
Abstracts

Law and the Image

Costas Douzinas

Intimate links exist between political power, law and images. Theology, philosophy and law have always developed elaborate rules about visibility. The iconophilic and iconoclastic traditions complemented one another and combined to construct subjectivity and to reconcile humanity with finitude. In modernity, law replaced religion and philosophy conceptualised legality through the aesthetic category of the sublime. The law understands the importance of the governance of images for the maintenance of the social bond and helps organise a regime of permitted images and forbidden idols which amounts to a complex legal administration of aesthetics and a related aesthetic organisation of law.

Postmodernism, Hyperreality and the Hegemony of Spectacle in New Hollywood: The Case of The Truman Show

Michael Kokonis

The purpose of this essay is to explore the nature of contemporary movies in the socio-economic and cultural context of the so-called New Hollywood. Ever since Hollywood's reorientation towards the blockbuster, the American film industry has witnessed an unprecedented growth as a result of the radical changes it underwent both in the way of making films and in the way of doing business. The point I intend to make in this essay is that unless we become aware of these changes, that is, unless we realize that Hollywood has now expanded in diversified multimedia markets, controlled by international conglomerates, we will find it difficult to appreciate or evaluate its cultural products, especially the high-tech, high-stakes, high-budgeted blockbusters. By focusing on one of New Hollywood's self-reflexive releases, *The Truman Show*, I propose to analyze the ways in which this film reflects on the current situation in New Hollywood. My approach is not necessarily based on narrative analysis, but rather on placing the film within a broader, post-modernist cultural perspective.

Verbal-Visual-Virtual: A MUDdy History

Alison McMahan

According to Manuel Castels we have recently entered the era of Global Networks, in which Culture refers to Culture and Nature is left out of the equation. This paper argues that MUDs (a term used generically to include also MOOs, MUSHes, MUCKs etc.) are one of the symptoms of this new era, as well as an ideal micro-terrain for its study. MUDs are communities on line, containing bots (agents and programmed personalities) and avatars (constructed digital personalities that mask other players) and they are laid out along spatial principles, making the "map" of the world a crucial part of its structure. MUDs can be text-based, 2-D or 3-D virtual environments. This paper focuses on text-based MUDs and begins by tracing their history, from the intertextual relationship of the fantasy worlds of Lewis and Tolkien with the board game "Dungeons and Dragons", to the first on-line MUDs of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Particular attention is paid to the LPMUD called Angalon, examining its avatar creation, bots, quests, navigation of the MUD space, as well as to the various ways that this space has been described by theorists like Aarseth, Landow and Murray. MUDs are a unique form of narrative because of the fluid nature of the existents and the fixed nature of the processes, which are a result of an interactive, modular plot construction. Players are not co-authors, unless they are also wizards. If we think of actual MUDplay as diegetic, and other aspects of MUDding, such as creating avatars and calculating hitpoints, as non-diegetic, we can productively apply theories of levels of narration, such as Branigan's, to interactive fiction.

The Western Gaze and Greek Photography: The Case of Nelly's

Nicos Panagiotopoulos

The issue discussed here concerns the cultural imposition that is achieved silently, without resistance, through the interaction between two powerful overcoded systems, that appear as natural: visual perception, in other words the gaze, and photography, a medium that affirms but also forms our perception. The Western gaze, as a particular way of interpreting and evaluating the world, and photography, as its technical medium and means of reprodu-

ction, have exerted a pervasive influence on the way we perceive, interpret, manage and evaluate both reality and its photographic substitutes. Greek photography, in all of its forms and uses, has been heavily determined by both these systems. An exemplary case here is the work of Nelly's. In the latter, the aesthetic and ideological heritage of the Western gaze combine in order to depict, through a truly remarkable iconography, an imaginary Greece.

Through Cyprus with a Camera: the Ambivalence Between Beautiful and Savage Nature

Hercules Papaioannou

In 1879, the distinguished photographer John Thomson created a photographic album on Cyprus, the most recent British possession. His work is revealing in many ways. Behind the curtain of the association of photography with the Grand Tour emerges a rather thorough colonization handbook, an early tourist guide, while photography seems to be used simultaneously as a tool of manipulating the British public opinion. Thomson's album stands apart for its multi-layered use of photography as an illustrative medium, bringing up for discussion crucial issues for the polysemy of the technical image. His work is also offered for the study of an ingenious and strategic engagement between word and imagery. Finally, it seems to embody a sufficient number of the basic characteristics that were to be found in an era in which the turn towards a visual culture is already a fact.

Images of War and the War of Images

Gregory Paschalidis

In recent decades, war images and the technologies used to produce/disseminate them, have been widely accused for being an integral part of modern warfare and for inducing a spectacular, voyeuristic and morally distant attitude towards war. This view, elaborated mainly by S. Sontag, P. Virilio and J. Baudrillard, is shown to derive from an anti-visualist discourse that has come as a result of a synthesis of the mass culture theories and the anti-technological and anti-representational problematics which was initially formulated by Heidegger and subsequently developed by

Sartre and Foucault. This anti-visualist discourse, successor to a long iconoclastic tradition, by making the technical image responsible for the evils of modern civilization, cultivates a negative fetishism of the technical image which, besides reducing the audience to cynical misanthropes, effectively paralyses any possibility for political action. The alternative approach outlined here suggests that since the Renaissance, the field of visual representation in general, and specifically that concerned with the depiction of war and violence, was gradually emancipated from the control of political and religious authority, ending up, in the age of the technical image, to become extremely heterogeneous and ridden with conflicts between antagonistic visual ideologies and ideological visions. A review of the development of war imagery in this period, reveals that the anti-war visual tradition is consistently characterised by an emphasis on the depiction of the horrific human costs of war. On its opposing side, we have a rival visual tradition that focuses on the glorification, aestheticization and sanitization of war, as well as, the efforts of political authority to reassert its control over the production and circulation of war images. In the context of this war of war images the possibility of political intervention and the distinctive character of the humanist discourse are rediscovered and reaffirmed.

Meta-Visual Spaces: Visualization of the Invisible

Yannis Scarpelos

It has been said that “software is invisible and unvisualizable” (Brooks) and thus “does not permit the mind to use some of its most powerful conceptual tools”. For several decades (until the early 1980s for Apple and the late 1980s for PCs), the absence of a graphic user interface (GUI) from the computers – which, let us not forget, didn’t even have a screen until the early 1970s – kept software invisible and unvisualizable. It was a situation that turned computers into fetishes and mythologized computer usage. Subsequently, however, metaphorical language structures were used to visualize the invisible, to present an image of non-representable tools. Soon, these metaphors became widespread, opening the way for the visual metaphorical structures that followed. The paper examines the way metaphors about the Internet (such as the “Information Superhighway”, the ‘Labyrinth’, the “Sea-travel”

or the 'Library' metaphors) structure our on-line experience, producing images which are used in video and computer games, as well as in everyday lingo.

Postmodern Supernaturalism: African American Women Writers and their Literary Powers

Susana Vega-Conzalez

The supernatural is one of the recurrent themes in the narrative produced by contemporary African American women writers. The postmodernist subversion of ontological borders goes hand in hand with these writers' own cultural and ethnic heritage in which there is not a clear division between the supernatural and the natural worlds, between life and death. In their attempt to redefine the Western concepts of reality and history, Toni Cade Bambara, Paule Marshall, Gloria Naylor and Toni Morrison pay a fair tribute to unheard voices from the past, strengthening present and future identities and bringing to the fore displaced and marginalised ways of knowing and perceiving the world.

For a traditionally downtrodden people such as the African American, the supernatural stands out as a site of resistance and a source of power before white dominion. In the literary discourse, it is employed as a strategy of subversion and transgression of linear narratives and binary oppositions, as well as an apologia for the hybridity and the validity of an intuitive, spiritual and ancestral knowledge. These writers' novels are dominated by ghosts, visions, superstitions, and the magic of the emblematic conjure woman, whose role as a liminal figure between the human world and the beyond parallels the marginality of the African American community in the white North American society. By bringing the dead back to life, by claiming the value of the past and by recovering the image of the conjure woman, contemporary African American women writers create healing and empowering narratives of resistance.

Visibility as an Aspect of the Class Signification of Certain Early 20th Century Athenian Intellectuals

Lia Yoka

A journalist's comment, an abstract from a play-script and references to the culture of literary cafés offer instances of a certain self-fashioning of early-twentieth century intellectuals in Athens. It seems that part of their identification as a class relied heavily on their making themselves seen as intellectuals and on juxtaposing their whole bodily and sensory disposition to that of the bourgeois. The concept of visibility catalyses our understanding of the modern regime of social signification that rendered possible the creation of a self-conscious and temporarily separate, "sincere" and "hard working", élitist national guard.