

Me rge rMa r g I nMar K[me]
Exploring Digital Technologies in Film and Electronic Media

in t r o d u c t i o n

locale, the settings in which social relations are constituted (these can be informal or institutional); *location*, the effects upon locales of social and economic processes operating at wider scales; and *sense of place*, the local “structure of feeling” (Agnew 263).

“Culture” can be thought of as a term that identifies human experience in selective and organised ways, lending significance to the forms through which people make sense of their daily lives (Rosaldo 26). This paper explores what happens when human experience and sense-making inhabit spaces beyond usually recognisable social forms and systems, namely the electronic systems of computer mediated communications (CMC).

Specifically, I examine the spatial processes involved in “new media” editing of digital images, focusing on *an edit* (the cut) as a place of cultural habitation. I explore what occurs when editing practitioners work between real / material and virtual / digital environments, so extending notions of “lived” social space into practices displaced through the technoscience of CMC. New media (nonlinear) editing forms a swift interplay between absence and boundary in taken-for-granted ways, so exposing the intersecting and often transitional locations / dislocations of identity formation (Castells

vol 1, Haraway *Moderst_Witness*) in relation to the culturally amassed complexities of new network structures and technological trajectories (Plant). Alongside these axes, and inseparable from them, operate textual variations in constitutive practice, realised through particular forms, or “orders” of languaging (Lucy, Butler).

Within this specific framework, this paper questions the sustainability of established cultural concepts of continuity through evaluating the everyday narratives of editing professionals. A structure for ongoing dialogue between members of the local media industry and perspectives brought by new humanities research is therefore extended, providing a useful forum for the exchange of multiple readings.

Additionally, emergent theories of spatial negotiation and “digital identity” are explored within the practices and contexts of applied media production, both as the “imaginary places” of reception and as the professional terrain of production. By interposing the reflections of two digital editors with sociocultural critique, this paper maps an understanding of emergent media practice and reassembles borrowed fragments from CMC settings, featuring these elements as markers in what Donna Haraway describes as the “excessive . . . fiercely physical, semiotic world of technoscience” (*Moderst_Witness* xiv).

Exploring the primacy of practice in everyday contexts reveals a fluidly determined (th)reading of commonplace nuance and workaday affairs, ultimately securing these within the delicate renure of dissolution.

from small things extravagance erupts and is silently exposed
:[delicate matters]: _ a cut? or a join? or a Rule of Six?

A *space* exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. Thus space is composed of intersections of mobile elements. It is in a sense actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it . . . [S]pace is like the word when it is spoken, that is, when it is caught in the ambiguity of an actualisation, transformed into a term dependent upon many different conventions, situated as the act of a present (or of a time), and modified by the transformations caused by successive contexts (de Certeau 117).

An ideal cut (100%) is the one that satisfies all these six criteria at once:

- 1 Emotion (51%)
It is true to the emotion of the moment
- 2 Story (22%)
It advances the story
- 3 Rhythm (10%)
It occurs at a moment that is rhythmically interesting and "right"
- 4 Eye-trace (7%)
It acknowledges what you might call "eye-trace" — the concern with the location and movement of the audience's focus of interest at any one moment
- 5 Two-dimensional plane of screen (6%)
It respects "planarity" — the grammar of three dimensions transposed by photography to two (the questions of stageline, and so on)
- 6 Three-dimensional space of action (4%)
It respects the three-dimensional continuity of the actual space (where people are in the room and in relation to one another) (Murch 23).¹

e m o t i o n (5 1 %) . . .

[a w o n d r o u s a f f a i r]

During the seventeenth century, a select group of Europeans (or women-and-Others-in-elision) led immensely passionate lives. Theirs was a well crafted and acquisitive affection whose ardent imaginings were to plough what it thought was the fabric of being, with exclusivity an assured seduction. Simultaneously, and with recognisable tenor, detachment grew large and the liaison was overshadowed (McDonald 3).

Biologist and science historian Donna Haraway remarks that technoscientific formations emerged through a period in Euro-knowledge creation which contextualised, or "situated," spatial systems of persuasion (*Moderst_Winnes* 25). Haraway refers to scientific laboratories in seventeenth-century England that were promoted as "public space" to effect collective validation of experimental matters. These were occupied, however, by a select group of speculators, "modest witnesses," regulated by codes of restricted access. Situating her commentary around the life of notable seventeenth-century scientist Robert Boyle, Haraway writes that Boyle's "experimental way of

life" triggered the development of what were to become three formative practices in scientific knowledge creation. Referring to Boyle's invention of a new "instrument," the air-pump, and after Shapin and Schaffer (25), Haraway writes:

[I]n the 1650s and 1660s in post-civil war Restoration England, Boyle played a key role in forging the three constitutive technologies for such a new life form: "a *material technology* embedded in the construction and operation of the air-pump; a *literary technology* by means of which the phenomena produced by the pump were made known to those who were not direct witnesses; and a *social technology* that incorporated the conventions experimental philosophers should use in dealing with each other and considering knowledge-claims" (24).

She goes on to suggest that an instrument such as the air-pump was "[e]mbedded in the social and literary technologies of proper witnessing . . . [and] . . . acquired the stunning power to establish matters of fact independent of the endless contentions of politics and religion" (24). Alongside the material means, the "subterranean labour," by which the air-pump was built, operated and maintained, these three technologies constituted the framework of the modern period. In Haraway's terms, they were the "founding gestures of what we call modernity," "situated knowledges" that actively marked out the difference between expert knowledge and non-expert opinion (24).

Interrogating the workings of a bounded community, Haraway seeks out forms of ill-precision that craft often unstated, yet acute, authorities of difference. Demonstrating a keenly fraught embrace of what she terms, "*diffraction*," small movements of spatial reflexion, we learn that "production of difference *patterns* might be a more useful metaphor for the needed work than reflexivity" (34). In Haraway's revised schema of interrogation, absence and presence circulate in quietly impassioned ways, not through the ruynancy of ideas, but through a question of what becomes "the apparatus of production," and the "*constitutive practices of technoscience production themselves*" (24, 35).

Modes of technoscientific transmission form the basis of computer-mediated communication (CMC) (Plant). Present-day technicians are carriers of early formative practice and encounter modes of self-invisibility similar to those described in Haraway. Just as "experimental philosophy — science — could only spread as its material practices spread" (Haraway 24), today's technoscientific practice involves intimate acts of diffidence in spaces

“semiotically accepted as public . . . theatre[s] of persuasion” (25). In what follows is found an embodiment of “public” validation and then an expression of “*diffraction*” within media production software. Both demonstrate irresolute tension. Both form an “apparatus” of production.

i m a g e

[a t e n d e r a c t i n s u b t e r r a n e a n d i a l o g u e]

[My worst experience of editing was [on] a feature film called *The Sound of Drumming* . . . The director . . . wanted to see a screening of the whole film . . . in three days time so it was a mad rush to get the film together . . . [W]e had to double-splice every cut and . . . check the sync on every shot and that’s labour intensive . . . I worked right through the night . . . I was there for three days without sleep . . . I was really bright and bubbly the morning of the screening thinking, “Oh, gee, I’ve done really well . . . no, I’m really cool, you know, I’ve been awake for three days and I’m, I’m firing.” We got into the theatre and as the clock leader went down my eyes suddenly started to get really heavy . . . I think I only passed the two-pip and I was out like a light. I woke up several hours later in an empty theatre and . . . everyone had gone . . . I thought, “Ah, maybe I should just get in my car, go home and never come back,” because it’s not a good idea to fall asleep at a first screening . . . I thought, “Yep, I’ve really burnt my bridges here” . . . “I’m in big time trouble.” . . . [T]hey decided not to wake me because I looked so peaceful . . . (Johnson 16).²

i m a g e

Instances are representations of an original object which is designated as the symbol. When the symbol object [or the original] is edited, the instances [or copies] automatically change to reflect the modifications to the symbol . . . Normally, modifying an instance modifies the symbol and other instances. However, you can modify an instance without affecting the symbol or the other instances . . . [which is called] “Releasing an instance from a symbol” . . . [This is achieved] by first breaking the link between the instance and the symbol . . . [To do this, firstly select the

symbol, then] choose
M o d i f y > S y m b o l > B r e a k L i n k
(Macromedia 92-95).

(S T O R Y (2 2 %) . . .)

The terminology used to describe editing can vary. In the United States, editing is called “cutting.” In Australia and the United Kingdom, it is known as “joining.” The first term places an emphasis on separation, the second on unification, or “bringing together,” suggesting that the term itself is vulnerable to conceptual fluctuation (Murch 12). What editing does, however, is to effect what editor Walter Murch has described as an “instantaneous displacement of one field of vision with another in just a few milliseconds, a displacement that sometimes also entails a jump forward or backward in time as well as space” (12). It is this “jumping” from one context to another which I want to explore.

Filmic representations currently work best when events are recorded and displayed at twenty-five individual frames per second, creating what the human eye perceives as ordinary, or “real” time — a series of discontinuous “stills” that creates a sense of “continuous” movement when projected at a certain speed. Over-recording of such movement, at say, one hundred frames per second, produces the expansion of events, recognised as “slow motion.” This kind of recording reveals detail that is beyond the usual perceptive capacity of the human eye — the exposure of what is usually unseen. Conversely, under-recording, at say, fifteen frames per second, produces a “jagged” effect where movement appears to be missing. This is literally so, and is noticeable in early recordings made by equipment that was comparatively limited, producing approximately eleven to fifteen frames per second, and the familiar “sped up” effect seen in early cinema (Crittenden, Danciger).³

This technical breakdown suggests that “film” is inherently discontinuous, a series of discretely contextualised juxtapositions.⁴ Correlatively, so too, is human vision. Revelational techniques, such as “slow motion” cinematography, call to account the foundations upon which concepts of “reality” are crafted (cf Winston, Pilling). Critical thinking in communications inquiry, for instance, deploys theory which suggests that human communication is based on the “production and consumption of signs” (see eg Thwaites, Davis and Mules; Castells; Hall), associatively invoking the field of vision as a basis for semiotic critique.⁵ Yet what can be “seen” corresponds reflexively to what is “unseen,” to what at first seems “absent,” therefore fluctuating in a *present-and-absent*, perhaps “*real-and-imagined*” (Lefebvre, Soja 106-144) framework, exposing with more precision, the moment of biological and cultural tension.

[I]t’s amazing how your eyes and ears accept things as well . . . as a complete experience that in so many ways it doesn’t make any sense at all, but I guess, in a lot of senses . . . editing doesn’t make any sense at all either (Peters 22).

Biological discourse, however, is not exhaustive where critical thinking about the body is concerned. Feminist philosopher Judith Butler, for example, positions the body as a site of discursive production. Refiguring the work of linguist J L Austin and, after Foucault and Althusser, Butler expands the notion of a performative, explaining how bodies are constituted through the language which names them.⁶ Such constitution occurs through the intervention (interpellation) of "speech acts" into a person's social existence. Butler states:

[I]t is by being interpellated within the terms of language that a certain social existence of the body first becomes possible. To understand this, one must imagine an impossible scene, that of a body that has not yet been given social definition, a body that is, strictly speaking, not accessible to us, that nevertheless becomes accessible on the occasion of an address, a call, an interpellation that does not 'discover' this body, but constitutes it fundamentally (5).

Is it fair to speculate whether the "act" of editing is a performative: a "doing which constitutes a being," a constitutive address, inducing a particular sensibility where none has existed?

[Y]ou have to look at editing in films like eye blinking . . . [Y]ou just don't know that you're doing it . . . [I]f you turn your head from one side to another, most people blink in between so you're almost cutting out that middle bit . . . [T]o cut from a shot in a film to a close-up, from a wide shot to a close-up, it's really not natural to do . . . [I]t's through watching films and . . . almost having that eye-blink feel . . . that people accept it and it's amazing how cuts can flow. [Editors] try and make things flow . . . [T]here's a sort of saying, "If you can't solve it, dissolve it" (Peters 12).

Editor Jack Peters recalls the physicality of the editing (visualising) process, one framed descriptively in linguistic terms, yet operative within a biological imaginary. The conflation between three distinct discourses exposes how this merger concurrently draws on perceptible limitations and semiotic familiarity. Biology ("editing . . . like eye blinking"), naturalism ("most people blink in between . . . it's not natural") and continuity ("it's amazing how cuts can flow") are blended here with relative informality suggesting their distinct tenability. Yet a new discourse hovers between these and is

equally prominent. Jack's mention of eye blinking, combined with the industry adage, "If you can't solve it, dissolve it," implies that the processes of hyper-elision, both their biological, or performative, and their filmic, or visual incarnations, are spatially coalescent. Here, the fusion between the material and the semiotic effects a movement into possibility and dissolution beyond the boundaries of usual perception.

r h y t h m (1 0 %) . . .

In "Why Do Cuts Work?" editor Walter Murch writes about the inevitability of displacement:

The truth of the matter is that film is actually being "cut" 24 times a second: each frame is a visual displacement from the previous one — it is just that in a continuous shot the displacement from frame to frame is small enough for the audience to see it as *motion within a context* rather than as 24 different contexts a second. On the other hand, when the visual displacement is great enough (as at the moment of the cut) we are forced to re-evaluate the new image as a different context [. . .] Discontinuity is King: it is the central fact during the production phase of filmmaking, and almost all decisions are directly related to it in one way or another — how to overcome its difficulties and / or how to take best advantage of its strengths (13-14).

Discontinuity is clearly something to worry over. As Manuel Castells and others have written (see eg Haraway, Balsamo, Springer and Plant), change effected by a new technological trajectory can be profound and often render societies anxious, introducing a volatile tempo to already overburdened systems of power/knowledge distribution. What follows is a (not so modest) witness to an equally pervasive trajectory of instability, one that is under-acknowledged within recent accounts of technoscientific change. It is an example of the discrete and potent processes of discontinuity in the hyper-semiotic world of CMC (Castells, vol 1) and may be useful as a way to expose the tension between the potential "play" of technoscience and the enduring constraints of its practice.

In the book *Zeros + Ones: Digital Women + the New Technoculture*, Sadie Plant writes about forms of interruption into the so-called linear trajectory of hegemonically masculinised technoscientific achievement, stating:

[T]he revolutions in telecommunications, media, intelligence gathering, and information processing [...] have coincided with an unprecedented sense of disorder and unease, not only in societies, states, economies, families, sexes, but also in species, bodies, brains, weather patterns, ecological systems [...]. Centres are consumed by peripheries, mainstreams overwhelmed by their backwaters [...]. Master copies lose their mastery, and everything valued for its size and strength finds itself overrun by microprocessings: once supposed too small and insignificant to count (46).

Tracing the story of the Difference Engine, an early calculating machine devised by nineteenth-century engineer Charles Babbage, Plant attends to the role of displacement in bringing about technological "mastery," and argues against a presupposition of "patriarchy" where technological formations are concerned (6). Highlighting the artfulness of Babbage's female collaborator Ada Byron (later Lovelace) we learn that Ada possessed willful intellect and self-determination. One exchange between Ada and Babbage outlines the delimitation which was to (re)figure centrally in their alliance:

"You are a brave man," Ada told Babbage, "to give yourself wholly up to Fairy-Guidance! — I advise you to allow yourself to be unresistingly bewitched. . . ." No one, she added, "knows what almost *any*ful energy & power lie yet undevelopped [sic] in that *witty* little system of mine" (7).

Ada's was an existence informed by controversy. Her "method," for example, for deriving formulae with which to intricately pattern her weaving enterprises, was less than conventional and more than imaginable. After Gibson and Sterling, Plant notes:

Unbuttoning the coat, he thrust his hands into the trouser pockets, the better to display the waistcoat, which was woven in a *dizzy* mosaic of tiny blue-and-white squares. Ada Chequers, the tailors called them, the Lady having created the pattern by programming a Jacquard loom to weave pure algebra (23).

Such comments refer to Ada's most identifiable sensibilities: the consistently deliberate departures she took from "rational and reasonable behaviour," alongside a capacity to expose the limits of imagined constraint. Ada's peers were known to remark:

"That you are a peculiar — *very peculiar* — specimen of the feminine race, you are yourself aware." They called her "wayward, wandering . . . deluded." She didn't argue; she seemed not to care. "The woman brushed aside her veil, with a swift gesture of habit" and, as though responding to Sigmund Freud, said, "There is at least some amusement in being so curious a riddle" (Plant 27).

[Y]ou never think of something and instantly hit a button . . . you are always in a lag behind, behind what your mind is saying (Peters 25).

Involved in Ada's acts of mathematical precision was her ability to move between the limits of linearity, to enter the gaps and elisions of so-called "clear thinking" and apply a more reckless and ill-defined imaginary. With both a specific form of wit and an applied level of contrary wisdom, Ada undertook to disrupt "what announce themselves to be founding fathers, points of origin, and defining moments [which] only ever serve as distractions from the ongoing processes, the shifting differences that count" and to render more sharply, the "subtle and fine grained, often incognito . . . mere and minor details. If, that is, they show themselves at all" (27). These were meandering acts of interrogation beyond mere discovery, interruptions into "straightforward accounts" and linear historicity offering potential moments of new disordering, of "delicious gaps, mysteries, and riddles" (26), the odd and contradictory ways of assembly and disassembly.

[I]t's now at a stage where you can edit almost as fast as you can think, so if I think, "[I]f I trim that shot and do that shot," within seconds I've done it and I can play it, so it's kind of getting towards painting I guess, or sketching where you can [gestures] do a little sketch and, "Nah," rub it out and change the curve, or whatever (Peters 16).

$e \ y \ e - t \ r \ a \ c \ e \ (\ 7 \ \%)$

The real world of digital reality has always been post-alphabetic. Probably because the letters of the alphabet were too slow to keep up with the light-time and light-speed of electronics . . . The result has been the end of the Gutenberg Galaxy and the beginning of the Image Millennium. Images moving at the speed of light. Images moving faster than the time it takes to record their passing . . . Images that circulate so quickly and shine with such intensity that they begin to alter the ratio of the human sensorium (Kroker and Kroker).

Coherence is sought after commodity. The imagined ease of the transition described above from the "Gutenberg Galaxy" to the "Image Millennium" exposes the sales pitch of dimensional abstraction: the promotion of unspatialised systems of perception, with misrecognition informing the play. Put simply, the alphabet has always been visual, a collection of symbols ordered in particular ways to create linguistic signs, producing the "meaning of the concepts in our minds through language" (Hall 17). This effect is called representation. Here, aspects of the work of French philosopher Jacques Derrida are useful, those where the certainty of intention and the clarity of meaning are made to shift, to disturb known boundaries of recognition and repetition.

Derrida understands visual recognition in ways that both stabilise and destabilise the processes of such recognition. By "signing the unseen" (Lefebvre 405-407), and revealing moments of linguistic betrayal, Derrida offers a critique that centres integration whilst suggesting inherent division. This division, however, is based on simultaneous separation and duplication. Linguist Niall Lucy suggests that Derrida reworks the moment of linguistic (symbolic) recognition, one traditionally based on the notion of repetition. From this evolves a theory based simultaneously on recognition and alteration. Lucy writes:

Derrida's argument turns on the recognition that any "mark" — anything that could be (or is recognised as) a sign, spoken or written, linguistic or otherwise semiotic — must be able to be repeated and thus *re*-marked. What would a sign look like that could not be repeated and made to appear somewhere other than where it was first seen? What would a mark be that could not be cited? In order to become significant, then, a mark must be repeatable. But to repeat it is also to alter it, by taking it out of one context into another. Strictly, then, repetition is impossible, since alteration must also occur whenever semiotic takes place. However imperceptible, however seemingly incidental, a change takes place during every act of so-called repetition (Lucy 25).

For Derrida, alteration attends repetition. This he calls:

iteration (*iter*, "repeat," *alterare*, "to change") to describe this ("essential") double and divided structure of the mark. In the absence of this structure, nothing that we use — or could use — to communicate could exist. "The consequences of this

very simple fact," as Derrida later puts it, "are *unlimited* and *unimitable*" (25).

Derridean thinking sees all communicative events as "occasional," as instances or fleeting citations, jottings or traces. Therefore, whilst communications are "always *placed* . . . they are also always replaceable. Nothing can be said or done that cannot be taken 'out' of context, as if it were communicable only in one place — its origin — alone" (25).

Returning for a moment to the sequence, *story* (22%), where a distinction was made between two forms of editing terminology — the first being a "cut" (to separate and therefore be dependent upon division), and the second, a "join" (to bring together in the fashion of "doubling") — it now seems possible to refigure nonlinear editing as a place of *iteration*, both repeatable and changeable, as a radically decontextualised, yet situated, movement.

[I]n the old days . . . you'd do an edit from tape A to tape B and that was it . . . if you didn't like it you had a choice to undo it in terms of change the edit points . . . [N]ow . . . on the Avids? you have . . . thirty-two levels of "undo," so you could do an edit . . . then completely undo it and within seconds it's back to the original version . . . or you could keep a copy of it just by hitting a button and it has instantly made a duplicate of your edit and then you could modify that version . . . but if you undo it . . . [and] actually some of it was okay, then you can choose to have the computer rebuild it for you to a certain level of where you were before . . . (Peters 7).

Here, not only is the point of division-and-separation able to be revisited, but also "undone," remade into a different *version*, not simply a repetition of the so-called original. Points of origin, versions and "certain levels," seem to be the same thing. The emphasis on the "edit" itself, as something to return to in order to *redo*, suggests that editing is an act, one that harbours the intrinsic, or ("essential") double and divided structure of the mark" (Lucy 5). It suggests that editing of this kind is also performed: "you could *do* . . . you could *keep* . . . if you *undo*": both a "doubling" and a division. Additionally for Jack, the act of editing is performative (it is a "doing which constitutes a being," in this case, of creating "an edit," and in his terms, "an edit" is something). As well, the "being constitutes a doing," forming an interrelationship between the act of editing and the interpellation of the act itself (who is the "you" who performs the act?).

A s[pl]ice into the work of literary critic Sneja Gunew addresses the Derridean notion of columns, borders and frames, providing clues into the workings of marginality and aesthetic judgement. Gunew suggests that "margins have always been ambiguous signs that have served to frame the centre in terms of indictment as well as approbation [they are the] spatially conceived representation of exclusionary gestures" (27). Here rests concern about the formula for defining intrinsic and extrinsic modes: how are the "invisible limits" of a spatialised imaginary to be determined (27)? Derrida remarks:

No "theory," no "practice," no "theoretical practice" can be effective if it does not rest on the frame, the invisible limit of the interiority of meaning *and* (of) all the extrinsic empiricals which blind and interrogate, dodge the question . . . Every analytic of aesthetic judgment presupposes that we can rigorously distinguish between the intrinsic and the extrinsic (qtd. in Gunew 27, 28).

In editing terms, delineations between "ins" and "outs" form the basis of what governs a fundamental editing function. This is the generation of continuity, a technical term that refers to the assembly of recorded material in ways that reproduce an effect of spatial consistency; once the terms of that consistency are established (Crittenden 41).

I think if you're looking for . . . continuity errors then there's something wrong with the core of the film [laughter] . . . [T]he continuity could be right but it's just that visually it's too jarring . . . I will sometimes go with continuity and other times I'll just forget it and cut . . . (Peters 13, 21).

Continuity and discontinuity can operate simultaneously and are conceived of above as doing so. This new concurrence can be a premise upon which editing distinctions *away* from continuity are also made ("other times I'll just forget it and cut"). The effect of continuity is maintained, yet the practice of attaining it secures its dissolution.

Gunew articulates a crucial logic of classic deconstruction, which proposes that "the elements excluded in the analytical processes are the conditions of its possibilities" (28). This suggests that, here, the exclusion of continuity allows for its very existence, not oppositionally as *dis*continuity, but rather of and within itself, neither intrinsic nor extrinsic.

Alongside Derrida's assertion of the presupposition of distinction, does this editor in fact suggest that editing is a myth: an illusional fusion between the constitutive processes of interpellation, discussed in Butler (if you're *looking* for continuity), and the allegorical interplay of semantic definition described by Lucy and Castells (visually it's too jarring)? Recalling the comments of Murch, who suggested that "when the visual displacement is great enough (as at the moment of the cut) [. . .] [d]iscontinuity is King: it is *the* central fact during the production phase of filmmaking" (14), in the new technology, the collapse between concept, enunciation and process, runs alongside established standards and gestures of totality.

two-dimensional/plane of screen (6%) . . .

Anxieties about screen culture: loss of face-to-face . . . loss of place . . . loss of dwelling . . . loss of depth . . . loss of presence . . . loss of reflection . . . loss of loss . . . Instead we need to face the screen. View the screen as place, not as abstract geometry . . . Measure its gaze . . . A shimmering tension between presence and absence . . . Single-minded visions are deflected and scattered into a reanimation of things (Bishop).

How to measure the gaze of planarity — the "grammar of three dimensions transposed by photography to two" (Murch 23)? Following Haraway, Sarah Knox observes that all inquiry into technocultural forms must acknowledge the preexistence of a technological "everywhere which . . . is the not-outside of technoscience" (145). Accordingly, the work of US sociologist Manuel Castells explores the notion of technological pervasion further.

Castells states that the contemporary West fosters a culture of "real virtuality" where a "fully immersive" screen(ing) environment not only reproduces a sense of "real experience" through the screen, but becomes the experience itself (1:373). In everyday terms, "real virtuality" can be experienced at times when "fragments, moments, or self-narratives of one's life seem like a film script or reminiscent of some filmic moment" (Crowley).

Correspondingly, Castells considers the "superext" of multimedia, which capture within their domain most cultural expressions, in all their diversity. Their advent is tantamount to ending the separation, and even the distinction, between audiovisual media and printed media, popular culture and learned culture, entertainment and information, education and persuasion . . . [T]hey construct a new symbolic environment. They make virtuality our reality (1:372).

Editors are (mass)media practitioners involved in this allegorical realm, constituting an active presence as both the architects of cultural expression and, concurrently, its users.

In Albert Smith's latest film . . . the editing is just mind blowing . . .

We came away from it saying "I could never do that".

[T]here's some scenes where there's eight layers of audio . . . [I]f you looked at it as a traditional editor, you'd say it's just a huge mess . . . but somehow . . . it is amazing (Peters 22).

Acts of editing mark a nexus of cultural, social and political traditions, performed through the *always-already-marked* editing body, itself interpellated through the continuing apparatus of technoscientific production (Butler, Haraway). By deploying a complex series of tensions and possibilities into the real virtuality setting, it is revealed that, for editors, "planarity," or "two-dimensionality," does not exist. Derrida and others have asserted that there is no distinction between dimensions: only distinctions which of themselves bear witness to contexts of theoretical inventions, historical subjectivities, and material negotiations (Haraway, Derrida, Lucy, Plant, Bishop). These are conditions well articulated by the coexistence of solidity and dispersion expressed below.

[A] lot of computers come with what we call "canned effects" . . .

but we always try and build what we call, "organic effects."

We try and take what the computer can do and then modify it

. . . into a unique effect or sometimes just use an effect for an effect's sake . . . [W]e'll do some ads that'll just be cuts and then other times, it'll be multiple layering and soft edged things and it'll sort of gel (Peters 23).

three-dimensional space of action (4%) . . .

Inscription enacts the spatialised moment, constituting that which is "concretely represented" — in the social production of social space. Social reality is not just coincidentally spatial, existing 'in' space, it is presuppositionally and ontologically spatial. *There is no unspatialised social reality*" (Soja 46).

[A]s an assistant [working] on sprockets, I've probably been able to have more input in the creative cutting of it than when it's been cut on a digital work station because the director and the editor will often just shut the room . . . hours go by, whereas when it's been on sprockets, I've been in the room and I've been asked my opinion more . . . (Johnson 5).

Castells asserts that computer mediated communication (CMC) investigates a new network paradigm of production relationships, which retain established relationships of production yet also depart from them (1:4). In his terms, in the new "informational society," "the source of productivity [itself] lies in the technology of knowledge generation, information processing, and symbol[ic] communication" (1:17).

A society characterised by an informational "mode of development" therefore negotiates knowledge processes, information systems and semantic representation. It is a society where the principal means of development "is the action of knowledge upon knowledge itself as the main source of productivity" (17). Generating a logic, or "informational paradigm," is a system that oversees "the core processes of knowledge generation, economic productivity, political / military power and media communication . . . connected to global networks of wealth, power, and symbols, [themselves] working under such a logic" (21).

I think the stress factor for me [is] especially that I always want more time . . . [Y]ou have to learn to be able to do something, move on . . . I think maybe the new technology allows you to handle it better . . . (Johnson 18).

Stresses brought to bear upon a knowledgeable body toy with the flexibility introduced by "new technology," and so administer the formation of an "editing identity." Castells observes that in this new era the "fundamental material dimensions of human life," space and time, have been compressed to the point of erasure indicating that power reciprocally intensifies in a complex "space of flows." Castells states, "the new information technology paradigm provides the material basis for its [own] pervasive expansion throughout the entire social structure" (1:469).

Alongside Haraway's suggestion that modes of absence and presence do not occur through an absence of ideas, but become a question of the "constitutive practices of technoscience production themselves" (*Moderat Witness* 24, 35), Castells's idea of a "legitimising identity" offers ways to consider

new relations of power in the negotiation of expert knowledge.⁸ He writes that “[l]egitimising identities generate civil societies in the sense of the original Gramscian concept of [actors becoming] a set of ‘apparatuses’” (2:10-12). An “editing identity” is therefore a mode of identity that utilises technological forms, and so is grounded in experimentation. Yet it re-embodies itself to mark again and again a form of material grammar (Haraway) that simultaneously contests and establishes an increasingly suspended form of semantic innovation.

I didn't just pick up editing and was a natural at it from the start. I found that I had to work at it . . . I've watched other people work and it seems to come just . . . you know “first cut.” I tend to **bolt scenes together and finesse and finesse and**

finesse and finesse
until I'm happy with . . . the way it is, so . . . (Peters 10)

[. . . d i s s o l v e . . .]

NOTES

1. Editor Walter Murch favours a particular form of proportional division, specifically distributing the “ideal editing frequencies,” the reasons why one “cuts.” I favour a different dissolve, transposing into the equation the languages of Interruption. Ultimately, the new weighting is for the reader to decide.
2. Pseudonyms are used throughout this paper to refer to the names of industry workers or titles of their projects.
3. For a comprehensive discussion about the geometry of image formation and the magnification of time, see Ralph E. Jacobsen, Sidney F. Ray, and Geoffrey G. Attridge, *The Manual of Photography*, 8th ed. (London & Boston: Focal, 1988). It is not my intention to specifically refer to the science of image formation. As a feature in my early professional training, however, image technology concepts inform editing practice and are widely deployed throughout the industry.
4. Here I draw a technical distinction between “film” and videotape, the latter being a form of magnetic tape onto which electronic signals are recorded. Video editing is still organised around the “frames-per-second” paradigm, and for ordinary viewing its effects are not noticeably different, save for precision of represented detail: for example “film” reveals more in “highlights and shadows” than video tape has the capacity to record, for example (see again Crittenden and Dancyger for expansion).
5. See also Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (New York: Routledge, 1993), for a discussion of vision theories from the time of Plato to Descartes. Jay's extensive account clarifies the contradictory and convoluted primacy of “monocular vision” (473) inherent in recent critical thinking, while calling for its retention through plurality.
6. A term first coined by linguist J. L. Austin, Warren Hedges writes that a performative is “a semiotic gesture that is a being as well as a doing. Or, more accurately, it is a doing that constitutes a being, an activity that creates what it describes.” Performatives are understandable only within a framework that is simultaneously social and semiotic (symbolic), requiring cultural authority to be effective. Hedges states that “performative[s] depend on a densely woven web of social relations that renders [them] intelligible, believable, and acceptable.”
7. Editing industry software standard.
8. Castells discusses three kinds of identity. See also: “resistance identity,” formed by social actors who are hierarchically excluded; and “project identity,” formed by those seeking broad social transformation over individual survival, such as feminists or environmentalists (10-12).

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