its proper widescreen aspect ratio, *Seconds* would influence "a nascent generation of cinematographers and directors who will shape the cinema of the 21st century."[51]

This reappraisal of *Seconds* appeared at the same moment when the film's distinctive approach to body-mounted cinematography was beginning to proliferate on American screens, both large and small. This approach – where the camera-equipped body appears in the frame and this appearance coincides with a character's physical struggle – had remained uncommon throughout the 70s and 80s. Certainly, there were some examples: a chest-mounted long-take from *Mean Streets* (Martin Scorsese, 1973), where a booze-soaked Harvey Keitel gleefully stumbles around a bar and passes out on a table; or the ending of the Blaxploitation film *Truck Turner* (Jonathan Kaplan, 1974), which features body-mounted close-ups of Yaphet Kotto as his bullet-ridden crime-boss character bleeds out in the streets. But these were exceptions to the rule. The dominant practice of body-mounted camerawork in this period was Steadicam cinematography, and, more specifically, "invisible" Steadicam cinematography, based on the aesthetic ideal that Steadicam shooting should not betray the physical presence of the operator

---

the obligation for "reborns" to keep their status secret, in allegorical terms, as resonant with Hudson's own experiences as a sexual minority. See, for example, Richard Dyer, "Rock – The Last Guy You'd Have Figured?," in *The Culture of Queers* (London: Routledge, 2002), 169-170.

[50] Vincent LoBrutto, "The Surreal Images of *Seconds*," *American Cinematographer* 78, no. 11 (November 1997): 98. This claim that *Seconds* announces the beginning of the Hollywood Renaissance (or the American New Wave, or the New Hollywood, depending on parlance) is a relatively familiar one. For instance, in their *Short History of the Movies*, Gerald Mast and Bruce Kawin list *Seconds* as one possible moment "when the old American movie reawakened as the new American cinema." Gerald Mast and Bruce Kawin, *A Short History of the Movies*, 7th ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000), 431.

[51] LoBrutto, "Surreal Images," 104.

connected to the camera. The priority that Steadicam operators place, and still place, on smooth operation often imbued their shots with an almost-but-not-quite-human quality, where the camera appears to correspond with the viewpoint of a character, but moves with a sinuous fluidity that exceeds the capabilities of any human being.[52] Many filmmakers, not least Stanley Kubrick with *The Shining* (1980), quickly recognized that this ambiguity made the Steadicam uniquely suitable for horror films.[53] As a result, rather than being cognate with the all-too-human struggle to move, like the body mounts from *Seconds*, the Steadicam instead developed a consistent, albeit not universal, association with the excessive mobility of entities unbound by natural laws.

The state of body-mounted cinematography began to shift in the mid 1990s with the appearance of other kinds of camera-equipped bodies in music videos. The directing team of Jonathon Dayton and Valerie Faris included several body-mounted shots with a *Seconds*-style visible operator in their high-profile video for “1979” (1996) by Smashing Pumpkins, and their subsequent video for “Go Deep” (1998) by Janet Jackson placed even greater emphasis on the technique. Another directing team that adopted the technique was the Icelandic duo known as the Snorri Brothers, who prominently used it in their video for “Chunky Black Shoes” (1996) by Maul Girls. Since then, the phrase “Snorricam” has become a generic term for body-mounted

[52] Daniel Morgan describes this almost-but-not-quite-human quality as follows: “The Steadicam provides an experience of movement that both is and is not like that of human motility…The camera seems to become a kind of character that is within the world of the film yet also not quite of it.” Daniel Morgan, *The Lure of the Image: Epistemic Fantasies of the Moving Camera* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021), 183-184.
[53] Jean-Pierre Geuens, for one, notes the repeated use of the Steadicam to convey “a floating menace [that] impressively emanates from nonhumans,” and cites *Wolfen* (Michael Wadleigh, 1981), *The Witches* (Nicholas Roeg, 1990), and *Alien^3* (David Fincher, 1992) as examples. Jean-Pierre Geuens, “Visuality and Power: The Work of the Steadicam,” *Film Quarterly* 47, no. 2 (winter 1993-1994): 17n26.

camerawork where the operator appears in the frame, as well as the title of a company associated with the Brothers, which rents official Snorricam rigs and accessories. In 2015, *Slate* published a video compilation entitled "History of the Snorricam" that demonstrates the increasing circulation of the technique within the contemporary media environment. Of the approximately forty film and television examples included in the four-minute compilation, more than thirty clips date from the 2000s or the 2010s.[54]

How can we explain the rapid rise of the Snorricam in Hollywood? One explanation might appeal to the concept of "intensified continuity," which is the name that David Bordwell gives to the dominant visual style of American movies since about 1960.[55] According to Bordwell, intensified continuity aims at the near-continuous visual stimulation of the viewer. Since we become habituated to specific visual techniques over time, filmmakers are constantly searching for new ways to grab and hold our attention. Therefore, we might suppose that, over the past twenty years, directors have turned to the Snorricam as a replacement for other devices that have lost their power to shock and surprise as a consequence of overuse. But, if this is the case, why did most directors wait so long before turning to the body-mounted camera? Why did the body-mounted camera boom not happen immediately after *Seconds* provided a showcase for the technique?

---

[54] Slate, "History of the Snorricam," uploaded April 24, 2015, *YouTube* video, 2:31, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xr73ez4lqDI. The omission of any music video examples, as well as a title declaring the Snorricam "the ultimate *cinematic* shorthand for disorientation" (emphasis mine), means that this history passes over the crucial role of music video directors, like the Snorri Brothers, in the popularization of the technique that now bears their name.
[55] David Bordwell, "Intensified Continuity: Visual Style in Contemporary American Film," *Film Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (Spring 2002): 16-28. Bordwell later expanded on these arguments in *The Way Hollywood Tells It: Story and Style in Modern Movies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

Technological developments can help answer these questions about the untimely return of body-mounted camerawork in the style of *Seconds*. As camera equipment has become smaller and lighter, it has become possible to mount the camera on a wider range of performers, including people who might have lacked the strength or stature to support apparatuses like those conveyed by the brawny operator-actors of *Seconds.* (And, even then, conveyed with difficulty, as we can tell from the production photo of Hudson). According to Frankenheimer, it was only feasible to mount the camera on Campanella for the Grand Central chase because the actor was an "extremely strong man."[56] By the 90s, less burdensome equipment made the technique a practical possibility for more bodies in more situations, as exemplified by the music videos for "1979" and "Go Deep," which both attach chest-mounted cameras to teenage characters. In the years since these examples, body mounts have only become more accessible, not to mention more affordable. A YouTube tutorial from 2015 instructs viewers on the construction of their own DIY Snorricam using only a tripod and two belts.[57]

This tutorial specifically credits Darren Aronofsky's addiction drama *Requiem for a Dream* (2000) with popularizing the Snorricam, but it is more appropriate to connect the rise of the technique with Aronofsky's larger body of work. In collaboration with the cinematographer Matthew Libatique, Aronofsky first used body-mounted camerawork with a visible operator on his debut feature film *Pi* (1998). Producer Eric Watson happened to be present during the shoot for "Chunky Black Shoes," and he borrowed the body mount that was used to make *Pi* directly from the Snorri Brothers themselves. The protagonist of *Pi*, the sole subject of the body-mounted

---

[56] John Frankenheimer, "Commentary," *Seconds,* Blu-ray, (New York: Criterion Collection, 2013).
[57] Active Ingredient Creative Studio, "How to Make a SnorriCam with a Tripod and Two Belts," uploaded March 17, 2015, *YouTube* video, 2:46, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZXeHOkU15K0.

shots, suffers from a range of maladies, including a mysterious protrusion from his temple, which finally leads him to perform a self-administered trepanning. (Like *Seconds*, the film ends with the death of the protagonist from a drill wound to the head.) *Requiem for a Dream* further tightens the connection between body-mounted camerawork and physical struggle, in a way that aligns even more closely with the deployment of the technique in *Seconds*. An exemplary sequence comes from the final third of the film, by which point all four of the central characters are in the depths of substance abuse. We alternate between chest-mounted and back-mounted shots of the disheveled Marion (Jennifer Connolly) as she leaves an apartment, rides an elevator, exits the building, and promptly vomits onto the chest-mounted camera, which collects both spatters of bodily fluid and raindrops from the thundering sky above.

But *Requiem for a Dream* is not *Seconds*. Smaller and lighter gear makes it possible for the camera-equipped body to enact significantly different kinds of movement. In a marked departure from *Seconds,* where each of the camera-laden actors portrays a lumbering, burdened figure, Aronofsky and his collaborators attach the camera to an actor moving at full speed. In a scene where Tyrone (Marlon Wayans) flees a drug deal gone wrong, Wayans wears a chest-mounted camera that centers his blood-stained, tear-streaked face and, at points, also admits his clenched hands, which pop in and out of frame as he furiously pumps his arms. Aronofsky intercuts these body-mounted shots with shaky handheld shots looking ahead from Tyrone's perspective, an alternation that lasts until a police officer wrestles his hard-charging body into submission.

In the years since *Requiem for a Dream*, this technique – where the camera is attached to a sprinter, not a stumbler – has become a standard approach to body-mounted cinematography. We might think of Tom Wilkinson bolting out of a church building in *The Exorcism of Emily*

Rose (Scott Derrickson, 2006) as demons descend upon him, or of Jonah Hill careening through a hotel lounge in *Get Him to the Greek* (Nicholas Stoller, 2010) after receiving an injection of adrenaline straight to the heart. This technique has even crossed over into animated films like *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse* (Joaquim Dos Santos, Kemp Powers, and Justin K. Thompson; 2023), where the virtual camera moves as though it is strapped to the snout of the rampaging Lizard. These highly-mobile camera-equipped bodies confirm that, while *Seconds* provided a showcase for body-mounted camerawork, Frankenheimer's film did not exhaust its expressive potential. The decades since the 90s have thus marked a moment of both return and reinvention for the body-mounted camera. The deployment from *Seconds* has achieved widespread circulation at last, while an alternate approach, focused on a camera-equipped body that moves with less restriction, has also gone into general use. Then again, this alternate approach is itself continuous with an earlier tradition of body-mounted camerawork, because it harkens back to the speed of 60s sports cinematographers like Stephens, albeit not necessarily their discipline and control.

On the official Snorricam website, in addition to how-to videos with titles like "SC Harness – How to Put On," one also finds a short promotional video entitled "Snorricam Story" that recounts the history of the namesake device. It is no surprise that *Pi* figures prominently in this retelling, which incorporates interviews with Aronofsky, Libatique, and Watson. In the present, we see Libatique handling a new Snorricam model, and his remark about its superior capabilities, compared to the original version from the 1990s, leads into a final section of the video that covers several recent developments in Snorricam technology. One such innovation is a software program that digitally erases the Snorricam harness and support from full-body shots of the camera-equipped actor. We see several examples, where chest-mounted cameras point back

at actors from a distance and angle that would surely include the body mount in the frame, if the equipment had not been hidden from view by a software program. The resulting footage retains the characteristic visual effect of the Snorricam, with its strange discordance between figure and ground, only now the figure appears in its entirety. An unidentified speaker on the soundtrack enthusiastically refers to the "stitch" that renders the body mount invisible.

The stitch-enabled Snorricam makes the connection between body and image hard to recognize. The result is something akin to the opening credits of *Seconds*, where we see distortions that derive from the bodily movements of technicians working for Saul and Elaine Bass, even though these bodies are not themselves available for direct observation. Yet the concealment of the image-generating body that occurs during these credits is actually atypical of *Seconds*, a film that otherwise makes such bodies visually and thematically central. Even putting aside the surgical metaphor, the basic idea of the equipment-erasing Snorricam "stitch" recalls the secretiveness of The Company, which imposes a code of silence on its clients, forbidding them from acknowledging that their new lives, including their new bodies, are artificial constructions. The appropriate metaphor for the role of the image-generating body in *Seconds* is ultimately less the stitch than the scar, something that remains insistently present, testifying equally to how the body can change and how it can be harmed.

Chapter Four
In the Zone of the Blockbuster

"The film-maker who really influenced me more than any other is John Frankenheimer."

Steven Spielberg, *Sight and Sound* (Spring 1977)[1]

Like the film that surrounded it, the podrace sequence from *Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace* (George Lucas, 1999) was a showcase for computer-generated spectacle. While the sequence incorporates some pre-digital special effects techniques, such as miniature photography, numerous shots showing young Anakin Skywalker (Jake Lloyd) piloting his podracer across the desert planet Tatooine are entirely digital creations. Visual effects supervisor John Knoll stated that for "large chunks" of the sequence "it's all computer generated and there's nothing real anywhere," adding that the manufacture of digital images *ex nihilo* presented a special challenge to his team: "When you're starting with *nothing* like that, the work can be difficult" (emphasis in original).[2] One way that Knoll and his collaborators overcame this difficulty was to draw on reference footage excerpted from notable racing films of the past – including John Frankenheimer's *Grand Prix* (1966).[3] This footage helped the effects artists determine the rhythm of the podrace at the previsualization stage, and these excerpts remained important throughout the production process, even providing templates for some final effects shots.

In many ways, *Grand Prix* was a natural choice of cinematic source material. *Phantom Menace* writer-director George Lucas briefly worked as a second-unit camera operator on *Grand*

[1] Richard Combs, "Primal Scream: An Interview with Steven Spielberg," *Sight and Sound* 46, no. 2 (Spring 1977): 113.
[2] Ron Magid, "A New-Age Armada," *American Cinematographer* 80, no. 9 (September 1999): 117.
[3] Magid, "Armada," 112. Other films referenced by the effects team included *Le Mans* (1971), *National Velvet* (1944), and *Ben-Hur* (1959).

Prix, and returned to assist Saul Bass with the editing of its opening credits sequence.[4] Furthermore, the two films were both conceived and marketed as proving grounds for the latest and greatest filmmaking technology. Just as *The Phantom Menace* announced the state of the art in CGI (and digital cinema more broadly), *Grand Prix* flaunted never-before-used car-mounted camera apparatuses. In other ways, however, the two films are ill-matched. The technological innovations of *Grand Prix* were specifically intended to make it possible for the filmmakers to shoot races "live," without recourse to special-effects techniques such as rear projection. A trade advertisement by the camera equipment provider Gordon Enterprises, promoting its contributions to *Grand Prix*, declared that "All racing sequences are **real**, made on the track, from fast-moving 'Formula' and 'G1' racing cars" (bolding in original).[5] The makers of *The Phantom Menace* clearly admired the earlier film's innovations, but, in their appropriation, these effects artists negated the aesthetic principle that had made Frankenheimer's film look distinctive upon its original release, namely the prioritization of live-action, on-location cinematography over visual illusion. A film where "all racing sequences are **real**" became the basis of a sequence where there is frequently "nothing real anywhere."

The complex relationship between *Grand Prix* and *The Phantom Menace* situates John Frankenheimer somewhere in the vicinity of a billion-dollar-grossing blockbuster. This distant relation to blockbuster cinema was by no means atypical for the director, as the attestation from Steven Spielberg at the beginning of this chapter suggests. At various points from the mid-1970s onward, Frankenheimer made films and other media that engaged with the blockbuster, though without ever exemplifying it in straightforward terms. A fraught relationship to the blockbuster,

---

[4] Brian Jay Jones, *George Lucas: A Life* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2016), 64, 66. I discuss the *Grand Prix* credits sequence in more detail in chapter two.
[5] Gordon Enterprises, advertisement, *American Cinematographer* 48, no. 1 (January 1967): 16.

often associated with ideological and aesthetic conservatism, should not be misconstrued as an argument that Frankenheimer was committed to a more experimental cinematic practice that never achieved blockbuster-level success because it did not pander to an unsophisticated public. On the contrary, Frankenheimer was a clear-eyed pragmatist who understood that his continued employability as a Hollywood director depended on a demonstrated ability to reach a mass audience.[6] Frankenheimer desperately *wanted* to make crowd-pleasing popular entertainment; he just seldom succeeded.

Frankenheimer often spoke candidly about his longing for a major commercial hit. Early in the production of *French Connection II* (1975), he expressed disappointment that his previous film, *The Impossible Object* (AKA *Story of a Love* Story; 1973), had never played outside film festivals in the United States. "I want to make pictures that one sees," he said. "There's a great public out there and you have to reach them. Otherwise you're not in the movie business."[7] Two decades later, his goal remained the same, even though the "great public" had repeatedly spurned his films in the interim. During the promotional cycle for his television movie *Against the Wall* (1994), Frankenheimer confessed: "Do I miss making the big Christmas picture for Paramount? Yes, of course, I do. But television is a way of getting back to doing that."[8] Although he would,

---

[6] Frankenheimer encapsulated his understanding of the relationship between employability and mass appeal in a 1979 interview: "If you're in a business you've got to create some kind of profit for the business. You've got to bring in more than you've spent, otherwise they're going to fire you, you're not going to work. And what you have to do is try to figure out subjects that appeal to an audience. And you have to hope that you're right. And then, once you decide on that subject, you must never compromise it." Ralph Appelbaum, "John Frankenheimer Speaks to Ralph Appelbaum (1979)," in *John Frankenheimer: Interviews, Essays, and Profiles*, ed. Stephen B. Armstrong, (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2013), 66.

[7] Mary Blume, "Fathering a *Connection* Offspring," *Los Angeles Times*, September 1, 1974, M20.

[8] Bernard Weinraub, "Back to Hollywood's Bottom Rung and Climbing," *New York Times,* March 24, 1994, C13. The "big Christmas picture for Paramount" is a reference to *Grand Prix*, which premiered December 21, 1966. In this chapter, I focus on Frankenheimer's engagements

on other occasions, proclaim the aesthetic distinction of cable television compared to commercial cinema, here Frankenheimer is forthright about his cable work being a means to future opportunities in the film industry, namely the opportunity to direct a "big" studio production with a prime release date – in other words, a blockbuster.

With these remarks, Frankenheimer communicates his desire to make a blockbuster without ever using that exact term. As commentators on blockbuster cinema frequently observe, it is a familiar concept with recognizable features, but also highly resistant to precise definition. Early in his *American Blockbuster*, Charles Acland lists a number of sufficient but not necessary conditions for the designation. He writes, "'Blockbuster movies' alludes to tonnage, to outsize production budgets, unusually elaborate promotional campaigns, and significant box-office results. Only one of these attributes is required for the term to apply, so one hears of low-budget blockbuster hits and high-budget blockbusters that are box-office flops."[9] The introduction to the anthology *Movie Blockbusters* makes the terminological uncertainty sound even more daunting. Julian Stringer claims that no list of blockbuster attributes, however long, could ever be exhaustive: "Because the blockbuster has no essential characteristics, it can *never* be defined" (emphasis mine).[10] Stringer frames the (insoluble) problem of defining the term as primarily a *theoretical* issue, not so different from other open questions in film studies, like the purview of "film noir." One obvious response to this theoretical confusion is the recourse to greater

---

with blockbuster cinema since the mid 70s, but he had varied connections to the phenomenon before this moment. *Grand Prix* exemplifies several notable features of the pre-70s blockbuster, including an epic length (179 minutes) and large-gauge exhibition format (70mm Cinerama).

[9] Charles Acland, *American Blockbuster: Movies, Technology, and Wonder* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 6.

[10] Though, of course, the absence of essential characteristics could itself be understood as an essential characteristic. Julian Stringer, "Introduction," in *Movie Blockbusters*, ed. Julian Stringer (New York: Routledge, 2003), 10.

historical specificity. This is the approach that Sheldon Hall and Steve Neale take in their *Epics, Spectacles, and Blockbusters*. The authors survey “large-scale, high-cost” productions during various moments film history, with an emphasis on the biggest hits and some mention of infamous flops.[11] (*Heaven’s Gate* [Michael Cimino, 1980] makes its expected appearance in the section on late-70s “Super Blockbusters,” for instance.)[12] Based on these notable examples, the authors describe certain characteristics of blockbuster cinema as prevailing at different points in time, with full awareness that these generalizations do not hold for long.

I take a different approach to the historical variability of the blockbuster. Drawing on a range of blockbuster-adjacent media that Frankenheimer directed between the mid 70s and the early 00s, I show how non-canonical, non-dominant examples – neither record-setting successes nor studio-ruining failures – can also illuminate significant turning points in the historical development of blockbuster cinema. In tracking these permutations of the blockbuster, we come to recognize that, besides existing in the realm of theory, the question “What is a blockbuster?” also posed a *practical* problem for Frankenheimer, one that he never satisfactorily solved, despite his best efforts. This losing struggle might seem like a simple demonstration of the screenwriter William Goldman’s well-known pronouncement that, when it comes to predicting box-office success or failure, “Nobody knows anything.”[13] But this dictum does not quite capture how Frankenheimer experienced his own alienation from the “great public.” Frankenheimer repeatedly believed that he *did* know something. He thought that he was making films that people – a lot of people – would want to see, only to be proven wrong again and again.

---

[11] Sheldon Hall and Steve Neale, *Epics, Spectacles and Blockbusters: A Hollywood History* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010), 1.
[12] Hall and Neale, *Epics, Spectacles, and Blockbusters,* 231-232.
[13] William Goldman, *Adventures in the Screen Trade*: *A Personal View of Hollywood and Screenwriting* (New York: Warner Books, 1983), 39.

In no case did Frankenheimer make an unqualified blockbuster (assuming that there even is such a thing). Yet in each instance he nonetheless entered into what I call the *zone of the blockbuster*. This spatial metaphor is appropriate to the visual style of the media in question, since Frankenheimer's variations on blockbuster aesthetics frequently involve an alternate approach to cinematic space, especially the relation between space and technology. Studying these variations provides a model for a different kind of blockbuster history, one in which the central examples are not chosen on the basis that they possess, or not, certain key features. Instead, it is a history that is constructed around films where these features are tweaked, around examples that do not fit easily into emerging or established patterns. Such films not only tell us what blockbuster cinema has been, but also, and fascinatingly, provide a sense of what it *might* have been.

Coverage against Control

Frankenheimer liked to claim that he was chosen to direct *French Connection II* because he spoke French. On his telling, Fox executives were interested in shooting a follow-up to *The French Connection* (William Friedkin, 1971) on location in Marseilles, and his language skills made it reasonable for the studio to overlook the fact that he had not scored even a minor hit in nearly a decade.[14] This career slide, and the possibility that *French Connection II* might turn it around, was frequently mentioned in press coverage of the film. A pre-release article in the *Chicago Tribune* opens as follows: "What happens to a Wonder Boy – a much-acclaimed young director rising slowly out of the West, merely biding his time before the inevitable Academy

[14] Charles Champlin, *John Frankenheimer: A Conversation*, (Burbank: Riverwood Press, 1995), 139.

Award – who gets deferred? Does he melt away like celluloid under a spotlight? Or does he dust off his passport long enough to make the sequel to a blockbuster film he had nothing to do with?"[15] Besides demonstrating that Frankenheimer's setbacks were now a major element of his public persona, something that would continue for the remainder of his life, this opening paragraph suggests the formidableness of the task that the filmmaker faced. *French Connection II* was not just a sequel, but the sequel to a "blockbuster." More specifically, the original *French Connection* was a prime example of the surprise blockbuster. A modestly budgeted genre film, it became the third highest grossing release of 1971, and received critical acclaim to match its commercial dominance, including an Academy Award for Best Picture.[16] This was the standard that Frankenheimer would be measured against.

By relocating the action to a foreign destination, *The French Connection II* immediately marks its difference from the original in spatial terms. The film focuses on the culture clash that occurs when slovenly New York detective Popeye Doyle (Gene Hackman) travels to Marseilles in pursuit of the drug kingpin Alain Charnier (Fernando Rey), who had narrowly escaped capture at the end of the previous film. (A concluding intertitle had informed viewers that the fugitive was "believed to be living in France.") In addition to showcasing the existing environs of Marseilles, Frankenheimer also understood himself to be constructing another type of space. He sought to produce a space that would be a "creative atmosphere" for Hackman, in which the performer could fully exercise his acting abilities, especially his aptitude for in-character

[15] Pat Colander, "Frankenheimer Plugs in a Second *Connection*," *Chicago Tribune*, May 18, 1975, E14.
[16] David A. Cook, *Lost Illusions: American Cinema in the Shadow of Watergate and Vietnam, 1970-1979*, History of the American Cinema, vol. 9 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2000), 104.

improvisation.[17] While the phrase "creative atmosphere" might suggest an intangible mood or feeling, in many cases, this atmosphere was highly material. Frankenheimer requested "real cells, not just scenery cells" for a sequence where the jailed Doyle suffers through "cold turkey" heroin withdrawal, so that the actor could thrash around at full strength without bringing the set crashing down around him (as had happened to Burt Lancaster during production of Frankenheimer's prison film *Birdman of Alcatraz* [1962]).[18] Props were part of this approach too. For the same withdrawal sequence, Frankenheimer ordered a plate of food on the assumption that Hackman might find some use for it, which the actor quickly did, transforming a chicken leg and apple into a bat and ball for a semi-coherent monologue about a long-ago New York Yankees tryout.[19] He even integrated the objects into his dialogue: "I hit the fucking apple ball with the fucking stick."

The phrase "creative atmosphere" can also describe the type of space that Frankenheimer, in collaboration with cinematographer Claude Renoir, constructed with the camera – or, more accurately, cameras. *French Connection II* involved extensive multiple-camera shooting, largely to increase the likelihood of capturing Hackman's improvised behavior. As Frankenheimer explained, "With Hackman, he does so many things that are improvised, that you could never capture again, that it pays to have more than one camera on him."[20] The director favored wide shots of Hackman for similar reasons. Close-ups would sacrifice too many of the bodily movements, especially hand movements, that contributed to his characterization of Doyle. In combination, these techniques (multiple-camera shooting and full-figure shot scales) situated

[17] John Frankenheimer, "Commentary," *French Connection II*, DVD (Beverly Hills: Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2001).
[18] Champlin, *Conversation*, 139.
[19] Champlin, *Conversation*, 139.
[20] Frankenheimer, "Commentary," *French Connection II*.

Hackman within an expansive visual field, capacious enough to warrant the term "atmosphere," which the actor could traverse without hitting pre-established marks. Working in the zone of the blockbuster, Frankenheimer constructed a *zone of coverage* that was not coextensive with the area surveyed by any single camera.

Besides being numerous, these multiple cameras were often concealed. When shooting outdoors on the streets of Marseilles, Frankenheimer resorted to what he called "hidden camera stuff," which involved a number of elaborate deceptions.[21] He shot from inside sheds that had been built by the production team, as well as unmarked vans with black drapes over the windows.[22] One deliberate effect of these measures is that Hackman inhabits the zone of coverage alongside passersby who do not realize they are being filmed, adding another element of improvisation to the resulting footage. In the same way that multiple-camera shooting was designed to accommodate Hackman's unpredictable performance style, "hidden camera stuff" was intended to capture the unscripted behavior of heedless pedestrians-turned-performers.

An early sequence where Doyle is tailed by the local police, leading to a confrontation with his French liaison Henri Barthélméy (Bernard Fresson), exemplifies this filmmaking method. As we listen to an off-screen Barthélméy complain about the plan to use Doyle as "bait" for Charnier, we see snippets of the erstwhile New Yorker looking out of place at various locations around the city. In one of several shots showing Doyle drifting through a crowd, he harasses people with the catchphrase of the ugly American: "Do you speak English?" Most passersby ignore their Hawaiian-shirted inquisitor, prompting a series of exasperated hand gestures from Hackman, presumably illustrating the expressive body language that

[21] Champlin, *Conversation*, 140.
[22] Patrick McGilligan, "The Man Who Makes Popeye Run," *Boston Globe*, May 18, 1975, A8; Champlin, *Conversation*, 139.

Frankenheimer was concerned not to lose in a tight close-up. Yet one woman, after taking several strides past Hackman, turns around to study him. Similar gestures become even more prominent as the sequence continues. When Doyle corners Barthélméy and his lunch date on the street outside a restaurant, several people turn to watch the confrontation. First, three men in the background sneak looks at the actors, and then, a few moments later, so does a woman in the foreground, who walks between the (hidden) camera and the cast members, momentarily blocking one of them from view (figure 4.1). On his audio commentary, Frankenheimer takes particular pleasure in this latter look: "See her look at them. I love things like that."[23] One reason that the director approved the reaction was that it avoided a problem that he regularly encountered in scenes of this nature, where something attention-grabbing happens in public. Paid extras tended not to look, even though this would be entirely appropriate, even expected, because they knew that the incident was staged. Returning to the notion of a "creative atmosphere," we could say that "hidden camera stuff" generated such an atmosphere for non-actors, in the sense that it elicited a "natural" performance that was otherwise hard to achieve.

[23] Frankenheimer, "Commentary," *French Connection II*.

Figure 4.1 A non-actor caught on hidden camera obstructs the cast in *French Connection II* (John Frankenheimer, 1975)

None of these methods were innovations by Frankenheimer – far from it. Though relatively rare during the studio era, multiple-camera shooting had become more common over the 1960s and, during the 1970s, it was employed on productions of all kinds.[24] Sidney Lumet, Frankenheimer's old mentor, used two or three handheld cameras to shoot several improvised sequences for *Dog Day Afternoon* (1975), released the same year as *French Connection II*.[25] The juxtaposition of actors and non-actors was likewise familiar to audiences. The original *French Connection* had involved extensive location shooting on the bustling streets of New York, although *American Cinematographer* reported that the crew was less concerned with hiding their equipment, on the (apparently correct) assumption that New Yorkers would be too blasé to give

[24] David Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It: Story and Style in Modern Movies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 153-154.
[25] Sidney Lumet, *Making Movies* (New York: Vintage Books), 89.

it much notice.[26] Besides combining actors and non-actors, "hidden camera stuff" also blurs fiction and non-fiction, and this too was an increasingly common practice in the 70s, across fiction films and documentaries alike. *Medium Cool* (Haskell Wexler, 1969) had inserted its protagonists into "real" situations, specifically the protests at the 1968 Democratic National Convention. And *In Danger and Deep Distress, the Middleway Spells Certain Death* (Alexander Kluge, 1974), provides an even more contemporaneous example of the same strategy.

What makes the coverage-based, improvisation-conducive cinematography of *French Connection II* notable is its appearance in the context of blockbuster cinema at a moment *just before* the aesthetics of the blockbuster are redefined around the maximization of visual control. Building on the general consensus that the 1970s are a decisive decade in blockbuster history, Julie Turnock claims that *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977) and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (Steven Spielberg, 1977) establish the basic visual template that effects-heavy blockbusters have followed ever since. She names these films "expanded blockbusters," a reference to Gene Youngblood's *Expanded Cinema* (1970), and explains that their distinctive look resulted from merging traditional optical effects practices with experimental animation techniques, a combination that massively increased filmmakers' ability to manipulate the image.[27] The intensively manipulated mise-en-scene of the expanded blockbuster marked "a move toward realizing the goal of the *total control of all elements of the frame*" (emphasis in original), an aspiration that continues to determine the stylization of blockbuster cinema in the era of CGI, when the image has become even more pliant.[28] Of course, "total control over all elements of the

[26] "Photographing *The French Connection*," *American Cinematographer* 53, no. 2 (February 1972), 159.
[27] Julie Turnock, *Plastic Reality: Special Effects, Technology, and the Emergence of 1970s Blockbuster Aesthetics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 16-17.
[28] Turnock, *Plastic Reality*, 24.

frame" was precisely what Frankenheimer renounced on *French Connection II* by allowing events to unpredictably unfold within the zone of coverage. Ever untimely, he relaxed control at a juncture when other blockbuster filmmakers were about to seek its unprecedented concentration.

It is remarkable that, despite manifesting such antithetical attitudes toward the exercise of control, *French Connection II* and the expanded blockbuster actually share certain formal affinities.[29] One of the key terms in Turnock's description of expanded blockbuster aesthetics is "layered." It describes how the mise-en-scene is built up from several different types of imagery (live-action photography, stop-motion animation, 2D animation, still artwork, and so forth), which cohere into a diegetic environment, both fantastic and credible, that appears to have been filmed by a single live action camera. But Turnock explains that effects artists did not regard this composite mise-en-scene as a flat stack of planes, instead understanding screen space as "global and spherical rather than planar."[30] Based on this conception, they staged dynamic action along the z-axis, often propelling the viewer into the extreme depth of the screen space. The Death Star "trench run" from *Star* Wars, and other effects sequences like it, generates a powerful feeling of moving in and through screen space, which Turnock summarizes as "the illusionistic sense of kinetic forward momentum."[31] The podrace from *The Phantom Menace*, with its straight-ahead shots from in-between the coupled engines of the onrushing repulsorcraft, shows that this

---

[29] Turnock anticipates this point when she writes that "We can also relate the overstuffed frame [of the expanded blockbuster] to live-action examples of New Hollywood filmmakers like Robert Altman (especially Nashville [1975]), who piled characters, soundtracks [sic], and narrative incident into the same frame." Here, Turnock posits the "overstuffed" frame as the point of connection, whereas my analysis instead focuses on the notion of "layering." Turnock, *Plastic Reality*, 122.
[30] Turnock, *Plastic Reality,* 170.
[31] Turnock, *Plastic Reality,* 167.

blockbuster convention has persisted across the analog/digital divide.

The street scenes from *French Connection II* also fundamentally depend on layering. A typical composition presses Hackman between locals in the background and foreground, and, as we have seen, these laminated planes are often connected by curious glances at the leading man. These layered compositions are to be expected from Frankenheimer, who frequently spoke about his preference for depth staging, though these shots also mark a slight departure for him, because the people looking over Hackman from a distance are often out of focus (in contrast to, say, the famous shot of Mrs. Iselin at the press conference in *The Manchurian Candidate* [1962], which combines depth staging with depth of field.) But although this mise-en-scène may be highly layered, it does not reflect the "global and spherical rather than planar" conception of screen space that Turnock associates with the expanded blockbuster. Another way to describe this conception of screen space would be to say that effects artists thought about screen space as a three-dimensional volume, which the viewer does not simply look into, as though through a window or frame, but instead has the experience of entering and moving through. This onscreen world is designed to be penetrated by the camera (virtual though it may be) and by extension the viewer. None of the coverage-based, multi-layered compositions from *French Connection II* activate a similar feeling of penetration. But Frankenheimer arguably did construct "a global and spherical rather than planar" space when shooting *French Connection II*. Indeed, this is one way of describing the zone of coverage – a three-dimensional volume that people could traverse. The crew placed multiple (sometimes hidden) cameras so that the performers, especially Hackman, existed within a covered space that they could move through on unpredictable, unpremeditated paths. By creating an environment that was both encompassing and traversable, Frankenheimer was thinking along similar lines as expanded blockbuster effects artists. But while these effects

artists were interested in propelling viewers through an onscreen environment that might be entirely fantastic, like the "trenches" of the Death Star, Frankenheimer was more concerned with the movements of performers through a physical environment that actually existed before the camera(s). Put differently, we could say that the expanded blockbuster features a "global and spherical" space on the screen, whereas *French Connection II* constructed a "global and spherical" space on the *streets.*

In its final minutes, however, *French Connection II* does fleetingly provide an "illusionistic sense of kinetic forward momentum" akin to the space battles from *Star Wars*. After raiding a drug lab, Doyle chases Charnier through Marseilles on foot, reaching a point of near collapse, before ultimately shooting the villain dead on the deck of his sailboat. The sequence contains several examples of coverage, where we watch Doyle charge through crowded public space, but it also introduces another camera technique that we have not seen before this point. At eight different points in the approximately six-minute pursuit, we see first-person POV shots, lasting mere seconds, that let us look through Doyle's eyes as he rushes ahead.[32] In three instances, his hands also protrude into the frame, parting the crowd on a bus and then meeting several obstacles on the waterfront. Though these shots also involve some lateral movement, as Doyle scans his surroundings for Charnier, they predominantly plunge us into depth along the same extended z-axis that would soon become central to the visual dynamism of blockbuster effects work. These microdoses of blockbuster kineticism involve a shift away from the underlying principles of coverage. Whereas coverage was motivated by the desire to keep Hackman under continuous observation, so that none of his unpredictable body language would be missed, these POV shots completely remove his body from view, with the intermittent

[32] These POV shots are further set off from the surrounding footage by a switch to 16mm stock.

exception of his (or someone's) outstretched hands. In these shots, Frankenheimer momentarily approximates the kineticism of the expanded-blockbuster-to-come, at the expense of the alternative aesthetic program based on coverage that he had chosen for his blockbuster sequel.

Of course, these shots, especially those with intrusive hands, recall the body-mounted cinematography from *Seconds* (John Frankenheimer, 1966).[33] But the similarities are only approximate, as the body mounts from *Seconds* were designed to produce a unique disjunction between figure and ground that is entirely absent here. Still, the two techniques are related insofar as they both align us with a body that *struggles*. Doyle looks increasingly agonized over the course of the chase, one last ordeal in a film that repeatedly pictures him in states of abjection, the withdrawal sequence being only the most obvious example. Hackman's painful-looking limp during this chase was not an affectation; the sequence inflamed an old knee problem that caused the actor extreme discomfort, becoming worse and worse as shooting continued. Frankenheimer is apologetic in his audio commentary, though he also justifies his treatment of the actor, explaining that "You just don't double Gene Hackman."[34] In this sequence, we see a representation of physical injury, but the filmmaking process that produced this representation was itself injurious. While the relationship between making media and doing harm only emerges in the final minutes of *French Connection II*, it would pervade Frankenheimer's next passage through the zone of the blockbuster.

Visibility, Vulnerability, Viscerality

---

[33] I discuss this body-mounted camerawork at length in chapter three. The shots from Doyle's perspective also recall the forward-facing, car-mounted camera positions from *Grand Prix*, which I return to in a subsequent section.
[34] Frankenheimer, "Commentary," *French Connection II*.

French Connection II did not match the commercial success of its predecessor. Looking back, Frankenheimer blamed audiences' lack of familiarity with sequels (something that is now hard to imagine, given the dominance of franchises in the present-day entertainment marketplace).[35] But the film did impress Robert Evans, producer of such early-70s blockbusters as *Love Story* (Arthur Hiller, 1970) and *The Godfather* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972). Evans soon recruited Frankenheimer to direct the thriller *Black Sunday* (1977), an adaptation of a bestselling novel by Thomas Harris that drew inspiration from the Munich Massacre at the 1972 Summer Olympics. *Black Sunday* dramatizes an attempted terrorist attack on the Super Bowl. The co-plotters are the Black September militant Dahlia Iyad (Marthe Keller) and the deranged Vietnam War veteran Michael Lander (Bruce Dern), who load the Goodyear blimp with plastic explosives and metal flechettes, intending to detonate it above the crowd and then release a prerecorded statement condemning American policy in Palestine. When the Israeli commando David Kabakov (Robert Shaw) intercepts this statement near the beginning of the film, he races to prevent the attack, ultimately towing the blimp out of the stadium with a helicopter in an effects-heavy climax. This finale exemplifies the status quo in the effects industry immediately before the field reorganized under the influence of *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters*, both released later that same year. *Black Sunday* favors on-set process photography, especially front-projection, over the optical techniques that would soon set a new standard for kineticism in blockbuster cinema.[36]

---

[35] Gerald Pratley, *The Films of Frankenheimer: Forty Years in Film* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 1998), 157. Frankenheimer claims that *The Godfather Part II* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1974) "came out right after" *French Connection II*, but, in fact, the *Godfather* sequel had been released around six months earlier.

[36] Bill Hansard, "Creating Front Projection Effects for *Black Sunday*," *American Cinematographer* 58, no. 8 (August 1977): 832-835, 862-863. Hansard, the special effects coordinator for *Black Sunday*, does unknowingly intimate how the effects industry was about to

Though it did not herald the next generation of effects-driven blockbusters, *Black Sunday* is prophetic in other ways. Corey Creekmur describes it as "one of the first films to acknowledge terrorist acts as spectacles carefully staged for mass media exposure."[37] The Super Bowl makes an opportune target, because it already is a mass-media spectacle, more specifically a *televisual* spectacle, with an enormous audience of television viewers whose attention can be co-opted. Though Creekmur describes the Super Bowl as "fully covered by the mass media" and refers to terrorism being "staged for television coverage," he does not connect the narrative significance of coverage in *Black Sunday* with the role of coverage in the filmmaking process.[38] Indeed, Frankenheimer retained the coverage-based shooting style of *French Connection II* for several key sequences from *Black Sunday,* a film that thematizes coverage in a way that *French Connection II* does not. More specifically, *Black Sunday* thematizes how the zone of coverage becomes a *danger zone*. As Creekmur suggests, if terrorists want to maximize the visibility of their actions, then any heavily covered event becomes an appealing place to strike, meaning that, in an age of terrorism, inhabiting covered space always comes at a risk.

The dual role of coverage, as both narrative content and production practice, is most pronounced during the section of *Black Sunday* set at the Super Bowl. With the cooperation of the National Football League, Frankenheimer filmed most of this material, comprising the last forty minutes of the film, during Super Bowl X (January 18, 1976) at the Orange Bowl in Miami.

---

change. He concedes that front projection imposes strict limits on camera movement, but he explains that blue screen techniques involve the same problem, "unless you have a computer system available" (862). The computer-assisted motion control rig known as the Dykstraflex would be one of the major technological innovations by the effects team on *Star Wars.*

[37] Corey Creekmur, "John Frankenheimer's 'War on Terror,'" in *A Little Solitaire: John Frankenheimer and American Film*, eds. Murray Pomerance and R. Barton Palmer (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 104.

[38] Creekmur, "'War on Terror,'" 104, 108.

The shoot involved a team of nine camera operators who worked to achieve coverage of a space that was simultaneously being covered by CBS television equipment.[39] In many cases, *Black Sunday* crew members placed their cameras directly alongside those belonging to CBS, resulting in shots that reproduce the vantage points familiar to television audiences. (Frankenheimer claimed that he was able to negotiate this arrangement because the CBS personnel were old colleagues from the late 1950s.)[40] Even when *Black Sunday* crew members assumed other positions, however, they nonetheless needed to remain aware of television cameras so as to avoid interfering with the broadcast, a strict condition of their access to the event.

The centerpiece of the Super Bowl sequence is a series of seven shots in which Kabakov, starting from an upper level of the stadium (figure 4.2), rushes down to the field, sprints its entire length, jumps a fence behind the end zone, and finally bursts into a CBS television trailer – all while the game is in progress. Several aspects of this sequence are familiar from *French Connection II*. Frankenheimer once again goes against the grain of the expanded blockbuster by renouncing complete control over the frame. In this case, the sheer magnitude of the crowd around Kabakov, comprising thousands of independently moving bodies, means that these shots are less unplanned than they are *unplannable* – Jordan Schonig's term for those phenomena, such as fluttering leaves or breaking waves, that cannot be completely planned even if the filmmaker tries.[41] Layering remains important too, especially in the second shot, where a long lens pointed across the field flattens the hard-charging Kabakov between several strata of people along the sidelines.

---

[39] Hansard, "Front Projection Effects," 832. Sources do not quite agree about the exact number of cameras used for the sequence. The *Black Sunday* press kit claims the number was 11.
[40] Pratley, *Forty Years*, 164.
[41] Jordan Schonig, *The Shape of Motion: Cinema and the Aesthetics of Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 21.

Figure 4.2 Kabakov (center, with white lapels) descends the stadium steps in *Black Sunday* (John Frankenheimer, 1977)

But something important has also changed compared to the previous film. In *French Connection II*, Frankenheimer was pleased by non-actors' habit of looking at the cast members; in this instance, the effect of the footage derives from non-actors' *obliviousness* to the events occurring in their midst. To be sure, a few people do stare at Shaw as he passes, and at least two individuals have even stronger reactions: a hot dog vendor twists out of his way and a security official attempts to restrain him. Yet the overwhelming majority of football fans appear entirely ignorant of his behavior, and this unawareness aligns with their predicament in the narrative, as potential victims of a terrorist attack they do not see coming. In other words, the incomprehension of the crowd with respect to the *production* (that is, its incomprehension that a film shoot is underway) generates an extremely powerful feeling of unawareness – of something being missed – that amplifies our experience of the narrative situation, namely the pathetic vulnerability of the crowd to eviscerating violence that will come as a terrible surprise. Of course, this analogy makes the production of *Black Sunday* something akin to the terrorist plot being enacted by Dahlia and Lander; it is another complex operation unfolding around

unsuspecting people who have no idea what is happening and therefore no ability to act in response.

On Creekmur's account, *Black Sunday* explores how the zone of coverage becomes primed for violence. But this is not the full extent of the relationship between media and violence across the film. Beyond acting as an invitation or inducement to violence, media are also its means of commission The Goodyear blimp is only the most obvious example of a weaponized media apparatus. Crammed with cameras and monitors that hunched-over crew members must squeeze between, the blimp is a massive media-making machine, not to mention that it is an enormous "screen" for the Goodyear logo. When Dahlia enters the airfield with the bomb, she lies that the contraption is "television equipment," a line that encapsulates the recurrent idea that media technologies may be threatening in themselves.[42] While the crowd at the Super Bowl survives its encounter with media-as-weapon, other characters are not so fortunate. A freighter captain who colludes with Black September is assassinated by a bomb inside his telephone, which Lander plants while dressed as an AT&T technician. A similar ruse occurs when Dahlia and Lander test the bomb at a warehouse in the Mojave Desert. Locking down the explosive device atop a tripod, Lander tells an affable watchman that the object is a special "panoramic" camera, inviting him to pose before it. When it detonates, we momentarily see the character perforated with projectiles as he stares straight ahead with wide-open, expectant eyes. This killer camera even generates a type of picture. Lander enthuses over the symmetry of the blast pattern inscribed, as innumerable points of light, on the interior warehouse wall. The aesthetic dimension of his response becomes clear when he tells Dahlia that she looks "beautiful" in the scattered

[42] For a canonical account of the crossover between media technology and weapons technology, see Paul Virilio, *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception* (London: Verso, 1989).

beams filtering through.

The idea that media can forcefully, even violently, act upon the body also has its place in the discourse of the blockbuster. When Turnock mentions the "illusionistic sense of kinetic forward momentum" generated by the space battles from *Star Wars,* among other action sequences with exaggerated depth effects, she describes only one aspect of blockbuster cinema's sensual address. According to Turnock, blockbuster filmmakers of the late 1970s were interested in various kinds of physical stimuli, which they sought to combine with intellectual impact, turning one into a vehicle for the other, in films that would "first penetrate the body and then engage the mind."[43] This description of a twofold sensual-intellectual appeal is a more generous variation of the familiar claim that blockbusters privilege sensation *at the expense* of other qualities. For instance, when Linda Williams claims that the "roller-coaster sensibility" of *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960) provides an aesthetic model for later (roughly post-1975) blockbusters, she emphasizes how viscerality takes precedence over other modes of engagement. She places *Psycho* at the "beginning of an era in which viewers began going to the movies to be thrilled and moved in quite visceral ways, and without much concern for coherent characters or motives."[44] With its arsenal of deadly communication devices, *Black Sunday* literalizes the power of media to "first penetrate the body," as Turnock puts it, which she and Williams both understand as central to the blockbuster viewing experience. The killer media in the film are a sharp corrective to a utopian discourse about media impact, evident in Youngblood's *Expanded Cinema* and influential on the expanded blockbuster, where physically and mentally receptive viewers are opened up to alternative worldviews and lifestyles, a necessary step toward a more

[43] Turnock, *Plastic Reality*, 15.
[44] Linda Williams, "Discipline and Fun: *Psycho* and Postmodern Cinema," in *Reinventing Film Studies*, eds. Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (London: Arnold, 2000), 356.

liberated, equitable society. Against such optimism, Frankenheimer represents media impact as life-ending, rather than mind-expanding. Furthermore, the representations of media impact in *Black Sunday* frequently coincide with shocks that exemplify the trend, described by Williams, towards a more assaultive, roller coaster-like popular cinema. The exploding head of the freighter captain and the hole-riddled face of the watchman are graphic images of violence, likely to make some viewers recoil from the screen, which means that, beyond simply representing the fearful subjection of bodies to media, these moments also enact it.[45]

A key sequence from midway through *Black Sunday* brings together coverage-based cinematography with this ongoing interest in the activation of bodies through media. Kabakov arrives in Miami Beach, where American officials are keeping the Black September leader Mohammed Fasil (Bekim Fehmiu) under heavy surveillance from a command post near his hotel. As in the Super Bowl sequence, a zone of coverage exists within the narrative, and we repeatedly look through the (diegetic) cameras that constitute this near-panoptic space, tracking Fasil as he walks down the street. When he discovers the operation, a running gun battle ensues over several blocks, leading from his hotel lobby to the beach, where Kabakov reluctantly shoots Fasil dead in the surf. Repeating a technique from *French Connection II*, Frankenheimer filmed much of this rampage using "hidden camera stuff," only now the camera blinds were even more numerous. They included garbage cans, hotel windows, flower pots, parked cars, phone booths,

[45] The violent content of *Black Sunday* was at issue in a long-running battle over the film's rating. After the film received an R rating from the Motion Picture Association of America, the studio (Paramount) repeatedly appealed the decision and submitted edited prints for re-rating, though none of these efforts were successful. For his part, Frankenheimer stated, "I don't think there's one frame of excess violence in the picture." Charles Schreger, "Frankenheimer's R-for-Irate Summation of Richard Nefner on the PG in Playoff Profit," *Variety*, April 13, 1977, 5.

and portable toilets.[46]

Looking back on the Miami Beach sequence shortly after the release of *Black Sunday*, Frankenheimer expressed satisfaction with its resemblance to television news. He said: "When I saw the news coverage of the recent terrorism in Washington [the March 1977 Hanafi Siege], I was impressed by how much it looked like the Faisal shootout in *Black Sunday.* It was shot exactly the same way. Thank God, because I knew that's the way they would do it, put the long lenses in the cameras that jiggle just a bit. That's exactly the way we shot the Faisal shootout. And that's exactly what happens when they really have to shoot one."[47] Certainly, some moments from the sequence strongly evoke television news. At one point, we are watching a singer on an outdoor stage, then the camera suddenly wrenches right to discover Faisal storming through the crowd, as though a television journalist on the scene has just realized something important is happening nearby. But the differences from television news coverage also matter. The sequence is not a "fake" news report. It lacks television news conventions like eyewitness interviews or voiceover commentary, though Frankenheimer had extensive experience simulating these devices, from his years on the series *You Are There* (1953-1957)*,* where CBS reporters would "interview" people on the scene of famous historical events. In fact, in the Faisal shootout, Frankenheimer achieves the overall visual style of television news with a method that is closer to that of television sports. Like the CBS camera team at the Super Bowl, the *Black Sunday* crew instituted a zone of coverage *beforehand*, in anticipation of something scheduled to occur at a particular time and place, rather than rushing to the scene of breaking news that was

---

[46] Gary D. Engle, "John Frankenheimer: An Interview (1977)," in *John Frankenheimer: Interviews, Essays, and Profiles*, ed. Stephen B. Armstrong, (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2013), 57; Aljean Harmetz, "Frankenheimer Rides a Blimp to a Big, Fat Comeback," *New York Times*, April 10, 1977, D21.
[47] Engle, "Frankenheimer," 58.

already underway (as television reporters did in the case of the Hanafi Siege, for instance). The amalgamation of media that Frankenheimer achieves here is actually more complicated than he makes it sound, because besides emulating television coverage on film, he also bridges different varieties of television coverage (news and sports), each with its own spatial and temporal dynamics.

Though the Miami Beach sequence does not show us any killer media, it nonetheless involves another permutation of the idea that bodies are vulnerable to media impact. In *French Connection II*, "hidden camera stuff" was a means of eliciting natural reactions from people stumbling upon something unusual, like the angry confrontation between Doyle and Barthélméy. But a shootout is much different than a shouting match. While Frankenheimer warned onlookers in the vicinity of the hotel, via loudspeaker, that the shootout was simulated, not everyone caught on camera was so prepared.[48] After Faisal flees his hotel with a hostage, we see a car screech to a stop and the driver plunge below the dashboard. His terror was real. The driver entered the intersection without knowing that filming was in progress. (The production team paid to rent his car for subsequent shots.)[49] A group of mostly elderly concertgoers in a nearby park were also taken by surprise. Frankenheimer spotted the crowd and ordered a reluctant Fehmiu to run through it with prop gun in hand. The group looks more confused than terrified at his intrusion, but, despite the absence of panic, Frankenheimer's willingness to let non-actors believe that they were in the presence of a charging gunman should warn us against romanticizing the aesthetic of coverage.[50] Because it draws out spontaneous behavior, the technique might seem essentially

[48] Champlin, *Conversation*, 150.
[49] Harmetz, "Comeback," D21.
[50] In fact, Frankenheimer was dissatisfied with onlookers' non-responsiveness to his provocation: "Nobody knew what was happening. Here comes a guy waving a gun, and nobody even said

humanistic, especially in comparison to other blockbuster filmmakers' fixation on a completely controlled mise-en-scène. But this sequence demonstrates that coverage is not always a benign, benevolent practice. Here, the relevant term for Frankenheimer's conduct is not so much "control" as "domination." The people under domination are non-actors in the zone of coverage, who Frankenheimer treats like a blockbuster audience, that is, as bodies to be inflicted with visceral shocks and jolts. Though he was interested in a sensual address to viewers, Frankenheimer also administered physical stimuli (like a prop gun being waved around) in the course of making his film, relocating the viscerality of the blockbuster from the space of reception to the site of production. In the context of the Super Bowl sequence, I likened the secretive production of *Black Sunday* to the terrorist plot undertaken by Dahlia and Lander, and the Miami Beach sequence further tightens this connection, even though non-actors are now being actively provoked, as opposed to remaining oblivious. It is not an exaggeration to say that Frankenheimer *terrorized* people within the zone of coverage, converting their fear into images that would serve his purposes. Frankenheimer lacked "control" over these people, and yet he was nonetheless imposing his will upon them.

In late 1976, Evans screened an incomplete version of *Black Sunday* for film exhibitors, who were exultant about its commercial prospects. Several industry figures in attendance made comparisons to *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975), then the all-time box office champion. "The phrase 'bigger than *Jaws*' became boring to hear," Evans recounts in his memoir.[51] Whereas publicity for *French Connection II* occasionally raised the possibility that it might revive Frankenheimer's professional reputation, columnists writing about *Black Sunday* at the moment

anything. I had to dub in a couple of screams because nobody reacted." Engle, "Frankenheimer," 57.

[51] Robert Evans, *The Kid Stays in the Picture* (New York: Hyperion, 1994), 289.

of its release treated the turnaround as a *fait accompli*. Headlines like “Frankenheimer Rides a Blimp to a Big, Fat Comeback” and “Frankenheimer Flying High Again” were typical.[52] Such declarations were not necessarily premature either. Four months before the release of *Black Sunday*, Paramount signed Frankenheimer to a long-term exclusive contract, a deal that the studio had not offered any director since the 1950s.[53] Put differently, we could note that the future of *Black Sunday* was so promising that it prompted Paramount to revive an industrial instrument out of the distant film-historical past.

Black Sunday, however, was not “bigger than *Jaws.*” Or, as Evans put it, “A blimp ain’t no fish – just hot air.”[54] Though not a financial disaster, the film did not place among the top twenty box-office hits of the year (a list that was headed by *Star Wars*).[55] Frankenheimer would later offer two main explanations for its underperformance. He cited its appearance at the end of a 70s disaster movie cycle that had run its course. And he blamed the release of *Two-Minute Warning* (Larry Peerce, 1976), a similarly-plotted film about a sniper who targets football fans at the fictional “Championship X,” which appeared just four months before *Black Sunday*.[56] According to Frankenheimer, his film was too late twice over.

There are, however, other ways of accounting for the fate of *Black Sunday.* Just before the release of the film, when its profitability was still in the realm of speculation, *Variety* critic Arthur D. Murphy suggested a much different reason why it might struggle in the marketplace. Near the end of his positive review, Murphy writes: “what could work against the film is the

---

[52] Harmetz, “Comeback,” D19; Charles Champlin, “Frankenheimer Flying High Again,” *Los Angeles Times,* April 10, 1977, N1.
[53] “Frankenheimer Is First Par Exclusive in Two Decades,” *Variety,* December 8, 1976, 3.
[54] Evans, *Kid*, 290.
[55] Cook, *Lost Illusions,* 501.
[56] Champlin, *Conversation*, 152.

curious undertone that, while audiences may flock to cardboard shootouts and disaster films, where dozens of artificial characters get slaughtered, it's something else again where the climactic victim is a stadium full of us. Call it a sense of tribal revulsion if you will, but the impact of the film ultimately reaches those primal nerve-endings."[57] Almost twenty-five years later, in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, Peter Bart would sound a similar note. In a *Variety* editorial appealing for a less violent popular culture, Bart recalled how the carnage in *Black Sunday* had turned off moviegoers: "it was so real as to be downright horrific."[58]

Both authors describe an adverse reaction to *Black Sunday*, and Murphy, in particular, makes this reaction sound highly embodied, with his reference to "primal nerve-endings." Neither author connects this effect to specific visual techniques. But it is reasonable to suggest that they are both responding to coverage, that is, the choice to populate scenes of (potential) terrorist violence with non-actors – with "us" as Murphy puts it. If so, then, in the case of *Black Sunday*, Frankenheimer's practice of coverage was not simply, or not primarily, at variance with blockbuster cinema insofar as it repudiated complete control over the contents of the frame. Instead, coverage-based cinematography vitiated the very possibility that *Black Sunday* could become a blockbuster hit. In other words, a filmmaking technique that incorporates "real people" and a narrative that imagines the mass death of innocents combined in a way that audiences could not experience as blockbuster entertainment.

CGI-Driven

Frankenheimer mostly retreated from the zone of the blockbuster after the

---

[57] Arthur D. Murphy, "*Black Sunday*," *Variety*, March 30, 1977, 19.
[58] Peter Bart, "Finding Hope amid Ashes," *Variety*, September 17, 2001, 14.

disappointment of *Black Sunday*. His anachronistic Paramount contract resulted in only one film, *Prophecy* (1979), another unsuccessful attempt to replicate the success of *Jaws*, this time with an entry in the revenge-of-nature cycle that followed Spielberg's elevated sharksploitation film. (*Prophecy* replaces the great white with a mutant bear.) Frankenheimer's next attempt at a big-budget blockbuster-by-design would not come until *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1996), which he took over four days into shooting after the original director (Richard Stanley) was fired. One of the lesser aggravations during its infamously troubled production was the digital effects work. During an interview conducted on the premises of the effects house Digital Domain, Frankenheimer proclaimed disinterest in the new technology at his disposal: "You know, to tell you the truth, I couldn't give less of a damn about all this digital this, and digital that, because they're never going to get a digital script…I would much rather do a movie like *The Burning Season* [1994; his HBO television movie about the environmentalist Chico Mendes] any day, than a high effects movie."[59]

When Frankenheimer made these comments in 1996, the "high effects movie" had recently become synonymous with the "digital effects movie." After influential test cases including *The Abyss* (James Cameron, 1989), *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (James Cameron, 1991) and *Jurassic Park* (Steven Spielberg, 1993), computer-generated imagery (CGI) proliferated in commercial cinema. Spectacular digital effects sequences quickly joined the list of attributes that could define, though never with exactitude, the elusive term "blockbuster." While the mainstreaming of CGI marks a significant development in the stylistic evolution of the blockbuster, Turnock argues against considering it a radical break. Instead, she understands

[59] Tim Rhys and Ian Bage, "Hollywood Survivor John Frankenheimer (1996)," in *John Frankenheimer: Interviews, Essays, and Profiles*, ed. Stephen B. Armstrong, (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2013), 131.

digital effects work as another step toward blockbuster filmmakers' ultimate goal since the late 1970s: the completely controllable frame.[60] Though she never directly engages with the definitional instability of the term "blockbuster," with this argument, Turnock suggests that the ongoing pursuit of ever-greater visual control lends some degree of coherence to blockbuster cinema between the 70s and the present.

The idea that CGI intensified directorial control recurred in mid-90s discussions of the technology. Interviewed by *American Cinematographer* around the release of *The Phantom Menace*, George Lucas, a high-profile proponent of digital production and exhibition, repeatedly used the language of control to describe his methods. He stated, "Movies are shot in an unlimited number of impossible conditions, and you don't always have the *control* over the situation that you'd hoped to have. Sometimes people don't quite hit their marks, or the lighting isn't quite right, or you have two or three cameras and one of them wasn't framed up like you thought it was when you walked away from it. Now you can adjust all of that, and you don't have to live with mistakes" (emphasis mine).[61] Several commentators were disturbed by this imagination of an infinitely manipulable, mistake-free cinema. Jean Pierre Geuens, responding directly to this Lucas interview in *Film Quarterly*, warned that "a dangerous ethos permeates the entire *Phantom Menace* project," while also accepting Lucas' basic proposition that digital tools were means of control, writing that these techniques would make directors "truly omnipotent, their power

[60] Turnock, *Plastic Reality*, 24. In a now-canonical essay published amid the rise of CGI, Stephen Prince takes a slightly different position, arguing that digital effects require a significant modification of traditional assumptions about cinema, especially the nature of cinematic realism. See Stephen Prince, "True Lies: Perceptual Realism, Digital Images, and Film Theory," *Film Quarterly* 49, no. 3 (Spring 1996): 27-37.
[61] Ron Magid, "Master of His Universe," *American Cinematographer* 80, no. 9 (September 1999): 32d.

absolute."[62] Geuens warned that this amplification of control would occur in tandem with a devaluation of virtuosity. By compensating for the kinds of mistakes that Lucas mentions, like the failure to position the camera properly, digital technology introduces room for error, or as Geuens would have it, sloppiness. He describes the consequences of these less pressure-filled working conditions in a mystical register. When filmmaking ceases to demand virtuosity, cinema loses "the sense of magic that permeates the shoot and the sense of accomplishment that comes from working out miracles in the face of incredible odds."[63] For Geuens, the digital era is a disenchanted one.

Frankenheimer joined the ranks of the digital skeptics. Aversion to CGI would be a major theme of the publicity for his film *Ronin* (1998), a thriller, prominently featuring several car chases, about mercenaries attempting to steal a mysterious metal case whose contents are never revealed to the viewer. In this case, Frankenheimer ventured into the zone of the blockbuster by making a film that purported to negate one of its (newly) central components: CG spectacle. The positioning of *Ronin* as an alternative to the relatively recent phenomenon of the CGI-driven blockbuster began before the film even started shooting. When he signed on to direct, Frankenheimer told *Variety,* "It's not one of these CGI pictures, it's about people."[64] Reporting from the set, *American Cinematographer* made a slightly more specific claim, stating that the car chases in *Ronin* were all "shot 'live' (with no process or computer graphics work)."[65] This

---

[62] Jean-Pierre Geuens, "The Digital World Picture," *Film Quarterly* 55, no. 4 (Summer 2002): 23. Recall, as well, Dudley Andrew's dismay over Jean-Pierre Jeunet's digital "image scrubbing" during postproduction of *Amélie* (2001). Andrew, *What Cinema Is! Bazin's* Quest *and Its Charge* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 19-20.
[63] Geurns, "Digital World Picture," 18.
[64] Michael Fleming, "*Ronin* in from Cold," *Variety*, July 2, 1997, 5.
[65] Ron Magid, "Samurai Tactics," *American Cinematographer* 79, no. 10 (October 1998): 39. Frankenheimer repeats this claim himself later in the article: "There was no process or green screen on this picture" (40).

assertion about the car chases was approvingly repeated by a panoply of critics. Richard Schickel told *Time* readers that the car chases “are done the old-fashioned way, by stunt drivers, which gives these thrill sequences an immediacy, a nervy élan that special-effects techies can't quite generate on a computer screen.”[66] And Peter Travers of *Rolling Stone* was only one critic who specifically credited this “old-fashioned,” pre-digital approach to Frankenheimer himself. Travers noted that “The director doesn’t stoop to digital dazzle to jazz an audience.”[67] In the years since the release of *Ronin*, such claims have smoothly passed from film criticism to film scholarship. In an essay where he celebrates *Ronin* as Frankenheimer’s “end-of-career masterpiece,” Stephen Prince, author of several canonical articles on digital effects, writes that “In an era of green screens and digital fakery, [Frankenheimer] reclaimed his belief that action staged live for the camera has an integrity and truth that makes it the essential heart of cinema.”[68]

These claims about the absence of CGI in *Ronin* are – perhaps not surprisingly – false. On close inspection, for example, there is no question that most of the tire smoke kicked up at the beginning of the Nice chase is computer generated. (The claim goes up in smoke, we might say). This type of ambivalence, where technology is alternately rejected and embraced, is itself a central blockbuster trope. Julie Turnock is only one commentator to note that, even though they are products of high technology, most blockbusters ironically feature “anti-technology narratives” where the protagonists are menaced by a more technologically advanced adversary.[69] Though this formula predates the rise of CGI, a unique variation appeared with the advent of

---

[66] Richard Schickel, “Abstractly Expressive,” *Time*, September 21, 1998, 100.
[67] Peter Travers, “*Ronin*,” *Rolling Stone*, October 15, 1998, 133.
[68] Stephen Prince, “Action and Abstraction in *Ronin*,” in *A Little Solitaire: John Frankenheimer and American Film*, eds. Murray Pomerance and R. Barton Palmer (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 87-88.
[69] Turnock, *Plastic Reality*, 273-274. As examples, she cites *The Matrix* (1999), *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001; 2002; 2003), and *Avatar* (2009).

digital cinema, one that is concisely demonstrated by *Terminator 2*. Whereas the original film counterposed the futuristic Terminator robot with heavy industrial machinery, like the hydraulic press where the cybernetic assassin meets his demise, the sequel pits “good” and “bad” Terminators against one another. An older-model T-800 (Arnold Schwarzenegger) with a solid metal endoskeleton protects the future savior of humanity from a more advanced T-1000 (Robert Patrick) composed of “liquid metal.” Because the shapeshifting T-1000 was a (partly) CG character, the struggle between the two Terminators effectively stages a contest between two different kinds of technology – mechanical versus digital – rather than narrating a more generalized technophobia.[70] This digital-era revision of the anti-technology narrative has recurred in various CGI-driven blockbusters since: think of *Independence Day* (Roland Emmerich, 1996), another early CG spectacular, where Earth is saved by fighter pilots (rallied via Morse Code) who take advantage of the invading aliens’ vulnerability to a computer virus; or of *The Matrix Revolutions* (The Wachowskis, 2003), where humans wearing hydraulic battlesuits repel Machines bent on entrapping mankind in a digital simulation.

Ronin also involves a version of this metanarrative. During the Nice chase, the computer expert Gregor (Stellan Skarsgård) coordinates an ambush on the convoy transporting the case. From a control room inside the back of a van, he tracks the antagonists on electronic maps via intercepted cell phone signals, instructing the other mercenaries over radio as they give chase in their own vehicles. In an analysis of this sequence, Corey Creekmur emphasizes Gregor’s

---

[70] This mechanical/digital metanarrative has been noted by various commentators on the film. For instance, Scott Bukatman writes, “there are different kinds of machines operating here, and the mechanical physicality of the robotic T-100 [sic], once the embodiment of an antihuman killing machine, has become positively *benign* in contrast to the noncorporeal, interiorized digitalism of the electronically generated T-1000” (emphasis in original). Scott Bukatman, *Terminal Identity: The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 309.

"simulated view" of the action, which is "intercut with the events that he directs (much like a filmmaker) from his semi-omniscient perspective, a position that allows him to anticipate and control the moves of his colleagues and their prey."[71] This reference to the "control" wielded by the computer expert obviously resonates with Lucas and Geuens' assertions about the enhanced control of digital filmmakers. But Creekmur does not mention how this sequence concludes: after the mercenaries disable the last vehicle in the convoy, Gregor betrays his "colleagues" and steals the case for himself. He alone benefits from his computer-enabled control over events. This plot twist associates digital technology with duplicity, but, again, the sequence cannot be understood as technophobic per se. After all, the other mercenaries, including the protagonist Sam (Robert De Niro), are consistently aligned with technology. It is just of another kind. These characters drive cars – heavy, noisy machines whose obdurate materiality sharply contrasts with the dematerialized simulations of physical space that appear on Gregor's computer screens.

Cinematography also has an important role in this contest of technologies. During the chase, we repeatedly look out from a forward-facing bumper-mounted camera that sits just above the onrushing ground (figure 4.3). Though we understand that this perspective corresponds to the visual field of the driver, the camera is too low to reproduce the optical POV of someone in the front seat, resulting in the feeling that we are, at some level, experiencing the world from the perspective of the car itself. [72] In such shots, the mechanical quality of the drivers' perception further strengthens the ongoing contrast with the digitally-mediated viewpoint of Gregor at his terminal. While the computer-savvy antagonist of *Ronin* might seem in keeping with the anti-

---

[71] Creekmur, "'War on Terror,'" 114.
[72] This effect is certainly not unique to *Ronin*. It is a standard convention of car chase movies. For a discussion of this effect, with several examples from 70s films, see Tic Romao, "Guns and Gas: Investigating the 1970s Car Chase Film," in *Action and Adventure Cinema*, ed. Yvonne Tasker (New York: Routledge, 2004), 147-148.

CGI branding of the film, the character of Gregor actually functions within a mechanical-versus-digital metanarrative that *Ronin* shares with various blockbusters praised for their CG appeals. From this perspective, the staging of digital anxiety in *Ronin* actually moves the film *closer* to the CGI-driven blockbuster cinema that it was supposed to repudiate.

Figure 4.3 The forward-facing, bumper-mounted camera from *Ronin* (John Frankenheimer, 1998)

Another connection between *Ronin* and the CGI-driven blockbuster runs through *Grand Prix*. Speaking about the *Ronin* car chases to *American Cinematographer*, Frankenheimer stated that "I did the whole thing in the style of *Grand Prix*, with the camera mounts in about the same places."[73] Of course, as we have already seen, the cinematography of *Grand Prix* also provided inspiration for *The Phantom Menace.* One commonality among all three films is the prominence of the bumper-mounted camera position described above. (Although, in the case of *The Phantom Menace*, the virtual camera is only implicitly "mounted" on the cockpit occupied by Anakin.) This camera position plunges us forward into the extreme depth of the diegetic environment, once again generating what Turnock calls the "illusionistic sense of kinetic forward momentum,

[73] Magid, "Samurai Tactics," 39.

whether we are navigating alleys in Nice or canyons on Tatooine. For all their differences at the level of cinematic technology, then, *Ronin* and *The Phantom Menace* involve an extremely similar mode of bodily activation and engagement, one that is characteristic of blockbuster cinema both before and after the popularization of CGI. To put this another way, the style of *Grand Prix* could be adapted by both proponents and opponents of CGI, because it modelled a spectacular kineticism that was broadly appealing to filmmakers regardless of their individual preference for digital or practical methods.

Car-mounted cinematography was not the only technique that Frankenheimer carried over from his previous films. The car chases from *Ronin* involved a return to multiple-camera shooting – that is, coverage. According to cinematographer Robert Fraisse: "Most of the time, we used three or four normal cameras, plus one or two remote crash-box cameras, which were cheap cameras with cheap lenses inside very heavy and resistant metal blimp [sic]."[74] Sometimes the same vehicle would be attached with two of the "normal cameras," each one placed outside the visual range of the other.[75] This renewed practice of coverage departs from its previous deployment on *French Connection II* and *Black Sunday* in several ways, not least because the technique becomes associated with the imposition of control, as opposed to its abeyance. Whereas coverage had formerly served to capture the spontaneous behavior of people in covered space, especially non-actors, it was now being used to shoot automotive stunts that were carefully planned by the filmmakers. In the process, coverage also shifts from a practice that is concerned with the movements of human bodies to one that is primarily organized around the motion, and frequently destruction, of massive objects.

[74] Magid, "Samurai Tactics," 39.
[75] Magid, "Samurai Tactics," 42.

When speaking about his abstention from digital effects, Frankenheimer's professions of older craft knowledge, like a familiarity with car-mounted cameras going back to the 60s, positioned him as the bearer of hard-earned skills that were no longer common. This is a persona that parallels the characterizations in *Ronin*. The film follows (with considerable self-awareness) the generic formula of the heist or caper film by assembling a team of characters with unique areas of expertise. Although the exposition is oblique, something much discussed by critics, we come to understand that most of the mercenaries are "ronin" (masterless samurai) in the sense that, after many years working for intelligence services on various sides of the Cold War, they have been cast aside by their respective governments in the unipolar moment. When the team first assembles, the characters shrewdly assess each other's abilities, and the "weapons man" Spence (Sean Bean) is dismissed from the operation after marking himself as a poseur in several ways, including his low tolerance for high-speed driving. (He throws up on the street post-car chase.) Near the end of the film, however, we learn that Sam's skillset was never not in demand; he has been working for the CIA the entire time. "I never left," he tells his associate Deirdre (Natasha McElhone) with typical indirectness. The character is last seen driving away with his CIA contact, presumably to continue a covert-ops career that never actually ended. With this denouement, *Ronin* ceases to be a straightforward narrative about historical castoffs, turning into the story of a protagonist who only *seemed* to have been displaced by the passage of time, when, in fact, his specialized skills remained as relevant and desirable as ever. This is how Frankenheimer wanted his story to end as well.

In the years after the release of *Ronin*, Frankenheimer's anti-CGI stance became increasingly common. Numerous commentators vented their frustration with its overuse, often echoing Geuens' point that the intensification of control had serious drawbacks. *Entertainment*

Weekly critic Mark Harris, for one, complained that "otherwise good filmmakers are succumbing to the delusion that perfection is actually achievable as long as they control everything themselves, and the result is movies that don't feel perfect – just overcontrolled."[76] Filmmakers themselves were also increasingly vocal about their frustration with "CGI pictures," as Frankenheimer had once called them. A 2006 *Variety* article entitled "CGI Backlash?" reported that "a palpable resistance to CGI has coalesced among filmmakers" and quoted several high-profile directors who proclaimed the advantages of non-digital effects.[77]

One of these directors was Christopher Nolan, who had recently completed his superhero film *Batman Begins* (2005). When Nolan spoke to *American Cinematographer* mid-production, he described the car chase from the film as a specific instance where he eschewed CGI, a claim that obviously recalls *Ronin*, where car chases were likewise framed as the alternative to digital spectacle. Nolan stated that, "We didn't want anybody ever thinking that we'd done this chase with a digital Batmobile; we wanted to audience to be very aware of the reality of it."[78] Just as Frankenheimer made *Ronin* an extension of *Grand Prix*, Nolan too constructed a pre-digital lineage for his Batmobile chase, connecting it to the "great automotive reality" of *The French Connection* and *Bullitt* (Peter Yates, 1968).[79] Yet, like the car chases from *Ronin*, the Batmobile chase does not abandon the artificial kineticism that CGI-driven action sequences also strive toward. At multiple points in the sequence, as Batman (Christian Bale) eludes police on the streets and rooftops of Gotham City, we experience the headlong flight of the Batmobile from the same bumper-mounted camera position that we are familiar with from *Grand Prix* and its

---

[76] Mark Harris, "Micro Mangling," *Entertainment Weekly,* March 23, 2007, 68.
[77] Daniel Frankel, "CGI Backlash?," *Variety,* January 11, 2006, A12.
[78] Stephen Pizzello, "Batman Takes Wing," *American Cinematographer* 86, no. 6 (June 2005): 58.
[79] Pizzello, "Batman Takes Wing," 58.

legatees. Furthermore, as with the Nice chase from *Ronin*, this sequence contains a representation of computer technology, only now, rather than being wielded by a self-interested traitor, this digital equipment is in the hands of the (super)hero. The interior of Nolan's Batmobile, like so many before it, is a control room, where multiple screens display images that give Batman an advantage over his less-well-equipped pursuers. He not only consults a virtual map of Gotham, but also follows a computer-plotted path through the vehicles in his midst. This car chase, held up by Nolan as an instance of abstention from CGI, shows us a character who himself depends on CGI to accomplish his superheroic mission.

Of course, the key difference between *Ronin* and *Batman Begins* is that the latter was conceived as a blockbuster and lived up to these expectations. Shot on an approximately $150 million budget, *Batman Begins* was the seventh biggest film of the year at the domestic box office, launching a trilogy that grossed approximately $2.4 billion worldwide.[80] In the context of *Ronin*, the (purported) avoidance of CGI was a way to mark the *difference* of that film from blockbuster cinema. Though Frankenheimer surely hoped that *Ronin* would be a commercial success, the film (unlike, say, *Black Sunday*) was never supposed to be a culturally dominant "event" movie. *Ronin* did not mark his return to directing "the big Christmas picture for Paramount." What the movement from *Ronin* to *Batman Begins* ultimately charts is the process of anti-CGI rhetoric becoming internal to the discourse of blockbuster cinema itself, especially practitioner discourse by high-profile directors (like Nolan) of what we might call "prestige blockbusters." A complaint made *about* blockbuster cinema shifts into a complaint made *by*

[80] Gabriel Snyder, "The 'Bat' and the Beautiful," *Variety,* June 20, 2005, 24; Box Office Mojo, "Domestic Box Office for 2005," accessed June 9, 2023, https://www.boxofficemojo.com/year/2005/; Sarah Whitten, "From Michael Keaton to Ben Affleck, Batman's Legacy at the Box Office Means Big Bucks," *CNBC*, March 3, 2022, https://www.cnbc.com/2022/03/03/batman-box-office-keaton-affleck-pattinson-bale.html.

some of its most prominent and respected purveyors. Frankenheimer, working in the outer reaches of the zone of the blockbuster, was rehearsing a discontent with "CGI pictures" that, within a decade, would be loudly resounding from its very center.

Coda: The Y2-Car Chase

In a 2002 article entitled "Lights, Camera, Traction: The Car as Film Star," *New York Times* columnist Phil Patton wondered whether a new "golden era" of car chase movies had recently dawned. In addition to *Ronin*, he cites the pursuits in *Gone in 60 Seconds* (Dominic Sena 2000), *Swordfish* (Dominic Sena, 2001), and *The Fast and the Furious* (Rob Cohen, 2001).[81] We might call this the Y2-car chase cycle. It is one of the rare instances when Frankenheimer was relatively synchronized with a broader trend in media culture, though his good timing was the paradoxical result of embracing a retrograde aesthetic. In addition to carrying forward techniques from *Grand Prix*, *Ronin*, along with the other films in Y2-car chase cycle, harkens back to what Patton identifies as the first "golden era" of the car chase movie, beginning with *Bullitt* and continuing through the 70s.[82]

Patton connected the revival of the cinematic car chase to another recent development. He reports that automakers have begun commissioning films featuring their vehicles, a trend exemplified by BMW's "The Hire" (2001), which consisted of five short films that were made

---

[81] Phil Patton, "Lights, Camera, Traction: The Car as Film Star," *New York Times,* February 15, 2002, F1.

[82] We might understand the revival of the car chase movie in relation to a broader increase in citation across 90s cinema. Jonathan Rosenbaum, in an essay on *Ed Wood* (Tim Burton, 1994) and *Pulp Fiction* (Quentin Tarantino, 1994), writes that, while Hollywood directors have long been interested in intertextual references, over the course of the 90s, these references escalate to the point that they compose "a self-sufficient world of their own." Jonathan Rosenbaum, "Allusion Profusion (*Ed Wood*, *Pulp Fiction*)," in *Movies as Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 172.

available online at bmwfilms.com. In each film, a suave chauffeur credited only as "Driver" (Clive Oven) completes a shady assignment in a different BMW model. This early experiment in the online distribution and exhibition of cinema was motivated by market research indicating that likely BMW buyers were increasingly active on the Internet, as well as concerns that this same consumer base was watching less network television.[83] Nonetheless, the short films were "heavily promoted on TV," according to *Variety*, meaning that a web series initiated based on doubts about the effectiveness of television advertising was itself sold with television advertising.[84]

Frankenheimer was one of the directors that BMW hired for "The Hire." (The other four directors were Ang Lee, Wong Kar-wai, Guy Ritchie, and Alejandro González Inárritu, an international team-up that recalls the assembled freelancers from *Ronin.*) Frankenheimer inaugurated the series with the instalment *Ambush*, essentially a five-minute car chase with a one-minute coda, in which the driver's passenger is a diamond smuggler who claims to have swallowed his merchandise. He fears being vivisected by the heavily armed criminals who pursue the driver down a rural highway with guns blazing. Patton describes *Ambush* as "in the mode of *Ronin*" and the front bumper-mounted camera makes several return appearances.[85] We assume this position, for example, during a series of shots where the driver sinuously steers around pieces of heavy machinery in a dark construction site. The less adept antagonists expire in a fiery collision with a bulldozer.

But something also changed between *Ronin* and *Ambush*. The short contains extensive,

[83] Anthony Vagnoni, "Behind the Wheel: BMW and Fallon's Web Films Widen Horizons for Entertaining Ways to Brand," *Advertising Age,* July 23, 2001, 12.
[84] Marc Graser and Jonathan Bing, "Helmers Hit Speed Bump with Ad Hybrid," *Variety,* June 3, 2001, 3.
[85] Patton, "Car as Film Star," F1.

though subtle, CGI by the effects house Radium. Visual effects supervisor Andrew Hardaway stated that, in addition to 90 instances of green screen, "we had to create digital tire smoke and debris, gun muzzle flashes, bullet rounds striking pavement with sparks, digital shell casings, as well as enhancing an explosion with synthetic debris."[86] These digital embellishments make clear that Frankenheimer's vehement rejection of CGI in the context of *Ronin* was highly pragmatic. He may not have been excited by "digital this and digital that," but Frankenheimer was evidently not opposed to digital technology on principle. Geuens he was not. Of course, in the case of *Ambush*, it would have been nonsensical to present the film as a stand against digital cinema, as the director did with *Ronin*, considering that the entire conceit of "The Hire" was to provide a computer-based film viewing experience.

The car chase was arguably a poor choice of subject matter for an experiment in online video. In the early 00s, the software and hardware limitations of the average home computer system threatened to turn rapid movement, a prerequisite of the car chase, into a miasma of compression artifacts. Cinematographer Frederick Elmes, who shot the second instalment of "The Hire," said that he was warned "about how people's computers would handle really fast pans," but ultimately decided to include them anyway, because "to get a really exciting car chase, you can't avoid [panning]."[87] A related technical problem was frequent interruptions for buffering, which, as the critic Elvis Mitchell pointed out, was an ironic issue for a series that was supposed to glamorize high-performing, smooth-running engines.[88] Downloading the shorts, rather than streaming them, could take several hours, resulting in a similarly incongruous

[86] Michael Goldman, "Effecting BMW Shorts," *Millimeter* 29, no. 7 (July 2001): 13.
[87] Jon Silberg, "BMW Hits the Infobahn," *American Cinematographer* 82, no. 7 (July 2001): 88.
[88] Elvis Mitchell, "Honk If You've Seen These Online Films," *New York Times,* June 26, 2001, E1.

combination of speed and slowness.[89] BMW marketers were originally attracted to a car chase-centric series because it would "push the envelope of [automotive] performance, showing what a BMW could do in the most extreme conditions, circumstances you could never hope to convey in a TV spot," but the series also tested the limits of the media infrastructure that existed at the moment of its release.[90] For an optimal viewing experience, "The Hire" demanded computer technology that was beyond almost all Internet users circa 2001.

But the public was not deterred by these inconveniences. The shorts were viewed over 11 million times in the first four months of release. Their popularity led BMW to order a second "season" of "The Hire" containing three additional shorts, a move that retrospectively reimagined the entire project as a television series on an annual schedule. The combined eight shorts received a total of 100 million views before bmwfilms.com was finally discontinued in 2005.[91] BMW sales rose along with these viewing figures. In 2015, when *Advertising Age* placed "The Hire" at number three on its list of the "Top Ad Campaigns of the 21st Century," it noted that BMW sales increased 12 percent in the year after the series began.[92] The publication also emphasized the influence of "The Hire" as a model for other branded content. When a one-shot revival of the campaign was announced in 2016, advertising industry figures questioned whether the series could stand out in a media landscape that had been transformed in its own image. As one skeptical observer put it: "The key difference today is that long-form sponsored content is

---

[89] Elmes stated that it took five hours to download his own (approximately seven-minute) film using his home modem. Silberg, "Infobahn," 88.
[90] Vagnoni, "Behind the Wheel," 12.
[91] BMW Group, "BMW Films Returns with 'The Escape,'" media information, September 2016. The three directors for "season two" were Tony Scott, John Woo, and Joe Carnahan. The 2016 revival was directed by Neil Blomkamp.
[92] "Top Ad Campaigns of the 21st Century; BMW Films 'The Hire,'" *Advertising Age*, January 12, 2015, 18.

everywhere, so how can you get the audience?"[93]

Based on these results, we could reasonably call "The Hire" a "blockbuster" for the incipient Internet age. The series was a big-budget production supported by a saturation marketing campaign that ultimately succeeded where the aspiring blockbusters *French Connection II* and *Black Sunday* did not. "The Hire" reached the "great public" and turned a profit for its backers. In short, these successful commercials were a commercial success. "The Hire" brought Frankenheimer deeper into zone of the blockbuster than he had been in decades, though his participation in the phenomenon remained idiosyncratic, requiring the term "blockbuster" to be employed even more loosely than is already customary. Indeed, rather than moving us toward a clearer definition of "blockbuster," "The Hire" instead makes us aware of yet another blockbuster variation – the blockbuster advertising campaign – which has its own historical lineage that might be traced out. (And Frankenheimer would have a broader role in this history; when the advertising industry trade press reported in 1989 that more commercials were being directed by Hollywood filmmakers, it cited Frankenheimer's then-recent campaign for AT&T as evidence.)[94] The category of the blockbuster is never simple and neither were Frankenheimer's encounters with it. Blockbuster cinema was both a structure that he wanted to work within and one that his media continually seemed to exceed.

---

[93] "Automaker Gears Up for Risky Return of BMW Films," *Advertising Age,* October 17, 2016, 30.

[94] Arden Dale, "Going Hollywood: Mad. Ave Is Going Mad for Feature Directors," *Back Stage*, December 22, 1989, 1.

Bibliography

Acland, Charles. *American Blockbuster: Movies, Technology, and Wonder*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2020.

Active Ingredient Creative Studio. "How to Make a SnorriCam with a Tripod and Two Belts." Uploaded March 17, 2015. *YouTube* video, 2:46. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZXeHOkU15K0.

Anderson, Christopher. *Hollywood TV: The Studio System in the Fifties*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994.

Andrew, Dudley. *What Cinema Is! Bazin's* Quest *and Its Charge*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

"Another Toll for a Famous Bell." *Life*, March 16, 1959.

Appelbaum, Ralph. "John Frankenheimer Speaks to Ralph Appelbaum (1979)." In *John Frankenheimer: Interviews, Essays, and Profiles*, edited by Stephen B. Armstrong, 63-80. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2013.

Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998 (1958).

Arriflex Corporation. Advertisement. *American Cinematographer* 46, no. 3 (March 1965): 145.

Arriflex Corporation. Advertisement. *American Cinematographer* 48, no. 3 (March 1967): 202.

Auslander, Philip. *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

Austin, J. L. "A Plea for Excuses." In *Philosophical Papers*. 3rd ed. Edited by J. O. Urmson and G. J. Warnock, 175-204. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.

"Automaker Gears Up for Risky Return of BMW Films." *Advertising Age,* October 17, 2016.

Axelrod, George. "Satirist's Profitable Progress." *New York Times,* October 21, 1962.

"Backstage at *Playhouse 90*." *Time*, December 2, 1957.

Baker, Peter. "Nixon Looked for 'Monkey Wrench' in Vietnam Talks to Help Win Race." *New York Times*, January 3, 2017.

Balken, Debra Bricker. "Harold Rosenberg and the American Action Painters." In *Action/Abstraction: Pollock, de Kooning, and American Art, 1940-1976*, edited by Norman L. Kleeblatt, 205-214. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008.

Barker, Jennifer. *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009.

Barnes, Mike. "John M. Stephens, Action Cinematographer and Cameraman, Dies at 82." *Hollywood Reporter*, July 6, 2015. https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-news/john-stephens-dead-grand-prix-806729/.

Bart, Peter. "Finding Hope amid Ashes." *Variety*, September 17, 2001.

Bass, Jennifer, and Pat Kirkham. *Saul Bass: A Life in Film and Design*. London: Laurence King Publishing, 2011.

Bazin, André. "Death Every Afternoon." Translated by Mark A. Cohen. In *Rites of Realism: Essays on Corporeal Cinema*, edited by Ivone Marguiles, 27-31. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.

Bazin, André. "False Improvisation and 'Memory Lapses' on TV." In *André Bazin's New Media*. Edited and translated by Dudley Andrew. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014.

Bazin, André. "Theater and Cinema – Part Two." Translated by Hugh Gray. In *What Is Cinema?* Vol. 1, 95-124. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967.

Beach, Christopher. *A Hidden History of Film Style: Cinematographers, Directors, and the Collaborative Process*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015.

Berg, Charles Ramírez. "*The Manchurian Candidate*: Compromised Agency and Uncertain Causality." In *A Little Solitaire: John Frankenheimer and American Film*, edited by Murray Pomerance and R. Barton Palmer, 29-47. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011.

Bird, Katie. "'Dancing, Flying Camera Jockeys:' Invisible Labor, Craft Discourse and Embodied Steadicam and Panaglide Technique from 1972 to 1985." *The Velvet Light Trap* 80 (Fall 2017): 48-65.

Birns & Sawyer. Advertisement. *American Cinematographer* 48, no. 10 (October 1967): 737.

Blume, Mary. "Fathering a *Connection* Offspring." *Los Angeles Times*, September 1, 1974.

BMW Group. "BMW Films Returns with 'The Escape.'" Media Information. September 2016.

Boddy, William. *Fifties Television: The Industry and Its Critics.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993.

Bordwell, David. "Intensified Continuity: Visual Style in Contemporary American Film." *Film Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (Spring 2002): 16-28.

Bordwell, David. *The Way Hollywood Tells It: Story and Style in Modern Movies.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.
Bowie, Stephen. "John Frankenheimer." *Senses of Cinema* 41 (November 2006). https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2006/great-directors/frankenheimer/.

Box Office Mojo. "Domestic Box Office for 2005." Accessed June 9, 2023. https://www.boxofficemojo.com/year/2005.

Bretz, Rudy. *Techniques of Television Production.* 2nd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962.

Bukatman, Scott. *Terminal Identity: The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction.* Durham: Duke University Press, 1993.

Calvo, Dana. "A Familiar *Path*." *Los Angeles Times,* November 7, 2001.

Casty, Alan. "Realism and Beyond: The Films of Frankenheimer." *Film Heritage* 2, no. 2 (Winter 1966-1967): 21-33.

Cavell, Stanley. *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*, enlarged ed. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979 (1971).

Champlin, Charles. "Frankenheimer Flying High Again." *Los Angeles Times,* April 10, 1977.

Champlin, Charles. *John Frankenheimer: A Conversation*. Burbank: Riverwood Press, 1995.

Churchill, Ted. "Steadicam: An Operator's Perspective." *American Cinematographer* 64, no. 4 (October 1983): 36-39, 113-120.

Colander, Pat. "Frankenheimer Plugs in a Second *Connection*." *Chicago Tribune*, May 18, 1975.

Combs, Richard. "Primal Scream: An Interview with Steven Spielberg." *Sight and Sound* 46, no. 2 (Spring 1977): 111-113.

Cook, David A. *Lost Illusions: American Cinema in the Shadow of Watergate and Vietnam, 1970-1979*. History of the American Cinema, vol. 9. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2000.

Cornea, Christine. "Frankenheimer and the Science Fiction/Horror Film." In *A Little Solitaire: John Frankenheimer and American Film*, edited by Murray Pomerance and R. Barton Palmer, 229-243. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011.

Creekmur, Corey. "John Frankenheimer's 'War on Terror." In *A Little Solitaire: John Frankenheimer and American Film*, edited by Murray Pomerance and R. Barton Palmer, 103-116. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011.

Crosby, John. "The Rush to Hollywood*." New York Herald Tribune*, August 15, 1952.

Dale, Arden. "Going Hollywood: Mad. Ave Is Going Mad for Feature Directors." *Back Stage*, December 22, 1989.

Dempewolff, Richard. "Those Great Pictures in *Grand Prix* – How They Were Made." *Popular Mechanics* 127, no. 3 (March 1967): 77-81, 200-202.

"Designed for Shootin' from the Shoulder." *American Cinematographer* 44, no. 5 (May 1963): 284-285.

DiGuilio, Ed. "Steadicam 35 – A Revolutionary New Concept in Camera Stabilization." *American Cinematographer* 57, no. 7 (July 1976): 786-787, 802.

Doane, Mary Anne. *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.

Dyer, Richard. "Rock – The Last Guy You'd Have Figured?" In *The Culture of Queers,* 159-174. London: Routledge, 2002.

Edwards, Paul N. *The Closed World: Computers and the Politics of Discourse in Cold War America*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996.

Eisenhower, Dwight. "President Dwight Eisenhower, the 'Falling Domino' Theory in Indochina, 1954." In *American Foreign Relations Since 1898: A Documentary Reader*, edited by Jeremi Suri, 103-105. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

Ely, David. *Seconds*. New York: Signet, 1964.

Engle, Gary D. "John Frankenheimer: An Interview (1977)." In *John Frankenheimer: Interviews, Essays, and Profiles*, edited by Stephen B. Armstrong, 49-62. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2013.

Evans, Robert. *The Kid Stays in the Picture.* New York: Hyperion, 1994.

Eyman, Scott. *Five American Cinematographers: Interviews with Karl Struss, Joseph Ruttenberg, James Wong Howe, Linwood Dunn, and William H. Clothier.* Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1987.

Farber, Stephen. "*Seconds*." *Film Quarterly* 20, no. 2 (Winter 1966-1967): 25-28.

Fenwick, J. H. "Black King Takes Two." *Sight and Sound* 33, no. 3 (Summer 1964): 114-117.

Feuer, Jane. "The Concept of Live Television: Ontology as Ideology." In *Regarding Television: Critical Approaches – An Anthology*, edited by E. Ann Kaplan, 12-22. Los Angeles: American Film Institute, 1983.

"Film Directors at Work." *Saturday Review*, December 23, 1961.

Fleming, Michael. "*Ronin* in from Cold." *Variety*, July 2, 1997.

Frank, Hannah. *Frame by Frame: A Materialist Aesthetics of Animated Cartoons.* Edited by Daniel Morgan. Oakland: University of California Press, 2019.

Frankel, Daniel. "CGI Backlash?" *Variety,* January 11, 2006.

"Frankenheimer Is First Par Exclusive in Two Decades." *Variety,* December 8, 1976.

Frankenheimer, John. "Commentary." *French Connection II*. DVD. Beverly Hills: Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2001.

Frankenheimer, John. "Commentary." *Seconds*. Blu-ray. New York: Criterion Collection, 2013.

Frankenheimer, John. "Commentary ("The Comedian")." *The Golden Age of Television.* DVD. New York: Criterion Collection, 2009.

Frankenheimer, John. "*L'acteur Paresseux*." *Cahiers du cinéma* 16, no. 94 (April 1959): 35-36.

Frankenheimer, John. "My Not So Brilliant Career." *The Guardian,* November 20, 1998.

Galili, Doron. *Seeing by Electricity: The Emergence of Television, 1878-1939.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2020.

Gertner, Richard. "*Seven Days in May*." *Motion Picture Herald*, February 5, 1964.

Geuens, Jean-Pierre. "The Digital World Picture." *Film Quarterly* 55, no. 4 (Summer 2002): 16-27.

Geuens, Jean-Pierre. "Visuality and Power: The Work of the Steadicam." *Film Quarterly* 47, no. 2 (Winter 1993-1994): 8-17.

Goldman, Michael. "Effecting BMW Shorts." *Millimeter* 29, no. 7 (July 2001): 13.

Goldman, William. *Adventures in the Screen Trade*: *A Personal View of Hollywood and Screenwriting.* New York: Warner Books, 1983.

Gordon Enterprises. Advertisement. *American Cinematographer* 48, no. 1 (January 1967): 16.

Gordon Enterprises. Advertisement. *American Cinematographer* 49, no. 10 (October 1968): 793.

Gould, Jack. "A Plea for Live Video." *New York Times*, December 7, 1952.

Gould, Jack. "'Live' TV Vs. 'Canned.'" *New York Times Magazine*, February 5, 1956.

"Governess." *New Yorker*, October 10, 1959.

Graser, Marc, and Jonathan Bing. "Helmers Hit Speed Bump with Ad Hybrid." *Variety,* June 3, 2001.

Guilbaut, Serge. *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.

Gunning, Tom. *The Films of Fritz Lang: Allegories of Vision and Modernity.* London: British Film Institute, 2000.

Hall, Sheldon, and Steve Neale. *Epics, Spectacles and Blockbusters: A Hollywood History*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010.

Hansard, Bill. "Creating Front Projection Effects for *Black* Sunday." *American Cinematographer* 58, no. 8 (August 1977): 832-835, 862-863.

Hardesty, Mary. "The Burning Season of John Frankenheimer: Four Decades of Directing." In *John Frankenheimer: Interviews, Essays, and Profiles*, edited by Stephen B. Armstrong, 113-118. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2013.

Harmetz, Aljean. "Frankenheimer Rides a Blimp to a Big, Fat Comeback." *New York Times*, April 10, 1977.

Harris, Mark. "Micro Mangling." *Entertainment Weekly,* March 23, 2007.

Higham, Charles. *Hollywood Cameramen: Sources of Light*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970.

Hilmes, Michele. *Hollywood and Broadcasting: From Radio to Cable*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999.

Horak, Jan-Christopher. *Saul Bass: Anatomy of Film Design.* Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2014.

Horwitz, Jonah. "Live Television Drama and Its Cinematic Legacies." PhD diss. University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2019.

Hudson, Rock, and Sara Davidson. *Rock Hudson: His Story*. New York: William Morrow, 1986.

Jagoda, Patrick. *Network Aesthetics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016.

"John Frankenheimer to Direct Commercials through Gibson, Lefebvre, Gartner." *Back Stage*, September 16, 1988.

Jones, Amelia. "The 'Pollockian Performative' and the Revision of the Modernist Subject." In *Body Art/Performing the Subject*, 53-102. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.

Jones, Brian Jay. *George Lucas: A Life*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2016.

Jones, Caroline A. "Filming the Artist/Suturing the Spectator." In *Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist*, 60-113. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Kael, Pauline. "A Sense of Disproportion." *New Republic*, January 14, 1967.

Kael, Pauline. "*Bonnie and Clyde*." *New Yorker*, October 21, 1967.

Kael, Pauline. "Epics: *The Bible* and *Hawaii*." *The New* Republic, October 22, 1966.

Kael, Pauline. "The Making of *The Group*." In *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*, 83-124. Boston: Bantam, 1969.

Kael, Pauline. "Worlds Apart." In *Deeper Into Movies*, 249-253. Boston: Bantam, 1974.

Keating, Patrick. *The Dynamic Frame: Camera Movement in Classical Hollywood.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2019.

Kennedy, John F. "Address by President John F. Kennedy to the UN General Assembly." Delivered September 25, 1961. U.S. Department of State. https://2009-2017.state.gov/p/io/potusunga/207241.htm.

Kerns, Robert V. "How Professional Football Is Filmed." *American Cinematographer* 50, no. 2 (February 1969): 210-212, 250-256.

King, Susan. "The Mature Candidate." *Los Angeles Times*, August 21, 1997.

Kracauer, Siegfried. "Silent Film Comedy." *Sight and Sound* 21, no. 1 (August/September 1951): 31-32.

Kracauer, Siegfried. *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997 (1960).

Krohn, Bill. "Jonah." In *A Little Solitaire: John Frankenheimer and American Film*, edited by Murray Pomerance and R. Barton Palmer, 262-277. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011.

Lehman, Ernest. "The Comedian." In *Sweet Smell of Success: The Short Fiction of Ernest Lehman*, 123-176. Woodstock: Overlook Press, 2000.

Leopold Enterprises. Advertisement. *American Cinematographer* 48, no. 2 (February 1967): 130.

Leopold Enterprises. Advertisement. *American Cinematographer* 48, no. 12 (December 1967): 908.

"'Live TV:' It Went Thataway." *Variety*, May 4, 1960.

LoBrutto, Vincent. "The Surreal Images of *Seconds*." *American Cinematographer* 78, no. 11 (November 1997): 98-104.

Lumet, Sidney. *Making Movies*. New York: Vintage Books.

Lyford, Kathy. "Brilliance, Resilience Marked Director's Life." *Variety*, July 8, 2002.

Madsen, Axel. "*Recontre avec John Frankenheimer*." *Cahiers du cinéma* 187 (February 1967): 11-12.

Magid, Ron. "A New-Age Armada." *American Cinematographer* 80, no. 9 (September 1999): 106-117.

Magid, Ron. "Master of His Universe." *American Cinematographer* 80, no. 9 (September 1999): 26-27, 30, 32d, 33, 35.

Magid, Ron. "Samurai Tactics." *American Cinematographer* 79, no. 10 (October 1998): 34-42.

Mandelbaum, Michael. "Vietnam: The Television War." *Daedalus* 111, no. 4 (Fall 1982): 157-169.

"The Man Who Makes the Difference." Uploaded November 8, 2013 (1968). *YouTube* video, 7:13. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DoW4T0CikOw.

Mast, Gerald, and Bruce Kawin. *A Short History of the Movies*. 7th ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000.

McCarthy, Todd. "Few Delights in Unearthly *Island*." *Variety*, September 6, 1996.

McGilligan, Patrick. "The Man Who Makes Popeye Run." *Boston Globe*, May 18, 1975.

McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994 (1964).

Miller, Richard. "John Frankenheimer Realizes a Longtime Interest and Begins to Direct Commercials." *Back Stage*, October 6, 1989.

Mitchell, Elvis. "Honk If You've Seen These Online Films." *New York Times,* June 26, 2001.

Monaco, Paul. *The Sixties: 1960-1969*. History of the American Cinema, vol. 8. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2001.

Montano, Benjamin. "Gammas, Gadgets and Gizmos." *American Cinematographer* 49, no. 12 (December 1968): 952-953.

Morgan, Daniel. *The Lure of the Image: Epistemic Fantasies of the Moving Camera.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021.

Murphy, Arthur D. "*Black Sunday*." *Variety*, March 30, 1977.

O'Connor, Francis V. "Hans Namuth's Photographs of Jackson Pollock as Art Historical Documentation." *Art Journal* 39, no.1 (Autumn 1979): 48-49.

Patton, Phil. "Lights, Camera, Traction: The Car as Film Star." *New York Times,* February 15, 2002.

Perkins, V. F. *Film as Film: Understanding and Judging Movies*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1993 (1972).

"Photographing *The French Connection*." *American Cinematographer* 53, no. 2 (February 1972): 158-161, 184-185, 211, 213-219.

Pingree, Geoffrey B, and Lisa Gitelman. "Introduction: What's New about New Media?" In *New Media, 1740-1945*, edited by Geoffrey B. Pingree and Lisa Gitelman, xi-xxii. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004.

Pizzello, Stephen. "Batman Takes Wing." *American Cinematographer* 86, no. 6 (June 2005): 36-59.

"The *Playboy* Panel: TV's Problems and Prospects." *Playboy* 8, no. 11 (November 1961): 35-50, 126, 130-139.

"Plot on the Potomac." *Newsweek*, February 24, 1964.

Pomerance, Murray. "'He Loved What He Did So Much!' An Interview with Evans (Evans) Frankenheimer (2010)." In *John Frankenheimer: Interviews, Essays, and Profiles*, edited by Stephen B. Armstrong, 229-245. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2013.

Pomerance, Murray, and R. Barton Palmer. "Introduction: Why Don't You Pass the Time by Playing a Little Solitaire?" In *A Little Solitaire: John Frankenheimer and American Film*, edited by Murray Pomerance and R. Barton Palmer, 1-9. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011.

Pratley, Gerald. *The Cinema of John Frankenheimer*. New York: A. S. Barnes, 1969.

Pratley, Gerald. *The Films of Frankenheimer: Forty Years in Film.* Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 1998.

Prince, Stephen. "Action and Abstraction in *Ronin*." In *A Little Solitaire: John Frankenheimer and American Film*, edited by Murray Pomerance and R. Barton Palmer, 78-88. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011.

Prince, Stephen. "True Lies: Perceptual Realism, Digital Images, and Film Theory." *Film Quarterly* 49, no. 3 (Spring 1996): 27-37.

Rainsberger, Todd. *James Wong Howe: Cinematographer*. San Diego: A.S. Barnes, 1981.

"Review." *Time*, February 17, 1958.

Rhys, Tim, and Ian Bage. "Hollywood Survivor John Frankenheimer (1996)." In *John Frankenheimer: Interviews, Essays, and Profiles*, edited by Stephen B. Armstrong, 125-134. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2013.

Rivette, Jacques. "The Essential." Translated by Liz Heron. In *Cahiers du Cinéma, The 1950s: Neo-Realism, Hollywood New Wave*, edited by Jim Hillier, 132-135. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.

Romao, Tic. "Guns and Gas: Investigating the 1970s Car Chase Film." In *Action and Adventure Cinema*, edited by Yvonne Tasker, 130-152. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Rosenbaum, Jonathan. "Allusion Profusion (*Ed Wood*, *Pulp Fiction*)." In *Movies as Politics*, 171-178. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

Rosenberg, Harold. "The American Action Painters." *Art News* 51, no. 8 (December 1952): 22-23, 48-50.

Rosenberg, Harold. *The Tradition of the New*. Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 1994 (1960).

Rosenberg, Harold. "Toward an Unanxious Profession." In *The Anxious Object*. 2nd ed., 12-20. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966.

Rubinfien Leo, and Erin O'Toole. In *Garry Winogrand,* edited by Leo Rubinfien, 294. San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2013.

Sandler, Irving. "Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg: Convergences and Divergences." In *Action/Abstraction: Pollock, de Kooning, and American Art, 1940-1976,* edited by Norman L. Kleeblatt, 129-133. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008.

Sarris, Andrew. "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962." In *Auteurs and Authorship: A Film*

Reader, edited by Barry Keith Grant, 35-45. Malden: Blackwell, 2008.

Sarris, Andrew. *The American Cinema: Directors and Directions, 1929-1968*. Boston: Da Capo Press, 1996 (1968).

Schauer, Bradley. "The Auteur Renaissance, 1968-1980." In *Cinematography*, edited by Patrick Keating, 84-105. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2014.

Schickel, Richard. "Abstractly Expressive." *Time*, September 21, 1998.

Schonig, Jordan. *The Shape of Motion: Cinema and the Aesthetics of Movement*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2022.

Schreger, Charles. "Frankenheimer's R-for-Irate Summation of Richard Nefner on the PG in Playoff Profit." *Variety*, April 13, 1977.

Scott, Vernon. "'Boy Genius' Label Irks Frankenheimer." *Los Angeles Examiner*, July 11, 1961.

"Seconds – Script." File 113. John Frankenheimer Papers. Margaret Herrick Library. Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Seldes, Gilbert. *Writing for Television*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1952.

Shanley, John P. "Tape: Two Views." *New York Times*, August 30, 1959.

Shaviro, Steven. *The Cinematic Body.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

"She's the Greatest." *Newsweek*, October 19, 1959.

"Shock of Freedom in Films." *Time*, December 8, 1967.

Silberg, Jon. "BMW Hits the Infobahn." *American Cinematographer* 82, no. 7 (July 2001): 85-88.

Slate. "History of the Snorricam." Uploaded April 24, 2015. *YouTube* video, 2:31. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xr73ez4lqDI.

Smith, Cecil. "Frankenheimer Helps Drama Live." *Los Angeles Times*, May 22, 1958.

Smith, Cecil. "Hemingway's 'Bell' on Spring Agenda." *Los Angeles Times,* February 17, 1959.

Snyder, Gabriel. "The 'Bat' and the Beautiful." *Variety,* June 20, 2005.

Sobchack, Vivian. *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.

Spigel, Lynn. *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Stasheff, Edward, and Rudy Bretz. *The Television Program: Its Writing, Direction, and Production.* New York: A.A. Wyn, 1951.

Stringer, Julian. "Introduction." In *Movie Blockbusters*, edited by Julian Stringer, 1-14. New York: Routledge, 2003.

"Technical Achievement Award." *The Operating Cameraman* 5, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 48-49.

Television Academy. "John Frankenheimer – Emmy Awards, Nominations, and Wins." Accessed June 14, 2023. https://www.emmys.com/bios/john-frankenheimer.

Television Academy Foundation. "John Frankenheimer Interview Part 1 of 13 – EMMYTVLEGENDS.ORG." Uploaded July 27, 2011 [interview conducted March 21, 2000]. *YouTube* video, 30:07. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LU2lE0x6hto.

Television Academy Foundation, "John Frankenheimer Interview Part 6 of 13 – EMMYTVLEGENDS.ORG." Uploaded July 27, 2011 [interview conducted March 21, 2000]. *YouTube* video, 30:02. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oaJKhnO3cu4&t=972s.

Television Academy Foundation, "John Frankenheimer Interview Part 11 of 13 – EMMYTVLEGENDS.ORG." Uploaded July 27, 2011 [interview conducted April 13, 2000]. *YouTube* video, 28:39. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-u4shROhtY.

Television Academy Foundation. "John Frankenheimer Interview Part 12 of 13 – EMMYTVLEGENDS.ORG." Uploaded July 27, 2011 [interview conducted April 13, 2000]. *YouTube* video, 29:53. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4aRlnfnzyTg.

"Ten Best Pictures of 1962." In *The 1963 Film Daily Year Book of Motion Pictures*, 119-121. New York: Film Daily, 1963.

Thomas, John. "John Frankenheimer: The Smile on the Face of the Tiger." *Film Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (Winter 1965-1966): 2-13.

Thorburn, David, and Henry Jenkins. "Introduction: Towards an Aesthetics of Transition." In *Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition*, edited by David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins, 1-16. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003.

"Top Ad Campaigns of the 21st Century; BMW Films 'The Hire.'" *Advertising Age*, January 12, 2015.

Travers, Peter. "*Ronin*." *Rolling Stone*, October 15, 1998.

Tubelle, Larry. "Out of the Tube." *Variety*, July 20, 1960.

Turnock, Julie. *Plastic Reality: Special Effects, Technology, and the Emergence of 1970s Blockbuster Aesthetics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015.

Vagnoni, Anthony. "Behind the Wheel: BMW and Fallon's Web Films Widen Horizons for Entertaining Ways to Brand." *Advertising Age,* July 23, 2001.

Virilio, Paul. *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception*. London: Verso, 1989.

Weinraub, Bernard. "Back to Hollywood's Bottom Rung and Climbing." *New York Times,* March 24, 1994.

Weinraub, Bernard. "John Frankenheimer Is Dead at 72; Resilient Director of Feature Films and TV Movies." *New York Times*, July 8, 2002.

Whitten, Sarah. "From Michael Keaton to Ben Affleck, Batman's Legacy at the Box Office Means Big Bucks." *CNBC*, March 3, 2022. https://www.cnbc.com/2022/03/03/batman-box-office-keaton-affleck-pattinson-bale.html.

Wicker, Tom. "Johnson Says He Won't Run." *New York Times,* April 1, 1968.

Wiener, Norbert. "Some Moral and Technical Consequences of Automation." *Science* 131, no. 3410 (May 6, 1960): 1355-1358.

"Will 'Computers' Run Wars of the Future?" *U.S. News and World Report*, April 23, 1962.

Williams, Linda. "Discipline and Fun: *Psycho* and Postmodern Cinema." In *Reinventing Film Studies*, edited by Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams, 351-370. London: Arnold, 2000.

Williams, Linda. "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, Excess." *Film Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (Summer 1991): 2-13.

Young, Paul. *The Cinema Dreams Its Rivals: Media Fantasy Films from Radio to the Internet*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006.

Zielinski, Siegfried. *Audiovisions: Cinema and Television as Entr'actes in History*. Translated by Gloria Custance. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999 (1989).