Chapter 3

Derrida on Cinema's Spectral Images: Time, Repetition, and Belief

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Introduction

For Jacques Derrida, the invention of cinematographic devices (capable of filming and projecting), of the cinematograph as an apparatus, opened up new lines of inquiry in philosophical thought regarding reality and its representation. Cinema is a kingdom ruled by a ghost (*le revenant*), a well-known cliché taken "deadly" seriously by Alan Cholodenko (2004: 99). The then novel experience of watching silent black-and-white moving images was comparable to a "séance," a supernatural session for communicating with the dead, *as if* those moving images were projections of ghostly apparitions, of those "neither living nor dead":

> On the screen, whether silent or not, one is dealing with apparitions that, as in Plato's cave, the spectator believes, apparitions that are sometimes idolized. Because the spectral dimension is that of neither the living nor the dead, of neither hallucination nor perception, the modality of believing that relates to it must be analyzed in an absolutely original manner. (Derrida 2015: 27)

Indeed, this idea is grounded in the bestowing of a temporal dimension upon moving images. The screen is a peculiar structure that 'captures' these projected shadows in the form of ethereal apparitions, present in their own incorporeality (projected). Cinema has defeated the conventional model for representing the nature of time because, at the limit, the shadows that are projected onto the screen are specters – the specter being a ghost *within* ghosts (the projected film), thus conceiving "spectatorship, as of analysis, as spectreship, as haunting and being haunted, as encrypting, as mourning and melancholia in perpetuity" (Cholodenko 2004: 111).

But how can *x* return from the past if *x* only exists in the present once projected onto the screen? This chapter will explore this paradoxical process, inherent to film's temporality, in which *x*'s first (and only) occurrence is not its last occurrence, as it will

return and be repeated once projected. It will explore this theme via an analysis of a "Lazarean" film project, *Visit, or Memories and Confessions/Visita ou Memórias e Confissões* (1982), directed by the Portuguese filmmaker Manoel de Oliveira (1908-2015), an autobiographical documentary film and self-portrait that was publicly screened following his death.

The figure of Lazarus represents those who return from the dead. Himself a "Lazarean" project, in order to return Oliveira first had to die; that is to say, he knew that in order to return one day (meaning: to show his film publicly), he already had to be dead. Thus, it is important to highlight that there is a strong teleological aspect to this kind of project. The director knew that he would be a ghost to those watching his film at the time of his "resurrection"; he had to be dead if he wanted to return. He had to be his own dead self or spectral self in advance, in order later to return.

Indeed, he was a dead man filming. Although this terminology has obvious spiritual nuances, I think that the temporal process involved is much richer, touching on a naïve, primitive perspective, rendering this kind of belief something more than blind faith. Its temporal process seems inconsistent, beyond the fact that the director was preparing what *would* remain of his memories in the future, accepting what would be his past (he would be dead) while preparing his future (he would return).

In the following sections, I will consider the relationship between time, death, and cinema, guided by Derrida's few but influential thoughts on cinema: first, by addressing the *unconscious* dimension of the viewer and cinema's theoretical proximity to Maxim Gorky's and Virginia Woolf's notes on the cinematograph and the experience of the novel; second, by focusing on film's capacity to make us think about death's temporal dimension, the ontological relationship between presence and absence, visibility and invisibility, referring also to the speech/writing debate – all relevant notions which I will explore by using Manoel de Oliveira's film as a case study. Finally, I will address certain thoughts on the new cinematic mode and system of belief. In sum, my chapter examines the notion of spectral images from a threefold perspective: time, repetition, and belief.

1. Twentieth Century "Savages" and the Unconscious Dimension

Jacques Derrida famously said: "You go to the movies to be analyzed, by letting all the ghosts appear and speak. You can, in an economical way (by comparison with a psychoanalytic séance), let the specters haunt you on the screen" (2015: 27). These words

may very well have been meant literally, as Derrida's famous comparison between film, psychoanalysis, and séances suggests. With this claim, evoking the viewer's *unconscious* dimension, Derrida wanted to take a truthful, scientific perspective on the cinematograph: the machine's function as the inventor of a "haunted house."

The projection of silent black-and-white moving images challenges a more conventional notion of belief. What one sees and what one perceives is not merely what is there in the present, to be seen and perceived. It is what one *thinks* one is seeing and what one *thinks* one is perceiving. This Derridean discussion on the presentness of what one thinks, particularly interesting in the context of the visual arts and grounded, perhaps, in his predilection for words over images, is part of a larger "plan" to overturn traditional Western metaphysics, which was based on "being-present." The visible is, by its own nature, complex and paradoxical, bringing into Derrida's way of thinking a gesture that one would not normally associate with the visual – that is, *writing*.

Thus, cinemato-*graphy*, i.e., the language *written* by this new technology (as opposed to discourse or speech) (Derrida 1998: 9), seems to have inadvertently invented a new mode of believing (Derrida 2015: 27). The new graphic paradigm of cinema (as a system of projected shadows) was in part foreseen by philosophers such as Plato. The Cave Allegory (1991: 514a) consisted of *imagining* a semi-dark underground cave where shadows were projected onto a wall and seen by prisoners, who, facing forward and thus ignorant of the source of the images, mistook them for reality itself. The relation between the prisoners and the projected shadows resembles the cinematographic experience, as many have already observed (Jarvie 1987: 44-55; Bauer 2005: 44).

As Glaucon replies: "You have shown me a strange image, and they are strange prisoners" (Plato 1991: 514a), a strangeness or *uncanniness* shared by many of the first moviegoers and film critics. This optical model of thinking (of *imagining*) is clearly present in cinema.

Cinema has intensified our general obsession with images and our fascination with shadows. And Derrida, while not an open cinephile himself, would be sympathetic to certain philosophical criticisms of cinema and the cinematic experience. For him, going to the movies was a distraction from philosophical work, as cinema was understood as a liberating and voyeuristic experience rather than a form of knowledge (Derrida 2015: 24).[1] But it was not only this. His interest in moving images (broadly construed) remained

[1] Contrary, for example, to Gilles Deleuze's claim that film thinks.

close to his own experience of it, as a joyful childhood memory which he then sought to comprehend as an adult. For this purpose, he uses the tools of psychoanalysis, which he views as a methodology for understanding, theorizing, and problematizing cinema, since for him the cinematic experience is connected first and foremost to an "infantile pleasure" (2015: 25) that allows for the analysis of a multilayered *phantomality*.

Figure 3.1: Antrum Platonicum, Engraving of Jan Sanraedam (1565-1607) after a painting of Cornelis Corneliszoon van Haarlem (1562-1638)

After all, the historical period coincident with the invention of the cinematograph gives us important contextual clues for better understanding the transformation that was about to take place within the arts. When the cinematograph was in the process of being invented, modern physics was facilitating a revolution in how space and time were correlated, as in Poincaré's and Einstein's theories; at the same time, Freud's psychoanalytic theory was emerging. As Guillermo del Toro's *Nightmare Alley* (2021) explores, psychoanalysis and cinema have much in common. The director identifies himself with deceitful characters, making us believe in the film's spectral images. Over time, film analysis and psychoanalytical jargon began to resemble each other, connecting the cinematic perception of the close-up, slow motion, and the use of *raccords* – as film techniques seen as symptoms of the viewer's *unconscious* dimension, of its oneiric-like

experience – with the inherent psychoanalytical processes of identification, fetishization, hypnosis, and so on.

The cinematograph's power to make spectators wonder about what they were watching, about the paradoxical status of past real events and present shadowy images, of materiality and its shadows, of a bare world depicted with no sound and no color, was already apparent to the first film audiences. Maxim Gorky was among the first spectators of the Lumière program screened in July 1896, in the city of Nizhny Novgorod. He was so astonished by the new experience that he published a small article on it, which famously began with the words "Last night I was in the Kingdom of Shadows" (Gorky 1960: 407). Gorky tried to put into words the "strange," complex, and antinomic experience of a "lifeless" life, of standing in front of this new realm of shadows, and he feared that his words were symptoms of his standing on the verge of "madness": "It is not life but of its shadows, it is not motion but its soundless specter" (Gorky 1960: 407).

Thirty years later, in June 1926, still in the silent black-and-white period, Virginia Woolf also devoted a short article to going to the cinema.[2] Praising the avant-garde German expressionist *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1920, directed by Robert Wiene) and criticizing literary adaptations such as the American mainstream version of *Anna Karenina* (1915, directed by Gordon Edwards), in this short article she expressed both her hopes and her worries regarding the young artform, the potential of which she naturally recognized. She was, in the first place, focused on the *pleasure of seeing* that she experienced when watching newsreels and the sense of reality's present tense – "there is…": "There is the King shaking hands with a football team; there is Sir Thomas Lipton's yacht; there is Jack Horner winning the Grand National," newsreel footage that she avidly consumed, "licking it up or tasting it with her eyes" (Woolf 1977: 264). She then shifts her focus to the need to understand her own behavior and *primitive* sensations in an intellectual way. In this way, Woolf makes a provocative move from an epistemological and aesthetic perspective, according to which newsreels strengthen "the passage of time and the suggestiveness of reality" (1977: 265), to an ontological and existential understanding of the power of moving images, of the viewer's ontological status of *invisibility* and nonexistence. The present time of the represented past events seems not to be our present time:

[2] Published in *Arts* with the title "The Cinema"; in late July, another version appeared in *The Nation and Athenaeum*, and in August it was published in the *New Republic* as "The Movies and Reality" (Humm 2012: 222).

> Together [the eye and the brain] they look at the King, the boat, the horse, and the brain sees at once that they have taken on a quality which does not belong to the simple photograph of real life. They have become not more beautiful, in the sense in which pictures are beautiful, but shall we call it more real, or real with a different reality from that which we perceive in daily life? We behold them as they are when we are not there. *We see life as it is when we have no part in it.* As we gaze we seem to be removed from the pettiness of actual existence. The horse will not knock us down. The King will not grasp our hands. The wave will not wet our feet. (Woolf 1977: 265, my emphasis)

In the shadows projected on the screen, the viewer sees life as it is when *not taking part in it*. Images take on a new quality. Beauty is independent of time; it will go on and remain the same, as it was ten years ago. Mesmerized by the world being viewed, the viewer knows of its invisibility and, on the contrary, of the images' detachment. They are not just pictures or photographs; they are *moving* pictures of a present that is long gone.

In a famous interview conducted by Antoine de Baecque and Thierry Jousse, Derrida would confess his childish and naive curiosity about cinema and how, at some point in his life, cinema acted like "a drug, entertainment par excellence, uneducated escape, the right to wildness [fr: *le droit à la sauvagerie*]" (2015: 24). As Woolf also observes in the very first lines of her notes:

> People say the savage no longer exists in us, that we are at the fag-end of civilization, that everything has been said already, and that it is too late to be ambitious. But these philosophers have presumably forgotten the movies. *They have never seen the savages of the twentieth century watching the pictures*. (1977: 264, my emphasis).

Woolf thinks that cinema, and in particular cinema's capacity *to show, and not just to tell*, can respond to this problem – or, as she says, in the presence of moving images she becomes a savage in the sense that she experiences something yet to be understood, a primitive experience yet to be civilized or educated.

To the ambiguous and transitory nature of moving images Derrida ads a Freudian analysis, stating that these images are *traces*, residues of an experience, not only in the

sense that they happened a long time ago but in the sense that, from the moment they are captured, from the moment the reality is filmed, they are destined to be destroyed. When this occurs, they become a ghostly reality. And yet, they remain preserved as moving pictures. This embodies what Freud calls the "death drive": a tendency to self-destruct or a compulsion to repeat in the sense that it is a paradoxical consequence of the archive fever seen as the need to auxiliary memory and amnesia (Derrida 1995: 12).

Nothing fits this predisposition better than film's photograms, or the true materiality of cinema, as they allow cinema's projection to be a "consignation in an external place which assures the possibility of memorization, of repetition, of reproduction, or of remission" (Derrida 1995: 11-12), for which the proliferation and accessibility of digital archives (potentially ceaselessly) merely facilitates the process of ghosting reality.

2. Haunted Visits: Film's "Neither/Nor" Condition

Cinematic projection brings spectral reality into a new dimension, "neither living nor dead" (2015: 27), a ghost *within* ghosts (the projected film). Cinema contributes to new ghostly perceptions, a new logic, and a new mode of believing, thus mixing the elements that we take for granted within the logic of good sense. The past dimension of those living things, long gone, returns within a present apparition: present *and* absent, *neither* present *nor* absent, as if death were not an obstacle to remaining alive.

But how can *x* return from the past if *x* only exists in the present, when projected? How can *x*'s "first time" not be *x*'s "last time"? The originality of *x* is to be repeated. The camera has the power to spectrally transform *x*'s first time within a process that anticipates, or produces in advance, its return. Its spectrality is granted *in advance*: as a consignation, or a *credit*. As I will argue in my analysis of Oliveira's film, the spectral nature of cinema becomes clearer in films that depict reality with the purpose of preserving it for the future to come (its first time is not its last time, because it has been spectralized by the camera), a moment yet to come but planned and expected to be a moment of eternal and ethereal repetition. In this case, in order to return, reality must have changed its ontological status – only *then* will it return as a ghost (because it is a post-mortem film):

> Repetition *and* first time, but also repetition *and* last time, since the singularity of any *first time*, makes of it also a *last time*. Each time it is the event itself, a first

> time is a last time. Altogether other. Staging for the end of history. Let us call it a *hauntology* [*hantologie*]. (Derrida 1994: 10)

This hauntological Derridean discussion on aesthetics and film-philosophy regarding the multilayered idea of cinema's *phantomality* or *spectrality*, either as an explicit subject in many films (horror films, for example, that depict spirits or phantasms) or as a phenomenological structure, identifies an original belief system among the arts grounded in the film camera's spectralization.

For Derrida, the Western philosophical tradition, which is based on a metaphysics of the present (the dominance of being-present), is dictated by logocentric laws, according to which each concept is not independently consistent but requires its opposite. For example, truth is inseparable from falsehood, or un-truth. The problem is that in this ontological-conceptual structure, this 'A *and* not-A' which challenges the principle of noncontradiction itself ('A *or* not-A'), the A is privileged over the not-A (Brunette and Wills 1989: 7).

Consequently, the concepts of truth, sense, and beauty are considered more valuable than their direct opposites – falsehood, nonsense, and ugliness, respectively – even if they depend on them for their consistency. Within the deconstructive "methodology," while it is difficult to define a concept, as its success depends on an inherent failure to do so (the other, the trace, the excluded, etc. – what happens to this not-A?), it is all the more difficult to create concepts, as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari famously argued (1994: 35).

Cinema plays with Derrida's deconstructive mode of thought, presenting different connections between "concepts" and creating new thoughts, in particular on the relationship between specters and ghosts. In *Echographies* (2002: 115), Derrida distinguishes the specter (who is visible but materially/bodily absent, intangible) from the ghost (who has died and comes back to life). If film involves knowing that the one being filmed is destined to become a specter, as if haunted by its future condition of visible absence, its visibility persists on the condition that these images continue to be projected.

Thus, to sum up, a specter is that *x* that one *thinks* one sees, in the sense that one *believes* one is seeing that *x*, although one never actually sees the *x* one thinks/believes one is seeing. The problem is that of a new system of belief. How to connect and explore this *seeing/thinking* relation?

There are many examples of documentaries (film and television) that were made to be seen specifically only after their protagonist's death. Within the philosophical sphere,

there is Gilles Deleuze's *L'Abécédaire* (1988-1989), a television documentary featuring filmed interviews with Claire Parnet, to be shown after his death in 1995[3] (see Stivale 2008, Patton 2010). Within the sphere of cinema, another, less documented, example is a film by the Portuguese filmmaker Manoel de Oliveira: *Visit, or Memories and Confessions/Visita ou Memórias e Confissões* (1982). As Oliveira's "Lazarean" project was intended to be projected on the screen, it is perhaps more relevant to Derridean discussions of 20th-century visual arts and film studies insofar as it touches on the core of Derrida's thought: the structure of apparitions and of being-present.

Manoel de Oliveira decided to film his own film-testament, to be shown after his death. When he made his film in 1982, he was 73 years old; he would go on to (somewhat surprisingly) live for another 33 years, before dying aged 106. At the time, his longevity and creativity made him the world's oldest working director and the director with the longest career (his first film, the short documentary *Labor on the Douro River/Douro, Faina Fluvial*, dates from 1931). He could not have known in 1982 that he was in fact in the prime of his artistic life, not its end.

In the following decades, while working on his several subsequent films, Manoel de Oliveira showed an interest in philosophical questions regarding movement and time. He became intellectually close to prominent 20th-century film philosophers such as Gilles Deleuze, with whom he exchanged letters on *Francisca* (1981), and Jacques Derrida, whose honorary doctorate from the University of Coimbra in 2003 he himself patronized. He was an amateur thinker, focusing either on the oneiric and incorporeal source of moving images, imagining the ghost of reality when projected and repeated, or on the expanded time of each shot's duration.

Visit was shot in Oliveira's own home, which he ultimately had to sell to pay his many debts, and the sale itself became a leitmotif for directing a self-portrait of the artist as a middle-aged man. Since he had to leave behind what had been his family's home for the last forty years, he felt a need to tell his love story – the story of his love for both his wife and his films.

With *Visit*, the director's aim was intentionally spectral – to remain visible and present although materially/bodily absent. This spectrality stemmed from the archival nature of film itself. While not all specters create or build up a (film) archive, all archives suppose this spectral nature, these *traces*, from the moment they are prepared and desired

[3] Gilles Deleuze with Claire Parnet, *L'abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze* (1988), 3 DVDs (Montparnasse: Arte Video, 1997).

to the moment they are used, rescued, and repeatedly recycled. His self-archive was also self-controlled, expressing the power to choose what to keep and what to discard, selecting what would return in the future and shaping how his past would be visualized (thus returning and being repeated).

As Derrida puts it when describing archive fever as an essentially destructive drive – a matter not of archiving the past but of what is *archivable* for the future (*l'avenir*) – "a spectral messianicity is at work in the concept of the archive" (1995: 36). Thus, instead of telling us the story of his own past – describing, for example, autobiographical episodes from his childhood and his adult life with his wife, Maria Isabel, collecting the best episodes of his past – Oliveira selects and removes what will remain, controlling the future of his name: he is selecting what will remain to be repeated, quite literally, in the future.

Visit plays with the undecidability between the visible and the invisible, the presence and the absence of something or someone. Quite intentionally, apart from two private screenings to a selective group of crew members and film critics in 1986 and 1993 (Rapold 2015), for more than 30 years the film remained publicly unscreened, preserved in the archives of the Portuguese Cinematheque, until its official release in 2015, the year of Oliveira's death. The film differs importantly from other, unedited works that have been 'found' and viewed after the artist's death. Many films released posthumously corroborate a rather disconcerting perspective on the images shown, such as *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* (2017, directed by Rian Johnson), a film released after Carrie Fisher's death, and *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999), released after Stanley Kubrick's death. As Jean-Michel Frodon emphasizes, *Visit* stands apart in that the artist deliberately "staged" the film – qua self-portrait – to be seen posthumously, "comme composant de la mise en scène de son film" (Frodon 2016).

3. The System of Belief: "Now I believe"

Mastering time in film has been an obsessive and obscure desire of many filmmakers and film-philosophers. Time is what cinema is made of. Thus, time cannot assist this artistic transformation without undergoing its own innovation, with a sense of montage's ephemerality and fragmentation, a whole new mechanism for creating new forms of *believing* in mistrusted moving images. The paradigmatic example is the creation of a "spectre memory" (Derrida 2015: 30) in films that depict a time when cinema had yet to be invented (as in the popular "category" of films set in medieval times), which raises a

new set of epistemological issues regarding belief and the imaginative depiction of certain historical periods. The same epistemological issues are raised by those films (perhaps all films) that demand to be read – or, as Deleuze calls these "readable images, lectosigns" (2008: 23). A lectosign is what is expressed in a proposition independently of its relation to its real object. It considers the image as *independent* of an external object, thus allowing it to become legible.

Introducing the notion of the lectosign into Derrida's "supposed" criticism of images and love for words, of favoring the arts of discourse over the visual arts (the overturning of logocentrism is at the basis of *deconstruction*), is interesting in the sense that it gives voice to the claim that the model of writing could fit cinema. What is written is also readable; it is not just a visual image to be seen.

Deleuze and Derrida both claim that sound is as important as the visual character of moving images. Voice and sound are components of the visual image, even in silent films, where one finds indirect and silent lectosigns (Bogue 2003: 182). This debate regarding speech/writing (or word/image) is relevant to the extent that cinema defies and resists authoritarian philosophical logocentrism. As Derrida explains:

> The recording of speech is one of the major phenomena of the twentieth century. It gives living presence a possibility, which has no equivalent and no precedent, of "being there" once again. The greatness of cinema, of course, is to have integrated voice recording at a certain moment of its history. This was not an addition, a supplementary element, but rather a return to the origins of cinema allowing it to be still more fully achieved. The voice, in cinema, does not add something: it is cinema because it is of the same nature as the recording of the world's movement. (2015: 32-33)

Visit films words, but it is important to think, to distinguish, the lines of division, as well as also of connection, between what the film shows and what is said. Oliveira uses images and words to compose a self-portrait. But can he be the same thing, the visible image and the one who shoots? What is shown when filming words, and what is said when filming images? The camera that returns these readable images functions as a mirror. Once behind the camera, Oliveira catches his own gaze, of himself in front of the camera. But it is a performed gaze. Thus, the cuts or intervals between words and images, between what one thinks one is hearing and what one thinks one is seeing, act as a

temporal *disagreement*, as if the words expressed by the different voices came from a different temporality, from a past long gone.

The film starts with slow tracking shots, entering the gates of the property and moving inside the house. We then hear a voiceover of an anonymous, invisible couple (played by Teresa Madruga and Diogo Dória) who are paying a courtesy visit, just "to say thanks for a dinner and for a little conversation." Their voices conduct the visit through the house's several rooms (reading a fictional text written by Agustina Bessa-Luís, who, since *Francisca* (1981), had become a regular collaborator), while the house itself is slowly shot as if uninhabited – apart from the director's workspace, where the camera finds him, still working. He faces the camera: "I am Manoel de Oliveira, a director of cinematographic films."

As an expression of cinemato-*graphy*, Oliveira's writing is allied with photo-*graphy* in the shots of Maria Isabel gardening, which feature images of her younger self, also gardening, in the form of black-and-white photos (Fig. 3.2). A sequence of photos pops up in the film, spanning different times, different memories – *haunting* the moment.

This is also true of the home movies and slideshows that Oliveira has prepared to show us with his film projector (Fig. 3.3). Facing his audience, he projects the shadows towards us. The strategy is the same as inserting photos directly into his film as interjecting pop-ups, as opposed to featuring them in the background (Fig. 3.4).

Figure 3.2: Screenshot from Visit

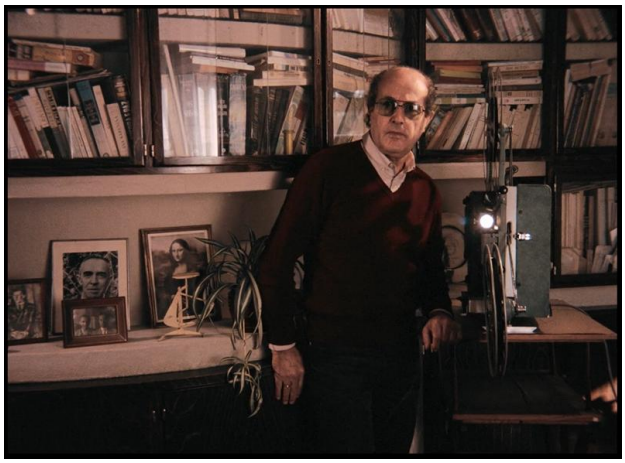

Figure 3.3: Screenshot from Visit

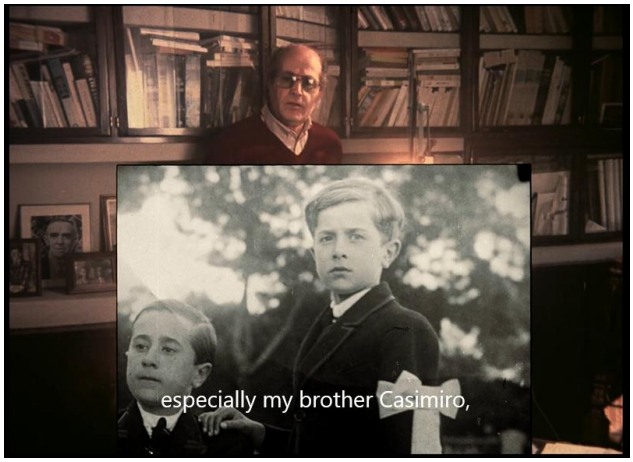

Figure 3.4: Screenshot from Visit

By facing the camera (Fig. 3.5), Oliveira is facing viewers from a different time, from the *afterworld*. The empty house is not a static object but is filled with memories – the empty house is now a filled ghost house, as ghostly as the theatre in which the film would later be screened.

Figure 3.5: Screenshot from Visit

These are the memories and confessions of a dead man. As the female voice says, "it's an unreal time of day, nightfall. We're neither alive nor dead." "It's the time when we say goodbye, when we have regrets, or even forget the spirit of revenge," adds the male voice. Nightfall is thus an augury, a moment of passage, of "not yet," neither alive nor dead. But it is also the best moment to say goodbye, not without grief or melancholia. Nightfall reveals a moment of nostalgia, which is not as beautiful as it might be expected to be.

Oliveira's *trace* is present not only in the work he has created but in himself as the creation – of his legacy, of his image, of his story, towards the future. Thus, film is also a model of writing, as attested to, for example, by Agnès Varda's idea of *cinécriture* and as reinforced in her film *The Gleaners and I/Les glaneurs et la glaneuse* (2000). As Peter Brunette and David Wills observe when analyzing the use of the *signature effect* in films: "Given the visuality of film, as well as its usual reliance on narrative and character, it seems particularly appropriate to consider directors who write themselves into their films" (1989: 124).

As *Visit* is not a collective film in the traditional sense but was directed, written, produced, edited, and acted by Oliveira himself, it is possible to try to find within it Oliveira's "signature," his body (Derrida 2021: 11-12). The body of the film is his own body, as he is the "subject" of the film, but also in the sense that his body is his work and acquires more power when the artist is absent, from its disruptive point of view. For example, the artist truly haunts the screen when he is not visible or noticeable (for example, during Madruga and Doria's voiceover) and yet communicates with our own body as viewers (who "countersign" it). Neither the artist nor the work of art is present, and yet they are experienced. As a work of art, *the film must not* be left private, unseen,

or unscreened. Oliveira knew that when the teleological nature of his film was to be realized and the film publicly screened, its author would not be alive to *speak for* it. He could not be there *instead* of the film (as a replacement, of course); on the contrary, *Visit* would have to speak for itself. And this would be the correct and only accomplishment of its nature.

These images have value in themselves, even if the viewer does not know who the subject is, or who Oliveira *was*. And by themselves, they are antinomic, rooted simultaneously in documentary and in fiction, both at the same time and consecutively in the sense that each genre can dominate the viewer's mind even if for only a few seconds. The film is about Oliveira ("I am Manoel de Oliveira, a director of cinematographic films"), but it is not Oliveira that the viewer is seeing – even if he is what he or she thinks she is seeing. In that interval, a mediated reality, it is possible to introduce fictional elements; in the viewer's mind, it is possible to introduce doubt (consider the wooden settee, which seems to have been moved from another location – the perfect object for *séances*, unlike the usual pedestal tables, as the male voice says at one point).

We *believe* we are seeing the King, the boat, the horse, as in Virginia Woolf's newsreel footage example, but in reality, what "there is" is indeed a "there was." As in Plato's Cave, the spectators believe what they are seeing. Cinema adds new layers of interpretation, showing its own deficiency and partiality, a multilayered *phantomality*. It has invented an original mode of believing because in film such "things" are not really there; only their shadows appear and are seen. What is happening in a cinematic experience? According to this mode of believing, perception is based on a contradictory condition that is not a hallucination, although it is not present either.

In 1983, Derrida played himself in Ken McMullen's film *Ghost Dance*. In a famous scene with Pascale Ogier, she asks him if he believes in ghosts. Improvising some thoughts on being haunted by a ghost, Derrida then returns the question to her: "And what about you, do you believe in ghosts?" The line was repeated over and over, and she answered him over and over with the same line, "Yes, now I do, yes." The scene (its "first time" and its many repetitions) is spectral in itself, but its spectrality would be intensified when, after Ogier's death, Derrida would watch the film again and see the now dead Ogier asking him – no longer Derrida the actor but a viewer in a theater – "Do you believe in ghosts?," Ogier herself answering: "Yes, now I do, yes" (Derrida and Stiegler 2002: 120).

Above, I questioned what happens to the trace, to the other, to what is not present, and how it can be included in philosophical thinking. Derrida's "logic of supplementarity" (1994: 94) was his answer, since it allows us to expand the thinkable insofar as it allows us to claim the *contrary*, the structure designed as 'A *and* not-A', without being contradictory, thus challenging the principle of noncontradiction itself ('A *or* not-A') – in his own words, the "deconstructive thinking of the trace" that involves the inscribing of "radical alterity and heterogeneity, of differance, of technicity, and of ideality in the very event of presence" (Derrida 1994: 94). The hauntological "thesis" of cinema's essential spectrality, however, remains paradoxically in tune both with Oliveira's naïve, quasi-primitive perspective on film and with the sense that thinking can never *exhaust* our understanding of anything.

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