Through the window: The subject and the voyeur's gaze within cinema and video

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Through the window:
The subject and the voyeur's gaze within cinema and video.

James A. Doohan
BA (Visual Arts)
Communications and Creative Industries
Course B98
6th November 2006
USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.
Abstract

The underlying theme of this thesis is that cinema and related media create sites in which the viewer becomes a kind of voyeur, and in doing so normalises the voyeuristic gaze. Relationships between those who possess the gaze and those who become the object of that gaze are structured both ideologically and through the apparatus of the camera itself. These ideologies are arguably driven by a patriarchal paradigm, particularly within mainstream cinema where men appear to control the gaze and women are positioned as the object of that gaze. Even within cinema however that appears to be explicitly misogynistic like the horror genre, there are instances where the relationship between these two positions is more interactional. Through the example of David Cronenberg’s cinema and my own practice I aim to demonstrate how the gaze of the viewer and the active gaze of the on-screen characters is repositioned from focusing on the female body to the male. In this way the male character comes to occupy the liminal space between active subject and passive object in relation to the gaze.

Furthermore within this thesis and within my current work Window Loop the question is raised about the truth-telling status of the camera as visual information captured and exhibited. It is my assertion that film always distorts reality, in that information becomes framed and manipulated both to create a context and for ideological purposes, as a consequence the voyeur’s gaze within the mediated environment is always susceptible to misperception.
Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

i. incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;

ii. contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or

iii. contain any defamatory material.

Signature: James A. Doohan, 6th November 2006
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Introduction

The darkened spaces of the cinema and the home theatre are sites which, arguably simulate the conditions that activate the voyeuristic gaze. The audience is present and treated as an invisible guest within the majority of narrative films and as such is able to gaze into private and public spaces which the on-screen characters enters. Though I work within a visual arts context, the form of my current work Window Loop mimics this dynamic through utilizing the medium of video and the sculptural possibilities of the moving image. The viewer of Window Loop is positioned as a type of voyeur in a darkened intimate room looking out and into two projections of windows that simulate the basic structures of an interior and exterior of a domestic setting. By restricting the amount of visual information given surrounding the actions of the subject seen through and upon the frame of the window, I am attempting to suggest that the gaze of the voyeur cannot come upon a reciprocal relationship with the object of the gaze. Rather understanding is dependent on the ideologies and power relationships between those who actively look and those who are looked upon.

In examining the complexity of the voyeuristic gaze and power relationships over the object; I have used examples within narrative cinema itself. The first chapter 'The Voyeuristic Gaze' will explore how voyeurism particularly mediated voyeurism has become one of the more prevalent forms of entertainment in contemporary society and what are the implications of this development. Furthermore I will demonstrate how the gaze of cinema can be analogous to the voyeuristic gaze in Alfred Hitchcock’s Rear Window, which Norman K. Denzin (1996, p. 118) in the The Cinematic Society: The Voyeurs Gaze describes as "an ode to voyeurism". Rear Window is also a reference in my own work particularly in the use of the window frame as eluding to the way in which cinema creates a window onto the world.

The second chapter, 'The Gendered Gaze', examines the relationship between the spectator and the object of the gaze as it applies to gender. A key text cited in my research that addresses the power relationship between these two positions is Laura
Mulvey's essay *Visual Pleasures and Narrative Cinema*. Mulvey's main polemic is that ideologies constructed within narrative cinema are intrinsically geared towards the phallocentric, for Mulvey (1989, p. 19) states, "In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female". This dichotomy can further be described as activating the voyeuristic tendencies of the male spectators gaze, male as being the subject who looks and the woman as the image/object who is looked upon. As a general rule this occurs within the vast majority of narrative cinema, however my argument is that there exist several films where the cinematic gaze appears to be afforded a greater dynamic relationship between those who own the gaze and those who are gazed upon. The case studies I have chosen to examine this dynamic are within the horror genre, and to demonstrate that even with a genre which appears to be clearly misogynistic towards woman and perpetuates gender stereotypes there are horror films where the positioning of the gaze and in tum fixed gender roles are less rigid and more fluidic than they often appear.

The final chapter 'Window Gazing' will contextualise the issues of the voyeuristic gaze and the gendered gaze further in relation to my current work *Window Loop*. Although I employ certain cinematic tropes within this particular work, the aim of this chapter is to demonstrate where *Window Loop* differs from cinematic form and where it is similar. For instance the lack of narrative in the work and the use of the double projections differ greatly from how mainstream cinema is most often received by the viewer. However like cinema I do employ the model of the unseen viewer (audience) gazing into alternative and recreations of private spaces. Through *Window Loop* I am attempting to highlight how and why several theorists consider this model of cinema, that is the viewer in a darkened space gazing into private spaces, to be a form of mediated voyeurism. Furthermore by restricting the scope of this gaze as well as creating an immersive environment for which the viewer to enter *Window Loop* alludes to how meaning can be constructed and mediated through this gaze.

The complexity of the issues that arise within *Window Loop* cannot all be addressed in this thesis, that is why I haven chosen to concentrate principally on the three most common elements within the work: the gaze, the window and the subject. Therefore only
theories which I believe relate to these elements directly are commented upon and included in the main body of this thesis. Related theories or ideas which need to be discussed further have been included as footnotes within each respective chapter.
1. The Voyeuristic Gaze

Contemporary forms of voyeurism are not necessarily specific to the 21st century but are the end results of developments in visual technologies that have increased exponentially in sophistication and distribution during the last half of the 19th century and the 20th century. Bilge Yesil (2000, n. p.) in Reel Pleasures: Exploring the Historical Roots of Media Voyeurism and Exhibitionism, writes that during this period there had occurred "a remarkable rise in the quantity of visual material available to the public. With the advent of photography and graphic reproduction, newspapers and magazines, people had become extremely concerned with visual representation". These developments resulted in the emphasis on seeing above all other senses, and creating a society which was beginning to have the ability through these new technologies to seek a greater range of visual and aural information than was previously available. Paralleling developments in technology this period also witnessed a greater emphasis on exposing individuals private thoughts and secrets to a larger public. Yesil (2000, n. p.) further sees this change of society’s attitude coming about partly because: “Modernists set out to overthrow Victorian euphemism in favor of ‘terrible honesty’. Dark family secrets and everyman’s innermost fantasies were explored by writers and artists alike".
Through the continuing development of visual and mechanical reproduction technologies, coupled with a society that was becoming more accustomed to exposing private matters publicly, the groundwork had been laid for newer forms of voyeurism. Clay Calvert (2004, p. 4) in *Voyeur Nation* notes that this period therefore created a push towards what he refers to as 'mediated voyeurism' a term which he defines as voyeurism as it pertains to the "means of the mass media and which now includes the internet". The forces which create and impact upon mediated voyeurism according to Calvert (2004, p. 13) are the following:

Social, political-economic, technological and legal. These forces, in turn, touch on and sweep up important concepts and values in a self-governing democracy such as privacy, self-realization, discourse, reality, truth, newsworthiness, public interest, and freedom of speech.

It can be argued therefore that issues concerning voyeurism and the voyeuristic gaze are more prevalent within a contemporary image based culture than any previous epoch.

The definition of what constitutes a voyeur and therefore voyeurism can vary, however the general definition as found in the Oxford Dictionary (2003, p. 1608) is as follows: “1. a person who gains sexual pleasure from watching others when they are naked or engaged in sexual activity. 2. a person who enjoys seeing the pain or distress of others”.

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1. Calvert also defined mediated voyeurism as falling within the following categories:

   i. **Video Verite Voyeurism.** A genre or technique intended to convey candid, unmanipulated realism, or as the word “verite” suggests the truth. Commonly applied to forms of documentary, which purports to convey an objective window on the world.

   ii. **Reconstruction Voyeurism.** A technique or form commonly applied within television in the reenactment or dramatization of a real event. Reconstruction purports to be non-fiction.

   iii. **Tell All/Show-All Voyeurism.** Refers to tell-all talk shows, ‘reality’ television, and investigative television newsmagazines. Most recently evidence in web-cam broadcasts such as those on My space.

   iv. **Sexual Voyeurism.** Voyeurism that is distinctly sexual in motivation. Can often include the filming and exhibition of unsuspecting individuals in various stages of undress, sexually explicit activity and bodily function. (Calvert, 2004, pp. 4 – 10)
These two definitions are of the voyeur attempting to fulfill two desires, firstly sexual gratification and secondly power over the person or persons objectified by the gaze, other factors of voyeurism, however are not considered within these definitions such as how the voyeur is most often unseen by the subject of his/her gaze. The idea of the unseen voyeur is crucial to understanding mediated voyeurism. Norman K. Denzin highlights this in *The Cinematic Society: The Voyeurs Gaze* (1996, p.14) stating, “that the cinema makes voyeurs out of spectators...in the shadows of the theatre is reproduced the concept of a private, sacred space which the spectator enters”. Similarly Laura Mulvey in *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1989, p. 25) refers to cinema as fulfilling “the basic pleasure of scopophilia (pleasure in looking)”. This pleasure being essentially that, which takes other people as objects of controlling and curious gaze. The audience within the vast majority of mainstream cinema is treated as though they are an invisible guest, they are invited to gaze upon a hermitically sealed world that is completely indifferent to their presence. Here the gaze within cinema can fall within a system of three looks according to Mulvey (1989, p. 2):

That of the camera as it records the pro-filmic event, that of the audience as it watches the final product, and that of the characters at each other within the screen illusion. The conventions of narrative film deny the first two and subordinate them to the third.

The on screen voyeur is granted the privilege and power of doing the gazing-the looking-determining which characters are to be the object or spectacle of that gaze. Cinema allows the audience to vicariously enter the public and private worlds the on-screen voyeur trespasses. This on screen voyeur can appear in different guises such as; “The reporter, detective, sleuth, spy, psychoanalyst, sexual pervert, psychopath, murderer, rapist, photo-journalist, cameraman, accidental tourist. (Denzin, 1995, p. 1)”

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2. Mulvey argues that it is through the power afforded to the male gaze that women are most often defined as spectacles or objects within cinema, (this theme will be explored within Chapter 2 in my analysis of the gendered gaze).
Though they may differ in roles and occupation they all share the common quality of being characters attempting to transgress into places both private and public which they may not belong.

Whether voyeurism is simulated as it is in cinema or the real thing it can be considered as indicative of a society where the voyeuristic gaze has potentially reached all individuals, “By invading private spaces the voyeur defined the sanctity of such spaces, even as their presence was being erased by the surveillance structures of the democratic societies” (Denzin, 1995, p. 15). Within this environment a two-fold form of voyeurism has become commonplace and expected as a method for which the individual’s behavior can be controlled both publicly and privately. The means with which this is achieved is not necessarily from an overt or from an outside force but through the expectation of being watched.

The feeling of being watched is not depending on someone looking (e.g. Seppanene, 2002). People internalize the rules, regulate their own behavior even when it is not necessary and, thus, exercise power over themselves. The emotional event of being seen has been described as “the constant torture of the random but ever possible gaze” (Ainley cited in Virillo, 1998, n. p.) The argument that cinema makes voyeurs out of spectators can therefore be expanded to suggest that the voyeuristic gaze and the feeling of being watched becomes normalised within the individual through mediums such as cinema. “The constant torture of the random but ever possible gaze” is replaced by complacency and the acceptance that the ever-present gaze is a normal condition of living in the 21st century. This notion appears to already become a premise for several films dating at least as far back as the 1950’s, one particular example being Alfred Hitchcock’s *Rear Window*.
The Voyeur at the Rear Window

*Fig. 2. Rear Window (1954) film still*

*Rear Window* has become a reference point for my own work *Window Loop*, in that it deals explicitly with the voyeuristic gaze within cinema, Denzin (1996, p. 118) regards Hitchcock’s film as “an ode to voyeurism”. The very title *Rear Window* of the film suggests this, the spectator is asked to appropriate the identity of the voyeur, to gaze into a space perhaps they were not meant to. This theme is developed within the narrative.

The protagonist Jeff is a photojournalist who has become wheelchair bound after an accident and is recuperating within his apartment. Jeff passes his time gazing out the rear window to those apartments directly across and adjacent from his own. The action of the film takes place either within Jeff’s apartment or is shot looking out through the open window of his apartment. It is through this open window Denzin (1996, p122) writes “moving images and pictures of reality originate, and are erected, occurring and coming into being when one lifts the veils or curtains (blinds and shades) that separate the private
from the public in daily life”. Therefore the window within the film acts as a metaphor for not only the lit screen of cinema, but also perhaps the lens of the camera, the window of the projection booth, where the eye, like the film, creates a window onto the world.

Fig. 3. Rear Window (1954) film still.

As Jeff watches the occupants of those apartments that surround him he begins to construct narratives to describe and understand their behavior, in this way he becomes the reflexive stand-in for the spectator. That is, Jeff is like the spectator who makes his own cinema, this has already been emphasised early in the film in that Jeff’s regular employment has been as a photojournalist, and therefore we are aware that he is a professional in constructing stories through visual images. If the audience is aligned with Jeff through the act of looking, so too is Jeff aligned with the spectator in for the most part of the film though he is not be able to actively participate in the lives of the characters he gazes upon. They are depicted as either being completely indifferent or furthermore unsuspecting of being gazed upon. However there is one crucial difference between the position of spectator watching the film and Jeff’s form of voyeurism, Jeff is not in possession of a reflexive gaze, “we return Jeff’s gaze and see him as he cannot see himself” (Denzin, 1996, p. 121). This is apparent particularly not only in that the spectator can be the invisible guest in the private moments Jeff shares with his girlfriend, but in the inherent irony of the film, we the spectator watch as the voyeur watches, he like the characters/neighbours are oblivious to our gaze. Furthermore Denzin (1996, p121) argues that: “Jeff’s point of view does predominate in those shots correlated with the
binoculars and telephoto lens, but many of the other shots might be more accurately described from the point of view of the rear window rather than Jeff’s himself.

What drives the narrative of *Rear Window* is whether Jeff through his voyeuristic activities has uncovered a murderer in the apartment opposite, or has instead constructed, through a series of visual clues given, an elaborate but entirely fictitious scenario. It is not until the conclusion of the film that Jeff is proven to be correct in his assumptions, that is he does uncover a murderer, through the visual knowledge ascertained in this context by indulging in his voyeuristic desires he has uncovered the truth. His voyeurism is therefore validated.

More than fifty years have passed since *Rear Window* was made, though the film itself can be considered an ode to voyeurism it is worth acknowledging that it can also be read as being symptomatic of the time it was made, Robert Stam and Roberta Pearson in *Hitchcock’s Rear Window: Reflexivity and the Critique of Voyeurism* argue that:

> Hitchcock’s *Rear Window* can be read as political essay on surveillance which echoes the historical ambiance of McCarthyite anticommunism... Jeffries is an anonymous accuser whose suspicions happen to be correct, but the object of his hostile gaze might as easily have been innocent as Father Logan in *I Confess*, or Christopher Emmanuel Balestrero in *The Wrong Man*, to cite two other fifties (Hitchcock) films with anti-McCarthyite resonances. (Stam & Pearson, cited in Denzin, 1996, p. 137)

Though I agree with Stam and Pearson analysis of Hitchcock’s film as having ‘anti-McCarthyite resonances’ when watching a film such as *Rear Window* my personal reaction though speculative and hypothetical is exactly what if Jeff had entirely misperceived the goings on he witnessed through his rear window? Though Jeff was proven right what he did see in the rear window is seen at a distance and framed by the window, subsequently commenting on how visual information is framed by the cinema screen, little information is given of the characters beyond what is seen at this distance. In this manner the film can be read as an analysis on mediated voyeurism, especially as what is outside of the frame is restricted to our vision, then there is the possibility of
misperception and speculation. Denzin (1996, p. 122) states that the gaze of the voyeur is “Cold and analytic, it reads surfaces not depths. It has no need to probe the inner subjective life of the people who are gazed upon”. The point being a voyeur is to create a situation where the person looked upon does not physically engage with the gaze. This lack of interaction emphasizes the need for the voyeur to make speculations about the object of the their gaze, the danger however is when this speculation and visual misperception, start be taken as truths.

The camera in Hitchcock’s *Rear Window* ultimately “indulges scopic desire, reveals moral truths, acts as a moral authority and punishes those who transgress the law” (Denzin, 1996, p 136). The common saying of the *camera never lies* is reinforced in the conclusion of the film, an idea which is problematic though I believe Hitchcock meant to be ironic. The emergence and recent prevalence of ‘reality’ based network television contains evidence of this. In a program such as ‘Big Brother’, multiple cameras and microphones are attached to their bodies at all times and capture and record the inhabitants every move, it crosses several different media including television, internet and podcasts. The Big Brother household is an attempt to recreate every aspect of a private world to be displayed publicly to an audience in which reality can supposedly be accurately recorded, therefore the idea of the camera as being a truth-telling device is again extolled. However as Denzin argues “the technologies for producing the real distort the real that is being produced”. For instance the reality created through the camera is never objective: firstly what is perceived is determined by one’s angle of vision and framed through the viewfinder, secondly the footage is informed by ideology both when it is captured and exhibited, examples of ideological contexts, could be political, economical, sexual, and racial. Furthermore one can argue that the contestants within reality television act to the watching camera displaying a full complicity and an awareness of the gaze of the camera, there ever present gaze would entail that contests regulate their behavior accordingly. Within reality based programming therefore the likelihood of misrepresentation is great, a show such as Big Brother can reveal that the ‘real’ is sensationalized for the sake of entertainment, the mediated world of television
and film cannot be sites where the viewer can objectively analyse real situations, rather television and film create versions or traces of the reality which they depict.

As images within the mediated world are shaped and framed through ideologies and the technology, the distinction between ‘real’ and ‘imitation’ begin to become irrelevant. The images presented before the voyeuristic gaze in this context can therefore be refer to as ‘simulacrum’ in that “What is real is no longer our direct contact with the world, but what we are given on the TV screen: TV is the world. TV dissolved into life, and life is dissolved into TV. The fiction is ‘realized’ and the ‘real’ becomes fictitious” (Sarup, 1993, p. 164). In this context Rear Window can be not only read as an ode to voyeurism but a prediction of voyeurism in the age of simulacrum, where the world observed by the viewer are mediated through the interfacing of screens. The irony being the more the voyeur sees the object of their gaze, then the more distanced from the object of his/her gaze as the object within the screen becomes disembodied from the restraints of time, space, and a fixed external reality.

3. Jean Baudrillard (1988, p. 170) in Simulacra and Simulations outlines the cultural developments of the representational image as occurring in four successive phases:

1. It is a reflection of a basic reality.
2. It masks and perverts a basic reality.
3. It masks the absence of a basic reality.
4. It bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum.
2. The Gendered Gaze:  
The active subject and the passive object

As was established in the first chapter the voyeuristic gaze is a condition which appears to be implicit within the cinematic apparatus, the gaze of the voyeur contributes to power relations between those who do the looking and those who are looked at. A dimension of this gaze that shall be developed here is how it is in turn affected by gender. Laura Mulvey’s essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* establishes that the gaze as applied to cinema is not only gendered, but creates ideologies about the relationships between the different sexes. The overwhelming polemic of Mulvey’s essay is that narrative cinema is determined by a dominant patriarchal view of society, she states:

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly...the woman is positioned as an image, and man as the bearer of the look (Mulvey 1989, p.19).

Subsequently it is the gaze of the male protagonist of the screen which becomes the vehicle for the spectator’s gaze whereas the female is to be considered an object of the gaze. Since the first publication of the Mulvey’s essay in 1975, it has received criticism from a range of theorists, including Denzin (1996, p. 43) who criticizes the essay on several grounds including: “Its over-emphasis on binary opposition...and its inability to interpret those films where categories of the gaze collapse and male and female figures interchangeably identify with and gaze upon one another.”

The medium of film as made mention in the first chapter provides the viewer with the fulfillment of the basic pleasure of scopophilia. It is women who are generally objectified, and it is the male spectator who takes pleasure in looking, the female spectator in Mulvey’s polemic is afforded only a masochistic relationship to the gaze. However it can also be argued that women like men will experience a certain degree of identification to the male gaze or identify with the male character of the narrative. In *Deconstructing the Gaze*, for instance, Linda Badley (1995, p. 127) takes a similar
position to Denzin in referring to the possibility of interchangeability of the gaze stating "Women are allowed to vicariously, perversely to transcend their sex by assuming the male subject's gaze", vis-à-vis, the male spectator may also have the opportunity to vicariously experience what it is like to be "the sex" (Badley, 1995, p. 127) to be embodied as the "feminine other".

To explore the complex dynamic between those who possess the gaze and those who are objectified by the gaze, I shall show how they operate within what is referred to as the 'slasher' film. Furthermore my own current work Window Loop does make certain reference to certain themes found in this type of film. The slasher film is a sub-genre within horror that first became popular in American film in the late 1970's and the 1980's. Arguably the most popular series of 'slasher' films were Halloween (1978), Friday the 13th (1980) and A Nightmare on Elm St (1984). Each of these films and the numerous sequels which followed them consisted primarily of a "Woman who was identified, stalked, and brought down by a villain who functioned as an enforcer of patriarchal law" according to Badley (1995, p.102). Gender roles within the slasher film appear to be clearly drawn, it is perhaps little wonder why it is consider by some to be one of the most overtly misogynistic of all the film genres.

Following Mulvey's argument of the active male gaze and the passive female object it would therefore be assumed that the male spectator would identify with the villain's perspective, whereas the female spectator would empathize masochistically to the female victim. However there is a case to suggest that, due

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4. Robin Wood defines Otherness as "representing that which bourgeois ideology cannot recognize or accept but must deal with in one of two ways: either by rejecting if possible annihilating it, or by rendering it safe and assimilating it, converting it as far as possible into a replica of itself." (Wood, 2002, p. 27) Furthermore the bourgeois can be replaced with the dominant patriarchal culture, so the feminine is positioned as the 'other' in this context. Wood states that "The dominant images of women in our culture are entirely male created and male controlled. Woman's autonomy and independence are denied; on to women men project their own innate, repressed femininity in order to disown it as inferior (to be called "unmanley"-i.e., like a woman-is the supreme insult." (Wood, 2002, p. 27)
to the possibilities and complexity of identification of the spectator in relation to the on-screen characters, that the relationship between those who possess the gaze and those who are the object of it is not fixed. Mulvey (1989, p 25) indirectly poses the possibility of this shifting dynamic by stating that “the place of the look defines cinema, and that there is a possibility of varying and exposing that look”. Carol Clover is one writer who explores this issue in *Her Body, Himself*, within the essay she uses examples of what she refers to as the ‘Final Girl’ of the American ‘slasher’ film as a method of exploring gender identification and the gaze within film. According to Clover the recurring pattern that exists in each of these films is that the last remaining female character, which Clover (2002, p. 79) calls the Final Girl, is “by any measure the slasher film’s hero.” Not only is she the character that actively defeats the villain but it is her point of view that is privileged, “the final girl is the only character to be developed in any psychological detail” Clover (2002, p. 79). The spectator is asked from the attention paid to her that it is her characters story that hers is the main story line and it is her perspective that the spectator identifies with. However identification of the male spectator to the final girl may not necessarily reveals this, (Clover as cited in Badley, 1996, p.18) argues:
Women are usually victims in horror films because they are permitted a greater range of emotions—including the “masochistic” emotions of empathy, suffering, pity, and fear, as well as “male” desire and aggression. Male viewers can identify with these masochistic emotions and disavow them as belonging not to themselves but to a girl.

Although to assume that characteristics the male spectator identifies with most within the final girl are those characteristics which are the most masculine, then it can be argued that for the female character to attain male characteristics in the slasher film, she has to forgo her status as passive object of the gaze and be constructed as the possessor of the gaze and therefore become symbolically masculine. Within the ‘slasher’ film this is achieved in a variety ways in the films mentioned, such as her inevitable sexual reluctance; penetration in the slasher film according to Clover (2002, p. 81) “constructs the female”, and her openly inquisitive personality. In relation to the active male gaze and passive female object it is her investigating gaze that marks her as being unfeminine in the traditional sense in that she reverses the look. In doing so she makes a spectacle out of the killer and a spectator out of herself. The investigative gaze progresses from being mere inquisitive to being aggressive as she tracks down and hunts the killer. For example in the first act the Final Girl ‘Nancy’ of the original A Nightmare on Elm Street movie, starts out being potential victim of the psychopathic character Freud Kruger. He controls the dream world which Nancy enters when she falls asleep, within this world she is at Kruger’s complete mercy as his possess a virtually omnipotent gaze, and can quite literally distort this reality to torment and torture his victims. It is not until the final third of the film, that Nancy realizes to defeat Kruger she has to force her self to sleep thereby entering the dream world which he controls and where she is the object of his gaze, and bring him into the real waking world were he can hunted and killed.

Clover (2002, p. 78) describes the male killer of slasher films as being: “Unseen, or barely glimpsed, during the first part of the film, and what we do see, when we finally get a good look, hardly invites immediate conscious empathy. He is commonly masked, fat, deformed, or dressed as a woman”. Nancy in Nightmare brings Freddy Kruger into full view, it may be more than a coincidence that when he becomes the object of her and the audience inspecting gaze that he becomes more vulnerable.
Steven Shaviro (1993, p. 62) in *The Cinematic Body* however opposes Clover’s ‘literal’ reading of the Final Girl to a traditionally psychoanalytic referring to it as a “figurative reading, and in doing so has positioned her as nothing more than a figurative male” this reading he argues “regulates and normalizes these films, disarms or disavows their subversive potential for gender fluidity”. Though I agree that horror films in their body specificity often create potential spaces, which allow for a type of gender fluidity, it is almost impossible to deny that they are still made within a patriarchal paradigm. One possible cause as Badley (1996, p. 104) points out is that “Women directors are rare, especially in mainstream cinema and lack access to the means of film production”, horror films are of no exception in this regard, and most often femininity and masculinity are constructed through a male perspective. Therefore I agree with Clover in that power and the possession of the gaze in the slasher film are aligned within this perspective male. The final girl therefore is for all extents and purposes of the slasher film is most often more like a ‘figurative’ male.
The Male subject becoming the object of the gaze

_The male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification. Man is reluctant to gaze at his exhibitionist like._ (Mulvey, 1989, p. 3)

![Videodrome](image)

Fig. 5. _Videodrome_ (1982), film still. The male gaze becomes inverted.

Whereas the ‘slasher’ film highlights the necessity that in order for a leading female character to survive she has to shift and occupy the position general ascribed to the male character, there exists several examples within the horror genre in which the opposite can said to be true. That is an active male subject who becomes a passive object to be exposed and gazed upon. For example characters within Canadian director David Cronenberg’s films often can occupy several positions in relation to the gaze regardless of whether a character is male or female. Badley (1996, p. 104) describes the cinema of Cronenberg’s as falling within a genre which she describes as “Anti-horror” that is: “Exploiting horror’s marginality and it’s potential for generating controversy to expose, unsettle, and reposition the gaze”. Furthermore Badley attributes this to the often self reflexive nature of genre stating “It helps that the low-budget horror is inherently self-conscious of its voyeurism (an overt statement of what is inherent in the structure of cinema itself). “
Cronenberg earliest films such as *Rabid* (1977) and *The Brood* (1979) have been cited as evidence of how women are constructed as an other within cinema, they appear to depict the feminine as monstrous, and emphasised according to Showalter (as cited in Badley, 1996, p. 125) “male science’s fear and envy of women’s powers of reproduction and the struggle between them for control”. However within Cronenberg’s films of the 1980’s, for example *Scanners* (1981) and *Videodrome* (1982) it was the male characters not the female characters who became the object and central to the gaze of the audience. Arguably this was part of a larger trend which Badley (1996, p. 126) saw as occurring in horror genre of the 1980’s, she states:

Because “man” is still the “universal” body, the gendered male-male anatomy viewed as psychological destiny—has not until recently been popular issue or even recognized as an image...films of the 1980’s that used the vocabulary of horror—from *Altered States*, 1980, and *Alien*, 1979, to *Hellraiser*, 1988—it is the male body that is opened, anatomized, and hystericized.

The image of the male body within the above films is a male body exposed, invaded and dissected. The other prominent theme within each of this films is the idea of metamorphosis of the male protagonist, that is “the male subject confronted or “gave birth” to the soft-bodied “feminine” in himself” (Badley, 1996, p. 26). Within Cronenberg’s *Videodrome* and a film such as Ken Russell’s *Altered States* for example the audience literally witness’ a male who ‘gives birth’ to a new self through a series of graphic mutations both physical and psychological. Cronenberg’s films however differ from other films with similar subject matter of this period because his male protagonists almost always die tragically for the same reason, that is, they bring about their own destruction in their attempts to harness and exploit the dramatic physical and psychological changes which occur within themselves. I will argue further this is also due to realization that they rapidly lose the ability to define themselves as being distinctively human. To elaborate on this point I will examine Cronenberg’s 1986 remake of *The Fly*. A film which can also be cited as a good example of how the attention of the audience’s gaze is positioned on the male as the object, and secondly how the male becomes hystericised, in the original sense of the word, as he attempts to see himself and understand his ‘new’ self.
The plot line of Cronenberg’s *The Fly* is basically as follows. Seth Brundle, a quantum physicist, invents a device that enables him to dematerialize and teleport solid matter, the device is referred to in the film as the ‘telepod’ and looks, according to Barbara Creed (2005, p. 43) “like a man made womb”, a reading which becomes more apparent as the film develops. After successfully teleporting inanimate objects and eventually a living baboon, he teleports himself, however during this procedure he accidentally scrambles his genes with those of a housefly. Instead of an instant change of heads (as in the 1958 film), Brundle metaphorically becomes a new hybrid, literally from the inside out. The chance mutation creates a new hybrid between man and animal, the ‘Brundlefly’.

Fig. 6. *The Fly* (1986). Brundle in the telepod just prior to his metamorphosis.
Fig. 7 & 8. *The Fly* (1986) film stills, two different stages of Brundle's metamorphosis. Though his appearance maybe monstrous by seeing the Brundlefly through Veroncia's gaze the audience is able understand him as a tragic figure and a character worthy of sympathy.

Badley describes the Brundlefly as a "male subject who as his body is deconstructing he is also physically constantly is giving birth to a new subject" (1996, p. 127) she argues, "Brundle (the subject) by becoming Brundlefly has become the subject-object." Therefore Brundlefly occupies the liminal territory of 'becoming', his body is continually mutating to a state which is without definition. By fusing his DNA without the housefly he has crossed the boundary between man and animal, a boundary that signifies according to Creed (2005, p. 24):

The line between the civilized and uncivilized, the self and the non-self...the 'abyssal limit of the human-the edge of the primal uncanny. Like woman, the animal has been designated 'other', existing in a troubled relationship to the rule of law and language.

Furthermore by becoming the 'other', Seth Brundle as a research scientist is forced to view himself as an object, by doing so the audience becomes aware the disastrous consequences of trying to occupy these separate positions.

Brundle's mirror gazing leads to schizophrenia, dialectic, heteroglossia. One such mirror scene, in fact, has him organizing the "Brundle Museum of Natural History" in the medicine cabinet. He sheds parts of his previous
3. Window Gazing

Within the first two chapters of this thesis I analysed firstly how cinema can stimulate the conditions of voyeurism and secondly the complex relationships that are created in the cinematic environment between those who own the gaze and those who are gazed upon. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate how these ideas operate within my current work, the video installation Window Loop. It is important at this point to state that though Window Loop is influenced by and borrows from certain cinematic tropes, the ultimate form and presentation of the work differs to cinema considerably. I regard the work as being well within the field of which I will refer to as the 'visual' arts. This particular work for example equally draws upon performance, installation and 'video' art as it does cinema. However within Window Loop the issue is still the voyeuristic gaze and how this can be played out within a visual arts context.
selves as “of historical interest only, “redundant”-his teeth, his ears, fingers-studying his body as it changes. Self-reflexive humor becomes his primary strategy for maintaining both distance and continuity, awareness of the boundary between involuntary animal behavior and human socialization. (Badley, 1996, p.130)

That it eventually becomes impossible for Brundle to assimilate and understand the changes that have occurring within his body, he has become according to Shaviro (1993, p. 144) “excluded from the scene of his own metamorphosis... he suffers from “a disease with a purpose” of its own which he is not privy”. However the audience does not witness Brundle metaphorphis from his point of view or ‘gaze’, it is the female character whose perspective is privileged over other characters.

In the first act of the film for instance the audience is introduced to Seth Brundle primarily through a female character named Veronica. Veronica is a journalist who is actively looking for a physicist in which to conduct a feature article for a scientific journal. She chooses and conducts her article on Brundle, Badley (1996, p. 128)
describes as her gaze as being, “alternatively dispassionate and an empathic one” particularly on the event of becoming emotionally and physically involved with her subject. By the second act of the film the privileging of Veronica’s gaze manifests itself in a variety of ways, for example, when Brundle becomes the experiment, Veronica possesses the camera and writes the book that becomes the film we are watching. She is presented simultaneously as surrogate director and spectator-voyeur in the film, throughout which “Brundle is progressively “feminized”: opened and anatomized, layer-by-layer” (Badley, 1996, p 129). If Brundlefly is the monster he does not hide in the shadows but is in full view for the most part of the film. Therefore I can argue that the notion of a male gaze which possesses the woman as the object is not as evident in the Fly. Brundle like Veronica becomes enthralled by the image of himself, though the image of the Brundlefly ultimately lies beyond their comprehension. Though Brundle may be able to understand and observe the continual changes to his physical form from an objective and scientific standpoint he is unable to adapt to the how those changes effect him and Veronica emotionally and psychologically. This inability to adapt eventually results in Brundles self-destruction.
As mentioned above Cronenberg’s films of the 1980’s are atypical within the horror genre. They do not construct the monster as an archaic form of the other which society represses. Cronenberg’s “monsters” it can be argued are actually a kind of end result of the attempt to completely control and manipulate the body through science and technology. The male protagonist within his films exist in the liminal space not only between, man and animal and man and technology, but also between being the subject who can possess the gaze and becoming the object of that same gaze. His films depict an active male gaze inverted back in on itself, and in doing so he has created ways to invert and challenge the patriarchal codes of the genre.

5. Cronenberg’s monsters or hybrids appear to belong more within Harraway’s Actor Network Theory, than within any ancient symbolisms of the repressed other, in that, the monster like the cyborg, is similar in that they are created through a network of advancements in military and medical technologies. It is important to differentiate between hybrids or what Harraway refers to as “boundary creatures” (cited in Sofoulis, 2002, p. 26) as Zoe Sofoulis, points out that “The emphasis to be not on hybridity as such, but on the specificity of hybrid forms that arise in particular situations” (Sofoulis, Z., (2002) ‘Cyberquake: Haraway’s Manifesto’, in Prefiguring Cyberculture, (ed.) Cavallaro, A., Jonson, A. & Tofts, D., p. 26, Sydney: Power Publications.) Therefore the Brundlefly cannot be a stand-in for all hybrids, such as the cyborg, the hermaphrodite etc, but is unique to the particular situations through which it has been created. Within his films continually become the experiment were there are no longer any forgone
The Window

The window does more than reflect the world. It activates the world, stirs it up makes it problematic. (Denzin, 1996, p122)

The constant image within Window Loop is the window. The window acts within the video as a permeable boundary that separates the public world from the private world, and the exterior from the interior. The subject within Window Loop is seen crossing this boundary, and subsequently the viewer vicariously enters the public and private worlds the on-screen character trespasses. The use of the window in this form relates conceptually to Alfred Hitchcock’s Rear Window that is the action of the film always occurs in relation to the window on both sides of the pane. It both captures and frames the actions surrounding it and the actions seen within it. In this context the window as it appears in Window Loop creates a screen within a screen, both in a literal sense and in a metaphorical sense that is the cinema screen creating a window onto the world.

The Restricted Gaze

The action of a person entering a window within Window Loop invites the spectator to gaze and vicariously enter into different spaces. I hope to limit the amount of visual information given in each scene, two of the only certainties given are whether the window has been filmed from an exterior position or from within an interior and that all the scenes were shot at night. The camera in each scene could be said to be in fixed or stationary position I have also chosen while shooting not to use any zoom functions as if to focus upon particular details. I purposely shot the film from a similar distance to the window in each scene, so as when the video switches from scene to scene the window retains the same proportions. The reasons for the film to be shot in this manner should become clear to viewer upon viewing the piece: firstly I believe it creates a clean continuation between each scene and secondly to reinforce the two dimensional aspects
of the window image. It is hoped that when the viewer looks through the window, the
distance between objects appears ambiguous. Arguably the shallowness of the image
could reference Denzin’s reading of the nature of mediated image (1996, p. 127) “a
surface where appearances cannot reveal deep, inner truths about human relationships”,
within Window loop I have taken a statement such as this and attempted to give it a broad
interpretation, so not as to mean only that film distorts ‘inner truths’ about the
relationships between people but also between a person and their environment and their
relationship to objects within that environment. The final presentation of Window Loop
upon two screens prevents the sequential reading of the work and go further to articulate
this idea. Window Loop purposely differs from the linear narrative of Rear Window, for
example the inquisitive gaze of the voyeur in Rear Window uncovers in a linear and
sequential order a series of visual clues. By piecing together these clues his voyeuristic
activities are validated because at the conclusion of the film he finds what is a truth that is
there is a murderer in the apartment across the way. However it is worth noting that in
Rear Window other than the ‘voyeurs’ motivations, it is never revealed to the audience
murderer’s motivations for his actions nor any of the other characters which are seen by
Jeff. Maybe Hitchcock is suggesting what Denzin believes that the gaze only reads the
surface, and that we do not understand characters inner motivations for their actions only
the consequences of those actions. Intersubjective understanding of the subject or a
definitive truth is further eluded through the sequencing of events provided within
Window Loop, as the work has no beginning, middle, all that can be scene is the same
action in slightly different variations. If attempting to position the male subject of
Window Loop as being like a character within the verisimilitude of a narrative film, then
he exists only to fulfill this action ad infinitum. His motivations beyond this action are
purposely not made clear; rather a space is created where the viewer through the limited
information given may have to construct there own meaning and speculate upon the
causality of the scenes depicted.

Formally the images projected may be considered as mimicking certain aspects of cinema
while on the other hand it also mimics the look surveillance. The cinematic aspects are
evident in the dramatic lighting, props and wide screen format, however the production
values, sound design and rudimentary style of editing fall far short of anything created within mainstream cinema. Even the size of the image is closer in dimensions of the projection screen for instance of the home theatre the size of standard cinema screen (contextually it is worth noting that the size relates the work to the domestic setting in which the footage was captured). The aspects which reference surveillance I believe are in the fixed camera position and the manner in which the images edited appear to switch from one channel to another, as if several cameras are capturing the same footage from similar vantage points from either side of the windowpane. The intention of borrowing formally from cinema and surveillance is to not only to furthermore emphasis the relationship of the cinematic experience as being a type of mediated voyeurism, but also how information is framed within these mediums.

Though I principally reference cinema within *Window Loop* and theories on mediated voyeurism, I have been also been influenced in at least aspects of visual design by the works North American artist Paul McCarthy. McCarthy is not commonly referred to as being an artist who deals with forms of voyeurism or mediated voyeurism, however I so these themes operating as a sub text within several of his works. *Bossy Burger* (1991) which McCarthy exhibited at the Rosamund Felsen Gallery in Los Angeles can be used to demonstrate how the presentation of an artwork can incite the investigative gaze of the voyeur. McCarthy achieved this in the materials he chose within the filming and the presentation of the work; *Bossy Burger* featured two leftover sets from a discontinued sitcom, *Family Affair.* (The title *Bossy Burger* is borrowed from the name of the restaurant and teen-hang-out featured in the program.) Within the set the viewer came across various foodstuffs and condiments smeared about the set. Ralph Rugoff's (1996 p. 72) *Mr. McCarthy's Neighborhood* describes as:

Reeking of violence, the scene conjured the aftermath of a barbaric assault, a crime against television's hygienic family values. True to the ethos of our instant replay culture, the 'crime' was continuously re-enacted in a 59-minute video displayed on a pair of monitors adjacent to the set. In the tape, McCarthy plays the deranged host of a mock-cooking programme. Dressed in clown shoes, chef's outfit and a grinning Alfred E. Neumann mask (Mad magazine's cover boy), he conducts an autistic culinary exercise, emptying out bottles of mayonnaise and ketchup with
masturbatory abandon... Eventually, however, it is clear that he is trapped on the set: though McCarthy’s chef probes its boundaries and prowls its passageways, he cannot escape its borders. It defines his entire universe.


*Bossy Burger* could be said, as being a comment on commercial culture, and forms of television stereotypes impact upon the individual\(^6\). What is of greater concern to me is how *Bossy Burger* relates to my own work the positioning of the viewer.

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\(^6\) Rugoff (1996, p.52) states elsewhere in the essay of the “contemporary truism that our experience is mediated, infiltrated and infected by images imbibed from the mass media, the stupefying poltergeist of TV characters and Hollywood stereotypes that serve as social role models. McCarthy’s work examines this invasive kaleidoscope of clichés and its enmeshment with our ‘individual’ psychology”.

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The viewer can actively gaze into the set and they can also watch the character on the two monitors provided. This does not make the work interactional, between the viewer and the subject; rather the gaze of the viewer is that of the investigative voyeur of cinema or television. As Rugoff mentions above "the scene conjured the aftermath of a barbaric assault", it is the viewer who is left to piece together through a series of grisly clues evident in the stains and materials in the set itself as they have arrived after the fact and combine those with the video footage to create a subjective understanding or 'truth'.

My own work *Window Loop* perhaps appears more reductive in style than a work such as McCarthy’s *Bossy Burger*, certainly in the structural qualities of the work, and the more specific range of themes which are being investigated. However what is similar between the two works is the recreation of a space. For example in *Window Loop* two moveable gallery walls are positioned and placed adjacent to one another forming a smaller, more intimate space to elude to the basic structure of the house where the video was shot. Two video projections are then projected onto these walls so that the windows of the film are to scale, in this manner the videos simulate windows in different parts of a small room.

In *Window Loop* a conscious effort has been made to simulate the conditions that activate the voyeuristic gaze, both in the footage and the presentation of the footage. As the work is a double video projection in a darkened and intimate space, which the viewer enters, the subject of the video (myself) is indifferent and does not acknowledge the gaze of the camera and therefore the gaze of the viewer. The basic premise is that a male subject is attempting to create loops by actively entering and exiting open windows of a domestic house. The structure that formally defines the male subject universe in *Window Loop* is the window frame. As a rudimentary recreation of this space is created within a gallery context the private domestic space of the house in this is made public through the film and subsequent exhibition.
Becoming the Object of the Gaze

It is difficult to argue that through this work I am revealing a different kind of gaze, such as a feminine, for example the gaze afforded to Veronica in Cronenberg’s *The Fly* as mentioned in chapter two. I am however attempting to implicate the viewer within the work and as a result create an awareness of how their gaze can begin to take upon qualities of voyeurism. My interest in the cinema of Cronenberg is that his films at once exploit the nature of scopophilia particularly that of the male viewer and at once question the extant the body becomes the object of the gaze. Shaviro (1993, p. 154) writes, as Badley similarly stated, that Cronenberg

> Creates a male fantasy of control over the female body completely through making her the object of the gaze; as in *The Brood*. However in films such as *Videodrome, The Fly* and *Dead Ringers* this fantasy is progressively undone; attention is returned from the objectified female body to the subjectified male one.

The attention of the gaze is returned to the male subject in *Window Loop*, in that the basic premise of a male character who enters windows within the night as seen as a reference to the violent intruder who violates the sanctity of the domestic home, such as the villain or killer of the ‘slasher’ film. However I have omitted the presence of the ‘victim’ the one who is hunted and stalked. The intruder then becomes the only character within *Window Loop*, in relation to a genre such as the slasher the relationship between the active male who possess’ the gaze and passive female who is objectified is undermined. I attempt to make reference to the genre further by the inclusion of the stage blood which covers my hands. Firstly the idea was to create ambiguity over whom the blood belongs too, myself as a bloodied injured victim or the blood of another person from a heinous crime I may have committed. Secondly to create an indexical mark upon the window frames, the frames become bloody as I continue to move through them. Like the damaged set in McCarthy’s *Bossy Burger*, the idea here was to create the mark of a hidden violent or chaotic event.
To define *Window Loop* in binary of the male who looks and the female who is the object of the gaze I believe becomes impossible, attention is shifted back upon the male subject at which point he begins to occupy a liminal space between this two positions. As he trespasses into different spaces through the window thus directing the spectators gaze, while at the same time he is the object for the gaze of the viewer, as his is the only subject present within the work.

![Window Loop video still](image)

The relationship between the subject and the object of the gaze is further made problematic by the illusion that has been attempted in *Window Loop*, that is for the male subject to have the ability to move from one screen to another, a process which results in the subject appearing multiplied or fragmented. The presence of the body as fragmented and the endless repetitiveness of his actions within *Window Loop*, refer to a self that is no longer self-contained, and an action that is never completely resolved. Jacques Lacan (as cited in Creed, 2005, p. 188) writes “in order for the subject to preserve its sense of self as complete and unified, it must preserve boundaries between those things that threaten the self, such as fragmentation and death”. Lacan also writes at length on the development of the individual’s sense of subjectivity and self-recognition within the mirror stage, this development as being an important stage where in the individual understands the boundaries between themselves and the world around them.

Self-recognition in the mirror is effected (somewhere between the ages of six and eighteen months) in three successive stages. At first, the child who is together with an adult in front of a mirror confuses its own reflection with that of its adult companion. In the second phase the child acquires the notion of the image and understands that the reflection is not a real being. Finally, in the third stage, it realizes not only that the reflection is
The multiplied subject as it appears in *Window Loop* may reveal what Creed refers to as "the uncanniness that resides within, which makes strangers to ourselves...Freud emphasized the reflection as a 'double' but I would emphasize the uncanniness evoked of being startled by our image—that we do not always know ourselves, that the estrangement of the self from itself is a fundamental condition of being human" (Creed, 2005, p. 29).

However within *Window Loop* there is no possibility of recognition of the other as they are indifferent to the each other's gaze. They may mirror one another on opposite sides the windowpane, and occupy the same time periods but their images never collide. It is the same body which is fragmented or split through the medium, what is presented is a body doubled and split carrying out the same actions not opposition to one another but not in union either.

The sense of the uncanny is also transferred upon the viewer in relation to the positioning of the work. Firstly as mentioned above the images are projected on adjacent walls within a darkened intimate space, the effect which is attempted is to create illuminated windows within a small room. In this sense it could be read as to visually evoke the idea of 'unheimlich'8, a term often used by Freud to symbolize the uncanny. The 'unheimlich' or an unhomely home is literalised that it is a room and the images of the windows of domestic house are made unfamiliar. The viewer may experience a degree of uneasiness or disorientation in that to view both images the viewer has to situate themselves within this space, essentially stand within the middle of the work, affecting the proximity between the voyeur and the subject or object of their gaze. As referred to in the first chapter "cinema makes voyeurs out of spectators...in the shadows of the theatre is reproduced the concept of a private, sacred space which the spectator enters" (Denzin, 1996, p. 14). *Window Loop* therefore can be read simultaneously as enforcing these conditions however in potentially frustrating the viewer in restricting the scope of the gaze, it could also be regarded as an attempt question the inherent voyeuristic qualities inherent in both the mediums of film and video. Furthermore how these mediums turn people into objects of the gaze.
7. The uncanny is often referred to in the following German terminology of 'unheimlich' and 'heimlich'.

The German word 'unheimlich' is obviously the opposite of 'heimlich' (homely), 'heimisch' ('native')-the opposite of what is familiar; we are tempted to conclude what is 'uncanny' is frightening because it is not known and familiar...Something has to be added to what is novel and unfamiliar in order to make it uncanny. (Freud as cited in Creed, 2005, p. 3-4).
Conclusion

The principal theme of this thesis is that cinema creates the conditions which activate the voyeuristic gaze, this gaze is two-fold as it is applied to the on-screen character who crosses into spaces which the viewer is then allowed vicariously to enter. In this context cinema, and subsequently television and the Internet, can become sites which function as normalising the voyeuristic gaze within society. This is particularly apparent in the popularity of 'reality' based entertainment and the prevalence of surveillance technologies within our public spaces. Paradoxically though the voyeur has access to gaze into an unprecedented amount of private spaces it can also argue that through mediated voyeurism the voyeur is increasingly distanced from the object of his/her gaze. As outlined in the first chapter this distance is a result of the possible misperception of the object of their gaze as they can only perceive the surface reality of that object. Therefore the ability of the camera to capture an objective truth or reality within this environment is brought into question, firstly the camera as an apparatus frames and delineates and isolates the visual and the aural and secondly this information is constructed and framed through a range of ideologies, which can be for instance political, economical, sexual and racial in motivation. Information considered superfluous to an ideology may be edited out of the screened footage.

As an ode to voyeurism Hitchcock's *Rear Window* could also be called a piece of reflexive filmmaking, that is cinema about cinema, and its basic function of fulfilling the viewers scopic desires. *Window Loop* though not being a piece of cinema, it is after all a video projection within a gallery, however through this work I am attempting to make the viewer aware of how the gaze can start to take upon voyeuristic qualities. This sense of reflexivity relies greatly on the viewer's awareness of himself or herself spatially within the work and on where they position their gaze in relation to two screens. That the subject appears to encroach upon the space of the viewer, from a series of different positions opens up the possibility of redefining the proximity of the voyeuristic gaze in relation to the subject or object of that gaze. The work questions the truth-telling gaze of both the camera and the voyeur, that seeing is not always understanding. As mentioned...
in the first chapter the voyeur of Hitchcock’s Rear Window Jeff arrives at a truth after piecing together a series of visual clues, the time spent looking is thus rewarded. Resolution as in the sense of a linear narrative of beginning, middle and end cannot be achieved in Window Loop, as the same or similar scenes are endlessly repeated, by the on-screen subject. The technology of having two projections running simultaneously, create videos which go in and out of sync with one another introduces an element of chance, the number of combinations of sequences therefore becomes far greater and contributes to the open-ended qualities of the work. This is the inherent irony of Window Loop is that even if the combinations of footage are presented as being infinite, within each new scene scarcely no new visual information or clues are presented to be deciphered by the viewer.

Through Window Loop I wish to further undermine the relationship between fixed positions of the male who actively gazes within the work and the object of that gaze. Two elements quickly become apparent to the viewer in Window Loop firstly that there is little to see beyond the boundary of the window, and secondly, there is only the male subject as the one character within the work (even though he may possibly have a double). As there is no other definitive object of the gaze attention is therefore repositioned upon the male subject, in doing so he takes upon the dual status of the subject-object.

Window Loop is not only a metaphor for the screen of cinema and television but of the liminal space which the window represents, that is the permeable boundary between exterior and interior, public and private. The male subject’s boundaries are defined in relation to this space; his actions are captured within it. As he is multiplied, the image of a unified self is questioned; distinctions between ‘I’ and the ‘other’ or the ‘real’ subject and the ‘imitation’ begin to breakdown, he is a subject as image disembodied from the real and in this respect could be referred to as pure simulacra. In reference to cinema what is created is a reality which becomes distinctive from the external world, that is a reality where the laws of causality can be manipulated, for instance time and space are no longer restraints upon the image, the truth of the image as seen through the window or screen I believe should therefore always be questioned.
List of Images


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Bibliography


