

# “Time’s Up: *The Clock* and Cinephilia”

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At a quarter-to-two in the afternoon in Christian Marclay’s twenty-four-hour-long digital video installation *The Clock* (2010) a time bomb detonates on a bus, killing a boy and a score of other passengers in prewar London. An example of Alfred Hitchcock’s early filmmaking bravura, this notorious set piece from *Sabotage* (1936) exemplifies the narrative conventions of early sound cinema that remain dominant in film and television today. The reflexive dimensions of the film’s drama are remarkable as well, because the unwitting boy carries both the time bomb and a combustible two-reeler for his sister’s husband, a terrorist who manages a movie theatre. The automatism of the explosive device corresponds to the automatism of *Sabotage*’s own images and sounds, so that the countdown to the inexorable deadline is doubled in the dangers manifest in the film’s materiality.

Over a decade later, after moving to Hollywood to refine his skills, Hitchcock wrote an article entitled “The Enjoyment of Fear,” which he concludes with a self-admonition about this very scene. He argues that audiences pay to be frightened, for even the most improbable situations, such as “the legendary, though now sadly obsolete, circular bandsaw approaching the bound and gagged heroine,” will never end in death, because “deep in the subconscious mind of the spectator is the certainty ... that the totally impossible will occur,” namely her rescue.<sup>[1]</sup> He divides “cinematic fear” between terror and suspense. The former is created by “surprise,” the latter by “forewarning.”<sup>[2]</sup> Terror and suspense are mutually exclusive according to Hitchcock, yet there can be “compromise,” as a film can have scenes of both, although he advises that there should be more of the latter. The shock of the unexpected, however, remains indispensable in making the spectator’s horror equal to that of the unsuspecting characters. In retrospect, Hitchcock thought that he had erred in allowing the boy to die in *Sabotage*, as spectators were “encouraged to fall in love” with him. Hitchcock had hence transgressed an unwritten rule, as the explosion was set up with fair warning, yet there was an assumption that the character would come to no harm, much like that archetypal heroine. The “audiences – and the critics, too – were unanimously of the opinion,” he writes, “that I should have been riding in the seat next to the lad, preferably the seat he set the bomb on.”<sup>[3]</sup>

*The Clock* is itself full of surprises, has very little suspense, and never ends. Its concept appears simple enough: an around-the-clock compilation of shots, scenes, and sequences from extant films and television shows that display or refer to their own diegetic time, isochronically synchronized to the real time in which Marclay’s compilation is projected. For the intellectually and philosophically minded *The Clock* will likely provoke, and has provoked, a range of overlapping and intersecting concepts of time and representation, including the philosophical, historical, political, sociological, and psychological.<sup>[4]</sup> Yet it is a project that principally rewards an affective investment in, if not devotion to, longtime film and television viewing for its spectators, who immerse themselves in a current of images and sounds ordered according to the fictive time of clocks and wristwatches that measure and produce indefinite tenses which consequently seem limitless. The end for the cinema as a medium is near, however, as its time is drawing to a close.

And so, too, is the earth’s own capacity to sustain life as it is currently known, due to increasing greenhouse gas emissions, rising sea levels, higher ocean acidity, thinning Arctic sea ice, and the accelerating extinction of thousands of animal species annually. In this era of the so-called anthropocene, *The Clock* offers a timely occasion to rethink the recent histories of moving image media such as film, television, and video by considering them in their entirety in correspondence to the world itself as a totality.

Marclay completed *The Clock* during a period of great uncertainty within European and American film culture, amid anxieties on the part of cinephiles about the future of photochemical film as an apparatus in the new digital era.<sup>[5]</sup> Writing in 2006, for instance, Laura Mulvey argued that the “threat of extinction ... draws new attention” to photographic and cinematographic indexicality, and “the present pathos retrospectively affects the vast body of film and photographic material,” so that “as old films ... are re-released in constantly increasing numbers on DVD, the two media, the old and the new, converge.”<sup>[6]</sup> A little dated now, due to the increasing popularity of streaming video online, Mulvey’s thoughts still have purchase in addressing the connection between old and new media, even if she does miss two steps – namely television and video – in bounding from film to DVD.

Cinema is “first of all a *fact* and as such it raises problems of aesthetics, of sociology, and of semiotics, as well as of the psychologies of perception and intellection,” and “has a certain configuration, certain fixed structures and figures,” within which “each film is ... a *piece of cinema*,” Christian Metz wrote in the early 1960s.<sup>[7]</sup> *The Clock* brings together fragments of pieces of what was the cinema, which is no longer the same sort of fact, but instead the residual mythos of the twentieth century. The “cinematic institution,” as Metz would write a decade later, “is not just the cinema industry ... it is also the mental machinery ... which spectators ‘accustomed to the cinema’ have internalised historically and which has adapted them to the consumption of films.”<sup>[8]</sup> The “mental machinery” that developed during the late twentieth century has outlived the very “institution” which established the conditions for its enlargement.

*The Clock* itself inclusively expands a conventional notion of the cinematic through the incorporation of material from television shows.<sup>[9]</sup> Its own televisual features are fairly obvious, as *The Clock* replicates that feeling of the steady, omnipresent immensity of what Raymond Williams typified as television’s “flow,” in addition to “reruns” and intermittent shifts that recall “channel surfing.”<sup>[10]</sup> As *The Clock* can only be viewed in set locations at set times it revives that old-fashioned concept of “appointment viewing” once reserved for favorite television shows or extra-special episodes, such as season premieres or finales. Unlike the cinema experience, in which the spectator typically loses track of the time, moreover, television constantly reminds the viewer of the real time, due to the segmentation not only of network and cable schedules, but the differing lengths of various programs and intrusive advertisements that are just as regularized as the programs they interrupt. And the sheer length of *The Clock* connects the TV “couch potato” of the 1970s and ‘80s to the “binge watching” of contemporary television shows on Netflix and Hulu.<sup>[11]</sup>

As a technological medium – which began its existence silent and monochromatic and later featured synchronized sound, in color and in a range of gauges, ratios, proportions, and dimensions – the cinema was destined for obsolescence from its very inception. Its continuing cathexis for viewers worldwide is a result of what Stephen Heath terms the cinema’s “narrativization,” where “every film is a veritable drama of vision” in which “the spectator will be bound to the film as spectacle as the world of the film is itself revealed as spectacle

on the basis of a narrative organization of look and point of view that move space into place through image-flow.<sup>[12]</sup> For decades, its tributaries, as it were, have surged far beyond the theatre experience in covering a much greater territory, including television, videotape, and discs. Adjusting the requisite "mental machinery" that Metz describes, without reconfiguring it, this enlarged "institution" keeps the spectator "bound" to the spectacle principally through its "narrativization," regardless of the screen upon which it appears.

In the era of new media overinvestment in the intricate theoretical questions of indexicality and medium specificity, particularly from the perspective of contemporary spectatorship and the fate of the art form, thus overlooks a relatively *longue durée* from approximately 1980 to 2000, when film, television and video constituted a coextensive "institution" around the globe and across moving image media, including but not limited to network and cable TV, VHS and Betamax tapes, laserdiscs, bootleg DVD-Rs, and DVDs.<sup>[13]</sup> *The Clock's* hypnotic appeal thus draws on attachments that have been stimulated by an exposure not only to 16mm, 35mm, and 70mm projection in theatres, but equally shorts and features broadcast on television and converted to videotape, as well as television in the form of sitcoms, soap operas, and one-hour dramas.<sup>[14]</sup>

My own trip on this 'time machine' was exceedingly brief. On May 28th, 2013, at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, I viewed near exactly a twenty-fourth of *The Clock* from 1:17 to 2:17pm, entranced by the stream of both familiar and unfamiliar moving images that appeared before me upon the screen. I loved every minute of it. During this hour watching *The Clock*, I identified scenes excerpted from the following films and television shows: *Frantic* (Polanski, 1988), *Shaft* (Parks, 1971), *The Killers* (Siegel, 1964), *The Piano Teacher* (Haneke, 2001), *MacGyver* (ABC, 1985-1992), *The Taking of Pelham One Two Three* (Sargent, 1974), *Monsieur Verdoux* (Chaplin, 1947) *Baby Doll* (Kazan, 1956), *The Fly* (Neumann, 1958), *Double Indemnity* (Wilder, 1944), *Down By Law* (Jarmusch, 1986), *The Producers* (Brooks, 1967), *When Harry Met Sally...* (Reiner, 1989), *Sabotage* (Hitchcock, 1936), *The Grifters* (Frears, 1990), *The Sixth Sense* (Shyamalan, 1999), *Belle du jour* (Buñuel, 1967), *Spider-Man 2* (Raimi, 2004), *Barry Lyndon* (Kubrick, 1975), *Weekend* (Godard, 1967), *Clockwise* (Morahan, 1986), *Manhattan* (Allen, 1979), *Nine and 1/2 Weeks* (Lyne, 1986), *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (Minghella, 1999), *The X-Files* (1993-2002), *Watchmen* (Snyder, 2009), *Dressed to Kill* (De Palma, 1980), *Spanglish* (Brooks, 2004), *L.A. Confidential* (Hanson, 1997), *Primer* (Carruth, 2004), *Election* (Payne, 1999), *Men of Honor* (Tillman Jr., 2000), *Hook* (Spielberg, 1991), *Matlock* (NBC, 1986-92, ABC, 1992-1995), *Columbo* (NBC, 1968-1978), *The Taking of Pelham 1 2 3* (Scott, 2009), and *The Twilight Zone* (CBS, 1959-1964). I would estimate that this was just less than half of the appropriated material from this comparatively minute section of *The Clock*.

As a temporal monument, the work's immense scale effectively pushes at the limits of the infinite. Its dimensions extend both on a horizontal (or syntagmatic) axis, as a very, very, very, very, very long experiential work, and on a vertical (or paradigmatic) axis, as a mega-compilation of moving images spanning two centuries. With rare exceptions, the duration of *The Clock* prohibits complete screenings, due to the limitations set by the normal opening hours of galleries and museums. Yet it is next to impossible to imagine anyone sitting through it in its entirety without interruption, for obvious reasons related to hunger and thirst, the need to urinate and defecate, and for sleep. *The Clock* hence has no actual beginning or end. It starts and finishes at points determined by the arrival and exit of specific viewers, and in this way it effectively functions as a chronograph. The superabundance of film and television scenes and sequences means that any individual spectator would be unable to recognize (and, later, recall offhand) everything he or she saw and heard. *The Clock* thus appears nearly boundless. These horizontal and the vertical axes – which also could be understood in terms of length and depth – intersect in a perpetual present tense, as the screen time is coterminous with the time zone in which *The Clock* is synchronously presented.

Time multiplies and refracts, however, when the spectator recognizes a film or television show they have already seen, destabilizing the isochronic equilibrium formed between the two axes. Catching a glimpse of a favorite scene or sequence might produce a feeling akin to unexpectedly seeing a loved one, or induce memories of a time and place in which one had watched a specific film or television show. "Old movies," Nora Sayre notes in her book on Hollywood cinema of the 1950s, *Running Time*, "set off a chain of very free associations, due to the month or even the day when one saw them." She mentions, for instance, going to see *Rebel Without a Cause* (Ray, 1955) "with a pregnant, unmarried friend who had no clues about how to obtain an abortion," and viewed *Somebody Up There Likes Me* (Wise, 1956) "during the week when some thought the Suez crisis might lead to a widening war in the Middle East."<sup>[15]</sup> As Sayre indicates with her examples, these "associations" are inextricably personal and political. Everyone is bound up collectively, both as witnesses and participants, within the great dramas of the era in which they find themselves, together and alone.

Second by second, minute by minute, hour by hour, *The Clock* thus instantiates aspects of what Paul Ricoeur describes, in his analysis of Virginia Woolf's novel *Mrs Dalloway*, as the relation between "mortal time and monumental time" in modernist prose fiction.<sup>[16]</sup> He argues that the "fictive narrator" of Woolf's novel, who tells a story set over a day and an evening in London in 1923, provides a "progressive accumulation" of mostly minor events that are interrupted by numerous "excursions into the past." The subjective flashbacks of the characters thus enrich the reader's sense of the story-world's depth, in which "the world of action" is inextricable from that of individual "introspection."<sup>[17]</sup> Events in external reality are measured by the chiming of Big Ben at regular intervals, whose "official time" Ricoeur aligns with authority figures, such as Septimus's doctor, who personifies the "monumental time" as a "counterweight to the living times experienced by Clarissa and Septimus."<sup>[18]</sup> Ricoeur concludes that there is no single, all-encompassing time in which these characters live and that there instead exists "one solitary experience in another solitary experience."<sup>[19]</sup> Like the characters in *Mrs Dalloway*, the individual spectators of *The Clock* are each caught up in a communal experience within the gallery or museum space, in situ, whose present reality is palpable in the form of the work as a timepiece, scaled to "monumental time." Yet each person is propelled into the past, both optically and aurally through the present tense of the moving image and within the mind's eye (and ear) of memory, in all its uniqueness and immaterial ephemerality.

As an intertextual remediation of already existing moving images, however, Marclay's work structurally and rhetorically differs in key respects from Woolf's novel, so that it is not 'neo-modernist' in spirit. That "insurmountable fissure ... opened up by the monumental time of the world and the mortal time of the soul," as Ricoeur describes it, thus takes on another narrational shape in *The Clock*. Big Ben functions as a centering symbol of imperial power in *Mrs Dalloway*, whereas there is no such timekeeper in *The Clock*, but instead a profusion of clocks and watches shifting back and forth in history. Linear in its synchronization with the actual time of its presentation in reality, *The Clock* starts and stops, stops and starts. It has no dénouement, unlike in *Mrs Dalloway*, when Clarissa learns of Septimus's suicide.

*The Clock* is composed of a multitude of events, incidents, and episodes, and as a meta-narrative it effectively decenters space and time, denying closure. And differently from the novel, there is no implied "fictive narrator" telling the story. Notwithstanding the editorial flourishes that ostensibly declare his authorship, Marclay's

immense labor (in organizing and assembling the twenty-four hours of footage) is soon forgotten when watching his work, displaced by the very sounds and images he has so carefully arranged. There is thus no actual narrative point of view – either from the author or the characters – as there typically is in canonical modernist (and postmodernist) prose, even in the case of writers such as James Joyce, Vladimir Nabokov, or Samuel Beckett.

Within the history of experimental and avant-garde film, and video art, the themes, tones, and meanings of *The Clock*'s precursors are explicitly or implicitly those of the filmmaker's, whether on the horizontal axis, with the separate cine-dreams of Fernand Léger and Cesare Zavattini, who both longed to make unrealized daylong films, Andy Warhol's epics such as *Empire* (1964) and \*\*\*\* (1967), and Jacques Rivette's legendarily distended *Out 1* (1971), or on the vertical axis with collage films such as Joseph Cornell's *Rose Hobart* (1936), Bruce Conner's *A Movie* (1958), Matthias Müller's *Home Stories* (1990), and Jean-Luc Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988-1998).

Each of the latter group of films, for instance, presents a discernible rhetorical angle on the images and sounds they juxtapose. All these films speak, to follow Bill Nichols's theory about documentary practice, in a "voice" that is clear enough to hear.<sup>[20]</sup> This enunciation typically offers an ideological critique, either implicitly (as in the case of *A Movie*) or explicitly (as in the case of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*), utilizing the filmic 'language' of montage developed in the 1920s by Soviet filmmakers such as Lev Kuleshov, Dziga Vertov, and Sergei Eisenstein. *The Clock*'s editing strategies certainly recall Kuleshov's "creative geography," yet Marclay's abutting of foreign time-spaces is not likely to fool anyone, as the imaginary territories have already been established in the appropriated films.<sup>[21]</sup> Rather than "decoding ... life as it is," as Vertov declaimed in 1925, Marclay could be said to be 'recoding life as it appeared.'<sup>[22]</sup> The "kino-eye" for Vertov meant "comparing and linking all points of the universe in any temporal order," whereas Marclay's 'digi-eye,' as it were, orders reality's cinematic and televisual reflections in a strictly linear, chronographic array.<sup>[23]</sup> And although *The Clock* arguably has aspects related to Eisenstein's distinction between metric, rhythmic, tonal and overtone montage, for example, Marclay's work here does not constitute the kind of reflexive demystification typically associated with avant-garde montage, as it does not possess the "voice" that Nichols describes.<sup>[24]</sup>

*The Clock* belongs equally, it should be stressed, to the mass culture tradition of the compilation film, such as *The Movie Orgy* (Dante, 1968), *That's Entertainment!* (Haley Jr., 1974), or Chuck Workman's montages for the Academy Awards telecasts. Destabilizing differentiations between 'high' and 'low' media cultures and the specific moving image ontologies of film, television, and video, in form and content, *The Clock* could thus be dismissed as an epic mashup that possesses attributes of familiar aesthetics of online pop culture, on the order of that ever expanding cornucopia of compilation videos on YouTube and Vimeo. Jonathan Romney tellingly writes that "film and television history is co-opted into a "promiscuously goofy *Hellzapoppin'*-esque collage," in *The Clock*, yet it "is also a *film* of considerable philosophical density," which encourages its viewers to "examine the way time – or the effect of time – is created and structured in film."<sup>[25]</sup> The slippage Romney makes between television and film in placing *The Clock* exclusively in the latter category, setting up in part a dichotomy of playfulness and seriousness, can be understood as properly dialectical if one analyzes Marclay's digital video installation as the juxtaposition of differing moving image media that are all narrativized a priori.

In a 1967 essay, "Art and Arts," Theodor Adorno observes the contemporaneous preponderance of mixed and multimedia art – think Robert Rauschenberg – and notes that the disintegration of ontological divisions between one medium and another is inextricable from art's ideological function in negating history's tragedies. For Adorno, aesthetics and medium specificity are bound up together in the social structures which give them meaning, so that "[w]hatever tears down the boundary markers is motivated by historical forces that sprang into life inside the existing boundaries and then ended up overwhelming them."<sup>[26]</sup> In passing, nearly half a century after masterpieces such as *Battleship Potemkin* (Eisenstein, 1925), *Sunrise* (Murnau, 1925), *The General* (Keaton/Bruckman, 1926) and *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (Dreyer, 1928) were made, this well known cine-phobe notes that the "question whether the film is art or not is idle."<sup>[27]</sup> Today, this appears just as self-evident. The related question as to whether or not television is art, it should be emphasized, is identically "idle." Of course it is. Consider not only the excellence of recent shows such as *Freaks and Geeks* (NBC, 1999-2000), *Breaking Bad* (AMC, 2008-2013), *The Americans* (FX, 2013-), and *Broad City* (Comedy Central, 2014-), but also older fare such as *I Love Lucy* (CBS, 1951-1957), *Blackadder* (BBC1, 1983-1989), *St. Elsewhere* (NBC, 1982-1988), *Twin Peaks* (ABC, 1990-91), and *Seinfeld* (NBC, 1989-1998).

As intermedial arts, cinema and television are now primarily linked together by "narrativization," which draws its powers from their related but distinct ontologies. Cinema's extraordinary capacity to show visible life 'directly' seemingly promises its democratization and universality. That the aesthetics of the "cinematic institution" persisted on television and videotape, and continue to persist online, should thus be of no surprise. Cinephiles' and film theorists' distinction, ontologically, between cinema and television certainly made sense before the electronic age of cable TV, VHS tapes, and laserdiscs of the 1980s and '90s, and remains so in theoretically retroactive, historicized analyses of photochemical films. But today the separation appears rather anachronistic, perhaps little more than nostalgia for the postwar era of the 1950s, '60s, and '70s that, to a lesser degree, was already seeing the intersection of the cinematic and the televisual.<sup>[28]</sup>

The actual feeling of "pathos" experienced by those who matured in the pre-electronic and pre-digital age should thus not be due to the 'passing' of photochemical reproduction, but instead by the realization that the cinema (and television) had, and perhaps still has, the potential to show its spectators the world anew. This was something that Adorno could not recognize or comprehend, yet that any cinephile and telephile knows can be as beautiful and critically revelatory as in any other medium.

Marclay's work unabashedly solicits those who possess an affection for moving images that is distinct from an impassioned intellectualization whose lineage can be traced at least as far back as French film culture of the 1950s. The critics writing for *Cahiers du cinéma* endowed films with a philosophical weight and aesthetic significance due to the presumed artistic originality of favored auteurs. Always already present since cinema's inception, another cinephilia has since gained greater visibility, if not even increasing legitimacy among cinema's cognoscenti, inside and outside the academy. All over the map, it is not restricted to a presumably learned heterosexual white male spectator 'indulging' in the self-consciousness of his gaze, but a near infinite range of film and television and video viewers, cutting across gender, sexuality, race, nationality, class, and age, nearly all of whom will surely delight in the reward of special moments, which might occur at any time, on any kind of screen. Anyone who loves the flicks or pictures, films or movies – or television, straight-to-video, the Z Channel, or HBO, for that matter – will have such treasured images and sounds. Like the "one solitary experience in another solitary experience" that Ricoeur describes in *Mrs Dalloway*, these attachments are as personal and private as they are public, inexplicable in what catches any one person's interest, and later, affection.

One such detail fleetingly appears in *Sabotage* a few minutes before that ill-fated boy dies when the bus blows up. While getting ready to leave the flat, Steve (Desmond Tester) shines his shoes by rubbing them on the back of the socks he is wearing. Hitchcock devotes a single shot to this action, imbuing the character with an idiosyncrasy that extends beyond this one person, humanizing the film itself. It is for this very reason that Hitchcock later regretted his "transgression" in blowing up the bus with Steve still onboard. Spectators can take pleasure in fear, but only if their trust is not violated. The sadistic dynamics of the Master's visual style have been extensively explored in many psychoanalytical and feminist analyses vis-à-vis spectatorship, revealing the psychic mechanisms that produced the opprobrium which Hitchcock received – a testament to the cinema's power to move the imagination and the potential pain that narrativization can inflict. Although the grand scale of Marclay's work echoes Hitchcock's control in playing, itself, with the principles of suspense and surprise through montage, it withholds the satisfaction of final closure which a film such as *Sabotage* provides. *The Clock* cuts Hitchcock down to size, furthermore, undermining his towering status among discriminating "film snobs" by intermixing and juxtaposing the sequence from *Sabotage* with more prosaic material from films like *When Harry Met Sally...*, reminding them, as Hitchcock himself famously said, that "it's only a movie."

Marclay thus flaunts the selfsameness of narrativized moving images by utilizing the once radical montage technique of the Soviets and later avant-garde artists such as Conner and Müller to silence the extant editing patterns through which the films 'speak' in their integrity as "works," to follow Roland Barthes's distinction.<sup>[29]</sup> Rendering his own montage essentially voiceless, Marclay's work is so grand in magnitude that no individual spectator would hear the messages in any case, displacing Marclay's own role as a would-be auteur. In literalizing the metaphorical dimension of Barthes' concept of "text," *The Clock* produces "the infinite deferral of the signified," in which the "generation of the perpetual signifier" develops "according to a serial movement of disconnections, overlappings, variations." Consequently, the spectator works not to decode Marclay's meta-montage, but instead enjoy the "disconnected, heterogeneous, variety of substances and perspectives," that all these films and television shows reflexively present in the present tense.<sup>[30]</sup>

As a heteroglossia of images, sounds, times, spaces, peoples, and languages, *The Clock* hence ostensibly negates any sense of universalism. All these sights and sounds do not 'add up,' as they might in another moving image collage, but instead induce flashbacks that propel its individual spectators into the past, making them pleasurable or painfully aware of their own "mortal time." The intersection of the horizontal and vertical axes – the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic – does remind the spectator of the real time, however, which indirectly reflects a totality which can only be symbolically signified through its twenty-four-hour length as form, a temporal metonym for the world itself as a totality. *The Clock* can thus be interpreted as a reflexive materialization of that spell under which all the world's cinephiles and telephiles and videophiles are placed: a narrativization that transcends any one apparatus in its indexical substitution of the totality which itself refracts in ever multiplying forms.

"Monumental time" has long been showing its age, however, due to the proliferation of these permutations of the moving image – even, paradoxically, as the processes of globalization have resulted in greater standardization, in terms of cultural homogenization and economic integration. Modernist filmmakers such as Eisenstein and Vertov seized upon the potential of cinema's fracturing of monumental time as early as the 1920s, opening up one of the (ostensibly) radical possibilities of the cinema. Gilles Deleuze characterizes later, albeit quite distinct manifestations of this phenomenon as something of a 'good object' in his conception of the "time-image" in exemplary art films, such as those made by Roberto Rossellini, Jean-Luc Godard and Alain Resnais in postwar Europe.<sup>[31]</sup>

Yet the definite article of the title of Marclay's work reminds us that there is but one time, one world, even though its perception has become so distorted and distended by the audiovisual mediations and re-mediations with which many people see and hear it. In the 1970s and '80s, before the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the dangers of totalitarianism animated, in no small part, the poststructuralist work of French philosophers like Deleuze, skeptical of the dialectical materialism which still influenced sectors of the European intelligentsia. Michel Foucault advised that in examining the history of reason, in the present, the "undefined work of freedom" entailed an "historical ontology of ourselves," which "must turn away from all projects that claim to be *global* or radical." The "claim to escape from the system of contemporary reality so as to produce the overall programs of another society, of another way of thinking, another culture, another vision of the world," he argued, "has led only to the return of the most dangerous traditions."<sup>[32]</sup> "Let us wage a war on *totality*," Jean-François Lyotard similarly wrote in 1982.<sup>[33]</sup> In its opposition to orthodox Marxism and the complete catastrophe of Communism in Russia and Eastern Europe, poststructuralist theory and philosophy has proved, in its own modest and insidious way, "dangerous" in its particular theoretical relativisms and capitulations to the logic of late capitalism as a world system, which functions according to an incoherent ideology of both scarcity and inexhaustible growth.

This contradiction finds its correlate in the global profusion of moving images today, in which there is now an inverse relation between dwindling energy resources and the extraordinarily immense pluralities of entertainment that are currently available – much of it archival and online. Cinephiles in the United States and Europe eagerly await the newest work from great auteurs, in addition to digital restorations of classics, whilst remaining on the lookout for new talent in heretofore unexplored or nascent film cultures. Critics and theorists who bemoan the supposed 'death of cinema' could rightly be criticized for having a Euro-American bias, as many of the most artistically innovative films are currently being produced in regions such as South America and East Asia, which in this 'late' phase of globalization are often transnational in character. Yet as a symptom of uneven modernization and the expansion of multinational capital, this veritable explosion of contemporary film art can pessimistically be discerned as a compensatory artistic reckoning with ravages to the environment and the social consequences of successive waves of industrialization and deindustrialization in the expansion of more markets.<sup>[34]</sup>

Technologies and art forms may become obsolete and disappear, but only we can die. Just as time is running out for the cinema as a photochemical apparatus – as well as in its own 'afterlife' converted into other media, such as television and videotape – so too is time running out for the world itself. The lament for the 'demise' of celluloid projection amid the glut of online entertainment might, at best, be an attempt to honor and preserve the artistic detritus of twentieth century capitalism's superstructure. But at worst, this type of cinephilia indirectly fetishes industrialization through a purism that disavows the cinema's instrumental function in reproducing, as one giant advertisement for cutting edge technology, ideologies which have led to the devastation of the planet's ecology.

*The Clock* remains purposefully 'unfinished,' so massive that the spectator will eventually abandon it – left, however, with a sense of futurity and possibility. Even though it is composed of recycled material, there is always more to see and hear, to discover, and to relive. Reviving bygone distractions, *The Clock* reflects and reproduces a temporality of powerlessness and passivity which nonetheless foregrounds both the

"monumental," monetary value and "mortal," existential meaning of time itself, against a foreboding backdrop of planetary catastrophe. Its "infinite deferment," to follow Barthes's terminology, exhibits what is lost in the ongoing change to habitats and ecosystems; not just 'nature' itself, as it were, but the modern and postmodern social forms which established the conditions for its destruction.

In displaying all these moments, one after another, *The Clock* is effectively without voice, however, in functioning as a timepiece. It offers the viewer simply one more place to fill or kill some time while continuing to either ignore or disavow the impending disaster, about which no one individual can do anything. Its quietude is not unrelated to the tattered, jagged silences of Samuel Beckett's plays, which Adorno valued for their function as a negative image of what he termed "the administered society." Differently, however, Marclay offers no characters as such in his fictive space – even as bare as the stock types in *Waiting for Godot* (1953) – but instead their appropriated 'ghosts.' By putting the individual spectator at center stage, *The Clock's* re-narrativization displaces the imaginary investment in characters that Hitchcock exploited. Each individual spectator is now compelled to perform the role of a lone soul lost amid the overwhelming indifference of the world itself, taking solace in special memories of times they spent gazing at refractions of reality itself. If the voices of the appropriated films and their auteurs are indeed silenced in *The Clock*, then so too are the individual spectators.' Anyone who dips into this practically endless flow of images and sounds is complicit – in his or her mute awe – in the sad grandeur of our collective stupor.

*The Clock* provides a comfortingly reflexive space for cinephiles and telephiles, prompting recollections of points in time, drawn from the world, which first made them fall in love with specific films or television shows, whether it was in a cinema, watching broadcast television, or off of a videotape or DVD. The "pathos" that Laura Mulvey describes in recognizing the end of cinema (which arguably also includes the loss felt in recognizing the end of certain televisual and videographic experiences in the age of new media) is that feeling that within this great constellation of moving images there exists, for all its spectators, moments – big and small, magnified and minimized – which can touch each and every one of them in some way that is resolutely human.

The immensity of Marclay's work equivocally suggests, however, that such images and sounds are incommensurate with the actual ruin wrought by centuries of industrialization and the attendant ideological justifications for capitalism, as they are ironically premised on an illusion of endlessness. "Art," Adorno writes, "presents humanity with the dream of its own doom so that humanity may awaken, remain in control of itself, and survive."<sup>[35]</sup> As a work that invites a reveling in filmic pleasure, *The Clock* reveals that film (and television) can no longer fulfill that function – if it ever really did. Like that time bomb set to go off in *Sabotage*, the earth may have reached what some scientists have called a "tipping point" in irreversible climate change. Sure to have catastrophic consequences for future generations, it is happening very quickly on a cosmic and planetary timescale, but relatively slowly on the individual level, a temporal phenomenon that *The Clock* symptomatically embodies in the contrast between "monumental" and "mortal" time. Its temporal magnitude may indirectly signify the unfolding disaster in its entirety, spanning a day and a night in correspondence with the rotation of the earth upon its axis. Yet its transfixions, well exemplified by the "enjoyment of fear" Hitchcock so adroitly manipulates in that early afternoon sequence in *Sabotage*, suggest that it may be too late. The "cinematic institution" continues to expand further and descend deeper, across and between more and more screens and speakers around the entire globe, offering an illusory substitution for the world it eclipses – diverting us from the dire climate change which is occurring right now. Time's up.

[1] Alfred Hitchcock, "The Enjoyment of Fear," *Good Housekeeping* (182/2, 1949), 39.

[2] *Ibid.*, 241.

[3] *Ibid.*, 243.

[4] These might include Friedrich Nietzsche's "eternal recurrence," Henri Bergson's "durée," Mikhail Bakhtin's "chronotope," Martin Heidegger's "temporality and historicity," Eugene Minkowski's "lived time," Guy Debord's "spectacular time," Gilles Deleuze's "time-image," and Eviatar Zerubavel's "time maps."

[5] See, for example, D.N. Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), Dudley Andrew, *What Cinema Is!* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion, *The End of Cinema?* trans. Timothy Barnard. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), and the dossier, "The Last Picture Show?" with contributions by Nicola Mazzanti, Tacita Dean, and Amy Taubin, in *Artforum*, October 2015, 286-301.

[6] Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), 21. My emphasis.

[7] Christian Metz, *Film Language*, trans. Michael Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 3. Emphasis in original.

[8] Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier*, trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, Alfred Guzzetti (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 7.

[9] Critics and theorists who have written about *The Clock* have not made much of the inclusion of television shows. Some have not even acknowledged them, such as Rosalind Krauss. She argues that Marclay "is a holdout against the eclipse of the medium," whose artwork here requires its spectators to "confront what must be called...the underlying conditions of film," in "Clock Time," *October*, 136 (Spring 2011), 213-14.

[10] Raymond Williams, *Television* (Routledge: London and New York, 1990), 86-120.

[11] This itself is not too dissimilar from movie marathons at repertory theatres and film festivals.

[12] Stephen Heath, *Questions of Cinema* (London: Macmillan, 1981), 44.

[13] Its supplementary incarnations exist in movie magazines, trade journals, photonovels, comic book and novel adaptations, soundtrack recordings, toys, and various settings and events, such as video rental stores, conventions, film festivals, and film society screenings.

[14] It is also worth remembering that before the supposed "Golden Age" of American television today there has been a long history of film directors making films for television, or even simply television shows. Roberto Rossellini, Jean-Luc Godard, Eric Rohmer, Agnes Varda, Maurice Pialat, Jean Eustache, Chantal Akerman, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Alan Clarke, Mike Leigh, Krzysztof Kieslowski, Michael Haneke, Lars Von Trier, and Olivier Assayas made work for television broadcast in Europe, for example, as did Alfred Hitchcock, Steven Spielberg, David Lynch, Michael Mann, Oliver Stone, and Steven Soderbergh in the United States, not to mention all those obscure metteurs en scène who have moved back and forth between television and feature film directing.

[15] Nora Sayre, *Running Time: Films of the Cold War* (New York: The Dial Press, 1982), 27.

[16] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative, Volume 2*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 101-112.

[17] *Ibid.*, 103.

[18] *Ibid.*, 106.

[19] *Ibid.* 112.

[20] Bill Nichols, "The Voice of Documentary," in *Movies and Methods, Volume II*, ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley: University

of California Press, 1985), 258-273.

[21] Lev Kuleshov, *Kuleshov on Film*, ed. and trans. Ronald Levaco (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 52.

[22] Dziga Vertov, *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, ed. Annette Michelson and trans. Kevin O'Brien (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 49.

[23] *Ibid.*, 88.

[24] Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form*, ed. and trans. Jay Leyda (San Diego: Harcourt, 1977), 72-83.

[25] Jonathan Romney, "What Time is it Where?" *Sight & Sound*, 21/5 (May, 2011), 30.

[26] Theodor W. Adorno, "Art and Arts," in *Can One Live After Auschwitz?*, ed. Rolf Tiedmann, trans. Rodney Livingstone et al (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 370.

[27] *Ibid.*, 386.

[28] "Films," Dudley Andrew argues, for instance, "display traces of what is past and inaccessible, whereas television feels (and often is) present. We live with television continually as part of our lives and our homes; sets are sold as furniture. Keeping up a 24-hour chatter on scores of channels, television is banal by definition. In contrast, we *go out* to the movies, leaving home to cross into a different realm," in "Time Zones and Jetlag: The Flows and Phases of World Cinema," in Nataša Durovicová and Kathleen E. Newman (eds), *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 61. Emphasis in original.

[29] See Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text" in *Image-Music Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 155-164.

[30] *Ibid.*, 158, 159. My emphasis.

[31] See Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (London: The Athlone Press, 1989), especially 156-224.

[32] Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 46. My emphasis.

[33] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 82. My emphasis.

[34] The masterful work of Jia Zhangke (who, not incidentally, has long worked in digital video) is exemplary in this regard.

[35] Adorno, "Art and Arts," 385.



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