



ALL THIS: Writings on “All This Can Happen”



With the utmost love and attention the man who walks must study and observe every smallest living thing ... The highest and the lowest, the most serious and and the most hilarious things are to him equally beloved, beautiful and valuable.



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IJSD Volume 7 Editorial: On *All This Can Happen*

Claudia Kappenberg, University of Brighton

Keywords: Laura Mulvey, Miranda Pennell, Annette Michelson, Maurice Blanchot, Robert Walser, utensil, resemblance, worklessness, choreographic object, found choreography, cinematographic gestures, archive, screen space

All This Can Happen (ATCH) had its first public screening at Dance Umbrella, London's international dance festival, on the 13th October 2012. Since then, the work has been screened internationally, reviewed in dance and film journals and online, and been the subject of a symposium at the Freie Universität Berlin.¹ This issue of the IJSD builds on this extensive circulation, and dedicates, for the first time in the history of the journal, the whole issue to one work of art. A comparable venture in the publishing realm is the *One Work* series from Afterall Books, in which publications are dedicated to exploring a selected piece of work. However, a single writer or critic authors *One Work* projects. The selection of writers included in this issue brings together some of those who have screened the work in their respective venues or festivals, some of those who have contributed to the Berlin Symposium, and others who have engaged with it in their scholarly work or reviewed the film for the wider press. In this way, different voices and perspectives are gathered around one focal point. Besides enriching our understanding of the work in question, this commonality of focus also serves to highlight the extraordinary richness of dialogues that occur in the multidisciplinary field of screendance.

The extent and intensity of this conversation is in itself a testimony to Siobhan Davies and David Hinton's remarkable collaboration, artistry, and craft. There is no doubt that over time the film will be a marker and milestone in the evolution of screendance and its canon, and will be referred to time and again, both through the work of subsequent screendance makers and in the discourses around the practice.

One of the many compositional strategies of *All This Can Happen* is the play between still and moving images. This play unfolds simultaneously as well as sequentially through the constant opening and closing of frames, and it scatters movement across the screen. The effect is like seeing, not one or more moving bodies, but an infinite number of movements appearing and disappearing within a seemingly infinite digital space. Furthermore, images from across different decades and origins are brought together to form one continuous stream. The ongoing unpredictability of arrest and flow, and of as-if-movement, holds the viewer like a cat on a string, tugging and

teasing in a tantalizing chase. Every now and again however, a still image quietly occupies the frame and invites, according to Laura Mulvey, a more pensive spectating and a reflection not only on what is in the image, but on the nature of cinema.²

Agreeing with Mulvey, Miranda Pennell has argued that the still image should be considered as a choreographic gesture, which disrupts the cinematic flow out of a delight in material for its own sake, material which is not in the service of (narrative) progression.³ As Pennell noted, “there is a special pleasure derived from [this] ‘constructedness’ of choreography, as there is of avant-garde film. Avant-garde film and dance can draw us into the materiality and construction of the body or of the film and its projection.”⁴ This pleasure is not Dziga Vertov’s kino-eye, which would give us access to a world “without a mask, a world of naked truth,” as Mulvey wrote.⁵ It is rather the fascination with an artifice of simulated stills and implied movement, of images which deliberately stray away from the narration in order to do their own thing.

Film theorist Annette Michelson speculates on what lies behind this fascination with the filmic construct:

To describe a movement is difficult, to describe the instant of arrest and of release, of reversal, of movement, is something else again; it is to confront that thrill on the deepest level of the filmic enterprise, to recognize the privileged character of the medium as being in itself the promise of an incomparable, and un hoped for, grasp upon the nature of causality.⁶

Already in its prologue, *ATCH* calls on this filmic enterprise, and sets up an uncanny analogy between the jerky movements of the body on screen—a patient in a hospital bed—and the quick alternation, or stuttering, of still and moving images. The parallels are so strong that we cannot be certain whether the repetition of the patient’s head movements is part of an original film clip, and therefore a symptom of the traumatized patient, or an effect produced in the editing, a cinematic construct. The stuttering body mimics a filmstrip that is stuck in the projector, and both resemble a broken record player with the needle stuck somewhere in the grooves. The cinematic play questions the representation and challenges what we think we see.

When something is broken, our perception of the thing changes. As Maurice Blanchot argues in an essay titled *Two Versions of the Imaginary* (1985), objects and utensils that are tied into a habitual purpose tend to be invisible to our consciousness, but in a damaged or dis-functional state they appear to us as image, they become present to us.⁷ “The utensil, no longer disappearing in its use, appears. This appearance of the object is that of resemblance and reflection: one might say it is its double.”⁸ Drawing essentially on Heidegger in this argument, Blanchot links the category of art in general “to this possibility objects have of ‘appearing,’ that is, of abandoning themselves to pure and simple resemblance behind which there is nothing—except being.”⁹

Describing such an image as a 'thin ring,' Blanchot places it in-between the solid object and the nothing, arguing that in the becoming image, value and signification are lost:

Now that the world is abandoning it to worklessness and putting it to one side, the truth in it withdraws, the elemental claims it, which is the impoverishment, the enrichment that consecrates it as image.¹⁰

An object which no longer fulfills its signification, which no longer masters its existence, is claimed, or reclaimed, by something more elemental and exposed to time and to transformation. In *ATCH*, a set of images show women on a street in frazzled archive pictures; the images are half eaten by time and full of marks and blank areas, barely representing their subjects. Instead of making present what is in the image they merely refer to their subjects, offering a resemblance. The women themselves remain distant and part of an intangible past. This distancing effect is enhanced by the splitting of the screen into multiple images, therefore denigrating the images to fragments, which can no longer tempt us into believing that we see the real thing.

This distance between the image and what it refers to interferes with how we see. According to Blanchot: "Not only is the image of an object not the meaning of that object and of no help in comprehending it, but it tends to withdraw it from its meaning by maintaining it in the immobility of a resemblance that has nothing to resemble."¹¹ In *ATCH* we see this, for example, through the images of the traumatized soldier, whose fall is caught and frozen within a still image. In becoming an image, he becomes a double of himself, a grotesque copy whose meaning is put into question.

Throughout the film, the flow of still and moving images and the narrative flow of people and places appear only to disappear, barely gaining significance. The narrator himself, always walking and wandering, is also caught within this transience as someone who merely gathers images and sounds and brief impressions. In moments the narrator-author addresses his own transience and foregrounds an ambivalence with regards to being "just" a walker: "Left of the road here, a foundry full of workmen and industry causes a noticeable disturbance. In recognition of this, I am honestly ashamed to be merely out for a walk while so many others drudge and labour."¹² An instant later, he denies his embarrassment, suggesting that he has no problem with being found out. But then again the narrator is fiercely critical of everything that smacks of capitalist gains and industrialization. He says:

Speaking of thrashings a countryman deserves to be well and truly thrashed because he is not hesitant to cut down the pride of the landscape, namely, his high and ancient nut tree in order to trade it for despicable, wicked, foolish money.¹³

By contrast, the observer Walser abandons himself to worklessness. He walks through space, but he does not belong. Instead, he appears more like an image of himself, a resemblance. Perhaps Walser observed and wrote both in search of meaning as well as in defense of meaninglessness. As part of a generation that was traumatized by war and its human cost, he can be seen as an advocate of purposelessness, defending values that reside outside of the spheres that are dedicated to productivity. Numerous figures of 20th century literature and philosophy have been concerned with this quandary. For example, "To be useless is today for man the most difficult thing," wrote Martin Heidegger in 1963; "The useful is understood as that which is practically useful and of immediate technical purpose, like that which produces an effect of some kind with which I can do business or trade. However, that which is most useful, is the useless."¹⁴ Walser appears to have walked partly in order to observe and record, but also to practice uselessness, in a fervent defense of what it means to be human. *All This Can Happen*, transposing the complexity of a stroll that is so little and yet so much, allows the viewer to both engage with Walser's thoughts as well as to take their own journey through the myriad of images, sounds, and scenes and to gather their own observations. Almost 100 years after the publication of *The Walk*, the material has lost none of its relevance.

In their original film proposal for the British Film Institute, Davies and Hinton lay out the film's structure and propose a cinematic collage that is built through a complex layering of observational, analytical, and emotional threads. It is therefore no surprise that the work invites many different responses from its audiences and from the authors included in this issue. There are engagements with the relation between text, image, and moving image; contributions to dance scholarship; film historical analysis; and investigations into the wider social and cultural context of modernity as well as personal notes. The issue opens with a literary contribution by writer and curator of film Gareth Evans (Whitechapel Gallery, London UK). His essay offers a personal response to the film and invites a reflection on the processes of transposition that occur when a text becomes a moving image work which is then seen, heard, and felt to become a text again. The writer W.G. Seabald was an admirer of Walser's prose, and Jürgen Simpson, curator of Light Moves (Limerick, IE, compares Seabald's own use of still images as elements which disrupt and destabilize text with the use of archival images in *ATCH*. This is part of a wider investigation into the relation between the cinematic medium, the narrative thread, and the sound world.¹⁵ Reflecting on the diversity of reading modes available throughout the film and drawing on the notions of hypermediality and foto-films, Simpson proposes that the work defies immersive mechanisms through the overt employment of archival materials and its foregrounding of artefact.

Numerous reviewers and bloggers have commented on the movement in *ATCH*, proposing that movement is what it is all about. Hartmut Regiz from the German *Tanz*

Magazine had a more nuanced response: describing a scene in which the gesture of a newspaper seller, represented threefold, fuses into that of a fine lady who is paying for her cab, he wrote, "Time and again the camera chases the heels of someone, only to suddenly, and most casually, arrest the flow in order to create, through the coincidence of stillness and movement, a very peculiar tension."¹⁶

As a medium of movement, cinema is life-like, therefore any arresting of its flow touches us deeply, reminding us of the contiguity of life and death and the fragility of the human endeavor. There are three articles in the issue that investigate this elemental condition and its choreographic potential through dance and screendance scholarship. A conversation between Erin Brannigan (Senior Lecturer at University of New South Wales, AUS) and Cleo Mees (PhD researcher, Macquarie University AUS) echoes the collaborative spirit of the *All This Can Happen*. Brannigan and Mees discuss the film as a choreographic object and ask what contributions corporeality has made. Drawing on film theorist Laleen Jayamanne's proposition of the film as performance—as filmic performance—they trace the presence of breath and weight in the composition as an inscription of the body onto screen space and time. German scholar Maren Butte engages with the act of walking as a fragile bodily movement and leitmotif of both *The Walk* and *ATCH*. Considering walking as an activity that takes the subject into the "midst" of things, and as a process that synchronizes stepping and thinking, Butte theorizes the activity not only as locomotion but as an affective bodily activity that is formative of modernity. Drawing on the work of Brian Massumi, she argues that walking and the myriad of variations, such as balancing and wobbling, slipping, running, and hurrying, co-generate live space and screen space as well as the experience of these spaces. Florence Freitag, screendance artist and convener of the Berlin Symposium, further develops the investigation into the movement of and through images by drawing on Maya Deren's terminology of film as *unstable equilibrium* which draws the viewer in. Freitag investigates its affective potential through Miranda Pennell's notion of *nowness* and presence of cinematographic gestures, of images and their in-between.

Another set of scholarly contributions are informed by psychological and historical discourses. In view of the mental illness from which Robert Walser suffered in his later years, independent filmmaker and Assistant Professor of Film Studies in Connecticut Ross Morin argues for a psychological reading of the work and its cinematic elements. In a close reading of the film, he draws parallels between the visual structure, episodic narration, and flashbacks and the medical symptoms associated with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in returning soldiers. The film, according to Morin, foregrounds the traumatic effects of war. Nicolas Villodre, an expert on experimental cinema from the Cinémathèque de la Danse in Paris, provides a rich historical perspective on the many artistic movements and cinematic developments that have informed *ATCH*, some of which date back to the Avant Gardes of the 1920's and the 1960's. His

discussions of compositional approaches are furthermore embedded in the wider cultural history of the 20th century, its dance, theatre, and literary traditions. In order to facilitate access also to French readers, this article is published in both English and French. Simon Roloff, Junior Professor for Creative Writing at the University of Hildesheim, Germany, contextualizes the film by bringing in Walser's earlier novel *Jakob von Gunten*, a text which encapsulates new techniques and practices of administration around 1900 and highlights the transformative exertion of institutional power over the modern individual. This novel thereby offers a new perspective on both *The Walk* and *ATCH*, in particular on Walser's fascination with the meticulous recording of minute details of small events. Drawing on biopolitics, Roloff mines this historical context to draw parallels between the narrative and the visual patterns of the film and the repetitions and constraints of modernity.

The theoretical articles are followed by an extended conversation between Siobhan Davies and David Hinton with Claudia Kappenberg. Published in two parts, the first portrays the collaborators through a set of autobiographical "snapshots" of themselves as artists at this point in time, and of the wider cultural and creative context in which they work. The second part discusses aspects of the making of *ATCH*, in view of the first funding proposal for the project that was submitted to the BFI in 2012, and which is reprinted in this issue. This is followed by "ATCH on Tour and in the Press," a list of all the screenings of *All This Can Happen* between its premiere in 2012 and the summer of 2016, making an astounding register of over 80 public events. This document also includes a list of reviews and blog entries from the wider press that demonstrates the international interest the film generated. This includes a couple of review essays on *All This Can Happen* which are already in the public realm: Kyra Norman's "Still Moving, Reflecting on *All This Can Happen*" (2014), published in an earlier issue of the *International Journal of Screendance*,¹⁷ and Ximena Munroe's "*All This Can Happen*: Narrativas Alógicas a Través de la Coreografía de Imágenes en Movimiento" (2015), published in *Memoria Histórica de la Videodanza* (2015) by the Ibero American Screendance Network.¹⁸ The issue concludes with the reprint of three of the reviews of *All This Can Happen* from the wider press, by Sukhdev Sandu ("The Mighty Walser," *Sight and Sound* 2013),¹⁹ Sanjoy Roy ("Review of *All This Can Happen*, by Siobhan Davies and David Hinton," *Aesthetica Magazine* 2013)²⁰ and Priscilla Guy ("Screendance as a Question: *All This Can Happen* and the First Edition of the Light Moves Festival of Screendance," Center for Screendance Blog, 2015).²¹ We are grateful for the permission to reprint their writing.

The ambition of the IJSD is to inform, witness, and critique, and to provoke and to take risks in order to stimulate growth and debates in the wider field. We hope that this issue with its different accounts, discussions, and topics demonstrates the extraordinary complexities and curatorial potential of screendance practices, as well as the diversity of scholarship which screendance affords. The issue is intended to add a

new impulse and further challenge current parameters. The journal also pursues and celebrates excellence. We are therefore most indebted to Siobhan Davies and David Hinton for engaging in this conversation with us and for allowing access to their archives, and we are delighted to be able to celebrate their work through this publication. German filmmaker Peter Delpout described Hinton as “the founding father of found choreography”²² and Davies has been designated as an institution by Flora Wellesley Wesley: “while Davies is a prominent feature of the Contemporary Dance establishment, her work has come to be characterized not by prevailing aesthetic values but by being of pioneering ilk.”²³

We look forward to what else they will make happen.

Last but not least, I would like to extend my thanks to Florence Freitag for convening the Berlin Symposium which sparked many conversations that eventually led to this special issue. I would like to thank Harmony Bench, Simon Ellis and the editorial teams at Ohio State and Coventry Universities for ensuring the continuity of the journal and expanding its constituencies. I would also like to thank Editorial Assistant Rebecca Weber for her contribution and rigorous copyediting, and Professor Sarah Whatley from Coventry University for supporting the production of the issue, and for contributing a Postscript that situates ATCH within the wider body of Siobhan Davies’ choreographic work and in amongst the shifting relations between art-, dance-, screendance-, film-, archival- and documentary fields.

Claudia Kappenberg

Biography

Claudia Kappenberg is a performance and media artist and Course Leader for the MA Performance and Visual Practices at the University of Brighton, UK, as well as founding editor of *The International Journal of Screendance*. She has published widely on performance and screen-based work, including in *Anarchic Dance* (Routledge, 2006), *The International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media* (2010), *Art in Motion* (Cambridge Scholars, 2015) and the *Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies* (Oxford University Press 2016). Her performance practice consists of minimal choreographies which have been shown across Europe, the US, and the Middle East in the form of live interventions, gallery-based performances, and screen-based installations.

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Notes

¹ Research Group BildEvidenz, Geschichte und Ästhetik at the Freie Universität Berlin (12/07/2014). Directed and chaired by Friedrich Balke and Florence Freitag.

² Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second*, 186.

³ Pennel, "Some Thoughts on 'Nowness' and 'Thenness.'"

⁴ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁵ Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second*, 181.

⁶ Michelson, 'From Magician to Epistemologist,' 104. Also quoted in Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second*, 182.

⁷ Blanchot, *Two Visions of the Imaginary*, 1981.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 81. (Italics mine.)

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹² Walser, *The Walk and Other Stories*, 61.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 95.

¹⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Martin Heidegger, Zollikon Seminars*, 159, 160.

¹⁵ See for example: Seabald, "Le Prometeur Solitaire" and Scime, "The Walk by Robert Walser."

¹⁶ Regiz, "All this can happen - Ein bewegter, ein bewegender Film von Siobhan Davies und David Hinton", p 6. Translation mine.

¹⁷ Norman, "Still Moving, Reflecting on All This Can Happen."

¹⁸ Munroe, "All This Can Happen: Narrativas Alógicas."

¹⁹ Sukhev Sandu. "The Mighty Walser."

²⁰ Sanjoy Roy, "Review of *All This Can Happen*."

²¹ Sanjoy Roy, "Review of *All This Can Happen*."

²² Delpout, "Found Choreography."

²³ Wellesley Wesley, "Interview: Siobhan Davies."

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PROVOCATIONS AND VIEWPOINTS

Mundane: Thinking through *All This Can Happen*

Gareth Evans

Abstract

What if ... a text (*Walser's Walk*) becomes image and sound and movement and new, and then becomes text again? This writing reflects on how images make history, now, on editing as placement and embodiment, on things bearing witness to things which must be borne witness to, and on rabbit holes of frames that might conjure up the world.

Keywords: image, sound, edits, *All This Can Happen*, Davies, Hinton

Where I am, I don't know, I'll never know, in the silence you don't know,
you must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on.

– Samuel Beckett¹

Always there is the war. The war and the bodies it makes. The shuddering stare, the stumble and fall—always bodies falling through the conflict-knotted air. The stumbling stare, the shudder and stall. The stopped and the starting, barely, again.

To harrow the phenomenal. To shake the head out, almost off. Jolt it clear of horrors, corpses piled in corridors of mind. To put the lights out on this territory, to raise them on another place entirely.

Blinds up. Time for gentler looking.

*

Once there was a person (was a man), who woke into the waking dream of life, and streets, and all the people coming forth by day. The health that comes from being out and in it, walking.

*"[A]s if I saw it for the first time ..."*²

A jumping girl waiting to land on her own shadow; even if only that, then a world, but a world becoming "modern," becoming its own image through immediate reproduction, faster than the most of people can, what, keep up with. Which is why a walk, in the midst of working hours, as the medium of encounter, is already a subversion, an oppositional proposal. Where others are labouring and in the middle of

the rush to maintain at least a balance or an equilibrium with the accelerating social, architectural, and technological times crowding in upon them, the person in question embarks, like a vessel on a once and brilliant morning, solely for the pleasure of the voyage.

So there's surely no surprise then that the presiding spirit of both this walk, imaged and imagined for us by Davies and Hinton in their quietly ecstatic and empathetic advocacy of sensual and intellectual witness, is Alice with her wonder entourage—all unceasing curiosity and sliding shifts of scale, and the rabbit holes of frames and bright arcades, and altered realities of every hue and consequence.

Make it new. Wash clean our eyes of happenstance we know, or know through all our tired ways of seeing...

*

For a work that is telling both a walk (through a place that makes topographic sense, however nominally a fiction) and a film constructed from shards of time and territory, the resolved site of the finished piece lies intriguingly elsewhere, in a triangulation between the elements, in the zone delineated between subject, story, and filmic strategy. From one perspective, this is a huge terrain—swathes of human, natural, and societal life. From another, it is tiny, because the integration of these three positions is so intimate, so neighbourly; the intentions of each are so mutual and so strikingly interdependent, that there is almost no distance between them. In fact, it might be said that the difference is only the width of a threshold or, to use a more relevant term here, the size of an edit.

And this is what is most remarkable, perhaps. Under Davies' and Hinton's scrutiny and care, the *edit*, the precise deliberation about image (an image, many images) and relations—first to duration, then with its own echo, repeat, refrain, or variation, and then to its placing (within the larger canvas of the screen) in dialogue or polylogue with others—becomes in a profound and ongoing sense the film *itself*. Of course, an edit can only exist if two frames or sequences previously exist and are able to be joined. But here, an unusual motivational alchemy has occurred. The edit is less a technical procedure than an embodiment, by which the experience of being alive—and the perceptual devices through which that living realises itself to be so—are conveyed.

This has come about partly because of the deployment entirely of found footage (that is, images with other purposed lives), or because of the choreographic impulse that underlies the project and the trajectories of both primary makers. Both strategies prioritise—as a walk does—process over arrival, encounter over ownership. The edit, therefore, is the agent of these approaches. The edit is the eyes or the ears in their ceaseless roving through the real. While every singular story of each moment is, in and

of itself, immeasurably precious and unequivocal, it is the *passage* that enables and ennobles their presence in the work as fully taken. Qualities of the “positive” or “negative,” of happiness or regret, anger or longing, are less important than the fact that they are all endowments of the *living*, of the undeniably existent.

This passage—of the writer/walker and the finder/film-makers—is equivalent in each medium, in each transaction, with the multifarious. It is this rigorous, shared intention that grants *All This Can Happen* its potency; and it is, as noted, undeniably choreographic in intention and realisation: bodies engaged in all the movements of the daily, *writing their chorus dance* (choreography’s etymology) into the mornings, afternoons, and dusk—that is the single doorway into every ancient evening.

“The soul of the world had opened.”

Forest joys, a woman’s meadow mystery, flower heads of songs, the tang and taste of almost a seduction...

There is a return to founding principles here, to ground tools: event first, then the recollection, but, in both, an *animation*; the breathing-into-being of things. Animation, in an enrichment of its cinematic sense, delivers the motion-capture of the soul (the *anima*) of objects, creatures, characters. Here engages a carefully woven relationship with democracy, with a general assembly of looking, with a full spectrum priority: all things carry and convey; all things bear witness and must be borne witness to; everything is illuminated, whether seeding burst or animal, woman or the weather, business or a building, worker or *such* woodland, gesture or the book.

This originating animation determines in its turn the aesthetic choices regarding the manipulations of the found image—the desire to find visual correlatives, in terms of precise expression, for the perceptual “truth” of that particular image or their sequence (and the latent truth of things *within* the image), whether in terms of registering its incident, context or this interiority (never imitative, rarely illustrative, always associative, heightening its telling by allusion; imaging the *effect*, the ripple out from action, the *feeling* of the walk and all its meetings...)

The project constantly operates on the threshold between order and collapse, between harbour (framing) and open water (dissolution of parameters). These frames rarely hold for long; image and energies spill, redirect themselves, breed, split, stutter, surge. Everyone and everything is multiple. Possibility outruns probability.

“I was no longer myself, was another; and yet it was on this account I became properly myself.”

The sensory world, registered so intensely in both text and footage, gives inevitably onto metaphysics. A walk is always, if properly attended, a journey through the event of one’s own life, the pressure exerted on it by circumstance and surroundings, and its

implications. The film's sourcing from diverse decades and regions, its population by numerous avatars of the walker and the watched, speaks as if effortlessly to a "universal" resonance and relevance, while resolutely anchoring and celebrating the tangible, the sensed.

There are hints here, then of the century's aspirations to "total" vision, but this is no panopticon of miserable surveillance, no spyglass for class corralling—although it acknowledges and signs the threat; rather it offers a generous endowment of dignity and worth, the act of acknowledgement, to all that is being visited—collaborations at every step, as richly nuanced as those within the assembly of the piece, from sound to voice, archive mining to front-of-house promotion. All roles are necessary, all tasks contribute. All are company on the journey.

Half a decade ahead of *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land*, Walser had journeyed through a total day, had hymned the miraculous momentary, had elegised the constant entropy of things (celluloid decay edging like a tide into the picture), had formed a language out of, and to counter, conflict. Prescience has its price. Prophets speculate less on a future than they speak to the concealed convergences, the simulations and stimulations, the fissures of the found and fragile present.

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And after all, all of this ... was it just a fever dream of longing for what might never have transpired? A final gasp in night sweats to salvage what might help, or what *had* helped, or what simply was (and is). Oh, to wrestle, waltz, and walk with matter, with such matter that is "world" and all its songs and glories, mundane gifts of being—be they low or high, hard or soft, sinister or gleaming, still and so they *are*; and so *we* were and are.

And Walser, wise beyond his wounds, he left the world he'd worded through and walked. "*I am not here to write but to be mad,*"³ he said, and paced asylum avenues for decades more of being. But he *did* still write, and still he wrote, how could he not, in micro-scripts so dense a side of empty envelope could carry forth a novel, texts so tight in their transcribing they moved beyond the legible through codes known just to him, smaller and smaller, writing himself *away* from things; but, marked on cards and scraps, they seemed yet like some messages sent out, sent back from where he was, somewhere in the continent inside.

Until the very end, the last walk on the last day (Christmas 1956), and Walser, well, he stepped out and he died, writing himself finally back into the world, scripting himself on a page of snow, a bundle in a dark coat, a blot on winter, spilt ink; a presence text that bore him right away.

He left a body, evidence, and another body, work; but who's to say he's really passed? He's striding out down every written lane, still pausing for the blossom of every wandering line. And now he's held, and more, endures, in every loving frame, nests of sound and image for the birds of *history now*.

All this could happen surely ... but *did* it happen?

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mundane (adj.)

mid-15c., 'of this world,' from Old French *mondain*: 'of this world, worldly, earthly, secular;' also 'pure, clean; noble, generous' (12c.), from Late Latin *mundanus* 'belonging to the world' (as distinct from the Church), in classical Latin 'a citizen of the world, cosmopolite,' from *mundus* 'universe, world,' literally 'clean, elegant;' used as a translation of Greek *kosmos* (see **cosmos**) in its Pythagorean sense of 'the physical universe' (the original sense of the Greek word was 'orderly arrangement')."⁴

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Yes.

Biography

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Notes

¹ Beckett, *The Unnamable*, 179.

² All quotations in italics are from *All This Can Happen* (2012). Dir. Siobhan Davies, David Hinton.

³ This quotation from Walser is relayed in general anecdote.

⁴ Etymology Online, "Mundane."

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ARTICLES

Within *All This Can Happen*: Artefact, Hypermediacy, and W. G. Sebald

Jürgen Simpson, University of Limerick

Abstract

All This Can Happen, by David Hinton and Siobhan Davies, is a film based on a novella by Robert Walser, a writer who owned little, possessed no books, and invariably wrote on second-hand paper. The film's integration of similarly borrowed materials and the nature of interactions between image, text, and sound are the central focus in this article which draws upon the work of W.G. Sebald and the vibrant field of related study as a means of analysis and enquiry. It specifically explores *All This Can Happen's* embrace of archival conditions and decay, the interaction between fictive and authentic layers, and how complex hypermediated visual structures are facilitated by both the text's grounding effect and its thematic focus on the act of walking.

Keywords: postdigital, aesthetics, archive, artefact, screendance, Sebald, Bolter and Grusin, hypermediacy, Walser, Barthes, photo-filmic, audio-visual, sound design, Chion, voiceover, decay, Cascone

All This Can Happen, by David Hinton and Siobhan Davies,¹ is a film based on a novella by Robert Walser, a writer who owned little, possessed no books and invariably wrote on second-hand paper. This film's integration of similarly borrowed materials and the nature of interactions between image, text and sound are the central focus in the following essay which draws upon the work of W.G. Sebald and the vibrant field of related study as a means of analysis and enquiry.

Der Spaziergang (The Walk) by Robert Walser, whose fine writings and influence on contemporaries such as Hermann Hesse and Franz Kafka could not prevent a dwindling career and madness, is a text that presents an innocent wonder with an undercurrent of strangeness.² Walter Benjamin describes the "unusual delicacy" that is readily available in Walser's work as hiding a layer devoid of worldly ambition: "the pure and animated spirit of convalescent life."³ This characteristic self-effacement, a writing in which content vies precariously with the medium itself, is described by Benjamin: "Everything seems lost to him, a gush of words comes pouring out in which each sentence has the sole purpose of rendering the previous one forgotten."⁴ So it is in *The Walk*, where the narrator describes a journey through town and country, and lingers at every turn on that which is encountered. Person or animal, hat or dress, air or

light; the opportunity for wonder is offered equally by all things, and each thing plays its part in *The Walk's* descriptive footfall. The effect is an unfolding in which each present moment, once described, is displaced by the next. The result is a narrative topology that is reduced in its directionality, its temporal forms flattened out into sequences of moments that, exhausted by detail, sustain the present.

Robert Walser's initial impact on the literary and social scene during the early part of the 20th century was followed by a gradual retreat into obscurity culminating in a quarter century spent in mental institutions. His death on Christmas Day 1956, his body frozen in the snow discovered by children, sparked a slow rise in recognition. Amongst those who championed his work were J.M Coetzee,⁵ Susan Sontag, and W.G. Sebald.⁶ Sebald's relationship went beyond admiration and entered into the realm of the uncanny, for Sebald saw in Walser a familial kinship and noted these in a chapter devoted to him in his 1998 book *Logis in einem Landhaus: Über Gottfried Keller, Johann Peter Hebel, Robert Walser und Andere (A Place in the Country)*.⁷ The sensitivity to coincidence that enabled this kinship is located throughout Sebald's writing and with this receptiveness retained, I would like to implement aspects of Sebald's approach as a key to engaging with the film *All This Can Happen*. It is specifically through Sebald's application of photography and his embrace of the archive that we may engage with the nature of interactions between text, image, and sound in *All This Can Happen*. The significant scope of discussion dedicated to Sebald resonates with *All This Can Happen*, and can offer a range of access points from which to engage with the film and this existing body of work.

"Seen as live evidence, the photograph cannot fail to designate, outside of itself, the death of the referent, the accomplished past, the suspension of time. And seen as deadening artefact, the photograph indicates that life outside continues, time flows by, and the captured object has slipped away".⁸ These opinions by Thierry de Duve are indicative of the position held by many of those who have addressed photography's tentative relationship with time. Susan Sontag states that "photography is the inventory of mortality,"⁹ and much of Roland Barthes' final work *Camera Lucida* is intent on deciphering the photograph as an indicator of mortality.¹⁰ This relationship between memory and photography is particularly significant in the context of Sebald's work. Maya Barzilai argues that, "the manner in which Sebald embeds old black-and-white photographs with the different narratives not only encourages a comparison between memory and photography, but also allows the reader to gain, experientially, a sense of the disruptive effect of the belated return of the past."¹¹ Of additional significance is the manner in which Sebald integrates the uncaptioned image within the text: The line between documentation and fiction is obscured and the inclusion of visual "evidence" presents the reader with concrete points of navigation which simultaneously support and obstruct the mind's eye. Of course, these discussions are specific to the still-image and some, including Barthes,¹² have argued successfully that

the fluidity of the moving-image liberates it from the melancholy of the photograph. This may at first appear to hinder a direct engagement between Sebald's text/image interplay and the nature of temporalities within *All This Can Happen*. However, although the latter is a film, I suggest that much of its imagery does not function in a traditionally filmic manner, and that this position plays an important role in understanding the manner in which sound, image, and text interconnect. There are a variety of reasons that support this position but in short, their cumulative effect is to evolve and dissect the absolute and binary opposition presented by Barthes. These arguments for differentiation can be broken down into two strands: the mechanisms of presentation and the nature of the audio-visual materials used.

A discussion of these mechanisms requires an initial statement as to the nature of the traditional filmic experience as follows: traditional film engages a desire for an illusion in which the viewer is presented with a single window-like frame through which a spatially and temporally realistic moving image is constructed. The result aspires toward a condition that has been described by Bolter and Grusin as "transparent immediacy,"¹³ and its acquisition has been the preoccupation of painters and writers for many centuries. The rationale behind transparent immediacy is to hide the mechanisms at play "by ignoring or denying the presence of the medium and the act of mediation" and thereby foregrounding the illusion presented.¹⁴ Photography and classical cinema adopted this realist inheritance directly from the mathematically induced naturalism originating in the Quattrocento, yet both technologies are contrasting in their effectiveness at conveying an illusion in which the mechanisms of production are hidden. It is this contrast that is implicit in Barthes' binary juxtaposition between photography and film. In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes states, "Like the real world, the filmic world is sustained by the presumption that, as Husserl says, 'the experience will constantly flow by in the same constitutive style,' but the Photograph breaks the 'constitutive style' (that is its astonishment); it is *without future*."¹⁵ This bringing to life of the image, by providing it with a future unfolding frame by frame, disguises its operational genesis and enables a form of transparent immediacy unavailable to the still photograph. Time unfolding in film defies analysis of the individual moment and offers an illusion approaching that of our own visual and sonic experience.

However, *All This Can Happen* does not conform to these paradigms and instead adopts a range of strategies that engage an attitude of self-reflexivity by deliberately disrupting the perceptual effect of the moving-image illusion. Of particular note is the strategy of "hypermediacy," coined by Bolter and Grusin, which they describe as follows:

If the logic of immediacy leads one either to erase or to render automatic the act of representation, the logic of hypermediacy acknowledges multiple acts of representation and makes them visible. Where immediacy suggests a unified visual space, contemporary hypermediacy offers a

heterogeneous space, in which representation is conceived of not as a window on to the world, but rather as “windowed” itself—with windows that open on to other representations or other media. The logic of hypermediacy multiplies the signs of mediation and in this way tries to reproduce the rich sensorium of human experience.¹⁶

If filmic immediacy can be achieved by an adherence to photorealistic paradigms within a regular temporal progression, then *All This Can Happen's* mode of presentation offers up a very different experience. Formed entirely from archival materials from film's inaugural period using black-and-white footage, *All This Can Happen* introduces two mechanisms within its first ten seconds that render “immediate” viewing impossible. The first mechanism is the application of a time distortion in which a group of film frames are looped repeatedly. Whilst the loop point is not explicit, the result frustrates the fundamental temporal principle of the film, which is replaced by an agitated repetition formed from the limited movement within those frames. The second mechanism is the sudden cessation of movement, whereupon the rolling film alights on a single frame and takes on the form of a static photograph. Again the perceptual effect is of an interruption to the progression of filmic time. Both of these techniques, which reoccur throughout *All This Can Happen*, cause a collapse of any continuous objective realism by refuting the inherent flow of time that passes from one frame to the next. This collapse in turn enables a close engagement with the forms of photographic and textual interplay that occur in the W.G. Sebald's work. Furthermore, the technologies that enable these forms of assemblage are mostly specific to the non-linear editing technologies of the digital age and therefore alien to the footage being manipulated. These mechanisms, along with the use of overtly archival materials distinct from the digital editing, further disable the possibility of filmic immediacy and partially return the images to their points of origin in the past. Indeed, it is mechanisms such as these that have enabled what Streitberger and van Gelder define as “photo-filmic images,”¹⁷

based on the insight that the ontological difference between film and photography, usually claimed by scholars of photography theory and film studies up to the 1990's, no longer holds in the digital era. With the advent of digital technology, the boundaries between the photographic and the filmic image are constantly blurred, both technically [...] and perceptively—in leaving the spectator in doubt of the (photographic or filmic) nature of the image.¹⁸

In *Death 24x a Second - Stillness and the Moving Image*, Laura Mulvey describes the perceptual outcome that results when conditions such as those found in *All This Can Happen* are met:

Of particular interest is the relation between the old and the new, that is, the effect of new technologies on cinema that has now aged. Consciousness of the passing of time affects what is seen on the screen: that sense of a “sea-change” as death overwhelms the photographed subject affects the moving as well as the still image. There is, perhaps, a different kind of voyeurism at stake when the future looks back with greedy fascination at the past and details suddenly lose their marginal status and acquire the aura that passing time bequeaths to the most ordinary objects. The “aesthetics of delay” revolve around the process of stilling the film but also repetition, the return to certain moments or sequences, as well as slowing down the illusion of natural movement. The delayed cinema makes visible its materiality and its aesthetic attributes, but also engages an element of play and of repetition compulsion.¹⁹

Although a fragmentation of film’s temporal dynamic displaces ‘immediate’ viewing and, paradoxically, exposes its time of registration, it is the nature of the audio-visual materials used that firmly locates *All This Can Happen*’s imagery in the past and which enable a particularly effective encounter with Sebald’s embrace of archive and memory. Hinton and Davies’ choice to construct their work entirely from archival footage is arguably the work’s most striking feature, and the specific qualities of these materials will be discussed shortly. However, behind the overt archival nature of these materials lies a deeper integration of archival practices and viewing strategies that significantly informs the structural and metaphorical qualities of this work. Analogous positions featured throughout Sebald’s work are particularly enlightening in exploring the capacities of the archive beyond the initial level of pictorial manifestation. In Sebald, we find a distinctive embrace of the archive that appears continuously in the structural forms of the text, in its themes, and as a mechanism for correlation and arrangement.²⁰ In his book *W. G. Sebald: Image, Archive, Modernity*, J.J. Long delves deeply into Sebald’s explorations of archive and reveals a wide range of strategies that build directly on archival models and modes of presentation. Whilst this survey’s embrace is far reaching, many of its insights have the potential to illuminate similar mechanisms and perceptual strategies in *All This Can Happen*—and by extension within other digital presentation modes.

One such insight is revealed by examining the form of hypermediacy considered by Bolter and Grusin to be most prevalent in contemporary digital media: “the heterogeneous ‘windowed style’ of World Wide Web pages, the desktop interface, multimedia programs, and video games.”²¹ Such systems of organisation are found throughout *All This Can Happen* where the “windows within windows” fragmentation of the screen is a central formal strategy. The arrangement of panes present images in a display of correlation and counterpoint that continuously shifts the screen’s subdivision and geometric form. That this malleability of shape and manner of

fragmentation finds its likeness not in the static arrangement of classical cinema but in the windows-type interface of the computer is clear from Bolter and Grusin's description of the latter:

Unlike a perspective painting or three-dimensional computer graphic, this windowed interface does not attempt to unify the space around any one point of view [...] Windows may change scale quickly and radically, expanding to fill the screen or shrinking to the size of an icon. And unlike the painting or computer graphic, the desktop interface does not erase itself. The multiplicity of windows and the heterogeneity of their contents mean that the user is repeatedly brought back into contact with the interface, which she learns to read just as she would read any hypertext.²²

It is this hypermediated arrangement of the film's materials, in conjunction with their photo-filmic quality, that enables a correlation with Sebald's preoccupation with archive and display and reveals a transformation that Long describes as a "process of decontextualisation and recontextualisation".²³ Christina Kraenzle illustrates how Sebald emphasises "how the photographer is also a kind of collector, searching for and creating meaning in individual decisions regarding selection, framing, and composition, acts that are later mirrored in the amassing, sifting through, and arrangement of individual photographs to be displayed in the photo album."²⁴ The ramifications of such arrangements are of particular note here; the presentation of diverse images (or indeed objects) within a unified space (such as a curio cabinet or photo album) enforces a homogeneity in which context is diminished and a hierarchical neutrality promoted. In turn, this flattening out facilitates a juxtapositioning in which morphological, movement, and abstract values may be foregrounded and new relationships between images and objects revealed. In *W. G. Sebald: Image, Archive, Modernity*, Long examines this process as follows:

The object is first removed from its cultural, historical, or intersubjective context and made to stand, in metonymic fashion, for a larger abstract whole. It is then subjected to a system of classification so that the ordering of the collection itself overrides the specific histories of the object and its conditions of production and use. The collection erases the labour involved in both producing the object and acquiring it for classification and display. In addition, the collection has the capacity to assign new value to objects that fall within its system.²⁵

Though the removal of the contextual features that form *All This Can Happen's* visual elements is in part a by-product of the cinematographic process (their return being at the discretion of the editor),²⁶ the nature of the film's hypermediated approach to presentation suggests a qualitative evaluation predicated on juxtaposition and repetition that is reflective of the archival strategy described above.

However, despite Long's promise of a new encounter between the now decontextualized images or objects, the capacities for such systems of display are not limitless. Where a pathway for correlation is desired, some cipher is required—a key to enabling the potential for interconnection of the collected materials. If *All This Can Happen's* mode of presentation is to be perceived as a cabinet of curiosities, it is one in which movement and body, and ultimately acts of walking, provide the themes for its display. Indeed the cabinet metaphor extends to the film's multiple pictorial spaces that mimic the geometric vocabulary of a museum display; the black horizontal and vertical spaces separating each "image field" on screen resembling the physical components of shelving and dividing walls. However, where the physical presentation is by necessity static, *All This Can Happen* fully avails of the profound malleability of digital video editing. The film continually revises its arrangement of inner windows within the screen's metaframe; each permutation is a new mosaic that enables a diversity of interactions and hierarchies to emerge. A self-reflexive strategy of stilling the moving image and in turn animating the static facilitates a reconsideration of the materials by drawing to the fore their qualities, lingering on relationships, or simply reducing them to archetypes of movement and form. The range of effects is striking and unpredictable, and the ensuing dance of images embraces both the abstract compositional complexities of avant-garde film and the pensive immobility of the photo on screen.²⁷ That this display is not subsumed by these combinations and superimpositions, in and of itself choreographically spectacular, is in part due to the specific qualities of the materials and the interconnectivity enabled by their focus on movement and body. However, a further element shapes *All This Can Happen*; a dramaturgy that imprints upon the visual materials and which in turn enables their complex mode of presentation. Despite the branching divergences and abundance of the archival materials, it is the primacy of Walser's narrated textual through-line that ultimately enables a binding of the film's manifold images into a stable dramaturgy. The organisational logic of the text forces a reconsideration of the visual materials' autonomy and the configuration of a new matrix of connections that disrupts the conventional audio-visual relationship. As previously mentioned, the significance of such interaction between modalities is explored throughout Sebald's work and it is one of Sebald scholarship's central themes. In Sebald, there is a tension between image and text that similarly results in an ambiguous hierarchy that destabilises the usually assumed authority of the photographic archival materials. Deane Blackler examines this as follows:

Although the photographs appear at first to document and illustrate the texts in a conventional fashion, they do so in an artful and playful manner, subverting the reader's habitual expectations of their relationship with the texts as passively illustrative or documentary. They are made to appear to document the texts' "authenticity," inserted by the narrator for his own illustrative or documentary purposes, but I argue that in fact they make

manifest the fictional game that the author, as distinct from the narrator, is playing with the reader [...] The images, as discursive tools or as the instantiations of memory which Sebald or the “writer” narrator position them to be, are inflected by the fictional context in which they are deployed.²⁸

Long provides a further insight into Sebald’s relationship to text and image that is particularly informative in this filmic context:

Memory is frequently coupled with the relation between the verbal and the visual. One insight that crops up repeatedly in interviews with the author is that the photograph demands narrativization, making what Sebald terms an “appeal” to the viewer to provide the image with a narrative context, and thereby to rescue it from its nomadic existence.²⁹

Sebald’s manner of blending fact and fiction is reflected throughout Hinton and Davies’ film. Indeed, although the density of interactions between text and image are predictably intensified in the cinematic medium, the text’s capacity to stabilize the archival materials is arguably retained. That is not to suggest that the connections between images we see in *All This Can Happen* are completely smoothed out by the narration we hear but rather that a facilitation of radical and indeed more turbulent organizing structures is enabled by the text’s grounding effect. However this facilitation is somewhat complicated by the nature and quality of the archival materials themselves which, by exhibiting all the hallmarks of their time of making, draw attention to their diverse origins. Outside of the directors’ developmental influence, artefacts such as film grain and poor resolution, as well as the black-and-white images, direct attention toward the film material’s archival origins. Indeed, the allure and diversity of these artefacts may hinder the text’s stabilizing capacity and challenge the viewer to bracket these out in favour of the text’s through-line. Like other artworks which construct meaning via the rearrangement of archival materials, such as Gerhard Richter’s *Atlas*³⁰ or Aby Warburg’s *Mnemosyne Atlas*,³¹ an understanding must be reached: an embrace of the archival conditions that requires a “seeing-through” of the artefact and an active participation in the generation of the works’ dramaturgical potential. In *All This Can Happen*, when that reduction is successful, the boundary between the fictive and the authentic may be obscured, to be replaced by an operational reversal. This new hierarchy, in which the fictional layer of the text assumes the role of imagined narrative truth, must then relegate the archival visual layer into a supporting role. With some notable exceptions, such as the appearance of iconic images by Étienne-Jules Marey in *All This Can Happen*, the image can then simultaneously hold its own indexicality whilst shrugging off its contextuality in favour of Walser’s *The Walk*.

The degree to which *All This Can Happen* promotes such viewing strategies and highlights the archival and temporal nature of the images may be further deduced by attending to the implementation and ramifications of the sound layer, which interfuses the textual and visual layers and which particularly characterizes *All This Can Happen's* distinct relationship to archiving as a form of arts practice. With the exception of the seven pieces of incidental music, and unlike the archival footage and Walser's source text, this layer originates from within the film's production environment and is the only material element of the film formed entirely for the purposes of this work. Whilst the visual and textual components are reliant on previously available materials, the unique authorial imprint available within the sound layer enables a particular insight into the work's archival and communicative qualities.

Of course, in many respects the sound layer that has already received our attention is the narration of Walser's text, voiced by actor John Heffernan. Film-sound theorist Chion has given particular attention to the nature of this form of voice-over narration and its ramifications on the viewed image.³² His concept of the "Acousmètre" (an unseen but heard 'acousmatic being')³³ is useful in articulating the unique qualities that emerge when a bodiless voice is brought into play. In his book *The Voice in Cinema*, he presents a range of possible scenarios in which this acousmètre may be positioned with respect to the filmic space; for instance though the voice may not be physically represented on-screen, it may nonetheless coexist within the diegetic reality of a film, such as in *The Wizard of Oz*.³⁴ Alternatively, the acousmètre may take on the function of an "I-voice" in which specific norms of sonic delivery (a sound without any variation in spatial quality and lacking in reverb) results in a bodiless voice that resonates "in us as if it were our own voice, like a voice in the first person" and that "can't be inscribed in a concrete identifiable space."³⁵ These are qualities that mark *All This Can Happen's* narration. Additionally, as the nature of the archival materials results in a diffuse diegetic reality, no specific location dominates; as such, the acousmètre is clearly that of the displaced I-voice, residing in a place and time outside that portrayed by the many images. Chion's thoughts on how such a voice impacts what is viewed are of particular interest in their potential to be positioned as events that have unfolded in the past:

The character's voice separates from the body, and returns as an acousmètre to haunt the past-tense images conjured by its words. The voice speaks from a point where time is suspended.

The French term for the word "voiceover" is "voix-off" [...] and it designates any acousmatic or bodiless voices in a film that tell stories, provide commentary, or evoke the past. *Bodiless* can mean placed outside a body temporarily, detached from a body that is no longer seen, and set into orbit in the peripheral acousmatic field. These voices know all, remember all, but

quickly find themselves submerged by the visible and audible past they have called up—that is, in flashback.³⁶

If Heffernan's reading of *The Walk* enables a narrativization of the archival imagery that forms *All This Can Happen*, it simultaneously highlights their photographic pastness. We are drawn to the narration of Walser's text as emanating from the now, calling up memories and images that appear in a visualized curio cabinet. However, as Chion suggests, the narration does not wholly dictate the reception of these images, nor is it the only component of the sound responsible for how the film's temporal layers are perceived. An additional sonic contribution is that of Chu-Li Shewring's "sound-design," which provides particularly valuable insights, especially given the inherently silent nature of the archival sources used in *All This Can Happen*.

The practice of sound-design within cinema usually involves the generation of an audio layer that supports and enhances a film's on-screen activities; these are expected to have a directly corresponding sonic component, and the sound designer is tasked with creating these in accordance with the work's aesthetic goals. Shewring's deviation from such practices may be considered from two perspectives—her approach to synchronisation and her attentiveness to the non-representational specificity of the filmic materials. Whilst Shewring's sound design does not shirk from supporting the realities represented on-screen, sounds and images drift in and out of synchronisation rather than conforming to the tightly knit relationships typical of the sound film. Indeed the very concept of diegetic sound is strained in the context of this work's dense assembly of archival images. As a result, where synchronisation between sound and image does occur, there is always the suspicion that these sonic events are not truly diegetic. In these instances, such as during the "roguishly graceful path" section,³⁷ the moments when sound underpins the passing of trains,³⁸ or the actions of a shoe-shiner,³⁹ the resulting audio-visual union has a theatrical quality, and the assertion that their interactions may be truthful is seldom made. Film theorist and former Sebald student Donnelly describes this sound-image relationship as "plesiochronous" designating it as "a rough, general synchronization that is not a proper matching of unified in-synch sound and image but fits a general soundtrack to particular images."⁴⁰ He further notes that "documentary films, a close relative of newsreels, have dealt with plesiochronous relationships between sound and image by nature of their production background as much as their repertoire of accepted aesthetic strategies."⁴¹

However, though this approach to sound design suggests a prioritization of the film's archival qualities, it is the manner in which Shewring places emphasis on two additional aspects—the specificity of the film's materials and its manner of construction—that ultimately secures this prioritization and establishes a distancing from the film's diegetic activities. In countering filmic immediacy, both aspects diminish what Christiane Voss describes as "the desire for and expectation of a special

kind of illusion formation in the cinema."⁴² As previously indicated, there is an inherent destabilization of the diegesis due to the film's reliance on the assemblage of materials from a wide variety of sources. It is impossible to establish continuity when the materials themselves invariably undermine its possibility. Similarly, as archival documents from early cinema and photography, the film's materials, by signalling their ontological status as non-fiction and apparently authentic documentation, restrict immediacy further. In part this is due to the black-and-white images that form the majority of the shots. As Richard Misek states in *Chromatic Cinema* (2010): "Even if it does not overtly mimic old documentary footage, [a] black-and-white still evokes past representations, implying that the image we see is something a camera once saw. Frame-by-frame, black-and-white declares: 'This happened.'"⁴³ However, even where color is included, the images in *All This Can Happen* exhibit the artefacts of early cinema; the constrained light sensitivity of the film stock, signs of decay, and accretion of hair and dust imparting a patina that unequivocally declares this condition of pastness. The impact of Shewring's sound design in this context lies in its decided embrace of these very errors and in so doing, by highlighting the markings that result from storage and viewing, it engages directly with features of the archive unexamined by Sebald.

First off, it should be noted that whilst noise and crackle sounds are characteristic features of early sound-film, the source footage in *All This Can Happen* is invariably silent and only rarely does footage with an accompanying sound channel make an appearance (e.g. the boys' whistling).⁴⁴ Therefore, the many sounds that appear to mimic the hiss and crackle artefacts of early sound-film must be considered as deliberate inclusions rather than unavoidable features. There are two possible objectives that such sound design suggests. The first stems from a simple desire to infuse any imagery with a sense of authenticity by ensuring that the archival footage is accompanied by sound artefacts that mimic those of early cinema and audio recording. This is a familiar strategy in film-sound, and may be considered alongside a general romanticization of analogue-era technologies as evidenced by the practice of adding vinyl record sounds onto digital music recordings (artificial errors). Importantly, this approach assumes that such sounds will be considered unconsciously, relegated into the background as a texture that does not require particular attention. Sounds listened to in this passive way may function to provide context (the background hum of a city) or enable a general qualitative sensibility toward those elements which *do* contend for our attention, in this instance providing a sense of the medium's fragility and age.⁴⁵ When sound is used in this way, its components are not presented as imparting specific meaning; the city's soundscape does not consist of specific cars or sirens but consists instead of a collective of such sounds that only together provide the necessary descriptive sonic backdrop. Similarly, the inherent noises of the gramophone medium are perceived not as individual rumbles and clicks but instead as a continuous stream of sounds that collectively reveal the fragile nature of their

medium. However, a very different perceptual and aesthetic outcome occurs when the sound designer decisively draws our attention to the specific qualities of individual sounds that might normally be considered part of the sonic backdrop. In this alternative sound design strategy, the objective in foregrounding such sounds introduces the possibility of their being considered as deliberate compositional elements. Those clicks and rumbles become part of a musical language, their rhythms and repetitions building tension or providing momentum. To suggest that this second objective may be at play in the film's sonic embrace of media "failures" would imply a more radical aesthetic embrace of the artefact in *All This Can Happen*. One may identify that this is indeed the case by attending to the specific interactions that occur between the visual artefacts of filmic decay and the sound design. Here, deliberate and precise sounds that mimic these artefacts synchronously respond to similar on-screen failures and, rather than providing a corresponding homogenous sonic counterpoint, foreground their contribution through radically alternating sonic textures that do not promote a passive listening approach. In short: the sound design becomes a foregrounded feature akin to that of music and language, and in so doing, it highlights the conditions of media decay and media failure as one of the film's primary thematic concerns.

In 2000, the *Computer Music Journal* published an article by composer Kim Cascone titled "The Aesthetics of Failure" that resonated with an emerging embrace of the digital artefact's potential.⁴⁶ This trend was not limited to music but was equally evident within the visual arts. Cascone's insights proved to be the primary stimulus for a field of practice and enquiry focussed on the digital glitch and, by extension, its art historical precedents. In "Aesthetics of the Error: Media Art, the Machine, the Unforeseen, and the Errant," Tim Barker expresses how "the potential for error marks the potential for the new and the unforeseen [...] an error in itself may be creative. An error may be utilized. It may be sought out and used to create the unforeseen within traditional systems, such as routine computer use, musical compositions, or visual art practice."⁴⁷ In *All This Can Happen*, dust, scratches, and film-noise unite the displays of human movement, a through-line of textures and patterns that, when rendered sonically, perform their own dance within and between the progression of images. And whilst the film's position within this aesthetic movement is in itself significant, this embrace of the artefact further serves to integrate by-products of the archival process as central aesthetic features. With this expressive potential privileged, the fragility of the archive is brought into focus; decay declares its pastness. In the above article, Barker further describes a work by Yann Le Guennec titled *Le Catalogue*, which resonates strongly with *All This Can Happen*:

This Internet-based work allows public access to a catalogue of images and installations created between 1990 and 1996. Every time a page is accessed from the archive, an intended error is activated in the form of an intersecting horizontal and vertical line, generated at random points over

the image. The more that the page is viewed, the greater its deterioration by the obscuring intersecting lines and the closer the image comes to abstraction. As Eduardo Navas states, “the archive is similar to analogue vinyl records losing their fidelity and being slightly deteriorated every time the needle passes through the groove.” In Le Guennec’s catalogue the act of accessing and consulting the information of the archive in essence causes an internal error to the information. This is an error that is inbuilt; it is an error that we cause by the act of looking at or accessing any of the images.⁴⁸

Within Sebald’s works and the film *All This Can Happen*, the role of the archive, as model and material, permeates throughout. For both, the interplay between text and image is a central narrative mechanism, and whilst the operational systems of book and film are distinct, there is little doubt that kindred philosophies inform their formative perceptual assumptions. However, the nature of Sebald’s authorship of both text and (in many instances) the images, enables a degree of integration unavailable in *All This Can Happen*. Walser’s *The Walk*, albeit adapted and narrated, retains its original design as a monomodal text when integrated into the filmic context. What is of interest is the degree to which that design is agitated or bolstered by this new context. As mentioned at this article’s outset, *The Walk* is a text fixed upon the present moment; each paragraph’s achievement is to render the preceding one inconsequential, whereupon it is in turn replaced by yet another. Yet its new filmic context initially appears to counter this temporal inclination by means of imagery and presentation methods that do not promote an immediate viewing that is similarly erasive. Instead, hypermediacy and the foregrounding of artefacts supplement the inherent signs of the archival images to create a visual world that repeatedly declares “I was” (distinct from Walser’s “I am”). If Sebald accommodates the product of such media effects within a similarly oriented narrative, then Hinton and Davies’ integration must either resign itself to a functional dissonance (Walser’s textual immediacy versus the film’s photographic hypermediacy) or endeavour to find a harmonizing strategy between these contrasting elements. Of course one might simply claim that the thematic bond between text and film adequately reconciles these temporal orientations; that the archival imagery’s faithful rendering of Walser’s text suppresses any impression of disparity. Yet this assumption presents the text as a dominant modality and similarly assumes a preference for an integration of text, image, and sound that is functionally uniform. Perhaps this is not the case. Defiant of immersive mechanisms, the film’s favouring of hypermediacy, overt employment of archival materials, and its foregrounding of artefact may promote a variable arrangement directed by the viewer in which Walser’s text does not necessarily monopolise. Whilst the interplay between text, image, and sound is compelling, it is not constrained to a single viewing strategy. Indeed, the ephemerality of *The Walk*’s unfolding subjects, its curious dramatic indeterminacy, facilitates—indeed promotes—an ebb and flow of

attention in which the text is brought in and out of focus. The sound layer is similarly receptive to such open viewing strategies; and by privileging in turn the textual, archival, and qualitative layers, it marks out the diversity of reading modes available throughout the film. In this way, *All This Can Happen* subverts dramatic expectations, inverting the notion of textual adaptation and replacing it with a dynamic landscape of pathways in which fiction, archive, and medium interweave, each beckoning for our attention.

Biography

Jürgen Simpson is director of the Digital Media and Arts Research Centre at University of Limerick and the co-curator of *Light Moves Festival of Screendance*. His work spans the areas of dance, electronic music, film, opera, and installation art. In the area of dance, collaborators include choreographers John Scott and Shobana Jeyasingh, composer Michael Nyman, and seven screendance works with director Mary Wycherley. *Metamorphosis*, with director Clare Langan, received the principal award at the 2007 Oberhausen Film Festival. Operatic works include *Air India: Redacted*, premiered in Vancouver in 2015, and *Thwaite*, which received the Genesis Opera Project's top award in 2003. Recent writing includes a chapter in the *Oxford Screendance Handbook*.

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Notes

¹ Davies and Hinton, "All This Can Happen"

² Galchen, "From the Pencil Zone: Robert Walser's Masterworklets," and Walser, *Der Spaziergang*, 3.

³ Benjamin, 351.

⁴ Ibid., trans. Andrea Scrima. "The Walk by Robert Walser: Reviewed by Andrea Scrima." Posted 23 July 2012. <http://therumpus.net/2012/07/the-walk-by-robert-walser/>

⁵ Coetzee, "Heir of a Dark History."

⁶ Sontag, "A Mind in Mourning."

⁷ Sebald, *Logis in Einem Landhaus*.

⁸ de Duve, 52.

⁹ Sontag, *On Photography*. 70.

¹⁰ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*.

¹¹ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*.

¹² Barthes, *Camera Lucida and Mulvey, Death 24x a Second*. 66.

¹³ Bolter and Grusin, 23.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁵ Barthes, 89, 90.

¹⁶ Bolter and Grusin, 33.

¹⁷ Streitberger and van Gelder, 51.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁹ Mulvey, 191.

²⁰ Long, 19, 35.

²¹ Bolter and Grusin, 31.

²² *Ibid.*, 33.

²³ Long, 28.

²⁴ Kraenzle, 130.

²⁵ Kraenzle, 130.

²⁶ Bazin, "Death Every Afternoon," 27-31.

²⁷ de Duve, "Time Exposure and Snapshot: The Photograph as Paradox."

²⁸ Blackler, 138.

²⁹ Long, 47.

³⁰ "Gerhard Richter's *Atlas* is one of several structurally similar yet rather different projects undertaken by a number of European artists from the early to mid 1960s whose formal procedures of accumulating found or intentionally produced photographs in more or less regular grid formations (one could think of the forty-year-long collection of typologies of industrial architect Bernhard and Hilla Becher begun in 1958, or the work of Christian Boltanski begun in the late 1960s) have remained strangely enigmatic." (Buchloh, "Gerhard Richter's 'Atlas,'" 117)

³¹ "Begun in 1924 and left unfinished at the time of his death in 1929, the Mnemosyne Atlas is Aby Warburg's attempt to map the 'afterlife of antiquity,' or how images of great symbolic, intellectual, and emotional power emerge in Western antiquity and then reappear and are reanimated in the art and cosmology of later times and places, from Alexandrian Greece to Weimar Germany [...] In its 'last version,' the Mnemosyne Atlas consisted of sixty-three panels (Tafeln). Using wooden boards, measuring approximately 150 x 200 cm and covered with black cloth, Warburg arranged and rearranged, in a lengthy combinatory process of addition and subtraction, black and white photographs of art-historical and cosmographical images. Here and there he also included photographs of maps, manuscript pages, and contemporary images drawn from newspapers and magazines. The individual panels, in turn, were then numbered and ordered to create still larger thematic sequences." (Johnson, "About the Mnemosyne Atlas.")

³² Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*.

³³ "The French term is a neologism made from 'être acousmatique,' or acousmatic being." (Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, 49). *Acousmatic* refers to a sound that is heard but cannot be seen.

³⁴ Fleming, *The Wizard of Oz*.

³⁵ Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, 51.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 49.

³⁷ *All This Can Happen*, 17:25 – 18:49.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 07:17 – 07:25.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 38:10 – 38:38.

⁴⁰ Donnelly, 182.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 182.

⁴² Voss, 138.

⁴³ Misek, 92.

⁴⁴ *All This Can Happen.*, 41:40 – 42:08.

⁴⁵ Kane, 27 and Demers, 148.

⁴⁶ Cascone, "The Aesthetics of Failure."

⁴⁷ Barker, 56.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 53.

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Breaths, Falls, and Eddies in *All This Can Happen*: A Dialogue

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Abstract

Dancefilm muddles the paradigms that would position film as an order of production controlling all cinematic motion (including camera movement, film speed, editing etc.), and dance as motion, liberated and encompassing any-movement-whatever. David Hinton and Siobhan Davies' experimental film, *All This Can Happen* (2013), draws text, image, and edit together via a poetics that is of the order of the choreographic. In a dialogue that echoes the collaborative spirit of the film, Erin Brannigan and Cleo Mees explore the corporeal and choreographic sensibilities at work in *All This Can Happen*, recognizing dynamics of breath and weight in various aspects of the film's composition, including the movements of the bodies on screen, the qualities of the edit, and the text of Robert Walser's original novella (on which the film is based). In exploring these corporeal-cinematic qualities, the authors work across and soften the dance-film binary described above.

Keywords: corporeality, cinema, falling, breath, choreography

This article was devised as a to-and-fro dialogue between the two authors in the spirit of the interdisciplinary, artistic dialogue between David Hinton and Siobhan Davies.¹ Thus, the direction the article would take could not be anticipated and has resulted in a text that reveals our shared interest in experimental composition, as well as engages with film's content, including the archival footage and Walser's text.² The experiment owes something, in this respect, both to what we describe as the "unanchored" nature of Walser's text and the choreographic experiment undertaken by Hinton and Davies, the latter of which undoes any binary concepts of dance and film that persist in practice and theory. These are the parameters of our contribution to the rich field of discourse now surrounding the film.

The Choreographer and the Filmmaker

ERIN: Described as "a flickering dance of intriguing imagery," *All This Can Happen* is the product of a collaboration between a filmmaker and a choreographer.³ Departing from the traditional relationship in such interdisciplinary encounters between content (the choreographic) and form (the filmic), Davies' contribution is not primarily evident

in the diegetic world; there are no sequences of dancers performing her choreography as in some of her past dancefilms. Instead, it is woven throughout every aspect of the film, from the choice of archival clips to their composition on screen. Equally, Hinton's contribution is not limited to the adaptation of choreographic material for the screen (as in his work with Lloyd Newson, for example)⁴; his deep and rich history in collaborative dancefilm productions is apparent in a project that turns archival film into a cine-dance.

While this is clearly a film with filmic characteristics, a more challenging point to argue is how the film evidences the choreographic work *undertaken in process*. How do the disciplinary skills of dance figure amongst the strategies, techniques, and paradigms of the cinema? This was a question underlying *Dancefilm*⁵, and such questions have returned more recently in a slightly different form in debates around the new collaborations between choreography and the gallery. In these discussions, what seems to be new is the idea that all the arts can "do" choreography, and this would be true if the definition is as broad as French curator Alexandra Baudelot's— "dance is first and foremost a question of the body, languages, and frames."⁶

Rather than proffering definitions of *dance* and *choreography*, can we think about how key choreographic terms and strategies such as weight, breath, tone, and flow are apparent in the film's composition?⁷ Together with tension, force, rhythm, texture, and energy, these terms are directly related to the physiological operations of the body and constitute discipline-specific variables for dance. How is *dance*—the discipline with the most advanced understanding of the role of the body, its medium in both the production and reception of a work of art—evidenced in *All This Can Happen (ATCH)* in its evocation and expansion of the thinking, writing, and walking that are at the heart of the film?

CLEO: An additional question that presents itself here is this: *which dance, or whose dance, we are examining?* Perhaps there are multiple dances at work in the film, if we consider it not only as a digital audiovisual object, but as an entity with various life stages and dimensions of production and reception. To name some of the dances that might be at play in the film we have, first, the dancing-thinking involved in assembling it, a process of selecting and then "choreographing" video material in the editing suite which quite possibly required that Hinton and Davies empathize kinesthetically with the movement evolving before them on their computer screens.⁸ There is also the dance that happens when viewing the film as an audience member, an experience that again involves empathizing with the movement on screen and simulating that movement in the body, even if only on a barely perceptible neurological level. Finally, there is the dancing surface of the video itself—digital, screen-bound, two-dimensional—as well as the dance of the film's richly textured soundtrack.

Choreographer William Forsythe writes that “a choreographic object is not a substitute for a body”—in other words, that the “choreographic object” is not synonymous with the human body.⁹ In his essay, Forsythe cracks open the possibility of transferring “choreographic thought” beyond the body, to manifest “in another durable, intelligible state,” such as his installations, or in sculpture or film.¹⁰ This is not to say that such objects completely jettison corporeal qualities; for instance, his installations transfer elements such as balance, weight, buoyancy, and tension into insentient materials such as metal, rope, and plastic. In the same way, choreographic terms which engage the dancing body, such as those you list—weight, breath, tone, energy—apply readily to film. Film scholar Yvette Biro, for example, refers to breath when describing the rhythmic contours of narrative films over time.¹¹ She writes of inhalation and exhalation when tracing the movement between constancy and upheaval, between tension and release, in the films she analyses. I would say that we can treat this film as a body of sorts, a body that breathes and falls, and is subject to gravity.

ERIN: So in considering *ATCH* as a choreographic object, this becomes our inquiry; at the heart of the choreographic is the body-mind, so where is this evidenced in the film? Then following this is the question: what corporeal, or dance-based knowledges are evident in the film’s form? And how can we account for its composition as a choreography? So we are sliding around between process speculation, compositional analysis, and spectator theory. Asking how the film mobilizes a choreographic sensibility emphasizes how the *filmic performance*—in its expanded definition—becomes, what philosopher Jean-François Lyotard calls, a “somatography.”¹² Film theorist Laleen Jayamanne writes,

In film the lighting, editing, camera distance and movement are equally potent “performers,” so that one could talk of filmic performance as including all these technical elements. These elements can transform the phenomenal body to such an extent that one could say that the body that cinema materializes did not exist prior to the invention of film.¹³

Perhaps this is what you categorize as the 3rd dance in the film—the dance of the surface of the video.

So the body of the filmic performance is constituted through a multiplicity of technical and human elements, something demonstrated again and again in experimental dancefilms. For Lyotard, the work of art and the viewer encounter each other where the affective force of the creative gesture impacts the body of the spectator, preceding and existing independently of thoughts, actions, and feelings.¹⁴ In the case of experimental film, he refers to the site where this encounter takes place as “a corporeal *mise en scène*”—*somatography*. *Mise en scène* is defined by Lyotard as “to stage,” and what is being staged is “on and for bodies, considered as multi-sensory

personalities.”¹⁵ In the corporeal *mise en scène*, affect is not *there*, pre-existing in the work, nor *here* as a familiar end result, a recognizable feeling. It is in pre-cognized *effects* that we can locate *affects*, and those effects are physical and in the domain of somatic intelligence, where bodily knowledge demands attention but where discourse fails. Recognizing and understanding the contributions of corporeality as an alternative source of knowledge is a major contribution of dance to the humanities, and fields like cinema studies are catching up.¹⁶

Reading Michael Taussig (on Benjamin on Duchamp), Vivienne Sobchack, Jennifer Barker, and Steven Shaviro on the tactility of vision, it seems clear that in a discussion of dancefilm and spectatorship, the plurisensoriality of dance must weigh in. This aspect of dance is well articulated by French kinesiologist and movement researcher Hubert Godard:

For a dancer, [plurisensoriality] is fundamental; dancers must be able to reproduce a movement they have seen, match it with a musical sound, and modulate their motor function accordingly [...] the work carried out in contemporary dance aims to do away with this compartmentalization [of the senses] which is caused by the catastrophe of language, by history.¹⁷

If choreography engages a plurisensorial mode of composing, executing, and viewing—perhaps before or beside structured thought and named feelings—let this guide our search for the choreographic in *ATCH*—specifically in the details of the filmic performance.

But before doing so, I’d like to add to the categories of dances in *ATCH* that you have outlined—the dance of composition, the dance of spectatorship, and the dance of the filmic performance—the dance of Walser’s text. As a part of the soundtrack, it dominates in the way only narrative texts can, appearing to order all of the heterogeneous elements at play.¹⁸ However, the text itself could be considered a form of writing-dancing due to the weight given to descriptions of his walking style (“my steps were measured and calm”, “a delicate, prudent walk... a subtle, circular stroll”) and of the gestures of himself and others (“a juvenile, foolish shout of joy burst from my throat,” “bold, elegant, courteous waving”), but also the description of his own, overarching movement from city to countryside and back again which shapes the text both narratively and emotionally.¹⁹ The *tone* of the text is also dancerly; that the mood of the protagonist is so aligned with the surrounding environment speaks of a corporeal sensitivity to his immediate physical surroundings, described as it is experienced in a self-aware present. This aligns with the characteristic of a dancer’s plurisensorial awareness of their own movement in space-time.²⁰

CLEO: Some terms for me that may prove rich in relation to this film... To *stage*: to see this film as the “staging” of an original text, almost like the staging of an opera—an assembly of forces that create an “effect of reality”²¹ which has the power to affect

viewers, bodily. *Somatography*: the inscription of a written text onto bodies; the raising up of that text into verticality and ephemerality.

Breath

CLEO: The film opens with bated breath—an unsteady rumble in its gut (and in mine), the distinct absence of speech. Monochrome footage: a man in a loincloth writhes stiffly on the floor, unable to lift himself to standing; another lies on a bed, his head and neck manipulated in all directions at impossible speed by a pair of hands belonging to someone at his bedside. Occasionally he looks straight at us in freeze frame. A brooding quiet hangs over us, like a bank of dark storm clouds some ways away. What waits to bear down upon us?

All this is released suddenly with the ripping-tinkling of louvres pulled up, flooding the frame with morning light. The sounds of life in a busy street, the view of the street from a second-story window. Speech. The writer converses with us, describes his desire to take a walk, to leave his room of phantoms behind for a while. We plunge into the morning with him, now breathing easier in the acute relief of walking, and of mornings.

Breath is held and released in this way at several points throughout the film: anticipation, tension, and—after this holding in—an exhalation. A release back into forward movement and easier breathing.

Progressions like these—of bated breath followed by exhalation—seem to roll us over from one chapter of the walk into the next. Each exhalation may also signify a return to an equilibrium of sorts. As the writer himself observes towards the end of the film, he swings regularly in and out of equilibrium, in and out of the forward trajectory of walking, and in and out of relative emotional contentment:

Mysterious and secretly there prowl at the walker's heels all kinds of beautiful subtle walker's thoughts, such as make him stand in his tracks and listen. He will again and again be confused and startled by curious impressions and bewitchings of spirit power. He has the feeling that he must sink all of a sudden into the earth, or that before his dazzled eyes an abyss has opened. Earth and heaven suddenly stream together and collide into a flashing, shimmering, obscure nebular imagery; chaos begins, and the orders vanish. Convulsed, he laboriously tries to retain his normal state of mind; he succeeds, and he walks on, full of confidence.²²

Weight: Eddies and Falling

CLEO: This loss and recovery of equilibrium—the opening of an abyss, the writer's effort to retain a "normal state of mind," and the eventual recovery—recurs throughout the film. I wonder if we could even say it characterizes the rhythmic

contour of the film: walking, falling, recovery; walking, falling, recovery.²³ The fall is seductive, as falling so often is—the writer is pulled out of his forward trajectory by some interruption and spirals deliciously into eddies of mental meandering, social interaction, and emotional intensity.

I draw the term “eddy” from my experience as a dancer participating in the “Painted Space Impro Exchange,” an improvisation research laboratory held in Sydney in 2012. At one point in this workshop, facilitators Tess de Quincey and Martin del Amo set participants the task of walking in straight lines exclusively for a set time, and then of walking in curves exclusively for a set time. Walking in curves, many of us found that it was easy and indeed very tempting to fall into circular, spiraling walking patterns that had us turning repetitive circles around ourselves. This coiled walking felt to my body like a gentle vortex, a constant falling inwards while only just managing to keep myself upright. There was a sense of risk, that I might begin to spiral so steeply that I lost my balance altogether. At one point someone described these spirals as “eddies,” and the term stuck for me, at least. Several of us reflected that circling in these small whirlpools, or eddies, was pleasurable, and that it took effort to move on from an eddy, to push our bodies out of falling and into a less steeply curved path by which we could travel across the room again.

My sense in watching this film is that the writer, at every new meeting or stimulus, “swerves” from his forward path into a curve, and enters an eddy.²⁴ Leaning into the spiral-like pull of his situations, he reaches surprising emotional highs and lows in which passionate descriptors of his feelings are heaped one atop the other, to a circling effect. For example, his nostalgic musings about his childhood, when he sometimes received a “well-deserved thrashing,”²⁵ lead him headlong into the declaration that men who cut down their beautiful nut trees deserve to be thrashed, and this in turn leads him to mourn the exchange of these beautiful trees for “despicable, wicked, foolish, money.”²⁶ The heaping up of these descriptors—*despicable, wicked, foolish*—suggests an eddying, a mesmeric circling around the same thought or feeling.

A reading of Walser’s original novella suggests that these curves are made steeper by the filmmakers’ editing of the written text. The narration in the film is an abridged version of the original, which is longer and makes its way towards emotional climaxes at a more gradual pace. As sections of the original text are edited out of the voice-over narration, the writer’s emotional inclines become steeper and more jagged, his ascents into passion more dramatic, and each climax more surprising for its quick arrival.

Some of these eddies are subtle and not overly disruptive, for example the writer’s observations on speed early in the film, which gently carry him into a reflection on his own love for slowness. “In fact, I love repose, and all that reposes,” he muses, “I love

thrift and moderation and am, in my inmost self, in God's name unfriendly towards any agitation and haste."²⁷ This eddy in the writer's thinking occurs as he continues to walk and does not throw his emotional equilibrium as much as other encounters do. A more disruptive encounter is the writer's lunch date at the home of his friend, Frau Aebi. Her strangely devoted gaze, combined with her insistence that he let her cut him another slice of meat, unsettle the writer and set into motion a visceral, erotic, surrealist meltdown. We enter into a visual world of dripping and squirting, of suggestively unfolding flowers, of gaping mouths and mouth-like rings of mold growing on old meat, of crackling insects and sprouts and roots. "Terrible woman!" the writer cries out, "What do you want with me?" He is released from this nightmarish vortex at once, when Frau Aebi laughs and confesses that she had merely "permitted herself a joke."²⁸ On screen, a woman with a genuine face laughs and pats a man on the back, daylight filtering in from left of frame. We are back in the real world, back on solid ground. Exhale.

Trains of thought like the writer's might be common in the wandering minds of walkers. But I wonder if some sort of falling, some *succumbing to an idea or a feeling* to follow it through to its ultimate conclusion, must take place to bring us to emotional intensities of this degree.²⁹

ERIN: And through the creative process we are seeing this falling in a dual mode here; this pattern in the thinking/writing alongside the eddying or circling that the images represent. Hinton has described how the artists were hoping to both mimic a stream of consciousness that is inherent in the random occurrences that unfold for the writer, and also give a sense of the multiple layers of information occurring at any given moment for a subject moving through the world.³⁰ The comprehensiveness of the content—covering music, money, fashion, food, politics, sex, and love—is proliferated yet again through images that extend, deepen, and derail stable thematics. Tomzack: storm, dust, rubble, smoke, owls, fire. Death: a sleeping girl, a butterfly, a tombstone, a pale neck and head falling back, a bird. Plurality at the level of the visual storytelling matches the highly attuned subjectivity of the dancer who acts as a sensitive mediator between perceptions and actions, stimuli and choices, which happen not in linear progressions but overlapping, corresponding, clashing, and collapsing. A version of this passage from *The Walk* is set against an extended montage of male folk dancers, the most explicit occurrence of dancing in the film:

Earlier walks came before my eyes. But the wonderful image of the present swiftly became a feeling which overpowered all others. All notion of the future paled and the past dissolved. In the glowing present, I myself glowed. From every direction and distance, all things great and good emerged brightly with marvelous, uplifting gestures. In the midst of this beautiful place, I thought of nothing but this place itself; all other thoughts

sank away [...] I fell away from the surface, down into the depths, which I recognized then to be all that was good.³¹

This condition of falling—into a series of events, an emotional eddy, a montage of images constituting an affective field—is set up in the film’s introduction through footage aptly described by Brian Bahouth as “wrenching.”³² Sourced from the Wellcome Institute, this footage of “shell-shocked” WW1 returned soldiers is set against Jules Marey’s pre-cinematic, sequential images of functional and exemplary movement which “drops in” throughout the film. The returned soldiers are afflicted with abnormal muscular tensions that prohibit efficient locomotive movement, often resulting in the men falling out of their attempt to walk, caught by others off camera or ending on the ground. This footage is part of a series of images in the film of human suffering: a child is beaten with a stick as he lies curled up on the floor, a white neck is dangerously exposed against a black background as the head lolls back and out of frame. Other things fall in the film—trees, paper, water—and this series of images creates a “negative” set juxtaposed against images of jumping that are joyful—children playing leapfrog, skipping, and grown men inexplicably flying up above a crowd of happy soldiers closer to the camera. These latter images belong with the series of tiny birds flying out of hands, gently released by the fat fingers of working men.

As you state, falling also evokes pleasure and the standard mode of the narrative is to be at one extreme or the other. For dancers working at the turn-of-the-twentieth-century, a new, pleasurable and creative relationship with gravity, weight, and the ground opened up new dimensions for the body moving through space and time. The vertical orientation of classical ballet was challenged by the terrestrial choreographies of Doris Humphrey, Martha Graham, and Mary Wigman. So falling, and the associated muscular release, is at the heart of what French dance theorist Laurence Louppe calls “the birth of contemporary dance” at the beginning of the 20th century.³³ The release of muscular tension and a less domineering partnership with gravity produced dance images of bodies falling through space and engaging with floor work. Again I turn to Godard, who describes the subversion of our foundational, efficient muscular habits that this new dance form undertook:

The essential task of the tonic muscles is to inhibit falling [...] In order to make a movement these muscles have to release. And it’s in this release that the poetic quality of the movement is generated [...] Why are we moved when someone dances, when they put so much at stake in terms of their stability [...]? Because these activities refer to the history that is wholly inscribed in our bodies, in the very muscles that hold us upright.³⁴

The filmic form of *All This Can Happen* follows the risks of extremes that are experienced by a writer whose equilibrium lacks an anchor. Consequently, the

choreographic organization of images and footage extends beyond commentary to succumb to a poetics that mimics the experience of falling beyond what is safe, efficient, and stable.

CLEO: This process of fall and recovery is also fundamental to the physical mechanics of walking. As Rebecca Solnit points out, to take a step is to momentarily lose and then recover one's balance—stretching one foot forwards in the air, launching one's weight off the back leg, and, for an instant, free-falling until the front foot makes contact with the ground and deftly absorbs the shock of landing.³⁵

The Edit: Co-Performing Panels

CLEO: For much of the film, its 16:9 frame is split into various panels containing moving images—a spatial montage. As the edit progresses chronologically, different moving-image panels take up varying proportions of the screen (halves, eighths, one third, two thirds). The remaining space between the panels is black, giving the impression of a slim dark frame that separates (and changes shape with) the images.

Alongside the pattern of fall and recovery, falling happens in an editing sense throughout the film, through movement that spills in stops and starts across the variously split screen. The moving-image panels appear to be in conversation with one another. They do not always display motion at the same time; in fact, they often move one at a time, tag-teaming so that one image moves while the other images hold still, waiting their turn in freeze frame. At times, the panels fall into unison, into syncopation, into canon. They make room for each other, allow each other to become the momentary focus of attention. They enact repetition, performing the same motion as each other or performing the same motion with a slight and deliberate variation—for example, depicting the same scenery three times but from different angles. Motion frequently cascades across the screen, from left to right or right to left. Several of these interactions converge beautifully about twelve minutes into the film, where three equidistant panels show a man working knee-deep in a field.

Observing these panels, I am again reminded of an experience I had dancing recently. I worked on a dance residency for Australian independent dancer Patricia Wood, along with one other dancer, Rhiannon Newton, at Critical Path in early 2015. The three of us improvised with a limited range of movement options in a square space marked out on the floor—a frame of sorts. Working uninterrupted for up to forty minutes at a time, we found ourselves in a constant, speechless dialogue, anticipating when and how the other two dancers might move and letting this influence our own movements. Sometimes we worked to contrast each others' movements, at other times we worked to find unison. In reflection, we agreed that we were repeatedly met with choices like *now/not now*, *I'm waiting for you/I'm not waiting for you*, and *to synchronize/to diverge*.

I am drawn to the idea that the panels in *ATCH's* spatial montage are co-performers, constantly falling in and out of step with each other, constantly meeting choices of *now/not now* and *to synchronize/to diverge*. The slabs of moving image that share the frame at any given moment resemble the three of us dancing in that designated square at Critical Path. Now moving in unison, now moving in syncopation or in canon; now creating duplicities by depicting identical pieces of footage, now creating contrast by depicting non-identical pieces of footage. Enacting an “I go, and then you go,” and a “you go, and then we go,” and a “you’re doing this, so I’ll do that,” and an “I’m going to do what you’re doing.” Always coming head-to-head with chance, too—with surprises, unexpected collisions, and coincidences.

This interpretation risks anthropomorphizing the image panels in ways that some might find problematic. Rather than anthropomorphize the film, then, we could also attribute this dancing-thinking to the makers, Hinton and Davies, who lived through these questions and improvisations in the editing suite.

Falling, in an editing sense, then, has to do with the ways the image panels fall into (and out of) step with each other in order to create a dance on the two-dimensional plane, a dance between independent and collaborating video panes. It has to do with the way movement falls across the screen, quite literally, through the canonical starting and stopping of motion across different image panels.

ERIN: These choreographic strategies you have identified in the edit—unison, syncopation, canon, repetition, variation, synchronization, and divergence—are made richer and more complex through the play between *movement* and *stasis* and also *fragmentation* and *juxtaposition*. The use of still (both freeze frames and photographs) and moving images (both film footage and camera pans over stills) provide a powerful choice amongst the plethora occurring on multiple levels. The stillness “shuts up” the film—and often the narrator—as we go deeper with an image; the face of a boy turned to the camera, dark with anger or frustration, appearing after the disturbing footage of the child being beaten. Or the sleeping face of a girl with a tear suspended in the corner of her eye set against an image of a butterfly.

CLEO: This reminds me of something else Biro writes about, and that is speed—not speed in the sense of quick cutting or a fast-paced narrative, but speed as bold space-time compressions and associations created through jump cutting and the juxtaposition of carefully selected, contrasting images. Biro describes high-speed editing as the art of evoking absent, imagined content through the selection and arrangement of powerful images heavy with potential meanings.³⁶ In encountering such image clusters—now in motion, now in stillness—the viewer is invited to engage their imagination and to creatively contribute to the available material.

ERIN: To dance with it.

How does the film dance with me?

CLEO: And here we return, almost verbatim, to one of the first questions you asked: *how does the film dance with me?* Lyotard's thoughts around somatography and *mise en scène* continue to feel pertinent.

Somatography: the transcription of a written text *onto bodies, for bodies*. Walser's text: written *onto* the bodies that fall and fly through the archival images; written *onto* all the individual elements of production that together (per)form the body of the film; written *onto* this animate entity that breathes and throws its weight around, entering narrative eddies and pouring itself spatially across the screen. (Here we are back at another question you posed, about how choreographic elements like weight and breath figure in a film's composition—it seems that they figure in so many ways!) And all of this *for our bodies*: we, here, dancing in our seats as we watch, listen, and feel.

To stage—"mettre en scène"—describing that ephemeral, fertile zone between artwork and audience in which affective exchanges are possible. As you said earlier, in the corporeal *mise en scène* affect is not *there* pre-existing in the work, nor *here* as a familiar end result, but where the work of art and the viewer encounter each other on a pre-cognitive, physical level. So this film "dances with us" in the sense that it participates with us in an encounter in which affect happens, in which different dances happen, in which all of it *can* happen.

Biography

Dr. Erin Brannigan is Senior Lecturer in Dance at the University of New South Wales and works in the fields of dance and film as an academic and curator. Recent publications include *Moving Across Disciplines: Dance in the Twenty-First Century* (Sydney: Currency House, 2010), *Dancefilm: Choreography and the Moving Image* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) and *Bodies of Thought: 12 Australian Choreographers*, co-edited with Virginia Baxter (S.A: Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 2014). Erin was the founding Director of ReelDance (1999-2008) and has curated dance screen programs and exhibitions for Sydney Festival 2008, Melbourne International Arts Festival 2003, and international dance screen festivals.

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Notes

¹ Siobhan Davies Dance, "All This Can Happen."

² Walser, *The Walk*.

³ Siobhan Davies Dance, "All This Can Happen."

⁴ *Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men* (1990), *Strange Fish* (1992).

⁵ Brannigan, *Dancefilm*.

⁶ Baudelot, "Choreographic Dispositifs," 182. However, we know that choreography can also appear "off" the body, in line with William Forsythe's "choreographic object." (Forsythe, "The Choreographic Object," unpaginated.)

⁷ Louppe, *Poetics of Contemporary Dance*.

⁸ Gallese and Guerra write about the central role of kinesthetic empathy and what they call "embodied simulation" in filmmaking and film viewing; Pearlman writes about the same in relation to film editing specifically and suggests, like Gallese and Guerra, that kinesthetic empathy plays a key role in the editing process (Gallese and Guerra, "Embodying Movies," 2012; Pearlman, "The Rhythm of Thinking," 2004.).

⁹ Forsythe, "The Choreographic Object," unpaginated.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Biro, *Turbulence and Flow*, 35-36.

¹² Lyotard, "The Unconscious as Mise-en-Scène," 88.

¹³ As cited in Stern, "As Long As This Life Lasts," 18.

¹⁴ Lyotard, "Gesture and Commentary," 45. It should be noted that Lyotard links affect directly to "feeling," while Deleuze insists that the two terms refer to discrete phenomena. For instance: "Affects aren't feelings, they're becomings that spill over beyond whoever lives through them" (Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 137.).

¹⁵ Lyotard, "The Unconscious as Mise-en-Scène," 87-88.

¹⁶ Our colleague, Stephen Muecke, was quick to point out here that "the body was 'discovered' a few years back by (feminist) philosophers" (Personal correspondence, 9/4/2015).

¹⁷ Godard, "Blindsight," 201.

¹⁸ See Lyotard on the ordering of traditional creative production in his essay, "The Unconscious as Mise-en-scène," 87.

¹⁹ Walser, *The Walk*, 14, 40, 32, 15.

²⁰ One of my favorite lines firmly locates the writer in his body: "self reproof touched me from behind my back and stood before me in my way" (Walser, *The Walk*, 87).

²¹ Lyotard, "The Unconscious as Mise-en-Scène," 88.

²² Davies and Hinton, *All This Can Happen*, 0:35:25 – 0:36:42.

²³ In proposing a rhythmic contour for this film, I am inspired by Yvette Biro and her ability to sketch rhythmic contours for films she analyses in her book, *Turbulence and Flow*. Moving beyond a linear conception of time, she describes a range of rhythmic possibilities for films and creates such a strong sense of the rhythm of each film she analyses that a topography or shape for the film emerges in my readerly imagination (Biro, *Turbulence and Flow*).

²⁴ The use of the term, "swerve," is intentional and with precedent. Steve Goodman, writing in the field of music, describes the swerve in relation to atoms falling vertically through space. Citing Lucretius and Serres via Deleuze, he writes that it is in swerving—in skidding out of their downwards trajectories in unpredictable ways—that atoms collide with each other and produce matter: "If it were not for this swerve, everything would fall downwards like raindrops through the abyss of space. No collision would take place and no impact of atom on atom would be created. Thus nature would never have created anything" (Goodman, *Sonic Warfare*, 106).

²⁵ Davies and Hinton, *All This Can Happen*, 0:23:06.

²⁶ Davies and Hinton, *All This Can Happen*, 0:23:57.

²⁷ Davies and Hinton, *All This Can Happen*, 0:05:50.

²⁸ Davies and Hinton, *All This Can Happen*, 0:27:10.

²⁹ It is important, too, to note the role that the narrator's performance plays in creating this rhythm in the film. Through a delivery that is at once emphatic and achingly delicate, the writer's highs and lows retain a wonderful complexity. They indicate at once the writer's acute passion and his careful sensitivity.

³⁰ Bahouth, Radio Interview with Hinton and Davies.

³¹ Davies and Hinton, *All This Can Happen*, 0:39:40. All other quotations cited from the film are taken from the film voice-over which is adapted from Christopher Middleton's translation of the novella (London: Serpent's Tail, 1992.)

³² Bahouth, Radio Interview with Hinton and Davies.

³³ Louppe, *Poetics of Contemporary Dance*, 22.

³⁴ Louppe, "Singular, Moving Geographies," 18. The "tonic muscles" are explained by Godard as those "which specialize in gravitational responses" and that contain our bodies' "most ancient memory" (Ibid.).

³⁵ Solnit, *Wanderlust*, 33.

³⁶ Biro, *Turbulence and Flow*, 37.

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Walking-Relations: On *The Walk* by Robert Walser and *All This Can Happen* by Siobhan Davies and David Hinton

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Abstract

The article explores figurations of movement in Siobhan Davies' and David Hinton's found footage film *All This Can Happen* (2012), which refers to the work of prose *The Walk* (*Der Spaziergang*, 1917) by Robert Walser. It focuses on *walking as act* from a perspective of movement analysis in performance and dance studies. The essay unfolds questions about the filmic rhythm and montage in relation to the bodily movement of walking and its discursive contexts. It analyzes figurations like rhythm and pace, balance and imbalance, (dis-)orientation, relations to space and to others (choreography, social dimensions). This article argues that Davis's and Hinton's *mise en scène* generates a specific mode of physically engaged, aesthetic experience for the viewer by blending in visual composition with sensations of bodily movement.

Keywords: walking as act, movement analysis, flâneur, choreography, relationality, performance studies, dance studies, (post-)modernity, rhythm, montage, bewegungsgestalt

Choreographer Siobhan Davies' and writer David Hinton's fifty-minute film, *All This Can Happen* (2012) is a referential found footage film.¹ It adapts of the work of prose *The Walk* (*Der Spaziergang*) by German writer Robert Walser from 1917 into a collage about a day-long walk around a small town. The Walk and *All This Can Happen* evolve from the bodily activity of walking. In Walser, it is unfolded in words, and Davies and Hinton create a rhythmic combination of imagery, sound, and text—arranged within the medium of film. In this article, I explore the acts of walking within both works by analyzing dimensions of movement. In examining walking as practice, both works can be read in choreographic terms as they set bodies and environment, time, and space into relation: they create walking-relations.² Walking is not only topic or matter in *The Walk* and *All This Can Happen*, but form. In both pieces, choreographic dimensions of walking, like flow and irregularity, balance and imbalance, moments of potential falling, disorientation, and also social dimensions of walking as practice, have sedimented in rhythmic compositions. Particularly, the montage of *All This Can Happen* provides an aesthetic perception for the viewers that can be characterized as an

affective participation and as an experience of liminality based on the use of transformed walking acts.

Walking Acts

Before analyzing the walking acts in *The Walk* and *All This Can Happen*, this article must pose some introductory remarks on walking as bodily practice. Walking can be characterized as a social, cultural, and performative practice that is learned by mimesis and is yet individual in its course of motion. In his essay, *Der Gemessene Schritt* (the measured step), Ulrich Giersch understands walking as “Bewegungsgestalt” (*gestalt* of movement),³ following Marcel Mauss’ concept of body techniques and describes it as a process of alternating tension and release of muscles and body-parts which produces a fragile equilibrium and an ephemeral moment of levitation.⁴ Anticipating and reacting at the same time, the body is being balanced upwards from feet and legs while a complete set of muscles is being engaged in a multitude of micro-movements. A constant process of adjustment and compensation is being commenced which is based not only on the visual sense but on muscular senses as well (*proprioception*).⁵ Giersch argues that walking is not a neutral locomotion but an affective bodily activity including thinking processes.⁶ Revising different examples including the Peripatetics, Friedrich Nietzsche, Paul Klee, and Thomas Bernhard, he demonstrates that body and mind are inextricably linked and in process of constant affective feedback.⁷ Giersch suggests to determine this interplay as synchronization where the measured steps share the rhythm of a measured thought. Two “spheres” intermingle in the process of walking, connected by two-way resonances.⁸ This synchronization can provide mind-states like concentration, distraction, and pleasure,⁹ as described in Walser’s *The Walk*. The walking figure repeatedly mentions the necessity to walk and its pleasures, explaining how walking frees him from fear and mistrust.¹⁰ In this respect, the activities of walking, thinking, and writing appear as synchronized spheres within *The Walk* although the walking body is absent. Walser’s *The Walk* and *All This Can Happen* share the dimensions of walking acts which have sedimented in the composition: both pieces unfold complex walking-relations posing questions about body and mind, ecology, subjectivity, sociality, and modernity.

(Not) Being in the Midst: Walking-relations

Robert Walser’s *The Walk* narrates a daylong walk through a (probably Swiss) small town and its rural environment from the perspective of a lonely stroller. *The Walk* reports episodically and in the shape of an inner monologue all that happened, or all that could have happened, during this meandering through the day.¹¹ As the reader accompanies the walking figure passing the events, the novel develops a unity of fictional walking and reading time. By this experimental literary strategy of soliloquy, *The Walk* unfolds a subjective, experienced time. The walking and thinking spheres are synchronized with each other and therefore with the reader. One seems to be in the

walking person's head while reading, co-walking, or even in-between the acts of walking, writing, and reading. This enables to connect with or to embody the situation—and not to identify, as identifying is often based on a story and its moral dimensions. In its perspective or mode of representation *The Walk* refers to the reader's own sensation of moving-in-the-world. Walser unfolds a space opening up by the flow of speech—leaving an invisible, imaginary line of walking behind eventually (choreo-graphy). At first glance, *The Walk* seems to have an underlying rhythm of speech that echoes the activity of walking: an alternating, seesawing, and balancing movement. It can be traced to John Hefferman's unvarying and even way of reading of *The Walk* as part of the soundscape in *All this Can Happen*. Within this basic rhythm, the walk is structured by all kinds of events and encounters. The walking figure is submitting a letter and meeting a friend called Frau Aebi, a tax assessor, and a tailor. The "better vagabond"¹² makes random acquaintance with a professor, a bank clerk, a book seller, a girl singing, and many others he sees from the distance, walking, riding bikes or in cars, sitting, standing, playing, singing, working, and so on. Furthermore, animals, flowers, books, clothes, and other objects find appearance in his description and co-create—in the process of walking— heterogenous and "wonderful image of the humble present" where everything is "equally loved, the narrating figure asserts in the first part of the novel.¹³ This phrase gives the impression that the walker experiences even banal events as beautiful and finds moments of peace, love, and freedom in walking through the day. This seems so refer to different reflections on walking but to one early modernist idea in particular: in the second half of the nineteenth century Charles Baudelaire wrote an essay called "The Painter of Modern Life" (1863)¹⁴ where he developed a concept of modernity and introduced a new idea of beauty. This idea did not ground in concepts of antiquity and classicism, like harmony, the statuesque, or the sublime, but in the ephemerality of daily-life itself, its fashions and changings in taste which are transitory but equally loved. "By 'modernity,'" Baudelaire explains in a central passage of the essay, "I mean the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable."¹⁵ It is only one of many notions of modernity but it discloses a fundamental shift in thinking in 19th century: from static concepts of beauty, to contemporaneity, to processuality, and to new definitions of time. Walser's work in prose was written fifty years later, and it certainly has different aesthetic intentions.¹⁶ Yet, Walser's walking figure experiences an "equal love" of things as he estimates daily-life objects and practices. By Walser's literary strategy in writing down a walking act, a flow of passing-by is taking place—like a celebration of "all that can happen," displaying an eternal beauty within the fugitive. Furthermore, Baudelaire described a shift in perspective from classicism to modernity by discussing the milieu-drawings of Constantin Guys.¹⁷ Guys serves as an example for the shift from "distance" to "closeness" in artistic practice, from painting to sketch, from result to process, from the studio as place of production to the outside world. In Walser, it is not the artist searching for an ephemeral motif to draw. The leisure-walker feels the necessity to

walk and to collect impressions to distract him from his work (of writing); the writer Walser obviously composed his text *after* many walks and probably invented the events. But the Baudelairian artist and Walser's walker share the artistic strategy and perspective of being in-the-midst-of-things, in a milieu, instead of being distanced. Walking always already starts in the "midst" or the "thick" of things; there is no starting or entering point, only a transformation of relations between the self, others, and things—a process.¹⁸ Choreographically speaking, the walker is not overlooking the space from a vantage point, he is walking right in the midst, creating a shifting network. It is not walking in a Euclidian space Walser describes, but a productive navigation in the sense of Brian Massumi which co-generates space by passing.¹⁹ This produces an ecology of things, relations with all kinds of things. Yet, the way in which Walser describes the walking-relations, the protagonist loses his dominant position in the midst and in the world. He is not the center of the network; there is no control over things. Although the stroller is protagonist of the story, his subjectivity itself only exists in relation; it derives from the interaction with its environment. He is not autonomous; he is one of many elements within this network-tableau of nature and culture. This even corresponds to recent discourse on New Materialism and on the Agency of Things (Actor-Network-Theory),²⁰ where concepts of nature are not grounded in questions of beauty or the fugitive anymore but in ideas of ecology and post-humanism and -anthropocentrism. For example, Bruno Latour and Jane Bennett have pointed out—also against the background of our ecological crisis—that smallest agents, animals, plants, dust particles, molecules, hormones, and vitamins cross our organisms and co-determine any situation.²¹ Uncountable factors produce a constellation. According to Latour and Bennett, contemporary art works can sensitize us for questioning hierarchical positions of the subject in ecological systems.²² In this respect, Walser's *The Walk* can be read as a reflection on ecology *avant la lettre*—but in a modernist way. The subject of his walk remains a walking figure that does not fully dissolve into its environment like it probably would in many contemporary art works. But throughout the reading process it becomes unseizable, loses its shape and becomes decentralized, fragmented by the way in which Walser composes different styles, languages, and events. In older traditions of walking, the person who is experiencing the world on foot is not questioned—for example, in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Les Réveries du Promeneur Solitaire* (1776/78) or in the idea of the flâneur as described by Walter Benjamin or Baudelaire. Here, discourses on bourgeois subjectivity as wholeness, on landscape and contemplation have been discussed.²³ I cannot fully explore those concepts of subjectivity here. But in Walser's *The Walk*, it is neither the contemplative walker nor the urban stroller wandering the arcades, making "studies" and "actively inscribing the city."²⁴ Walser's stroller seems to be in-between many traditions in many respects. And this clearly refers to a modernist topic: being in-between nature and culture (small town, rural environment) mirrors a specific binarism of nature and culture. The casual events in *The Walk* are marked by this binarism of nature and culture, where the walking activity in nature is positively

connoted against the background of (a certain type of) civilization. It generates joy and freedom; whereas industrial cars, work facilities, and recurrent military motives and metaphors invoke danger and terror to the walker. They associate violent civilization, rationalism, and the trauma of the First World War.²⁵ This impression is not clearly articulated within *The Walk* but seems to be a subliminal content suggested by almost inconspicuous events. For example, when the walker worries that children playing on the street could be hit by cars, the fear is expressed rhythmically: children are playing freely and are menaced to be hurt or killed by cars shooting in. Two movements and rhythms clash in this metaphor: the (un-)coordinated rhythm of a playful group with many directions versus the speed and power of a machine, a linear and aggressive movement. Basically, riding in cars and trains can destroy the connection with nature, *The Walk* suggests. It recalls what Wolfgang Schivelbusch's argues in his *Geschichte der Eisenbahnreise* (the history of train travelling): that it transforms the relational body-experience into an accelerated and bodiless visual perception of the world—into a being separated from it.²⁶ On the other hand, elements like cars and machines refer to an ideology of technical rationalism that points to the cruelest dimension of war.

It is by these struggling metaphors of nature and culture/civilization that Walser creates a tension of being in-between, a modernist angst to get lost in a complex and hostile world. Yet, the binarism of nature and culture is never strict in *The Walk*. Both seem inseparable and gradually cultivated; for example, the civilized pathways or flowery hats of ladies²⁷ speak of this mutual reaction and interdependency between nature and culture. By the way which Walser's walker speaks about nature, there even seems a reflexive distance inscribed from time to time. The enthusiastic motto of a "humble present" seems so exaggerated that it appears more like a self-convincing mechanism than as "spontaneous" enunciation. The experimental composition of the whole novel suggests it could be a referential element to walking traditions like those by Rousseau and others, although we know that Walser himself highly appreciated walking as a practice of relaxation. The reader cannot figure out who is speaking here due to the literary strategy. Furthermore, nature and culture merge by a rhythmic composition and produce a constant transformation into each other: walking through the forest, the protagonist is calmly thinking and walking, whereas he is in haste when irritated by signs of civilization, war, and social power. This produces an overhang or imbalance within the literary walking act. Sensations of walking at an abyss or of losing the orientation are recurrently described within the text and emphasize this impression of bodily instability. And what is emphasized clearly is a bare necessity to continue walking, to move forward—to run from all social, economic, and political regimentation.

Getting lost: Movement and Rhythm in *All This Can Happen*

In their filmic version of the walk, *All This Can Happen*, Siobhan Davies and David Hinton transport the reading experiences of shifting walking-relations onto the screen by using imagery, offscreen text, and sound. It is composed with found footage material from early film, colored or black and white, in different perspectives—arranged in different distances (cadrages).²⁸ By the use of split-screens, time-lapses, freeze frames, repetitions, and other effects, they create a montage of different rhythms, intervals, and demonstrations of relationality—reinforcing the collage character given already in Walser.

Like in Walser's *The Walk*, various events and a variety of protagonists in countless daily-life activities and movements are presented. The human-beings depicted are opening windows, walking, jumping, working, marching, riding bikes or cars, swimming, climbing scaffolds, cleaning, laughing, milking cows, shouldering guns, dancing; either not noticing their being watched, or sitting and watching or posing for the camera. And non-human elements also co-create the scenery. Pictures of animals, plants, things, clothes, fog, an eclipse, and even undefinable microcosmic smallest materials (in time-lapse condensation) were collected and combined. In their equal appearance, these worldly things suggest there is no hierarchy between human, animal, thing, and smallest element. It appears like the anthropocentrism is being questioned, just like in, or even moreso than in, Walser's *The Walk*. All elements play the role of actants or actors (in the sense of Latour) and co-determine the situation and combining their own movements with the movements of others.²⁹

Walser formed an in-between-ness of the walking figure by playing out the materiality of text and superimposing walking, writing, and reading processes. He conducted different types of texts and rhythm. But the text itself keeps a constant flow. It has rhythmic and thematic ruptures, but they are all re-arranged into a heterogeneous homogeneity of one text narrated by one figure: the perspective remains. In *All This Can Happen*, Davies and Hinton use the media specificity of film to split these ruptures even more: they fragment and multiply perspectives and walking acts. Voice and image are in tension as well as the imagery itself. There is no solid human figure to give order to the seen but the viewer. The narrator is just one equal auditory element amongst the other elements. Everything is floating or flowing, also due to the technical apparatus of film. Anything can happen, encounter each other, and (re-)appear in front of the viewer. This is how an anthropocentric position is challenged even more. There is no hierarchy between image and text, image and image, image and sound, motif and motif.

The walking events are not depicted mimetically like in a fictional film about a leisure walk. It seems to be a composition of time-images, in the sense of Gilles Deleuze, which create the scenery and reanimate the walk.³⁰ In his cinema book, Deleuze

differentiates movement-image from time-image. The movement-images of the narrative film build up a form of synthesis of images by montage, where time is represented in the film by an almost linear movement of things. Deleuze determines this process as the “sensomotoric scheme” or pattern to create illusion of a coherent world.³¹ The *mise en scène* of time-images like these in experimental films, on the other hand, separates time and movement; they are co-related differently. Optical and acoustic situations are composed autonomously and create complex relations between past, present, and future. This is what he defines as *virtual*, a catenation of elements and their time dimensions.

Based on this multitemporal complexity, *All This Can Happen* rebuilds and rearranges the metaphorical universe from Walser’s *The Walk*. Material from the beginning of the 20th century invoke the atmosphere of a modern era which was marked by a social and cultural transformation, by economic growth and technical progress, by a relation between work and leisure time, and also by war, violence, and anxieties. By the use of documentary material *All This Can Happen* illustrates a subliminal texture of Walser’s *The Walk*. It discloses the (non-)binarism of nature and modern civilization, of old- and new-world. *All This Can Happen* lays open the ambiguities which are suggested by Walser’s depiction of walking joy and social forces. In Walser, the love of nature and leisure-walking is contrasted by all kinds of social and technical regulations. Yet, he shows the interdependencies of both. *The Walk* represents a fragile equilibrium of freedom and given structures. *All This Can Happen* produces, by the way the walker speaks, an overhang in the process of reading and generates the impression of haste and flight. The walker often is in a hurry and changes his tone dependent upon where he is—e.g. when in a hurry, the text is narrated through short, simple, and direct sentences so there is a change in speed in the language itself. And calm and poetic sequences, complex and compound, are given in the passage in the forest, for example. Furthermore there, is an abundance of quickly narrated information when he is talking about workers, town-views, and so on. In *All This Can Happen*, the images are arranged in different speeds as well and reproduce this rhythm by the use of contrasts: Images of nature and walking are being contrasted by images of military practices, like marching, shouldering guns, or working in ironworks. Furthermore, the splits and cuts accelerate the speeds and density whereas held frames and sometimes repetitions reduce the speed (for a little while). There is a basic rhythm to this: the impression of an even *walking forward*, or flow, is produced by the mechanical movement of the apparatus, like an imaginary tact (also suggested by the soundscore of read-aloud text of *The Walk* by John Hefferman). This fundamental time of the medium is combined with more fictional and compositional time-orders like arranging story sets where the imagery belongs together and illustrates the texts, such as the visit at Frau Aebi’s or to a bookstore. These rhythmic dimensions are in tension like in all composed films. But in *All This Can Happen*, it is by the composition of speeds and fragments as well as the soundscape that produce a kind of accumulation or overhang of elements. The frames

change very quickly, and their mechanical continuity gives the impression to the viewer of being out of control or overwhelmed, of being menaced by the deepness and violence of this maelstrom of images. There is sensation of vertigo and of getting lost between the images. By the interplay of sounds and images, the individual seems to be erased; this is also a metaphor for modern angst. *Rhythm* can be understood as a regular repetition of the irregular, a flow including deviations being associated with human activity, whereas tact is more regular. It points to a regularity of mechanical instruments—and therefore to civilization and modernity.³² The interplay of regularity and irregularity in tone in *All This Can Happen* creates layers of movement, intervals and tensions between the rhythms, and destabilizes the viewer.

The soundscape of *All This Can Happen* by Chu-Li Cheng is an important factor of this destabilizing effect. It consists of a mixing of natural and “artificial” sounds. There is a mechanical repetition of sound morphemes like bubbling of water, sizzling of fire, creaking of wood, and white noises and of pseudo-diegetic or belated sounds (like the ringing of bells, or tweeting of birds when a window is opened). This pseudo-diegesis or syncope creates tensions and voids again and enriches the complexity. An uncanniness lies in the relations between the different layers of sound and between images and sounds, as they all seem separate and yet combined, familiar and unfamiliar at the same time. Any causality, logic, or reliable coordinates to perceive the world are suspended. Furthermore, the quality of the sounds often tends to noise, to heavy and dark industrial sounds, an unfamiliar and menacing droning and humming—reminiscent of danger, war, and violence, speaking to the viewer affectively and immediately.

The audiovisual arrangement is not an illustration of text. It exceeds the given text constantly and opens up associations beyond—creating a sphere of non-explainable and felt dimensions. Especially, the walking act as fragile bodily movement is a leitmotif in *All This Can Happen*, and it is represented in many ways. Activities and modes of locomotion are recurring within the images. Traumatized soldiers try to find their balance in walking, precariously wobbling. A baby attempts to move forward by slipping along the ground in a funny way. Children are running, men and women hurrying to work. The walking activity is fragmented into different frames and pluralized, creating a reflexive response to Walser’s piece, giving an almost tactile impression of the walker’s instability and liminality.

Because of this, the aesthetic perception by the viewers is marked not only by an aesthetic pleasure in perceiving the composition, but the act of viewing the film brings great awareness to its form (rhythm and composition) and affective impact. It poetically activates sensations of relatedness and dependency. For example, when the reader tells about Tomzack, the giant, a moving image of a very tall male person in historic clothing and a hat is displayed. The image is arranged in split, together with red-glowing images from a fire in the woods, with a white owl that corresponds to the

tall person in body-proportion. And it is combined with a close frame showing big hands and many smaller ones, then with a frame where a crowd and faces look up to the camera, and then with an apple crashing in a closing hand. In this composition of multiplication and repetition the impression of *felt relations* is given, transporting associated sensations and feelings, like being smaller, being weaker, being irritated, being eager to understand, and so on. Many small details create an affective field around the topos of a giant; he is not introduced verbally alone, or in comparison to another figure like in a fictional movie. Many relations are being shown and open up space for interpretation. Loneliness, otherness, and strength as affective qualities are suggested by the imagery and composition at the same time.

To conclude, the rhythmic compositions of movement in *The Walk* and *All This Can Happen* share choreographic dimensions of walking, like flow and irregularity, balance and imbalance, moments of potential falling, disorientation, and also social and cultural dimensions of walking as practice. They provide an aesthetic perception for the viewers that can be characterized as an affective participation and as an experience of instability and liminality.

Biography

Maren Butte, PhD is a theatre and dance scholar at the Research Institute for Music-Theatre Studies (fimt) at the University of Bayreuth. From 2011-2014 she was a research scholar at the Collaborative Research Centre "Aesthetic Experience and the Dissolution of Artistic Limits" at Free University Berlin, and from 2005-2009 at the Research Project "Iconic Criticism" (eikones) at the University of Basel. Her research fields are in dance and choreography (in relation to music and sound); affective processes and aesthetic experience; and intersections between theatre, dance, and film. A recent publication: Gabriele Brandstetter, Maren Butte, and Kirsten Maar (Hg.), *Topographies of the Ephemeral*, Bielefeld 2016 (upcoming).

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Notes

¹ Davies, Siobhan and David Hinton. *All This Can Happen*, Film, UK 2012, 50'.

² For definitions of choreography, compare recently Brandstetter, "Choreographie."

³ Giersch, "Der gemessene Schritt als Sinn des Körpers," 264.

⁴ Ibid., 272. *Levitation* is my translation from the German term *schweben* here.

⁵ In neuroscience and dance studies, the terms *kinesthesia* and *proprioception* are being used to characterize the dynamic interplay between bodily sensations or stimuli, gravity, weight, environment/ground, etc. See O'Shaughnessy, "Proprioception and the Body Image," esp. 177; Brandstetter, Egert and Zubarik (Ed.). *Touching and to be touched*.

⁶ Giersch, "Der gemessene Schritt als Sinn des Körpers," 264.

⁷ In the 20th and 21st centuries, with a shift from product to process in the first and second Avantgarde (Dada, Situationists, Surrealists, Fluxus, Happening, Environmental Art, etc.) different artists and choreographers like Richard Long, Hamish Fulton, On Kawara, Bruce Nauman, and others used walking as creative practice to explore the relations between body, mind, and space. See Brandstetter, Gabriele. "Schrittmuster: Über Gänge und Gangarten im Tanz," 72; Lucas, Raymond, "Taking a Line for a Walk" 169, 172.

⁸ Giersch, "Der gemessene Schritt als Sinn des Körpers", 266.

⁹ Ibid., 267.

¹⁰ Walser, *Der Spaziergang*, 20, 24, 49, 50.

¹¹ Ibid., 56.

¹² Ibid., 27.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Baudelaire, Charles. *The Painter of Modern Life*, 1-37.

¹⁵ Ibid., 13.

¹⁶ Research on Walser's oeuvre has emphasized the experimental way of writing in *The Walk*, the playfulness in arranging times and styles and the reflexiveness to the process of writing and its materiality itself. But the categorization of Walser's work as modernist along with (depending on the definition of modernity) Mallarmé, Valéry or Hauptmann, Kafka, Döblin, Proust, Joyce, and others is difficult and cannot be fully explored here. Compare, for example, Evans, *Robert Walsers Moderne*, 9-15.

¹⁷ Baudelaire, Charles. *The Painter of Modern Life*, 8.

¹⁸ Ingold, *Ways of Walking*, 1-19.

¹⁹ Massumi, "Strange Horizon. Buildings, Biograms and the Body Topologic," 178.

²⁰ Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 368-381.

²¹ Ibid.

²² For example, works by Pierre Huyghe (*Untilled*, 2013) or Donna Haraway that were presented at *Documenta 13* showed explicit interest in animals and plants. And also the film *Leviathan* (2012) by Lucien Castaing-Taylor and Verena Paravel from 2012 engaged their viewers in a different perspective: the camera did not focus on human activity alone, it contingently followed movements of animals, of water, clouds, machines, boats, and human body parts.

²³ Albes, *Der Spaziergang als Erzählmodell. Studien zu Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Adalbert Stifter, Robert Walser und Thomas Bernhard*. 9, 10.

²⁴ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 454, as quoted by Lucas, "Taking a Line for a Walk," 170. The Situationsists will continue this tradition in the 20th century.

²⁵ Walser, *Der Spaziergang*, 20, 55.

²⁶ Schivelbusch, *Die Geschichte der Eisenbahnreise*, 269.

²⁷ Walser, *Der Spaziergang*, 26.

²⁸ The found footage material was discovered through research in several archives (BFI National Archive, British Pathé, Wellcome Library London, Étienne-Jules Marey, Collège de France Archive, et al.) by Lucie Sheppard, Piera Buckland, and Zoë Dickin.

²⁹ Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 63-86.

³⁰ Deleuze, *Das Zeit-Bild*, 53-61.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Brüstle, Ghattan and Risi (Ed.). *Aus dem Takt*.

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An Unstable Equilibrium and Process of Becoming in All This Can Happen

Florence Freitag

Abstract

All This Can Happen is explored as an “unstable equilibrium” with one essential *raison d’être*: movement. The term “unstable equilibrium” is taken from Maya Deren, as she relates it to her own films as being in a constant process of ritualistic becomingness. The alternation of images—the cinematographic choreography—is what makes *All This Can Happen* a film that enables us to discover movement in its purest forms and actions, especially because things are made to move. It is the “unstable equilibrium” of these pictures and their in-between, a balance of different visual and motional dynamics, that develops into an understanding and becoming of movement.

Keywords: Unstable Equilibrium, In-Between, Becoming, Maya Deren, Gilles Deleuze

The concept of absolute, intrinsic values, whose stability must be maintained, gives way to the concept of relationships which ceaselessly are created, dissolved and recreated and which bestow value upon the part according to its functional relation to the whole. We face the problem of discovering the dynamics of maintaining an *unstable equilibrium*.¹

This is how filmmaker Maya Deren, in 1946, describes what it means for her to maintain an *unstable equilibrium*, a term that she attributes to her father, a Russian psychoanalyst. Dedicating her essay “Cinema as an Art Form” to her father, Deren writes: “To my father, who, when I was a child, once spoke to me of life as an unstable equilibrium.”² She uses the term to describe the human condition of her time.

“Cinema as an Art Form” is published in the same year as Deren’s most developed text on filmmaking, *An Anagram of Ideas on Art, Form, and Film*³ (1946), and the release of Deren’s fifth film, *Ritual in Transfigured Time*. In the essay, Deren not only advocates the possibilities of film as a time-space art, but also writes about the need to explore it as an independent art form, able to create and offer new realities reflecting actual changes in life and society.⁴ Later on in the text, Deren emphasizes the idea of adjustment to an ever-changing—hence ever moving—world and to life as being in a state of constant reconfiguration. The state of being human is at the same time “constant enough to constitute an identity” and “adjustable enough”⁵ to changing

circumstances. Influenced by the changing social, technological, and human conditions, Deren conceives of her films as a balance between states, as uninterrupted tension and opposition. These notions of states and tensions are echoed in the writing of French theorist Gilles Deleuze, who, in *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, describes *in-between* tensions as “intervals,”⁶ and as the driving forces of film. This article will draw on Deren’s filmic work and her notion of *unstable equilibrium*, as well as on Deleuze, to investigate the different forms of movement present in *All This Can Happen*.

In this article, the film *All This Can Happen* is explored as a visually choreographed poem that is driven by the dynamics of being an unstable equilibrium, a controlled coincidence, a state of the in-between with one essential *raison d’être*: movement. I argue that *All This Can Happen* is an essayistic filmdance, or “ciné-poem,”⁷ because of the choreographic interplay and the rapid alternation of images and visual gestures which enables the viewer to discover movement in its many forms and varieties. It is the simplicity of the movement of everyday things that is brought to life in the film: people, cars, hats, flowers, birds, a window opening, or a door closing. Everyday things that a walker—like the one in Robert Walser’s Novel *The Walk*⁸—might encounter on his/her way.

An essayist, according to Max Bense, on film or on paper, is “a combinatory person, a tireless producer of configurations on and around a specific object.”⁹ Essay-writing can be like a thought that moves on constantly, on its way to seeking meaning for something that may not have a stable significance. It is an *unstable* process much like a film, the ever-changing *becoming* of something else, an *aimless* undertaking, the end of which is unknowable. Aimless, in the way that Walser’s walker did not seem to follow any preconceived road. Both essays and films tend to have clear endings, but their ritualistic effects, their reverberation in our minds, are continuous, like the ritualistic *becoming* of Walser’s walking protagonist.

How then might an investigation of unstableness in Deren’s oeuvre help a reading of Davies’ and Hinton’s film and its effects and affects? This article aims to show that the spectator of *All This Can Happen* relates to the moments in-between the images in specific ways. Furthermore, this article reads the moving motion picture as both an homage to the humble flâneur Robert Walser and as a visual peripateticism¹⁰ of its own. Finally, this article attempts to constantly be moving forward as a becoming work of moving thinking.

Unstable Rituals

The online Oxford dictionary defines an *unstable equilibrium* as a “state of equilibrium in which a small disturbance will produce a large change.”¹¹ When something changes, it can *become* something else, even though the change may be small and happening very slowly. Maya Deren understands the *unstable equilibrium* as a balance between

different states and conditions, be they technological or human. Balancing indicates a notion of relations, or “meshes” of relations that make changes happen.

As Sarah Keller writes in her recent publication *Maya Deren: Incomplete Control* (2014), the *unstable equilibrium* could be seen as an “artistic strategy” employed by Deren.¹² As part of this approach, Deren both creates a structured form and fills it with “nonnarrative, nonlinear meaning.”¹³ Meaning is hereby generated through deconstructed spaces and depersonalized protagonists, and meaning is suggested rather than fixed. For Deren, openness—that is, “incompletion” and “open-endedness”—is “the essential nature of art,”¹⁴ intended to constantly shift the viewer’s perspective and experience—for example, with the help of juxtaposed psychological conditions or associations. Nevertheless, and in spite of an attitude of openness, Deren makes use of a clear structure, or form, in her films. She writes about her 1946 film *Ritual in Transfigured Time*:

I would like to use the word ‘classicist’ to describe *Ritual in Transfigured Time* precisely because it does not define according to the elements of the content—factual, fictional, abstract, or psychological. It is a concept of method: a controlled manipulation of any or all elements into a form which will transcend and transfigure them.¹⁵

According to Keller, this method implies a constant play between control and release.¹⁶ In that sense, art mirrors what takes place in rituals. According to Deren,

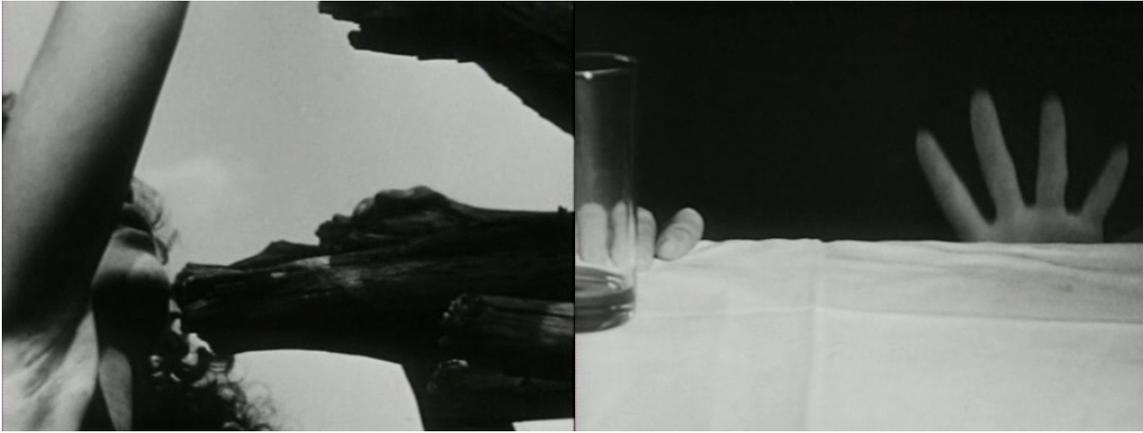
a ritual is an action distinguished from all others in that it seeks the realization of its purpose through the exercise of form. In this sense ritual is art; and even historically, all art derives from ritual. In ritual, the form is meaning.¹⁷

Deren controls the work through the form of her films, through the above-mentioned “controlled manipulation,” as, for example, in *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943); *At Land* (1944); and, most explicitly, in *Ritual in Transfigured Time* (1945-1946). Ritual, together with the notion of *unstable equilibrium*, constitute Deren’s particular interests during this period. Engaging with what happens if control and release work together, she explores the “deference of personality in possessed states of being.”¹⁸ The controlled ritual is deployed as the form that both contains and allows for play. Rita Christiani, friend and performer in Deren’s films, says about this period: “It was though she were looking for something. She knew what it was, but she just could not verbalize it, within the confines of a mind.”¹⁹ Accordingly, Deren needed to visualize and express it in images and through her bodily experience and expression, mainly by discovering the ritualistic states in Haitian Vodun between 1947 and 1955. Those experiences then were transposed onto her films.

Through the Haitian Vodun religion, Deren found a means to give “credibility to the unreal”²⁰ and to unite different temporalities. The latter is explored also in Deleuze’s writing. Deleuze defines his concept of *becoming* as a process of going “back into the event, to take one’s place in it as in a becoming, to grow both young and old in it at once.”²¹ Becoming does not mean returning to the past but entering a state in which one is open for new relations and possibilities through past events. As anthropologists João Biehl and Peter Locke write, “In becoming, as Deleuze saw it, one can achieve an ultimate existential stage in which life is simply immanent and open to new relations—camaraderie—and trajectories.”²² It is a whole process, nourished from experiences and combining temporalities. During the ritual, the living and the dead, the past and the present come together. A living body *becomes* an ancestral deity and the servant body transcends itself, reminiscent of the way in which Deren transcends personalities and identities in her films through exchanging characters (e.g. the changing identities of the man walking next to her in *At Land*),²³ sudden disturbances, and ritualistic dances. Indeed, in her early works, Deren used discontinuity and fragmentation to hint at psychological disturbances and diverging or converging constitutions of her protagonists.

In Deren’s *Meshes of the Afternoon*,²⁴ small changes produce an imbalance—in the image, in the form of unexpected occurrences—and contribute to the creation of a feeling of mystery, or instability around the protagonist’s identity. Something within the work is out of balance, and things appear to have happened in the past that the spectator does not know about. This ongoing uncertainty gives the film a sense of instability. Deren cuts out chunks of time, makes use of the jump cut, and produces loops that connect situations or scenes that have happened at another point in time, bringing closer together spaces that are distant. As the distances shrink, space is understood as something that can easily be transcended and transformed. As Keller writes, continuity and discontinuity build up new geographies, and, “space and time are furnished with flexible dimensions and can expand or condense places and moments.”²⁵ The spectator experiences an instability that is achieved through discontinuity and fragmentation.

Compared with *Meshes of the Afternoon*, Deren’s second film, *At Land*, takes the instability not from the inside of the protagonist, but through the representation of the outside world and its different dynamics. In the opening shot, the solo protagonist, played again by Deren, is thrown out of the water onto land, immediately challenging the viewer’s perceptions of real time and continuous space, as the seawater runs backwards down her body. The protagonist also realizes that the spaces and places she is looking for are always already changed and different when she arrives. This produces a precarious relation between body and space, where the latter never stays the same.



Screenshots of *At Land*. Dir. Maya Deren, 1944.

Everything appears to be incoherent in this *Odyssey*. Near the end of the film, Deren as the protagonist picks up stones on the beach in haste, without paying attention to them constantly falling down. All of a sudden she lets them all fall, attracted by something else. The next image shows her in front of two women playing chess. The women are sitting next to each other, and Deren is going through their hair with her hands before abruptly taking one of the chess figures from the table and running away with it. As in her first film, Deren tries to put the viewer into a kind of trance, choreographing the edit so that the viewer identifies with the “mental states”²⁶ of the protagonist. The states are realized furthermore through visual, dreamlike images, wandering bodies and objects that construct a disjunctive space and time. Continuity is not found in the image, but created through connecting movements.!

These psychological and mental states are part of the *unstable equilibrium* in Maya Deren’s work and can be related to the “thinking feeling” of her “Choreo-Cinéma” in the way that the latter is happening through a kind of “cinematic thinking.”²⁷ Deren herself explores this in her lecture “Planning by Eye” from 1947, first published in *Film Culture* #39 in late 1965, by comparing “individual” and “industrial” films.²⁸ By “planning by eye” Deren means to show on screen only the ideas that she could see or draw, hence choosing also for her films to be silent.²⁹

Material and Form in *All This Can Happen*

The *unstable equilibrium* in the viewing experience of *All This Can Happen* is achieved through variations and repetitions of detached and re-contextualized images and incompatible and reconnected spaces, bound together by the imaginative editing choices of choreographer Siobhan Davies and filmmaker David Hinton. Meanwhile, the narration of Walser’s walk activates, like Deren’s precariously balanced protagonists, the inner moving images of the viewer. Walser’s text articulates a process of change and *becoming*: “I was no longer myself,” he claims, “I was another, yet it was on this account that I became properly myself.”³⁰ He may as well have been

writing about being possessed! And while there is spoken word that forms a sort of narrative, Davies' and Hinton's film relies on the whole visual body of the film to build a visual poem. The film is "written" through different devices and "thinks" through the images. The *unstable equilibrium* is established from one image to the next, "through the frame, from one frame to the next,"³¹ as Deren would have said.

Much like a dancer might work on his or her choreographic material, rearranging and transforming it, the filmic material from the First World War recordings, psychiatric hospitals, and the first cinematographic experiments from the turn of the last century is doubled, stilled, slowed down or accelerated, and paired. The text is at the same time a *mise-en-abîme* of this walk and a dancing writing full of descriptions and details.³² It is as if Walser notices "every smallest living thing"³³ around him, writing down every minute he experiences.

All This Can Happen builds a momentum through both the quick succession of (moving) images, and of the interstices that occur between these images. The spaces between images bring to mind French theorist and writer Raymond Bellour's notion of "entre-images," a contemporary construction of multiple spaces through the use of various images; from film to photography to video material.³⁴ Eivind Røssaak, in his anthology *Between Stillness and Motion*, makes use of Bellour and describes the screen work of Gregg Biermann as a "multiplicity of images."³⁵ His characterization can also be applied to Davies and Hinton's film:

Cinematic motion as the movement of objects in space *within* the image is here competing with the movement *between* blocks of floating images. The blocks float like moving pictures *through* the screen like an approaching bullet or projectile. Ultimately, a labyrinth of movements appears both within the image (the image within the image) and between the images (the changing relationship between the images within the images). Continuity editing is replaced by discontinuous and labyrinthine editing process, and the screen no longer displays one image at a time, but several.³⁶

All This Can Happen does, however, not begin with this play of multiplicities. Instead, it is developed slowly and builds up as the film goes on. The first thing the viewer encounters is a single, framed, black and white recording of a man sitting in a bed, staring intently back at her/him.



Screenshot of *All This Can Happen* by Siobhan Davies and David Hinton, 2012. "War Neuroses: Netley Hospital 1917." Courtesy of the Wellcome Library, London.

The footage is looped, so that the man's head trembles from side to side. The materiality of the footage—its flickering and visibly aged nature—make it evident that these images are from a past era. They create a ghostly time-space somewhere between still and moving, producing, however, a remarkable experience of *nowness*. The man seems trapped in his bed, bound to it. The image then fades into another black and white recording of misty trenches—men, presumably soldiers, rolling down a hill—and out again to the man on the bed, as if we were diving into his memory. He appears to be/become the first protagonist. The looped image suggests that he is unable to move but has a desire to move and, in the following split screen—a first association of images—we see another man trying to walk, stand up, and fall. His attempt is arrested mid-movement and then repeated. Both men appear to be ill. They are unable to control their movements—possibly a symptom of illness. The historical context of the images—a supposedly psychiatric environment—and the presumed illness of the patients both contribute to the creation of a highly visceral experience of movement and stillness for the viewer. Significant in this chain of images is the framing of the movement, which contributes to the construction of meaning through association across images.

Movement is progressively foregrounded and brought into focus in *All This Can Happen*. The use of framed, split, or doubled images is the essential gesture of the film. The filmic recordings are reinvestigated, stilled, and brought back into motion. The same happens with the photographic material, edited in what could be called a *contrapuntal affection* between image and text on different levels. Not only is there an explicit relationship between Walser's text and the images, with the text commenting on the images, but also and especially between the images themselves through their very own pictorial logic. The term *contrapuntal*, borrowed from musical baroque and renaissance composition, indicates a polyphonic aesthetic. Such an aesthetic neither emphasizes harmony nor discounts it, but it simply employs a counterpart that rings out at the same time as the main melody. The counterpoint does not happen because of harmony, but in spite of it. In *All This Can Happen*, the main melody could be seen to

be the text against which the images have been juxtaposed in a cinematographic *détournement*, whereby each image is given a new intention. The images, one could say, “the danced archive,” trigger intermedial references that happen within the film, and that will be different for different viewers. The relationships between the images affect the meaning of the single image, and allow them to *become* alive.

This particular use of recontextualised images in *All This Can Happen* brings to mind other art films where photographs are used to create the work. Liv Hausken, in Røssaak’s anthology, calls such a work a “slide-motion film.”³⁷ Hausken writes about films, like *La Jetée* by Chris Marker, in which the camera seems to be moving within the images, panning and zooming through the photographs.³⁸ It is a moving picture in the best sense of the word. This sliding is used in *All This Can Happen*, for example, when the imaginative walker continues his way out of the city and into the woods. The camera is still at first and then pans to guide the eye of the spectator across the image, and through the woods.



Screenshot of *All This Can Happen* by Siobhan Davies and David Hinton, 2012. “Gods Handiwork” 1912 (S U Bunnell). Courtesy of Library of Congress Prints and Photographs.

It is a *false* pan—there is no camera, but it has the effect of changing our perception and causing our eyes to scan the image. This process is not unlike touch; it is a static image being touched with the eyes. The viewer feels engaged in the scene through that movement, just as the viewer follows the panning camera in the woods at the beginning of Deren’s *A Study*. In both cases, the viewer builds expectations as to what might be seen next, and the filmmaker plays with this build up of expectations. Davies and Hinton chose to maintain and emphasize the motion, rather than focusing on the stillness of the photograph. By doing so they take the viewer through the film, moving him/her.

Discontinuity and the Protagonist’s Body

Developing a particular “visual logic” of cinema, Deren played with spatial, temporal, and filmic parameters to create changing perspectives and cinematographic geographies, causing the viewer to experience time and space in unusual ways.³⁹ In *All This Can Happen*, the imaginative walker/traveller and the viewer, also, traverse

disparate spaces, but in different ways. Whereas *Meshes* or *A Study* engages the viewer in following Deren's protagonists, *All This Can Happen* does not propose this kind of identification with a single body.

The walker of *All This Can Happen* wanders through the city and the woods, but the spectator does not see him. There are roads, fields, bookshops, living rooms, and many people in the images, so that the walker is not represented by one distinguishable body, but by several figures at different times. Sometimes, the single body is hidden in the in-between, inviting the viewer to take his or her place in amongst the crowd.



Screenshot of *All This Can Happen* by Siobhan Davies and David Hinton, 2012. "The Open Road" by Claude Friese-Greene, 1925/6.

Space is perhaps experienced with a more personal engagement than in films that feature precise protagonists. In every visual happening and visually choreographed sequence, the viewer constructs the continuity of space through his or her own eyes. The space in Davies and Hinton's film relies on this interplay and interaction of the relations between images—the inside and outside of each image—as well as on the soundscape that accompanies the images and the narrated text.

Writing about Chris Marker's slide-motion film *La Jetée* in her book, *Phenomenology and the Future of Film: Rethinking Subjectivity beyond French Cinema*, Jenny Chamarette talks about a "cinematographic betweenness"⁴⁰ of bodies, technologies, and the outer world, of the film and of sound and image. According to Chamarette, Marker plays with "disembodiment" and "betweenness,"⁴¹ suggesting that the less a body (his own) is present in the image, the more the viewer is connected to that world, especially through the presence of the voice, which appears to slide over the different photographs. The disembodiment of the protagonist appears to act as a trigger for its opposite—embodiment—and sensorial engagement on the part of the viewer, within the filmic space and a sensorial feeling of the filmic space.⁴² The spectator fills in for the protagonist.

All This Can Happen also brings to mind *Why Colonel Bunny was Killed* by screendance maker Miranda Pennell.⁴³ The film is composed of still photographs taken at the turn of the twentieth century.⁴⁴ Pennell places the images one after the other and zooms

into details of the pictures to tell the story “of a medical missionary on the Afghan borderlands”⁴⁵ in British India. A sense of movement that was not originally present in the visual material is constructed and offered to the spectator. The images are, and look, old; the haptic nature of their partly damaged material spreads a breeze of history towards the viewer, fusing the “now” and “then,” as Pennell has argued in an earlier issue of the *International Journal of Screendance*.⁴⁶ The juxtaposition of a soundscape, composed of music, spoken word, and other sounds, with the images determine the viewer’s perception of the past. Pennell’s intention of connecting times is expressed through editing a series of still photographic images together, and creating interspaces, or spaces between them. At the same time, the spaces *in-between* the still images give the possibility to rest and pause *and* they create a sense of suspense, a moment of waiting for something to happen. As Pennell points out, “the photographic sequence makes for a potentially interesting dialectic between viewer and image, which can at once become a reflection on the past and an anticipation of the future-of-the past, the anticipation of cause and effect.”⁴⁷ There is a potential for different temporalities occurring at the same time, which recalls the multiple temporalities facilitated by rituals as discussed above.

The relational *in-between* of images opens up the interpretational possibilities of the film and makes the viewer “move” *even* between the still images. This tension between still and supposedly moving images entangles the viewer and draws her/him into the work. S/he may even find her/himself anticipating the next move, taking part in the ever changing, *unstable* state of moving consciousness and continuity. As Mark B.N. Hansen has argued in reference to Christian Metz’s reading of Bergson: “to perceive motion, rather than represent it statically in a manner that destroys its essence, *one must participate in the motion itself*.”⁴⁸

In order to participate, the viewer has to perceive and sense, think and walk, and be in a “thinking feeling”⁴⁹ of the medium, as well as in the world. This is reminiscent of Bergson’s understanding of the whole and of duration, which for him is an internal, psychological, and qualitative movement of time, like a stream of consciousness, not reducible to space. In *All This Can Happen*, the viewer identifies with the depictions of details, the feelings and thoughts which Walser develops during his walking and visualizes again while writing. His inner time, his inner experiences, constitute the flow of his reality, building continuity out of something we usually perceive in small bits and pieces. In the film they are transformed through sliding, repetition, slowing down, or other editing techniques and connect with our inner, intuitive movement.⁵⁰ The “cinematic thinking” and the “thinking feeling” thereby fall together in the viewer’s *unstable equilibrium*.

Handing Over Movement

If one was to summarize all the layers of *All This Can Happen*, it could be argued that movement is its core element: from the movement within each image and the passing from one to the other, to the movement of everyday gestures in the recorded material, and the movement of the walker whom one sees and hears talking about his walk.

To walk we have to lean forward, lose our balance, and begin to fall. We let go, constantly, of the previous stability, falling, all the time, trusting that we will find a succession of new stabilities with each step.⁵¹

This quotation from Robyn Skinner describes Maya Deren's *unstable equilibrium* through the act of walking. A walker has to adjust from one step to the next, not unlike the man falling right at the beginning of the film and trying to adjust to his instabilities. The filmic images similarly "initiate" each other and start an unpredictable flow of movement. It is a flow generated through a poetic aesthetic that is explicitly present in both Deren's oeuvre and Davies' and Hinton's film. It is not narrative meaning that comes first, but perception and experience, and a sense of the accidental. Nothing in *All This Can Happen* happens by chance, but the film gives the impression that *all this can happen* accidentally. According to Deren, the accidental experience defines poetic film: "Now poetry, to my mind, consists not of assonance; or rhythm, or rhyme, or any of these other qualities which we associate as being characteristic of poetry. Poetry, to my mind, is an approach to experience, in the sense that a poet is looking at the same experience that a dramatist may be looking at."⁵²

All This Can Happen hands over movement from one image to the next, as well as through the splitting of the screen into many smaller screens. In his analysis of the slide-motion film *Hausken* reflects on the development of movement in the switching from one image, or one frame, to another. Hausken refers to Christian Metz: "[E]ven if each image is a still, switching from one to the next creates a second movement, an ideal one, made out of successive and different immobilities."⁵³ It is curious that the succession of immobilities, as well as the stopping and starting of movement, would add up to a sense of constant movement. In a scene in which some girls are playing outside, movement is passed from one framed image to the next, as if there was a breeze traveling across them, animating the bodies of the images. The frame could be seen to function like a search screen, sliding over an animated reality and looking for something inside of it.⁵⁴ As the voice over muses, "let them be unrestrained,"⁵⁵ the girls pull themselves from one frame into the next, their emerging movements being freed and passed on, liberating movement from its narrative form much like Maya Deren had intended.

This second, ideal movement, that occurs between the images, as Hausken writes, allows for an associative connection of images in the sense of a vertical way of editing.⁵⁶ In this approach, where the physical movement is more important than

character definitions, the dance unfolds. In *All This Can Happen*, the film's structure is based on combinatory and physical associations between images and words, creating additional layers, generating "another dimension," as Deren writes with regards to the use of words in vertical film form.⁵⁷

The scene with the girls can be compared to a sequence of gestural dance that occurs in the film *Ritual in Transfigured Time*, a sequence that illustrates Deren's desire to create "dance out of non-dancing elements."⁵⁸ In *Ritual* it is not the bodies of the protagonists that connect distant spaces as they do in *Meshes of the Afternoon*, nor is it the movement of a single dancer, as in *A Study*. This scene is about one continuous movement going through the film, connecting the different characters and instances with each other. Deren's gestural dance points to the human condition more than towards meaning. As Deren argues, "what makes this a dance film, or a film-dance, is that all the movement—stylized or casual, full-figured or detailed—are related to each other, both immediately and over the film as a whole, according to a choreographic concept."⁵⁹



Screenshots of *Ritual in Transfigured Time*. Dir. Maya Deren, 1946.

Deren edits the guest's handshakes into a dance that freezes and starts again, thus forming the choreographic gestures of the film. The most important thing in these shots, as Deren argues, is "the emotional integrity of the movement itself."⁶⁰ Variations on this technique can be found right across *All This Can Happen*, not least in the magical hat-scene, where a woman adjusts her hat in an 8-way split screen.



Screenshot of *All This Can Happen* by Siobhan Davies and David Hinton, 2012. 'Hints and Hobbies.' Courtesy of AP Archive British Movietone.

The images in this scene look like chronophotography, originally created to arrest movement in its spatial distillation in order to apprehend its timing, that is brought to life again. They bring to mind what Georges Didi-Huberman has called "la danse de toute chose," the dance of everything.⁶¹ For Didi-Huberman, "chronophotography supplements human perception,"⁶² or, perhaps it sharpens and intensifies the viewer's perception, matching it to Walser's discernment on his walk:

In the water of a fountain a dog refreshes itself, in the blue air swallows twitter. One or two ladies in astonishingly short skirts and astoundingly high, snug, fine, elegant, dainty colored bootees make themselves conspicuous as anything else. Moreover two summer or straw hats catch my eye.⁶³

As an essayistic "ciné-poem," *All This Can Happen* is an approach to life through the visualized peripateticism of Walser, his walking, talking, and seeing things. His perceptions of the world are transferred onto the spectators, involving the viewer in a multi-sensual walking science. But *All This Can Happen* does not address the viewer directly, as do, for example, the essay-films of Jean-Luc Godard, Wim Wenders, and others. Instead it mines the sensorial through the multiplicity of *contrapuntal affections*. Possibilities and chances of meaning and understanding and of re-contextualisation are left open and allow for individual responses or interpretations. As argued by Sarah Keller about the possibilities and flexibility of expanding time and space with regards to Deren's work,⁶⁴ the film is thereby somewhat incomplete and open-ended.⁶⁵ Uncertain endings and uncertain narrative sequences underline the circularity and processual character of the work. Both *All This Can Happen* and Robert Walser's writing make use of this approach, and the wanderer/walker continuously, as Walser writes, "efface(s) himself in the contemplation and observation of things."⁶⁶

Becoming

Film, as Mark Alice Durant writes in an essay on Maya Deren, is about how one moment passes and becomes the next.⁶⁷ The change does not appear in one frame

but in what happens in the passage from one to another, in every in-between moment. This article has argued that *All This Can Happen* has its very own temporality, due to the difference in age between the varying images and the text. Together with the viewer's *newness*—to use Pennell's terminology⁶⁸—one comes to feel the timelessness of the film, and the possibility that it could be seen and understood at anytime, anywhere. Durant writes that Deren, "spoke of the concept of time not being a fixed phenomenon, but something that was essentially subjective and *unstable*. She adopted Einstein's notion of the 'relativistic universe' to describe the idea of constant metamorphosis—of **becoming** as opposed to being."⁶⁹ Time, like movement is neither fixed nor bound to space; it changes. It changes like the images and like Walser's walking writing. In that sense, archival footage and photographs become infused by a feeling of present time. The transformation of the archival footage into digital film generates new movement, but with all the historical marks and hints included.

"Becoming as opposed to being" recalls the ritual, and Deleuze's idea of going back into an event and reliving it in some way. One may go back in time and into history, but the purpose is not the history of these images, the aim is to facilitate new perceptions and experiences. In other words, film exists always in the here and now. And within this *nowness* film can recall the eventfulness of the cinematographic gesture no matter when it was first caught on film.⁷⁰

Finally to draw a final circle, another notion of *becoming* enters, as described by Martine Beugnet in her book *Cinema and Sensation*.⁷¹ Beugnet writes about the sensuous cinema, a cinema that returns to the flesh, to bodily experiences, and cites Deleuze and Guattari:

[B]ecoming is not to imitate or identify with something or someone. Nor is it to proportion formal relations. Neither of these two figures of analogy is applicable to becoming from the forms one has, the subject one is, the organs one has, or the function one fulfills, becoming is to extract particles between which one establishes the relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness that are closest to what one is becoming, and through which one becomes.⁷²

The relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness are the characteristics of both film and dance, and constitute its play. Watching still or moving images can cause the viewer to feel moved without displacement, to be possessed by the image as in a ritualistic practice, to hover between the old and the new, and to transcend present time. The continuous process and *unstable equilibrium* in *All This Can Happen* create a ritual of passing images that move the viewer. Movements and images may be repeated, but every repetition has its difference. Every image, like every step, is a new leaning forward, a new discovery that the directors take the viewer through. The *becoming* of their idea of movement happens in the *unstable equilibrium*, in the

auratic⁷³ visual—and in the union of crackling, visual processes and sonic layers of sensation. It is a walking reflection of living images that *become*, folding movement into new contexts, making connections with the spectator here and now.

Biography

Florence Freitag is working with moving images and moving bodies as director and videodance artist, performer, and curator/writer. She received an MA in Film and Audiovisual Media-Culture with a thesis guided by Maya Deren's "choreo-cinéma" and her voodooist presence. Freitag trained in dance between France and Germany. Inspired by life's shifting continuity, haptic kinesthetics, and everyday gestures, she is drawn to and involved in diverse multidisciplinary collaborations, including with Berlin-based dancers/choreographers, alongside working as videoeditor, as researcher/lecturer (e.g. Bauhaus-University Weimar), and as curator for the dance-performance platform "LUCKY TRIMMER." Her last videodance-trilogy in collaboration with DOP Johannes Plank has been shown internationally, including Loikka Dance Film Festival, Screendance Festival Stockholm, Short Waves Festival Poznan, Leeds International Film Festival, Lightmoves Festival Limerick, Dancescrecen London, FIVC, and DanceLab Nicosia

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Notes

¹ Deren, "Cinema as an Art Form," 31.

² Deren, "Cinema as an Art Form," 19. The essay was first published in the magazine *New Directions* 9.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 19-33.

⁵ Ibid., 31.

⁶ Deleuze, *Das Bewegungs-Bild*, 96.

⁷ Maya Deren didn't use the exact term ciné-poem to describe her films. It is used to describe Man Ray's cine-poem "Étoile de Mer." However, Deren describes her films as poetic, or being like poetry: "If philosophy is concerned with understanding the meaning of reality, than poetry—and art in general—is a celebration, a singing of

values and meanings." (Deren, "Manifestoes and Program Notes", in *Essential Deren*, 255).

⁸ Translated for the first time in 1955. The text in *All This Can Happen* and this article are from a translation by Christopher Middleton from 1957.

⁹ This is a free translation of Max Bense's quote: "Der Essayist ist ein Kombinatoriker, ein unermüdlicher Erzeuger von Konfigurationen um einen bestimmten Gegenstand," quoted in Faber, *Der Collage-Essay*, 8.

¹⁰ The notion of *peripateticism* comes from the philosophical school founded by Aristotle and derives from the Greek *peripatetikos*, meaning walking, and from the adjective *peripatetic*, meaning meandering or wandering. We could say that Walser's writing has something of an Aristotelian movement-thinking. For Walser and his connection to peripateticism, see Huelle, *Peripateticism*.

¹¹ Definition from Oxford Dictionaries Online. In Maya Deren's films, this occurs in two different ways. For example, in *Meshes of the Afternoon* we can have large changes through little changes like the new position of the knife in her dreamlike meander through the house. Another large change happens with the help of a little editing of the footsteps. Within four steps, Maya as the protagonist traverses four different spaces and times and steps back into her house. Something little is happening, that always keeps something bigger moving, continuously.

¹² Keller, *Maya Deren: Incomplete Control*, 83.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 83

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹⁵ Deren, "Ritual in Transfigured Time," 228.

¹⁶ Keller, *Maya Deren: Incomplete Control*, 83.

¹⁷ Deren, "Manifestoes and Program Notes," 252.

¹⁸ Keller, *Maya Deren: Incomplete Control*, 85

¹⁹ Christiani, in Keller, *Maya Deren: Incomplete Control*, 186.

²⁰ Rice, *Inverted Odysseys*, 17.

²¹ Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 170.

²² Biehl and Locke, "Deleuze and the Anthropology of Becoming," 317.

²³ *At Land*, Dir. Deren, 14'00.

²⁴ *Meshes of the Afternoon*, Dir. Deren and Hammid, 14' 00.

²⁵ Keller, *Maya Deren: Incomplete Control*, 52.

²⁶ Holl, *Kino, Trance, & Kybernetik*, 95.

²⁷ Deren, "Planning by Eye," 152.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 152.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 153.

³⁰ Walser, *The Walk*, 67.

³¹ Deren, quoted in McPherson, *Essential Deren*, 132.

³² Walser was inspired by the development of dance during the early years of the 20th century. He said, "It is my intention to dance with words." (Utz, *Tanz auf den Rändern*, 441) His sentences are very long, and he describes simple everyday life with

sophistication. A frequent use of alliterations and pleonasm or tautologies make his humorous texts plastic and flowing.

³³ Walser, *The Walk*, 61.

³⁴ Bellour, *L'entre-image*.

³⁵ Røssaak, *Between Stillness and Motion*, 196.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Hausken, quoted in Røssaak, *Between Stillness and Motion*, 85.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Chamarette, *Phenomenology and the Future of Film*, 106.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Pennell, "Why Colonel Bunny Was Killed."

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Pennell, "Some Thoughts," 74.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Hansen, in Røssaak, *Between Stillness and Motion*, 52.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁵⁰ See Bergson, *Materie und Gedächtnis*, 206.

⁵¹ Skinner, in Huelle, *Peripateticism in Robert Walser*. Online.

⁵² Deren, in "Poetry & The Film: A symposium." Online.

⁵³ Hausken, in Røssaak, *Between Stillness and Motion*, 90.

⁵⁴ Here we also could be thinking of Bazin's distinction between "cadre" and "cache." "Cadre" being the frame that collects the movement of the image in the inside and "cache" as a sort of mask that opens the image to the off, to the in between also of the images.

⁵⁵ Walser, *The Walk*, 15.

⁵⁶ Hausken, in Røssaak, *Between Stillness and Motion*, 90.

⁵⁷ Deren, in "Poetry & The Film: A symposium." Online.

⁵⁸ Deren, "Ritual in Transfigured Time," 225.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 225.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 225-226.

⁶¹ Didi-Hubermann, *Mouvements de l'air*, 281.

⁶² Deren, "Ritual in Transfigured Time," 225.

⁶³ Walser, *The Walk*, 15.

⁶⁴ Keller, *Maya Deren: Incomplete Control*, 52.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 52

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 60, 62.

⁶⁷ Durant, *A Life Choreographed for Camera*.

⁶⁸ Pennell, *Some Thoughts on 'Nowness' and 'Thenness'*, 72.

⁶⁹ Durant, *A Life Choreographed for Camera*, 72. Italics are original, Boldings by the author of this essay.

⁷⁰ Görling, *Im Medium Sein*, in Görling, Skrandies, Trinkhaus, *Geste, Bewegungen zwischen Tanz und Film*, 275.

⁷¹ Beugnet, *Cinema and Sensation*.

⁷² Deleuze/Guattari, quoted in Beugnet, *Cinema and Sensation*, 129.

⁷³ This is of course in reference to Walter Benjamin's terminology of the "Aura" in his 1936 essay "The work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." Here he describes the Aura of an art piece as the "Here and Now of the Original." Although Benjamin argues that the industrial art of filmmaking loses this auratic effect, it could be held against it that especially Maya Deren's filmdance can bring the experience of dance back via the medium film. The actualization and reinterpretation of the archive photography in *All This Can Happen* could have a similar effect.

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Trauma and Dissociation in *All This Can Happen*

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Abstract

This article is a close textual reading of Siobhan Davies and David Hinton's experimental film, *All This Can Happen*, as an exploration of the causes, symptoms, and coping methods associated with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in returned soldiers. The paper argues that the film repurposes Robert Walser's short story, *The Walk*, as an autobiographical account of the mental illness that plagued the author later in his life. The paper examines the connections between the narrated text and the onscreen imagery to identify diagnostic criteria of PTSD (as characterized in the American Psychological Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders, 5th Edition) such as dissociation, panic, depression, psychological and physiological triggers of flashbacks, avoidance behavior, hyper vigilance, and recurrent and intrusive thoughts. The paper concludes with an analysis of the film's split-screen editing technique, arguing that the experimental form of the film places the viewer deeper into the psychology of the narrator and functions to garner greater empathy and understanding of his pain.

Keywords: David Hinton, Siobhan Davies, Robert Walser, *The Walk* short story, DSM-5, PTSD, split-screen editing, trauma, returned soldiers, panic disorder, experimental dance film, found footage, repurposed footage

We open on what appears to be an extreme close shot of melted celluloid, although it may as well be an extreme wide shot of a landscape decimated by nuclear war. The image, unidentifiable and grey, suggests devastation, loss, and an overall breakdown of meaning and symbolism. The sound is desolate, like wind across a desert, joined by garbled radio transmission, evoking post-war annihilation. The shot sets up themes about destruction of film, landscape, even the human mind. Ultimately, the film is about all three.

All This Can Happen, the experimental film by Siobhan Davies and David Hinton, uses found footage and photographs from the early 20th century to (re)envision *The Walk*, a short story by Robert Walser originally published in 1917. *The Walk* is a story told through first-person perspective by a writer who goes for a walk across city and countryside, ruminating and making observations about society, culture, and existence. His commentary is witty and articulate, his criticisms are condemning of an

oppressive society and confessional of his role as a willing member. Through his observations, he is revealed to be a troubled man, depressed, anxious, and even schizophrenic as his ruminations become near-psychological breakdowns of fits of anger or fear. *The Walk* gives little indication for the cause of the narrator's pain but suggests that modern society has made him ill, that his role as a devalued artist causes him to live in constant shame and rage. While *The Walk* criticizes society through the lens of the narrator, its film adaptation, *All This Can Happen*, turns the lens back onto the psychology of the narrator himself. It is a film about a man's disconnect from people, society, and most importantly, from himself.

All This Can Happen is experimental in its use of split screen, frame-by-frame slow motion, and still photograph images. This article will comment on the use of these experimental techniques briefly in its conclusion; this article is primarily focused on the analysis of the psychologies of film's narrator and its author, Robert Walser. This article hypothesizes that Davies and Hinton's adaptation of *The Walk* was influenced by the life experiences of Walser before and after he wrote the story. Walser served in the Swiss national guard,¹ published the story in the middle of World War I, and in the early 1930's, was diagnosed with schizophrenia and forced into a psychiatric hospital where he died one winter day when out for a walk.² The film is focused on these links between war, death, and mental illness. While *The Walk* only makes occasional reference to war, *All This Can Happen* puts it front and center.

Perhaps Walser's biography served as inspiration for interpreting *The Walk* not as an expression of Walser's potentially mis-diagnosed schizophrenia but as an expression of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a diagnosis that did not exist until 1980. Davies and Hinton's film attempts to understand and express empathy for the emotional, psychological, and physiological pain of soldiers suffering from PTSD.

This article will begin with a brief description of posttraumatic stress disorder as defined by the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5).³ It will then analyze, sequence by sequence, how the film's content and structure is directly motivated by the narrator's disorder in an attempt to create understanding and empathy for his painful experience. Finally, the article will analyze the use of split screen editing in the context of dissociation and detachment, common symptoms of PTSD.

Diagnosis

Two of the key symptoms of PTSD are the re-experiencing of the trauma and the entering of a dissociative state caused by triggering stimuli. These responses are often painful, recurring, and uncontrollable. The *DSM-5* notes how dissociation can last for a long period of time and is triggered by simple events:

Commonly the individual has recurrent and intrusive recollections of the event [...] Recurrent, involuntary, and intrusive distressing memories of the traumatic event(s) [...] Dissociative reactions (e.g. flashbacks) in which the individual feels or acts as if the traumatic event(s) were recurring [...] The individual may experience dissociative states that last from a few seconds to several hours or even days, during which components of the event are relived and the individual behaves as if the event were occurring at that moment [...] Intense psychological distress [...] or physiological reactivity [...] often occurs when the person is exposed to triggering events that resemble or symbolize an aspect of the traumatic event.⁴

Two common coping behaviors for sufferers of PTSD are denial and avoidance. The *DSM-5* notes, "The individual commonly makes deliberate efforts to avoid thoughts, memories, feelings, or talking about the traumatic event [...] and to avoid activities, objects, situations, or people who arouse recollections of it."⁵

Finally, the *DSM-5* covers how affective and physiological PTSD symptoms may range from lethargy and depression to hyper vigilance and anxiety. The individual may feel, "detached or estranged from other people or a persistent inability to feel positive emotions [...] Individuals with PTSD may be quick tempered and may even engage in aggressive verbal and/or physical behavior with little or no provocation [...] Individuals with PTSD may be very reactive to unexpected stimuli, displaying a heightened startle response."⁶

All This Can Happen is the story of a man returned from war, existing mostly in a dissociated state, oscillating between terror, joy, and boredom. This article explores the film in the context of the PTSD symptoms of recurrent and intrusive thoughts, denial, hyper vigilance, and dissociation.

Empathy and the Unreliable Narrator

All This Can Happen allows the audience access to the narrator's mind and heart through a selection of passages from *The Walk*,⁷ through its use of found footage and photographs, and through its editing and sound design. The protagonist of the film, who is also the narrator, tells the story of his walk via voiceover and although he says that he believes that it "actually did happen,"⁸ many of his claims are dubious. The film, through its selection and omission of text from *The Walk*, represents a narrator whose observations are exaggerated beyond metaphor, whose emotions rapidly oscillate without motivation, and who slips in and out of first and third person. He comes across as an unreliable narrator; his reports of facts are not to be trusted. But *All This Can Happen* is not interested in a factual account of the narrator's walk; the film is interested in the emotional and psychological experiences of *The Walker*. The audience is sutured into the viewpoint of the narrator so they may experience the world as he does, and gain understanding or empathy for his plight.

Found footage and photographs from the early 20th century are juxtaposed with the voiceover narration. Thus the film visually places the audience into the period when Walser wrote *The Walk*, the world that Walser (and the WWI soldiers) inhabited. In addition to visual content, the editing and sound design are used to evoke and manifest the emotions that the narrator experiences during his walk. The found footage is frozen, multiplied, split, slowed, and distorted in countless ways to articulate the disjointed and dissociated psyche of the narrator, allowing the audience to perceive the world as he does. Although what “actually happened” during his walk is unknown to the audience, the film provides a significant contextualizing element that does not exist in the book with the opening sequence.

Recurrent and Intrusive Thoughts in the Opening Sequence

The opening sequence lasts only one and a half minutes, but without it the rest of the film would be an enigma. The opening sequence, unlike the rest of the film, exists outside of the consciousness of the narrator, beyond his grasp as a writer. There is no voiceover narration and no parallel in the original version of *The Walk*. The sequence is key to the filmmaker’s interpretation of the book as a story about PTSD.

PTSD is rooted in a specific causal event or events that affect an individual. The *DSM-5* describes the cause as “exposure to actual or threatened death [... by] directly experiencing the traumatic event [or] witnessing, in person, the event(s) as it occurred to others.”⁹ The opening sequence presents us with a man—presumably the narrator—lying in a hospital bed, shaking uncontrollably, looking across the room in a state of terror. He sees a weak and disabled man who tries to walk but repeatedly falls to the ground. The editing repeats the moment over and over, in slow motion. This moment of pain and weakness, burned into his brain and replayed endlessly, is the representation of his trauma.

In the same sequence, troops march up a hill, a soldier tumbles downward, and another man is unable to get off the ground. The dark soundscape only furthers the sense of Sisyphean futility and dread as the narrator stares on in disbelief, shaking uncontrollably. These images of pain and suffering may represent his first-hand experiences or those that he saw in others. In the diagnosis of PTSD mentioned above, either is essential to trauma.

One key word in the *DSM-5*’s descriptions of PTSD is *recurrent*. Indeed, the narrator cannot stop the images of pain and suffering. A doctor, unable to help, shakes the narrator’s head violently as the images play over and over. Finally, electric current sounds, suggestive of shock treatment, bring the scene to a close. The sequence ends with the image of a screaming man splashing water on his face. He’s clean, healthy, and ready to be released. However, in the rest of the film the narrator moves fluidly in and out of dissociative states, suggesting that the hospitalization and treatment was insufficient and even a contributing factor to the illness he develops.

Denial, Detachment, Distress, and Dissociation

After the opening sequence, the film switches to the present and introduces a healthier-looking narrator at his writing desk writing about how our “lads are fighting for us.”¹⁰ This visual, like many visuals in the film, is not present in *The Walk* and as such is entirely a creation of and emphasis by the filmmakers. The film suggests that although the narrator has been released from the hospital, he has not stopped thinking about the war. It consumes him, even as he goes about his work. He admits how the “desire to take a walk” overcomes him and he leaves his “room of phantoms” to hurry into the street.¹¹ The subsequent film is about inarticulable and inconceivable pain; most of the insights the audience gains are from what isn’t said. The film lets the audience determine the reasons for which he stopped writing, the extent to which he “desired” to be outside, and the manner in which he “hurried” out of his building to the street.¹² Although not explicit, one could be right to guess that his writing about war and thinking about his friends who died (the “phantoms”),¹³ triggered anxiety and panic, causing him to run outside. In fact, the entire walk itself could be seen as avoidance behavior as mentioned in the *DSM-5* above. *The Walk* is his attempt to repress and deny the trauma. He fails, of course. His dark thoughts recur at inappropriate times and he remains susceptible to triggers of all sorts.

As he steps onto the sunlit streets, he announces that the “all sorrow, all pain and all grey thoughts were as vanished,”¹⁴ and he feels that he has successfully escaped his traumatic pain. A beat later, he grows concerned about the heavy thoughts that lie “before me and behind me;”¹⁵ and within seconds, his happy thoughts of children running around darken, saying, “before long, old age will terrify and bridle them.” This example of happy thoughts being intruded upon by recurrent dark ideas establishes a cycle that will replay for the narrator throughout the rest of the film. The film, through its omission of original text, is able to condense and thus heighten the sense of oscillation between emotional and affective poles, making the narrator’s suffering clear to the audience.

In the next scene, the narrator passes by workers and laborers and feels “honestly ashamed”¹⁶ for being out for a walk. He runs into an old friend from the militia who accuses him of being out during working hours. He feels shame not simply because he’s walking during work hours, but because he’s out for a walk at all. He is reminded of his fallen brothers who are unable to walk and feels a sort of “survivor guilt,” adding to his layers of distress.

The scene also introduces a theme of how loud noises cause intense distress for the narrator. He exhibits irritability and an exaggerated startle response as described by the *DSM-5*, and combined with his guilt, he is sent spiraling towards paranoia. The film shows visuals of countless eyes spying on him, and just as it seems he may have a complete emotional breakdown, he fends it off through denial. He claims that he

doesn't feel the "least annoyance for having been found out. For that would have been silly."¹⁷ Through his self-deception, the film reveals his unreliability—not because he is lying to the audience, but because he is lying to himself.

Within a moment, and without clear reason, he's happy again and begins a new emotional cycle. He claims to love everything he sees with a "fiery love."¹⁸ The visuals display colorful photography and are accompanied by the sound of light whistling. His next emotional descent begins as he talks about the happy children playing in the road. Soon the film is flooded with images of traffic, and he remarks how easily the children could be "crushed to a pulp."¹⁹ The intrusive and recurrent thoughts of violence are fleshed out by the visuals, climaxing in a shot of a man preparing a child's coffin.

Throughout the film, the visual imagery reflects the subconscious and repressed emotions of the narrator. They show the subtext—what he cannot (and will not) articulate—and provide insight to the narrator's pain and complicated conceptualization of his experience. The visuals are essential to connecting the audience to the experience of the narrator. For example, in the scene after the child's coffin is revealed, there is a rare moment of backstory in which the narrator mentions coming "to this region out of cold, forlorn and narrow circumstances. Inwardly sick."²⁰ The narrator never says that the military is the cause of his pain—he's too far along in his denial and repression. Rather, the accompanying visuals of a man in a hospital and a disabled soldier provide the details.

The narrator's first sustained interaction with another human occurs in the bookshop, where he asks for a book that is both popular and well-written. The visuals suggest that the bookseller hands him a copy of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (another book about a person in a dream state out for a walk). The narrator says thank you "cold-bloodedly,"²¹ and as he leaves, the bookseller yells at him and calls him "uncultivated and ignorant."²² There is nothing in the narration to motivate such a response by the bookseller, so the audience is left to speculate. At first, it appears that the bookseller is to blame—he is overly "cultured" and condescending—but by this point in the film, the audience knows that the narrator possesses an unpredictable and agitated affect, and one that he seems unaware of. His cold-blooded "thank you" hints that he may have been rude to the bookseller throughout their interaction, questioning the bookseller's intelligence. It is just as likely, maybe even more so, that the narrator is the one to blame. As mentioned above, *DSM-5* indicates that people with PTSD may engage in "aggressive verbal and/or physical behavior with little or no provocation,"²³ and this scene could be read in these terms, demonstrating it through the narrator's cold, scrutinizing, and condescending treatment of the bookseller.

Soon after, the narrator gets caught up in the newspapers, noting phrases like "flank attack,"²⁴ and compares the art of war to the art of writing. He says he's thinking about how sometimes a "book must die and the writer despair of it all,"²⁵ suggesting that

he's actually thinking about soldiers dying. The details in the narration are present in *The Walk*, but the film uses these small remarks as jumping off points to explore its thesis about PTSD in full force. The visuals show soldiers marching, explosions, and devastation—conjuring up the opening images of the film. Before long, the visuals show dead men in trenches, as the narrator grows overwhelmed. As the moment reaches a climax, the visuals switch over to shots of grass and nature as the narrator calms himself down. The drama in the film becomes clear: how much longer will the narrator be able to fend off the intrusive imagery? How much longer will his repression and denial hold up before he is beaten to a pulp, forced to surrender to madness and pain.

He remains peaceful for a short while but soon admits that, "When I'm out walking, many notions, flashes of light, and lightning flashes, intrude and interrupt."²⁶ The visuals and sound design suggest that the flashes are distressing—lightning cracks across the screen, the audio becomes warbling screeches, and the images turn into a garbled mess of symbols and darkness and end with a solar eclipse. The PTSD symptoms have overpowered him and he has entered a state of total dissociation that leads him to a direct encounter with the manifestation of his trauma: Tomzack. Tomzack, "an enormity, a monster, who almost completely darkened my bright and shiny road [...] Beside him I felt like a dwarf or a poor weak child. Oh I knew who he was [...] he had to live without love and without human joy [...] He died every instant and yet he could not die."²⁷ This is the first moment of great despair that he faces. He feels complete terror and helplessness in his confrontation with inarticulable trauma and pain, manifested in a timeless, dark, inhuman giant. The intrusive thoughts of war and death are as endless and undying as Tomzack. He manages to elude Tomzack, but knows that he will see him again.

Snapping out of his dissociative state, he finds himself in a beautiful and quiet forest, and he thinks of sleep. He has an overall feeling of gratitude for the world that breaks "powerfully out of my soul."²⁸ He thinks of making love on the forest floor, but his thoughts turn quickly to what it must be like to die there. Thoughts of suicide are in line with the *DSM-5* that notes, "PTSD is associated with suicidal ideation."²⁹ He ends with the thought, "To have a small, quiet grave in the forest would be lovely."³⁰

The cycle goes on like this: a moment of joy is followed by intrusive thoughts of fear and violence, eventually culminating in thoughts of death. A pleasant stray dog provides the narrator the opportunity to berate and abuse, a young girl's singing turns into thoughts of dying with a smile, a schoolhouse triggers thoughts of being beaten and thrashed, a pleasant lunch turns into panic attack of terror and disgust where he is forced to eat an excess of meat, and a trip to the tailor leads to a shouting match in which the narrator runs away in shame.

He speaks with great respect to a taxman as he begs for a break for being so poor. He claims that he is misunderstood and disconnected from the people and the world around him and his rant sends him into an intense state of dissociation. He even describes his panicked state in third person. His words echo the *DSM-5*; "he will again and again be confused and startled by curious impressions and bewitchings of spirit power. He has the feeling that he must sink all of a sudden into the earth [...] an abyss has opened [...] and he must ask himself 'Where am I?'"³¹ The visuals turn blurry and chaotic; he is consumed with fear. "Earth and Heaven suddenly stream together and collide into a flashing, shimmering ... imagery,"³² he says as the visuals and sounds simulate explosions and fireworks. The images and celluloid melt as if caught in a projector, and the entire film seems to break down. In this moment, finally, the narrator does too. He continues to try to repress and deny, as has worked before, but this time is different. He now refers to himself in third person, truly dissociated: "he laboriously tries to retain his normal state of mind. He succeeds and he walks on."³³

The narrator then hopes he has returned to normal, but in fact, he has changed. He returns to the world uncertain about his reality, and although he claims to believe that everything he's described "actually did happen,"³⁴ his use of third-person narration suggests he's not in the position to judge. He finds himself back with the taxman and is told that they will consider cutting him a tax break after all. He is overjoyed, "raptures of freedom seized me and carried me away"³⁵ back onto the streets. While this may seem like just another cycle of joy and terror, he has actually started to break free.

There are three remaining significant events that demonstrate a new cycle, and perhaps even a path to recovery. The first event comes as he passes a train filled with travelling soldiers. He identifies with them, and remarks on how the civilians cheer for them. He does not avoid or run from this trigger; in fact, he is filled with positive emotions. His world becomes "a thousand times more beautiful [...] All grief, all human disappointment, all evil, all pain seemed to vanish."³⁶ The film repeats imagery of hands allowing birds to fly away—letting go. Indeed, the final moments of the film are about just that.

He continues in his state of joy and experiences a new state of re-association, claiming, "I walked as in an inward world. Everything outside me became a dream. I was no longer myself. I was another. And yet it was on this account that I became properly myself... In the sweet light of love I realized... Perhaps the inward self is the only self that really exists."³⁷ The images reveal children playing happily and, unlike every other occasion in the film, his thoughts are not intruded by images of death. His existential revelation is that he exists even if he can't trust the world around him. He finds a sort of self-love and unconditional acceptance for the first time.

In the evening, he reaches a forest by the lake, and it is here that he begins the process of mourning. In Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery*, she describes mourning as essential to recovery: "the descent into mourning is at once the most necessary and most dreaded task in this stage of recovery."³⁸ It is essential that PTSD sufferers grieve for the pain they have experienced, witnessed, or caused. The narrator reflects on loss, and soon the visuals grow violent and angry as a face conveys states of narrator's internal pain. He becomes overwhelmed with guilt, perhaps for the atrocities he committed or witnessed during the war. As he wonders how he was so cruel, he grieves for his own weakness, stating, "past life opened to me and I was seized by astonishment with my countless frailties."³⁹ As he reflects upon death and destruction one final time, he picks flowers that surround him. "Did I pick flowers to lay them upon my sorrow?"⁴⁰ he asks himself, knowingly. The flowers are, of course, signs that he is grieving and mourning his past. He may not be recovered, but he is starting to recover. He lets the flowers fall to the ground and walks home in the darkness.

The Divided Canvas

The most remarkable formal device in the film is its use of split screen and black lines to separate onscreen images. The purpose of conventional split screen technique is to provide multiple perspectives of a particular moment in time; to allow the audience to see simultaneity in a way alternative to parallel editing or cross-cutting. Consider the split screen editing of Brian De Palma in his early films like *Dressed to Kill*.⁴¹ His split screen technique serves to create a more cohesive experience of a particular moment from two perspectives, to enhance the viewer's knowledge of the diegetic drama.

Split screen or multiple projection technique has its place in the avant-garde as well. Andy Warhol's *Chelsea Girls*,⁴² for example, requires that two projectors screen unique scenarios at the same time, allowing the audience the choice to choose one story, or one moment from a story, over the other. In this case, the split screen creates entirely new meaning as the images, sounds, and dialogue interact and juxtapose with one another. Barbara Rubin's *Christmas on Earth*⁴³ simultaneously projects graphic sex acts on two projectors, one inside the other, as if the projectors themselves are engaging in intercourse. In Rubin's film as well, the audience creates new meaning as the images interact onscreen.

All This Can Happen, like Warhol and Rubin's work, uses split screen to allow for the construction of multiple meanings without regard for diegetic simultaneity. That is to say, since De Palma limits his use of split screen technique to literal diegetic simultaneity, he uses editing to enrich a single idea; but Davies and Hinton use their split screen so that as one image is added to another, multiple ideas are created all at once. Even more, Davies and Hinton are not limited to only two simultaneous images; often they use far more.

Digital editing software refers to the edited timeline as a temporal “canvas.” If the comparison to a painting is to be taken literally, the cinematic canvas chosen here is a severely restricted one. The canvas in the editing room exists temporally, and the only “paint” the editor may use is footage that has already been shot. The editor-as-painter does not create images; she controls how long an image is shown before moving on to another. With the exception of occasional dissolves or superimpositions, rarely is the editor’s canvas a place to combine or alter images. The timeline canvas doesn’t spatially construct ideas; it does so temporally. *All This Can Happen* turns the editor’s temporal canvas into a painter’s spatial canvas, uniquely placing multiple images on the screen at the same time. The film uses the canvas not just for montage, but also, significantly, for collage and decoupage.

Between the multiple images onscreen lie many black separating lines; the empty canvas beneath. The film’s black lines construct a new language of articulation and are aesthetically and philosophically meaningful. The split screen of multiple images frees the film for on-screen choreography that otherwise is only available across the edit point. Traditional editing allows for collisions and connections of shapes, movements, colors, brightness, etc., but only across the temporal cut point. *All This Can Happen* uses the black lines and split screen so that connections and collisions may be made across the screen-canvas itself. Images may respond to and play off of one another at the same time. The overall meaning of a particular moment is constructed without preferential regard for any one image, but instead on how the images come together as a whole.

Of course, the conflicting and complementary images seen onscreen at the same time are manifestations of the conflicted internal experience of the narrator. He, too, has trouble telling which image is “real” or primary. And so the film places the audience into the psychological perspective of the narrator—we struggle as he struggles. We find meaning as he does. We feel alone, disconnected, confused, scared, as he does. This is a film about empathy, and the visuals are essential to this process. The narrator does his best to communicate his experience to us, and the editing fills in the gaps. The audience hears his story and experiences, and viscerally feels, through the editing, his tortured state of mind.

All This Can Happen is striking in its ability to make visible the psychology of the narrator through the juxtaposition of visuals across the edit points, between visuals on the same screen, and against the sound design and carefully chosen text from *The Walk*. The film shows visuals that depict colors and context of the narration, but it also reveals images that are not in the narration at all. The film is about the subtext, gaps, about all that exists between the lines. The black lines and visible canvas are non-space, the absence of articulable meaning. They are denial, repression, amnesia—the forbidden subconscious made visible, a manifestation of dissociation and disconnection.

Before PTSD was named, those who suffered it, like Walser's narrator (if not Walser himself) and 40% of soldiers returning from WWI,⁴⁴ were seen as broken men, physically damaged and weak, and left to fend for themselves or hidden away in institutions—alone and misunderstood, unknown to the world and foreign to themselves. Decades later, PTSD is recognized as a treatable ailment due to advancements in cognitive behavioral therapy and medication; it has a name and it is visible to us. In *All This Can Happen*, Davies and Hinton rely on our contemporary and more widespread understanding of the disorder as they use a unique combination of found footage, narration, sound design, and across-the-canvas editing to provide insight and empathy into the body and mind of a tormented, fragmented, divided soul. I suspect that Robert Walser, alone and psychologically broken in his later years, would have appreciated such empathy.

Biography

Ross Morin is an independent filmmaker and assistant professor of Film Studies at Connecticut College in New London, Connecticut, where he teaches filmmaking and heads the film production curriculum. His most recent films, *A Wheel out of Kilter* and *Ad Noctum*, have screened nationally and internationally and won multiple awards. He is the co-founder of Kiltered Productions. Morin received his BA in Film Studies and Psychology from Connecticut College in 2005 where he graduated Phi Beta Kappa. He received his MFA in Film and Video Production from Ohio University in 2008 where he graduated Phi Kappa Phi.

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Notes

¹ Lerner, Ben, "Robert Walser's Disappearing Acts."

² Kunkel, Benjamin, "Still Small Voice: The Fiction of Robert Walser."

³ American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Fifth Edition.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 272.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 273.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 274.

⁷ Walser, *The Walk*.

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- ⁸ *All This Can Happen* (2012).37:04.Dir. Siobhan Davies, David Hinton. 37:04.
- ⁹ American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition*, 271.
- ¹⁰ *All This Can Happen* (2012). Dir. Siobhan Davies, David Hinton. 1:58.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, 02:20.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, 02:24.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, 02:20.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 02:38.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 02:50.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 03:44.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 04:25.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 04:40.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 05:10.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 06:24.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, 09:50.
- ²² *Ibid.*, 09:57.
- ²³ American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition*, 271.
- ²⁴ *All This Can Happen* (2012). Dir. Siobhan Davies, David Hinton. 11:02.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 11:41.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, 13:00.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 14:35.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, 14:35.
- ²⁹ American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition*, 280.
- ³⁰ *All This Can Happen* (2012). Dir. Siobhan Davies, David Hinton. 19:18.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, 35:50.
- ³² *Ibid.*, 36:17.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, 36:34.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, 37:04
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 37:36.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 38:43.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, 40:22.
- ³⁸ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 188.
- ³⁹ *All This Can Happen* (2012). Dir. Siobhan Davies, David Hinton. 43:58
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 46:55
- ⁴¹ *Dressed to Kill* (1980). Dir. Brian De Palma.
- ⁴² *Chelsea Girls* (1966). Dir. Andy Warhol.
- ⁴³ *Christmas on Earth*. Dir. Barbara Rubin.
- ⁴⁴ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 20.

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Siobhan Davies and David Hinton's *All This Can Happen* (2012)

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Abstract

This article considers *All This Can Happen* from an aesthetic point of view and connects this work, resulting from the tight collaboration of the dance film director David Hinton and the contemporary choreographer Siobhan Davies, to the history of avant-garde cinema. Apparently, *All This Can Happen* is not a dance film, although its rhythmic editing pays tribute to structural films of the seventies and deals with dance. It is not a run-of-the-mill "found footage" opus randomly organized, since the archives were discerningly selected. Subliminal shots, multi-screen images, photographic scratches, graphic signs, and pre-cinema elements associated with contrapuntal sounds produce fascinating effects, strange hallucinations, pure abstractions, and waking dream states, such as one could find in Georges Méliès films, as well as in Abel Gance's, Maya Deren's, or David Hinton's. As a masterpiece worthy of the name, this film demands repeated viewing.

Keywords: expanded cinema, avant-garde, split screen, rhythm, simultaneity, hypergraphy

This article seeks to provide a historical framework for considering the aesthetics and technology of *All This Can Happen*¹ by tracing the development of various image, sound, and performance practices that have resulted in new approaches to the material of film itself, as well as to screening formats and viewing environments. Drawing on Expanded Cinema and recognizing similar historic experimentation that began as early as the advent of film, this article identifies a rich array of artistic movements and projects that resonate with Siobhan Davies and David Hinton's collaborative film. Indeed, seeing *All This Can Happen* for the first time immediately stirs the viewer, who may then, if able, revisit the film indefinitely. Each screening is certain to reveal something new within the film's content or form, largely due to the artists' experimental approach, be it a subliminal shot, an incongruent conflux of images whose source the viewer seeks in vain, graphic signs, film strip accidents, or photochemical effects that one might miss upon first viewing. Davies and Hinton used the split screen² and updated the diptych and polyptych forms originally found in painting in order to create this "wide"³ film, in every sense of the term: ambitious in its movements and aims, polysemous, broad, and resonant with Expanded Cinema (a movement that includes works such as Abel Gance's 1927 *Napoleon* and Andy

Warhol's 1966 *Chelsea Girls*). Their film allows us to engage with questions that have fascinated critics since the 1920s and remain current, including those surrounding literary adaptations—in this case, Robert Walser's *The Walk* (1917)⁴; graphic interactions and the visual value of the image, or its "cineography;" psychophysiology; and the viewer's multi-event perception. *All This Can Happen* is replete with artistic, aesthetic, and technical elements that all have their own unique histories, often linked to those of the avant-garde.

Pre-text

With Robert Walser's *The Walk* as its starting point, the co-directors of *All This Can Happen* created several byways, at times departing from the original text for purely artistic reasons. They considered it necessary to condense the story, and, caught within the internal logic of editing, even reversed several scenes. This includes the passage to the bookshop found at the opening of the original text, just after a description of men's hats, which was inserted in the film between a brief sequence dedicated to feathers, ribbons, women's hats, and the digressive scene about cafés. This extended frame of reference leads to anachronisms as the images extend beyond the place and period of Walser's real (or imaginary) walk, and these alterations are directly linked to the problem of literary adaptations for the screen, as well as the abstract-figurative dialectic that results from the addition of images to any form of the written word. The artists did not seek to substitute or erase Walser's prose through audiovisual media, which would be more "modern" or all encompassing. Instead, they have proposed visual equivalents capable of rendering the protagonist's universe and situations as described by the Swiss writer.

"All this can happen" as soon as one unapologetically attempts to adapt a book, language, or the sacred—particularly when using film, which is traditionally considered a profane form of art. Despite the alterations and translation, the film's interpretation of Walser by artists from another era and in another medium retains the author's evocative intensity through spoken text (in English, not German), reduced from a story of 100 pages to essential selections in which content and form follow a meandering path. This success is the result of Davies and Hinton's skill applied to the mixing process and documentary research, as well as Danny McGuire's precise structuralist editing (and paradoxically, image gels), in addition to actor John Heffernan's perfect diction spoken off camera. The film neither distorts the content of the book nor the spirit that emanates from it. In this sense, it does not harm the moral rights of the author, which are by nature, "perpetual and imperishable" (at least, according to French law).⁵ Similarly, questions related to divergence (a creative method resembling collage used and justified by Lautréamont),⁶ the ontological separation of image and sound, as well as the photographic element are fundamental to Lettrist and Situationist films, discussed below.

Hypergraphics and Hypertext

In 1951, Isidore Isou, creator of the Lettrism⁷ movement, decided to end the synchronicity between audio and image, an inviolable rule of sound cinema, or the “talkie,” for both aesthetic and economic reasons. It was not until the 1960s that lighter equipment allowed the artists of *cinéma vérité* to truly record direct sound,⁸ while certain N.R.I. directors (narratif-représentatif-industriel [industrial representative narrative], a term proposed by Claudine Eizykman),⁹ such as Fellini, preferred systemically to post-synchronize their films in the studio. This anti-synchronization or “discrepancy” preceded Cage and Cunningham’s equivalent within the field of dance, resulting in a series of films that valued text more than image. The exception was Maurice Lemaître’s hypergraphic¹⁰ productions that, following Man Ray, Len Lye and Norman McLaren,¹¹ gave particular care to graphic interactions directly applied to photographic emulsion or the filmstrip—illuminations that Isou named “carvings.”¹² Similarly, in *All This Can Happen*, Davies and Hinton did not hesitate to utilize marks, scratches, and erasure on the filmstrip, allowing them to achieve a number of visual effects.

Marc-Gilbert Guillaumin (later known as a theatre director under the name Marc’O), produced Isou’s film *Traité de Bave et d’Éternité* (*Venom and Eternity*) that Jean Cocteau selected in 1951 for the Cannes Film Festival. The following year, he published *Ion n°1*,¹³ a poetry magazine containing texts and manifestos written by Isou, Poucette, Serge Berna, Yolande du Luart, as well as scenarios for films such as Gil J. Wolman’s *L’Anticoncept* (*The Anticoncept*), Guy-Ernest Debord’s *Hurlements en Faveur de Sade* (*Howlings in Favor of Sade*) and *Tambours du Jugement Premier* (*Drums of the First Judgment*) by François Dufrêne.¹⁴ *L’Anticoncept*, as well as the first version of the film previewed by Debord,¹⁵ eliminated the use of photography altogether (Wolman alternated circular black and white images projected onto a weather balloon) in favor of a lyrical soundtrack conceived as a collage of shouts, slogans, and phonemes devoid of any precise meaning.

Squaring the Circle

In his text “Architecture et scénographie” (“Architecture and Scenography”), the French theatre director Jacques Polieri observes the “rupture of the initial architectural (arena) circle,” and its “blossoming (Greek and Roman theatre)”¹⁶ in the 18th century prior to its Wagnerien (*Gesamtkunstwerk*) and cinematographic (diorama) transformations. He remarks, “Absurdly, the ideal for the theatre director [...] is to be able to reconstruct his theatre each time.”¹⁷ The structure of the circle haunted Appia, Craig, and other contemporary scenographers—from Josef Svoboda¹⁸ to the equestrian performance artist Bartabas.¹⁹

In Aubervilliers, France, Bartabas’ equestrian theatre Zingaro has recently merged a range of genres in unprecedented experiments that allow audiences to occupy the

ring traditionally reserved for circus acts. Seated on bleachers attached to a turnstile that slowly rotates clockwise around an uninterrupted flow of horses galloping in the opposite direction, spectators observe horses entering and exiting the background intermittently, varying live horses with those of their video projected shadows. In this performance,²⁰ Bartabas frenetically combined horses, their riders, shadows and reflections of the latter, projected from behind or in front, on a 360 degree screen attached to invisible joints and fittings. The performance was difficult to install, unprofitable, and suffered from record low attendance. Yet it achieved the scenographic utopia of theatre and film reformists, including those mentioned above.

Expanded Cinema

Exploring *All This Can Happen* from the perspective of Expanded Cinema, an artistic movement that saw film leave its home base and enlarge its horizons, can be particularly useful. This comparison is not meant to imply that Davies and Hinton's film tends towards the theatrical, despite its captivating voice over, or hörspiel: Chu-Li Shewring's sound design is neither a simple illustrative audio track nor is it a redundant mix that can be classified as *bruitiste* montage, or a film without images (minimalist film for which the prototype is Walter Ruttmann's *Wochenende* [*Weekend*], 1930). *All This Can Happen* eschews photographic or cinematic reproduction and ensures a unique sensorial experience—even if its material, the DCP (Digital Cinema Package), assures, at least theoretically, a certain durability, stability, and invariability. However, the formula of the polyvision "format" (to borrow a concept important to filmmaker Abel Gance²¹ and musicologist, film theorist, and cinéphonies producer Émile Vuillermoz),²² or multi-screen projection, presents actions, angles, and photographs from diverse sources simultaneously.

Gance designed visual triptychs beginning in 1925 for his film *Napoléon*²³ and created several others with surprising efficiency despite the fact that they were very difficult to screen. In one sense, this juxtaposition of two or more film images aimed to impress, occupying the entire field of vision to "furnish the space" (as Satie claimed to "furnish" the length of his songs on continuous loop)²⁴ in Byzantine²⁵ or Orientalist²⁶ styles. Alternately, *horror vacui* (fear of empty space) does not entirely explain this cinematic tendency initiated not long after the film's outset. For example, the *Cinéorama*²⁷ project designed by the Lumière operator Raoul Grimoin-Sanson for the *Exposition Universelle* of 1900 was conceived in search of "extended vision."²⁸ This model encircled visitors without immobilizing them (ensuring their gaze remained free, the real goal in this type of experiment), and was also presented by the Bauhaus artist and teacher Herbert Bayer at the Decorative Arts Exposition of 1930 in Paris.²⁹ Historically, the idea has ranged from photographic prints hanging perpendicularly at various angles (an idea Bayer went on to systematize in 1936 by creating a device with 360 degree vision) to the Lettrist *syncinéma* (see Maurice Lemaître's 1951 film *Le film est déjà commencé?* [*Has the Film Already Started?*]),³⁰ in addition to *CinemaScope*,³¹ various

attempts at creating films in 3D to counteract the threat of television, the *Circarama* created by Walt Disney and Ub Iwerks,³² and the *Laterna Magika* of Alfréd Radok and Josef Svoboda.³³

Cinema and Illusion

Expanded films may aim to create the depiction of illusion, such as a lift in a hot air balloon in Grimoin-Sanson's project. Alternately, at times, the saturation of signs produces an effect that strips a film of reality and renders it close to hallucination, a waking dream state, and abstraction. Between these two extremes, everything that can increase or intensify psycho-physiological sensations, visual commotion, and kaleidoscopic fascination is permitted. In the spirit of Cabaret Voltaire, Francis Picabia, who had just introduced the film *Entr'acte* during the dance performance *Relâche*³⁴ (created for the final appearance of the Ballets Suédois—and the last public event of the Dada Movement), wrote a "Cine-Sketch"³⁵ featuring Marcel Duchamp and René Clair's future wife, Bronia Perlmutter, as a nude Adam and Eve. It was held at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées on New Year's Eve in 1924, and some art historians, including Franck Claustrat,³⁶ concede that this short performance marked the beginning of the "happening," the "event," or even performance art. Several years later, in 1928, Germaine Dulac used film to reinforce the representation of a storm during the opera *La Tour de Feu (The Tower of Fire)*.³⁷ In the 1960s, experimental filmmakers engaged with expanded film and treated it not only as artistic or technical progress, but also as a genre of its own, situated between Kaprow's "happening"³⁸ and a gallery or museum installation.

In 1963, the American artist Barbara Rubin created *Christmas on Earth* in 24 hours, for which she projected two film reels of 34 minutes each. She did not screen one after the other, nor side by side, but one within the other. This small rectangular *mise en abyme* within a larger rectangle produced a perturbed sense of vision, or alternately, stimulated vision by invigorating it.³⁹ Two years later, Rubin's mentor, Jonas Mekas, organized the "Expanded Cinema" festival at the Film-Maker's Cinematheque, which revealed two innovators in the field: Stan VanDerBeek and Robert Whitman.⁴⁰ The latter created a space of "integral vision," the *Movie Drome*⁴¹ inside a New York grain silo. Rubin introduced the Velvet Underground to Andy Warhol, an artist who would soon launch into Expanded Cinema with his own 16 mm diptych and direct sound production, *Chelsea Girls* (1966). In contrast to Rubin's or Warhol's opus, Merce Cunningham⁴² and Charles Atlas' dance film for two screens, titled *Torse* (1977), required equally demanding precision similar to Gance's *Napoléon*. For screening, the two 16 mm film reels had to be synchronized to the frame.

Simultaneity

Certainly, editing and mixing undeniably aim, in the case of *All This Can Happen*, at a form of synchronicity even if it is attained in certain aspects through contrapuntal

discrepancy or delay effects. The *images* strip—image deserves to be used in plural form here—often announces what will come in the soundtrack and vice versa. The feeling of “total film” is reinforced by this approach to unison, and the “All” of *All This Can Happen* is not just an empty promise, an artistic statement, or flirtation, but a complete package. Polyrhythms (an important topic for Ricciotto Canudo)⁴³ that occur vertically during the projection of a film reel, following the temporal passage of tracks reserved for audio and the bulk of the strip occupied by the image—and now horizontally, from left to right, on the timeline of digital editing software—find their visual equivalent in *All This Can Happen* inside the frame, within a still image or a freeze frame, at times underlined by a pause in the image.

The film’s approach to visual fragmentation, the choice to “de-realize” or “surrealize” the collage and the layout in a visual patchwork style, entirely assumed by Davies and Hinton, produces an aesthetic shock due to the simultaneity of a range of stimuli. The coincidence of shapes, motifs, framing, and signs that are generally separated as flowing or discontinuous may trouble the viewer. These are not simply actions and movements that occur at the same time on an equal plane in order to justify acceleration or a sense of exaltation without goals, stemming from a futurist or constructivist dynamism generally associated with the city. This serves as a form of “new vision,”⁴⁴ to revisit the Bauhaus expression, a shift advocated by John Cage. Indeed, the same principle was applied in 1952 to the “theatrical event of a new genre”⁴⁵ mounted by Merce Cunningham, David Tudor, Mary Caroline Richards, Charles Olson, and Robert Rauschenberg at Black Mountain College. According to Cunningham, “Nothing was supposed to represent something other than what was given to see, a tangle of events that viewers could decipher as they pleased.”⁴⁶

Body of the Film

To avoid an imaginary limelight or backdrop,⁴⁷ *All This Can Happen* seeks to “turn off one and tear the other” as outlined by Émile Vuillermoz.⁴⁸ This tear is not only symbolic, it resembles a chessboard, a checkerboard, or a painting by Piet Mondrian or Paul Klee. The film’s simultaneity enjoys a feeling of omnipotence and the “miraculous gift of the ubiquity of film.”⁴⁹ Providing lyrical commentary for the film *Les Frères Corses* (*The Corsican Brothers*, 1941), based on the eponymous novel by Alexandre Dumas, and directed by the naturalist theatre director and theorist André Antoine, Vuillermoz reminds viewers of film’s “powers of evocation,”⁵⁰ but additionally addresses questions of a psycho-physiological order related to reception of:

a thousand little photographs of a strip... similar to cells of the human brain: the same speed of lightning reception, the same multiplicity of mirrors positioned to effortlessly juxtapose far off horizons, erasing distances, abolishing the slavery of time and space, embracing simultaneously the present, past, and future, reflecting all the cardinal

points at the same time, and transporting us within a tenth of a second from one extremity of the universe to another.⁵¹

During the early planning of *All This Can Happen*, Hinton hoped to use a collection of essentially pre-cinematic images, and more specifically the chronophotography of Etienne-Jules Maray and his assistant Georges Demeny. According to the filmmaker, the production was unable to obtain support from the Cinémathèque Française's current direction, which controls access to these images, initially safeguarded by the Cinémathèque's founder, Henri Langlois. Nevertheless, thanks to science filmmaker Jean-Dominique Lajoux, and in large part to the support of the British Film Institute, Hinton and Davies were able to include several Marey and Demeny images in their film. The BFI additionally provided access to rich source material from a wide selection of film genres, ranging from urban films (Ruttman's *Berlin, Die Sinfonie der Großstadt* [*Berlin, Symphony of a Metropolis*], 1927) to *found footage*, in addition to amateur films, newsreels, and fashion shows. Other public and private archives participated as well by providing access to excerpts and still images to which they hold the rights.⁵²

Added to *All This Can Happen*'s numerous tones of black and white are those of color film, ranging from the warmest to the coldest shades. Freeze-frames, film scratches, the subjects' inadvertent glances at the camera on screen, in addition to dust particles, stains and unfortunate accidents are all harnessed artistically: they are never concealed, but on the contrary, accentuated. The film invents its own medium by splitting the frame, presenting numerous vignettes, stacking eclectic angles and viewpoints, and aligning and opposing spaces of black and white with color. Rich in content and even more prodigious in signifiers, edited not to the second but to 1/25 of a second (to the frame) like *Le Ballet Mécanique* (1924)—another film directed by a team of two, Dudley Murphy and Fernand Léger—*All This Can Happen* condenses Walser's poetic story and allows it to dance. Edited according to an association of ideas, the film follows a musical logic. In this sense, one can say that *All This Can Happen* found its own unique rhythm.

Biography

Nicolas Villodre studied visual art at the Université Paris-I, and completed his dissertation in 1983. He was involved with the experimental cinema movement, which was particularly dynamic in France at the end of the 1970s. He has worked at the Cinémathèque de la Danse for 30 years and joined the Centre National de la Danse in 2013. In parallel, he has published numerous articles on dance and film for paper and electronic media.

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Notes

¹ Davies & Hinton, *All This Can Happen*.

² In commercial film, a model of the genre is Norman Jewison's *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1968), suggested to the filmmaker by two multiple screen examples presented at the Universal Exposition of Montreal in 1967: Roman Kroiter and Colin Low's *In the Labyrinth* and Christopher Chapman's *A Place to Stand*. At the International Fair of New York in 1964, IBM mounted an installation of 17 screens conceived by Ray and Charles Eames, as well as a short film in triptych form, Alexander Hammid and Francis Thompson's *To Be Alive* (1964), which inspired John Frankenheimer's film *Grand Prix* (1966). The split screen is closer to collage or photomontage than to the composite photo of the 19th century, or even Alwin Langdon Coburn's (1882-1966) "vortograph" that clearly tended towards abstraction. The multiple images produced by juxtaposition is also distinct in kaleidoscopic photography, generally associated with dreaming or hallucination in fictional films, achieved through prismatic lenses by avant-garde filmmakers such as Dudley Murphy (1897-1968) in *Black and Tan Fantasy* or *Le Ballet Mécanique*. (See Delson, Dudley Murphy.)

³ Translator's note: the author's use of "film large" in French translates literally to "wide film" in English, referring to both historic projection formats as well as hybridity and experimentation in contemporary moving images.

⁴ Walser, *Der Spaziergang*. First English version given in part in the film: Walser, *The Walk and Other Stories*.

⁵ See article L 121 of the French Intellectual Property Code, Law 92-597 1992-07-01, published in JORF on July 3rd 1992: "L'auteur jouit du droit au respect de son nom, de sa qualité et de son œuvre. Ce droit est attaché à sa personne. Il est perpétuel, inaliénable et imprescriptible. Il est transmissible à cause de mort aux héritiers de l'auteur. L'exercice peut être conféré à un tiers en vertu de dispositions testamentaires."

⁶ To define the notion of *divergence*, Debord revisited an excerpt from Lautréamont's *Poésies II* without citing the source: "Plagiarism is necessary. Progress implies it. It stays close to an author's phrasing, uses their expressions, erases a false idea by replacing it with the right one." (Debord, *La Société du spectacle*, chapter 8, paragraph 207). All translations Marisa C. Hayes.

⁷ The "Lettrists" preferred the spelling "Letterism" for the Anglicised term, but "Lettrism" is often the most common form found in English.

⁸ In France, it is a 16 mm Éclair camera designed by Coutant, synchronized by quartz to transistor tape recorder with ¼ Nagra chip bands, further developed by Kudelski.

⁹ Eizykman, *La Jouissance-Cinéma*, 10.

¹⁰ Hypergraphics, or metagraphics, proposed by Lettrists in 1950 is a system that favors the usage of all types of possible and imaginary signs (letters, sounds, movements, etc.). Isidore Isou observed that in painting, a figurative element placed within an abstract composition was enough to change it into figurative painting while a single sign introduced into a painting, figurative or not, transformed it into a hypergraphic creation, the symbol outweighing the referential material (Isou, *Le Lettrisme et l'Hypergraphie*).

¹¹ See Brenez & Lebrat, *Jeune, Dure et Pure*; Man Ray & Tzara, *Tristan Les Champs Délicieux*; Bouhours, & Horrocks, *Len Lye*; Bassan, *Norman McLaren*; Holter, *Photography Without a Camera*; Villodre, "Les Récréations Photographiques à la Fin du XIXe Siècle;" Villodre, "L'Anti-Photographie."

¹² Isou, "Esthétique du Cinéma."

¹³ Ibid. Single issue of a magazine edited by the Centre de Création, re-edited in 1999 by Jean-Paul Rocher.

¹⁴ Poet, visual artist, and poster designer who later became part of the New Realism movement.

¹⁵ Cf. Debord Guy. *Œuvres Cinématographiques Complètes*. Paris: Champ Libre, 1978 ; new publication: Gallimard, 1994. Before founding L'Internationale Situationniste, Debord, Wolman, Brau, Berna and a few others created L'Internationale Lettriste (1952-1957).

¹⁶ Polieri, *Scénographie, Sémiographie*, 29.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ We discovered in 1984 at the Théâtre du Rond-Point (Roundabout Theatre) in Paris the Svoboda's celebrated *Laterna Magika* and the piece titled *Le Cirque Enchanteur* (*The Enchanted Circle*) which made use of 35 mm film projections on a screen formed like a circular arc, giving the impression that clowns and acrobats were physically coming out of the image.

¹⁹ Bartabas is the creator of *equestrian cabaret*, merging theatre, dance, world music, and poetry. Bartabas based his troupe at the Fort of Aubervilliers (France) in 1984 within a circus structure designed for him by the architect Patrick Bouchain, the theatre Zingaro. He also founded in 2003 the Equestrian Academy of Versailles, which he considers a classical *corps de ballet* in which the apprentice riders practice kyudo (Japanese archery), theatre, and dance.

²⁰ This piece, titled *Darshan* (2009) is a complex scenography where audience is inside the arena while horses and riders replace spectators, surrounding them. (See Solis, "Darshan, Bartabas à Pas Comptés.")

²¹ Only some of his triptychs from *Napoléon* were used during rare screenings of the film since its premiere in 1927 at the Paris Opera. According to Jean-Jacques Meusy in 1895 (no. 31, 2000, p.153-211), Gance had already engaged fracturing the screen in his first version of *J'accuse* (1919). Kevin Bronlow states that Émile Vuillermoz proposed the term "polyvision" for this multiple screen format. (See Bronlow, *The Parade's Gone By*, p. 559).

²² The late Nouredine Ghali admired his uncommon personality. For Ghali, Vuillermoz was “a particularly understudied figure in French film criticism and theory. During the First World War and throughout the 1920s, he wrote numerous lucid and thought provoking articles” (Ghali, *L'Avant-garde Cinématographique*, 327). Vuillermoz, who published a major tome on music, *Critique Musicale (1920-1960)* was the subject of Pascal Manuel Heu's monograph *Le Temps du cinéma : Emile Vuillermoz, père de la critique cinématographique (1910-1930)*.

²³ Gance, *Napoleon*.

²⁴ John Cage revealed an unreleased composition by Erik Satie (1866-1925), in 1949, in the French revue *Contrepoints*, a model of repetitive music titled *Vexations*, created, according to specialists, in 1893, based on a theme and two variations with a very slow tempo that are to be reprised 840 times in a row, which gives the piece a duration of 18 hours. The music was played on piano in 1963 in New York in a marathon played successively by John Cale, John Cage, David Tudor, Christian Wolff, Phillip Corner, Viola Farber, Robert Wood, MacRae Cook, David Del Tredici, James Tenney and Howard Klein.

²⁵ Satie composed neo-Byzantine pieces, including *Gymnopédies* (1888) and, particularly *Gnossiennes* (1891) with Greek and Oriental ornamentation. A close friend of the prose writer and Rosicrucian Joséphin Péladan, Satie wrote *L'Hymne pour le Salut au Drapeau du Prince de Byzance* for him, recorded by the tenor Nicolai Gedda in 1987, which EMI released on CD in 1996. It is also known that the Javanese gamelan orchestras invited to the Universal Exposition of 1889 had a large impact on the composer and likely inspired him to explore the use of repetition (see supra Note 24 : *Vexations*, 1893 and also the music of the film *Entr'acte*, 1924).

²⁶ As soon we analyze the relationship between surfaces, we notice that from a distance—whether too far or too close—and with the film at a relative speed of acceleration, that we can no longer distinguish details and separate “visual atoms.” This observation stems from “density logic,” an important field for Alexandre Papadopoulo, who studied the organization of spiral space in the Persian miniature, the non-figurative art of calligraphy, the abstract art of the arabesque, and the esthetics of the horror of emptiness in *L'Islam et l'art musulman*.

²⁷ *La Nature*, 119-122. A description of this system required ten synchronized cameras and as many projectors. Louis Lumière himself had the idea for the *Photorama* in 1889, that he patented in December 1900, a system of complete reproduction of the horizon, panorama and no longer optic, like the camera obscura, but photographic, seen during the exhibition “Lumière! Le Cinéma inventé” at the Grand Palais March 27-June 14, 2015. See: *Les Lumière font leur cinéma*, 30.

²⁸ Meusy, “L'Énigme du Cinéorama,” 1-16.

²⁹ Cf. Quoi, “Herbert Bayer et la vision étendue.” *Vues d'En Haut*. Metz: Éditions du Centre Pompidou-Metz, 2013, 88.

³⁰ Splicing of the film and diverse interventions in the theatre are described in Lemaître, *Le Film est déjà commencé?*

³¹ Anamorphic image system developed by 20th Century Fox, used by Hollywood from 1953 to the sixties, based on the *Hypergonar* and the *Anamorphoscope* process patented in 1926 by the French Henri Chrétien. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anamorphosis>

³² The first Circarama film was *A Tour Of The West*, which was screened at the opening of Disneyland in July 1955. (see: Nielsen, *Projecting America*).

³³ Ibid. *The Laterna Magika* was introduced at the World's Fair of 1958 in Brussels. See also end note 18.

³⁴ See catalogue of Opéra de Paris exhibition: Auclair, *Les Ballets Suédois*.

³⁵ This revue, sometimes described as a "cine-sketch" or "cinesketch," was created by Picabia for the "Gala Evening for Rolf de Maré" according to the program. Directed and lit by René Clair, it used stroboscopic effects. Purportedly, Man Ray, who likely photographed the project during rehearsals, played the role of a gossip, Jean Börlin performed as a police officer, and the "Isadorable" Elisabeth Toulemont (alias Caryathis) performed to the music by the group "Six." Poems were likely recited by Yvonne George while the Georgian orchestra played hot jazz. (Garafola, *Legacies of Twentieth-Century Dance*, 114). According to Carole Boulbès, the theatrical equivalents of practice-based research in slow motion, acceleration, and simultaneity were proposed (Boulbès, *Francis Picabia, Écrits critiques*, 555).

³⁶ Cf. Auclair, *Les Ballets Suédois*.

³⁷ Lyrical drama in three acts by Sylvio Lazzari, staged at the Paris Opera by Pierre Chéreau, choreographed by Nicola Guerra, including a projected image of rough waves that traversed various painted set backdrops by Maxime Dethomas. See: Bibliothèque de France's notice FRBNF42047774 referring to Wolff, Stéphane. *L'Opéra au Palais Garnier (1875-1962)*. Paris: 1962. This interaction between film and performance is found more recently in ballets, such as Lucinda Childs' *Dance* (1979), a movement suite synchronized to a 35 mm film by Sol LeWitt projected at the back of the stage (Boisseau, "La 'Dance' Perpétuelle de Lucinda Childs,"); or Merce Cunningham's *Biped* (1999), multimedia choreography punctuated by giant 3D images of dance patterns and abstract forms created by digital artists Shelley Eshkar and Paul Kaiser. (Dahan & Gauville "Danse: Entretien Musical Autour.")

³⁸ The term "Happening" was used for the first time by Allan Kaprow in 1957 in order to qualify an artistic "performance" (Kaprow, Allan. "Happenings in the New York Scene." *Art News*, May, 1961, republished in: Kaprow, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*).

³⁹ In a number of examples, the effect is obtained during projection. The film reel is not necessarily wider, and the question of anamorphosis is not involved. This is the case for Man Ray who screened films by Méliès in color on dancers dressed in white during an outdoor party given in 1930 by Anna-Letizia Pecci-Blunt; or Werner Nekes directing flickering images from his *Schnitte für ABABA* (1967) onto a pine forest (Noguez, *Cinéma &*, 117).

⁴⁰ Whitman presented *Prune Flat*, a double image film played by Mimi Stark, Simone Forti and Lucinda Childs. Cf. Uroskie, *Expanded Cinema*, 133

⁴¹ Bouhours, *Quel cinéma*, 166-167.

⁴² For Cunningham's ballet, *Variations V* (1965), VanDerBeek used several screens onto which a montage of 16 mm publicity images, animated films, B-grade television, as well as abstract electronic deformations created by Nam June Paik were projected. These experimental films can be seen in the record of the piece directed one year later by Arne Arnborn for the German TV channel NDR.

⁴³ Guido, *L'Age du rythme*, 194-200.

⁴⁴ Moholy-Nagy, Laszlo. *The New Vision and Abstract of an Artist*. New York: Wittenborn, 1947.

⁴⁵ Vaughan, *Merce Cunningham: Fifty Years*, 65.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Translator's note: These are metaphorical terms used in Émile Vuillermoz's writing on film to distinguish new representations of space and time within the cinema as it departed from the use of theatrical backdrops and other stage conventions (Vuillermoz, "Devant l'Écran," 3).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² The Yorkshire Film Archive, British Pathé, the Wellcome Library, the London AP Archive, the British Movietone, the Religious Society of Friends in Britain, the National Grid PLC, Catalyst Housing, Les Films du Jeudi, Argos Films, the Collège de France, the Museum of London, the Library of Congress, John Martin, the Photographic Society, the Science Museum, etc.

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***All This Can Happen* (2012) de Siobhan Davies et David Hinton**

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Résumé

Cet article aborde *All This Can Happen* du point de vue esthétique et rapporte cette œuvre née de l'étroite collaboration entre le cinéaste de danse David Hinton et la chorégraphe contemporaine Siobhan Davies à l'histoire du cinéma d'avant-garde. En apparence, *All This Can Happen* n'est pas un film de danse, bien que son montage rythmique fasse de l'œil aux films sturcturels des années soixante-dix et ait à voir avec la danse. Ce n'est pas un simple opus de chutes trouvées, aléatoirement agencées, puisque les archives ont été soigneusement choisies. Les plans subliminaux, la juxtaposition d'images multiples, les grattages d'émulsion, les signes graphiques, les éléments précinématographiques associés aux contrepoints sonores y produisent de fascinants effets, d'étranges hallucinations, de pures abstractions, des états de rêve éveillé, déjà là chez Georges Méliès, Abel Gance, Maya Deren et... David Hinton. Comme tout chef d'œuvre digne de ce nom, le film gagne à être revu.

Mots clés: cinéma élargi, avant-garde, écran divisé, rythme, simultanéité, hypergraphie

Ce texte vise à fournir un contexte historique permettant de considérer les aspects esthétiques et techniques du film *All This Can Happen*.¹ Il retrace le développement de diverses pratiques dans les domaines de l'image, du son et de la performance qui ont généré de nouvelles approches liées au support filmique lui-même, de même qu'aux formats et aux conditions de projection. En s'appuyant sur les films élargis et sur des expériences similaires amorcées dès l'avènement du cinématographe, cet article met en évidence un vaste corpus de mouvements artistiques et de projets qui résonnent avec le film né de la collaboration entre Siobhan Davies et David Hinton. *All This...* secoue le spectateur immédiatement, dès la première vision. Ce dernier pourra le revoir indéfiniment par la suite, s'il en a la possibilité, certain d'y déceler à chaque fois du nouveau, que ce soit dans le contenu – quelque plan subliminal, quelque rapprochement incongru d'images dont on cherchera en vain à connaître la source, tel ou tel signe graphique, accident pelliculaire ou effet photochimique lui ayant échappé au prime abord – ou bien dans la forme, en raison, principalement, du parti pris expérimental des auteurs. Pour créer ce film "large", dans tous les sens du terme, c'est-à-dire ambitieux dans son geste et son propos, polysémique, ample, littéralement, proche de l'*expanded cinema* – domaine qui va, disons pour donner une idée, du

Napoléon (1927) d'Abel Gance au *Chelsea Girls* (1966) d'Andy Warhol –, Davies et Hinton ont recouru au "split screen"² et remis au goût du jour la structure du diptyque et du polyptyque jadis utilisée par les peintres.³ Leur réalisation nous permet d'aborder des questions qui ont intéressé les commentateurs, dès les années vingt, et qui restent toujours actuelles, comme celle de l'adaptation d'une œuvre littéraire – en l'occurrence, *La Promenade* (1917)⁴ de Robert Walser –, celle des interventions graphiques et de la valeur plastique de l'image – de sa *cinégraphie* –, celle, psychophysiologique, de la perception multi-événementielle par le spectateur. Autant de points artistiques, esthétiques et quelquefois aussi matériels, qui ont leur histoire, souvent liée à celle des avant-gardes.

Pré-texte

Prenant pour point de départ le récit de Robert Walser, les co-auteurs empruntent des chemins de traverse, s'écartent quelquefois du texte pour des raisons purement artistiques. Ils ont estimé nécessaire de condenser le récit et, pris par la logique interne du montage, ont même interverti quelque scène – on pense au passage consacré à la librairie qu'on trouve au début du livre, tout de suite après une description de couvre-chefs masculins et qui est intercalé dans le film entre la brève séquence de plumes, de rubans, de chapeaux féminins et la digression sur les cafés. Leur extension du cadre de références entraîne des anachronismes puisque les images débordent un peu le lieu et la période de la promenade réelle (ou fantasmée) de Walser. Ces altérations sont directement liées à la problématique de l'adaptation littéraire par l'image. Et à la dialectique abstraction-figuration qui résulte de l'adjonction de prises de vue à du texte, quel qu'il soit. Les auteurs ne cherchent pas à substituer ou à effacer la prose de Walser par un matériau audiovisuel, qui serait plus "moderne" ou englobant. Cette quête serait par avance vouée à l'échec. Ils se bornent donc à proposer des équivalents rétinien pouvant "rendre" l'univers, restituer les situations et les protagonistes décrits par l'écrivain suisse.

On sait que tout cela peut arriver... dès qu'on touche au livre, au verbe, au sacré. Lorsque, en sus, c'est l'art le plus profane qui s'attaque au tabou et s'attelle sans complexe à cette besogne. Rien de tel, ici : malgré l'altération, la traduction, l'interprétation de Walser par des créateurs d'une autre époque et d'un autre médium, le texte lu (en anglais et non en allemand), accourci (d'une centaine de pages, il se résume quelques "noyaux durs", si l'on peut dire, s'agissant d'un récit n'en ayant pas, dans lequel contenu et forme obéissent au principe de flânerie, de baguenauderie, de musardise), conserve son intensité évocatoire. Cela, grâce au savoir-faire de Davies-Hinton, au soin apporté au mixage, aux recherches documentaires, au montage de type structuraliste ou structurel, au photogramme près, de Danny McGuire (et aussi, paradoxalement, aux gels d'image !), sans oublier la parfaite diction du comédien qui nous le restitue en voix off, John Heffernan. Ce film ne détourne ni le contenu du livre ni l'état d'esprit qui s'en dégage. En ce sens, il n'atteint pas au droit moral de l'auteur,

par nature “perpétuel et imprescriptible” (du moins, en droit français).⁵ Cette question du détournement,⁶ méthode créatrice utilisée et justifiée par Lautréamont, proche de celle du collage, la séparation ontologique image-son ainsi que la mise en cause de l’élément photographique sont à la base du cinéma lettriste et situationniste que nous allons maintenant évoquer.

Hypergraphie et Hypertexte

En 1951, le créateur du lettrisme,⁷ Isidore Isou, décida d’en finir avec la synchronie entre l’audio et le visuel, une des sacro-saintes règles du cinéma sonore ou du film “parlant”, à la fois pour des raisons esthétiques et économiques – il faudra attendre le début des années soixante pour qu’un matériel allégé permette aux tenants du “cinéma vérité” d’enregistrer du vrai “son direct”,⁸ certains réalisateurs de cinéma N.R.I. (narratif-représentatif-industriel, pour reprendre l’expression de Claudine Eizykman)⁹ comme Fellini préférant post-synchroniser systématiquement leurs films en auditorium. Cet anti-synchronisme ou “discrédance”, qui annonce celle de Cage-Cunningham dans le domaine de la danse, donne naissance à une série de films valorisant plus le texte que l’image – exception faite des réalisations de Maurice Lemaître, hypergraphiste¹⁰ qui, à la suite de Man Ray, Len Lye et MacLaren¹¹ apporte un soin particulier aux interventions graphiques à même l’émulsion photographique ou pelliculaire – enluminures qu’Isou nomme “ciselures”.¹² On observera que Davies et Hinton n’hésitent pas non plus à recourir aux biffures, aux ratures et aux griffures de la pellicule qui leur permettent d’obtenir nombre d’effets visuels.

Marc-Gilbert Guillaumin (plus tard connu comme metteur en scène de théâtre sous le nom de Marc’O), producteur du film d’Isou *Traité de bave et d’éternité* que programma Jean Cocteau en 1951 au festival de Cannes, édita l’année suivante *Ion n°1*,¹³ une revue poétique contenant des textes et des manifestes d’Isou, de Poucette, de Serge Berna, de Yolande du Luart, ainsi que des scénarios de films tels que *L’Anticoncept* de Gil J. Wolman, *Hurléments en faveur de Sade* de Guy-Ernest Debord et *Tambours du jugement premier* de François Dufrêne.¹⁴ *L’Anticoncept*, comme la première version prévue du film de Debord,¹⁵ se passait totalement d’images photographiques (Wolman alternait images circulaires noires et blanches projetées sur un ballon-sonde) au profit d’une bande-son lyrique conçue comme un collage de cris, de slogans et de phonèmes dépourvus de signification précise.

Quadrature du Cercle

Le metteur en scène français Jacques Polieri, dans son texte “Architecture et scénographie”,¹⁶ observe la “rupture du cercle architectural initial (arène)”, son “éclosion (théâtre grec, romain, italien)” au XVIIIe siècle, avant ses transformations wagnérienne (*Gesamtkunstwerk*) et cinématographique (diorama). “L’idéal, dans l’absurde, pour le metteur en scène (...) est de pouvoir reconstruire chaque fois son

théâtre.”¹⁷ La structure circassienne, qui a continué à hanter Appia, Craig et tous les scénographes contemporains, de Josef Svoboda¹⁸ à l’artiste équestre Bartabas.¹⁹

Du côté d’Aubervilliers, chez Zingaro, nous avons eu l’occasion d’assister, il y a quelques années, à un mélange des genres inédit où les spectateurs occupaient la piste habituellement réservée aux jeux du cirque, assis sur des gradins fixés à un tourniquet girant lentement en sens horaire, circonvenus, captifs de manèges ininterrompus de chevaux lancés au galop en sens opposé, ces derniers entrant ou sortant de la toile de fond par intermittence, tantôt en chair et en os, tantôt sous forme d’ombres vidéo-projetées. Dans ce spectacle,²⁰ Bartabas mêlait frénétiquement chevaux, cavaliers réels, ombres et reflets de ceux-ci, projetés, par derrière ou par devant, sur un écran à 360° aux jointures et raccords invisibles. Cette pièce compliquée à mettre en place, pas rentable du tout, la jauge du théâtre étant au niveau le plus bas, réalisait l’utopie scénographique des rénovateurs du théâtre et du cinéma plus haut évoqués.

Expanded Cinema

Et c’est au cinéma “élargi” que nous avons affaire ici, autrement dit à cette tendance du 7e Art qui lui fait quitter sa base, le fait “sortir de ses gonds”. Non que le film Davies et Hinton lorgne du côté du théâtre, malgré l’aspect envoûtant de sa voix off, ou du *hörspiel*, bien que le *design* sonore de Chu-Li Shewring ne soit pas une simple illustration audio, un mixage redondant relevant du montage “bruitiste” ou du film sans image, film rétréci ou minimal dont le prototype demeure le *Wochenende* (1930) de Walter Ruttmann, cesse d’être une reproduction pour devenir une représentation ou une expérience unique – son support même, le DCP, lui assure, au contraire, théoriquement du moins, une certaine pérennité, une stabilité, une invariabilité. Mais il s’inspire de la formule ou du “format” de la polyvision, pour reprendre ce concept cher au cinéaste Abel Gance²¹ ainsi qu’au musicologue, théoricien du film et producteur de “cinéphonies” Émile Vuillermoz,²² ou de la projection multi-écranique, présentant des actions, des plans, des photogrammes de diverses provenance, simultanément.

Gance conçoit des triptyques visuels à partir de 1925, et en réalise plusieurs, d’une efficacité étonnante mais très compliqués à projeter, pour son *Napoléon*.²³ D’une part, la juxtaposition de deux ou de plusieurs bandes-images vise à “en mettre plein la vue”, comme le dit en France la vox populi, autrement dit à occuper la totalité du champ visuel, à meubler l’espace (comme Satie prétendait “meubler” la durée avec ses rengaines en boucles),²⁴ d’une manière byzantine²⁵ ou orientale.²⁶ De l’autre, l’*horror vacui* n’explique pas totalement cette tendance du cinéma amorcée dès ses origines. On pense par exemple au projet de Cinéorama²⁷ conçu par l’opérateur Lumière, Raoul Grimoin-Sanson, pour l’Exposition universelle de 1900, à la recherche d’une “vision étendue”²⁸ que proposera l’artiste et enseignant du Bauhaus Herbert Bayer lors de

l'Exposition des Arts décoratifs de 1930 à Paris,²⁹ encerclant le visiteur, sans l'immobiliser (la liberté du regard étant le but véritable de ce type d'expériences), de tirages photographiques accrochées perpendiculairement, sur différents plans (idée qu'il systématisera en 1936 en concevant le dispositif d'une "vision à 360°"), au *syncinéma* lettriste (cf. *Le Film est déjà commencé ?*, 1951, de Maurice Lemaître)³⁰ au *CinemaScope* (1953)³¹ et aux différentes tentatives de film en 3D destinées à lutter contre la menace de la télévision et des petits écrans, au *Circarama*³² breveté en 1955 par Walt Disney, à la *Laterna magika* qu'Alfréd Radok et Josef Svoboda³³ homologuèrent à l'Expo universelle de 1958 de Bruxelles.

Cinéma et Illusion

Le film élargi peut donc viser à un rendu illusionniste, comme par exemple, dans le projet de Grimoin-Sanson, une ascension en montgolfière, tantôt, au contraire, la saturation de signes produira un effet déréalisant proche de l'hallucination, du rêve éveillé, de l'abstraction. Entre ces deux pôles, tout ce qui peut accroître ou intensifier la sensation psycho-physiologique, la commotion visuelle et la fascination kaléidoscopique est permis. Dans l'esprit du Cabaret Voltaire, Picabia, qui venait d'introduire le film *Entr'acte* dans le déroulement du spectacle de danse *Relâche*,³⁴ écrivit, pour la dernière manifestation des Ballets Suédois (et aussi de Dada), un "Ciné-Sketch"³⁵ dans lequel figura Marcel Duchamp en tenue d'Adam et la future femme de René Clair, Bronia Perlmutter, en tenue d'Eve. Cette courte pièce donnée au Théâtre des Champs-Élysées le soir de la Saint Sylvestre 1924 annonce, pour des historiens d'art tels que Franck Claustrat,³⁶ le "happening", l'"event", voire la "performance" (au sens galeriste et non plus théâtral de ce terme). Quelques années plus tard, en 1928, Germaine Dulac utilisa le cinéma pour renforcer une scène de tempête dans l'opéra *La Tour de feu*.³⁷ Dans les années 60, les cinéastes expérimentaux s'adonnent au film "élargi", qu'ils traitent, non plus comme un progrès artistique ou technique, mais comme un genre en soi, entre le "happening"³⁸ (1957) de Kaprow et l'"installation" galeriste ou muséale.

En 1963, l'Américaine Barbara Rubin réalise en 24 heures *Christmas on Earth*, en décidant de projeter les deux bobines de 34 minutes chacune non pas à la suite l'une de l'autre, non pas côte à côte, mais l'une dans l'autre, un petit rectangle mis en abyme dans un plus grand venant perturber la vision ou, au contraire, la stimuler en la titillant.³⁹ Deux ans plus tard, son mentor, Jonas Mekas, organise le festival "Expanded Cinema" à la Film-Makers Cinematheque qui révèle deux innovateurs dans ce domaine : Stan VanDerBeek et Robert Whitman.⁴⁰ Le premier échafaude un espace de "vision intégrale", le *Movie Drome*⁴¹ à l'intérieur d'un silo à grains new-yorkais. Rubin présente alors le Velvet Underground à Andy Warhol, lequel ne tarde pas à se lancer dans l'*expanded* avec son diptyque en 16 mm et en son direct, *Chelsea Girls* (1966). Contrairement aux opus de Rubin et de Warhol, *Torse* (1977), film de danse à deux écrans de Merce Cunningham⁴² et Charles Atlas, demande une aussi grande précision

que le *Napoléon* de Gance pour être projeté, les deux bobines 16 mm devant être synchrones à l'image près.

Simultanéisme

Certes, montage et mixage visent indiscutablement, dans le cas qui nous occupe, à une forme de synchronie, même si, par bien des aspects, celle-ci est atteinte par des effets de décalage ou de délai (delay) contrapunctiques, la bande images – l'image mérite ici d'être écrite au pluriel – annonçant assez souvent ce qui adviendra dans la colonne sonore – et inversement. L'impression de "film total" est renforcée par cette recherche d'unisson et le "All" du titre du film n'est pas qu'une promesse de Gascon, une note d'intention auteuriste, une coquetterie, mais bel et bien un programme en tous points respecté. La "polyrythmie" chère à Ricciotto Canudo,⁴³ l'inventeur de l'expression "7e Art" qui se déroule verticalement au cours de la projection pelliculaire, suivant le défilement temporel des pistes réservées à l'audio et de la bande centrale ou part du lion occupée par l'image – et de nos jours horizontalement, de gauche à droite, sur la *timeline* des logiciels de montage ou de lecture numérique ! – trouve son équivalent visuel à l'intérieur du cadre, dans l'instantané ou le photogramme, quelquefois souligné par l'arrêt sur l'image.

Le cadre éclaté du film, le parti-pris de fragmentation visuelle, l'option du collage déréalisant ou surréalisant et l'agencement à la manière d'un *patchwork* visuel, totalement assumés par la chorégraphe et le réalisateur de films de danse produit un choc esthétique du fait même de la simultanéité de toutes sortes de stimuli. La coïncidence, au sens propre de ce terme, de formes, motifs, trames, signes en principe séparés, canalisés, discontinus peut, stricto sensu, troubler le spectateur. Il ne s'agit pas ici seulement d'actions, de gestes, se déroulant en même temps, mis sur le même plan comme pour justifier un emballement, une ivresse, une excitation sans objet ou découlant d'un "dynamisme" futuriste, constructiviste, généralement associé à la ville. Il s'agit d'aller dans le sens d'une "nouvelle vision",⁴⁴ pour reprendre cette expression du Bauhaus, dans celui du décentrement prôné par John Cage, principe appliqué dès 1952 à l'"événement théâtral d'un genre nouveau" monté avec Merce Cunningham,⁴⁵ David Tudor, Mary Caroline Richards, Charles Olson et Robert Rauschenberg au Black Mountain College. D'après le souvenir du chorégraphe, "Rien n'était censé représenter autre chose que ce qui était donné à voir, un enchevêtrement d'événements que les spectateurs pouvaient décrypter à leur guise."⁴⁶

Corps du Film

Pour lutter contre "la rampe invisible" et la "toile de fond imaginaire"⁴⁷ du théâtre, le film a dû "éteindre l'une et déchirer l'autre", ainsi que le préconisait Émile Vuillermoz.⁴⁸ Cette déchirure n'est pas que symbolique. Elle ressemble à un échiquier, à un damier, à un tableau de Piet Mondrian ou de Paul Klee. Le simultanéisme profite de la sensation de toute-puissance et du "don miraculeux d'ubiquité du cinéma".⁴⁹

Commentant avec lyrisme un film réalisé par le metteur en scène de théâtre et théoricien du naturalisme André Antoine, *Les Frères corses*, tiré du roman éponyme d'Alexandre Dumas, Vuillermoz⁵⁰ rappelle le "pouvoir d'évocation"⁵¹ du cinéma mais aborde aussi des questions d'ordre psycho-physiologique relatives à la réception des "mille petits clichés d'une bande (...) semblables aux cellules du cerveau humain : même rapidité foudroyante de perception, même multiplicité de miroirs à facettes qui juxtaposent sans effort les horizons les plus éloignés, supprimant les distances, abolissant l'esclavage du temps et de l'espace, embrassant dans le même temps le présent, le passé et l'avenir, reflétant simultanément tous les points cardinaux, et nous transportant en un dixième de seconde d'une extrémité à l'autre de l'univers."

Au départ, David Hinton souhaitait utiliser un corpus essentiellement pré-cinématographique, et plus particulièrement, recourir aux bandes chronophotographiques d'Etienne-Jules Marey et de son assistant Georges Demeny. Selon le réalisateur, la production du film n'a pas pu obtenir le concours de la direction de la Cinémathèque Française qui avait alors la garde de ces trésors sauvegardés par son fondateur, Henri Langlois. Grâce au cinéaste scientifique Jean-Dominique Lajoux et, surtout, à l'aide du BFI, Hinton et Davies ont toutefois pu insérer quelques images de Marey et Demeny. Le BFI leur a donné accès à une riche matière, tous genres cinématographiques confondus, qui va du film de ville (*Berlin, Die Sinfonie der Großstadt*, 1927 de Ruttmann) au *found footage*, en passant par les films d'amateur, les actualités, des sujets pré-montés comme des défilés de mode. D'autres archives, publiques et privées, ont joué le jeu, qui ont donné accès à des extraits ou à des images fixes dont ils sont ayants droit ou conservateurs.⁵²

Aux cinquante nuances du noir et blanc se sont ajoutées celles du film couleur, des teintes les plus froides aux plus chaleureuses. Les arrêts sur image, les éraflures de la pellicule, les regards et "poils caméra", les taches et les accidents malencontreux sont exploités plastiquement, nullement refoulés, au contraire, valorisés. En dédoublant le cadre, en démultipliant les vignettes, en étagant les plans et les prises les plus hétérogènes ou discontinus, en apposant et opposant par endroits noir et blanc et couleur, le film a inventé son propre support. Riche en contenu et plus prodigue encore en signifiants, monté non à la seconde mais au 1/25e de seconde (à l'image près), comme le *Ballet mécanique* (1924) également signé à deux mains (celles de Dudley Murphy et de Fernand Léger), *All This...* a condensé le récit poétique de Walser comme pour le faire danser. Monté certes par associations d'idées, il a surtout suivi une logique musicale. En ce sens, on peut dire qu'il a trouvé sa rythmique.

Biographie

Nicolas Villodre a fait des études d'arts plastiques à l'Université Paris-I, couronnées en 1983 par une thèse de III^e cycle. Il a participé au mouvement du cinéma expérimental, particulièrement dynamique en France à la fin des années 70. Il a travaillé 30 ans à la Cinémathèque de la Danse et a intégré le CND en 2013. Parallèlement, il a publié nombre d'articles sur la danse et sur le 7^e Art dans divers supports, papier et net confondus.

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Notes

¹ Davies & Hinton, *All This Can Happen*.

² Dans le cinéma dominant, le modèle du genre est sans doute *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1968) de Norman Jewison, suggéré au cinéaste par deux exemples d'écrans multiples présentés à l'Exposition universelle de Montréal, en 1967: *In the Labyrinth* de Roman Kroiter et Colin Low ainsi que *A Place to Stand* de Christopher Chapman. À la Foire internationale de New York de 1964, IBM montra une installation de 17 écrans conçue par Ray et Charles Eames et un court métrage en forme de triptyque, *To Be Alive*, de Francis Thompson, dont s'inspira John Frankenheimer pour son *Grand Prix* (1966). Le split screen est plus proche du collage ou du photomontage que de la photo "composite" du XIX^e siècle ou même du "vortographe" d'Alwin Langdon Coburn (1882-1966), qui tendait nettement à l'abstraction. L' "image multiple" produite par juxtaposition est également distincte de la photo "kaléidoscopique," généralement associée au rêve ou à l'hallucination dans le cinéma de fiction, obtenue au moyen de lentilles prismatiques par des cinéastes d'avant-garde tels que Dudley Murphy (1897-1968), dans *Black and Tan Fantasy* ou dans *Le Ballet mécanique*. (Cf. Delson, Dudley Murphy).

³ Nous emploierons les expressions "cinéma élargi", "film large" et "expanded cinema" qui rendent compte de l'hybridité de ces moyens techniques et englobent la polyvision d'Abel Gance évoquée infra et le "split screen" ou "écran divisé."

⁴ Walser, *Der Spaziergang*. La première version anglaise est utilisée dans le film: Walser, *The Walk and Other Stories*.

⁵ Cf. article L 121 du Code français de la Propriété industrielle. Loi du 92-597 1992-07-01, publiée au JORF le 3 juillet 1992: "L'auteur jouit du droit au respect de son nom, de sa qualité et de son œuvre. Ce droit est attaché à sa personne. Il est perpétuel, inaliénable et imprescriptible. Il est transmissible à cause de mort aux héritiers de l'auteur. L'exercice peut être conféré à un tiers en vertu de dispositions testamentaires."

⁶ Pour définir la notion de détournement, Debord reprend un extrait de *Poésies II* de Lautréamont, sans citer sa source : "Le plagiat est nécessaire. Le progrès l'implique. Il serre de près la phrase d'un auteur, se sert de ses expressions, efface une idée fausse, la remplace par l'idée juste." Guy-Ernest Debord, *La Société du spectacle*, Paris, 1967, chapitre 8, paragraphe 207.

⁷ Le "Lettrisme" a quelquefois pu être traduit... littéralement et non phonétiquement en anglais par "Letterism" au lieu de "Lettrism", terme qui a fini par s'imposer.

⁸ En France, il s'agit de la caméra 16 mm Eclair conçue par Coutant synchronisée par quartz au magnétophone transistorisé à of bandes ¼ de pouce Nagra mis au point par Kudelski.

⁹ Eizykman, *La Jouissance-Cinéma*, 10.

¹⁰ L'hypergraphie ou la métagraphie proposé par les lettristes en 1950 est un système qui prône l'usage de toutes sortes de signes possibles et imaginaires (lettres, sons, gestes, etc.). Isidore Isou observe qu'en peinture un élément figuratif placé dans une composition abstraite suffit à la changer en tableau figuratif tandis qu'un seul signe introduit dans un tableau, figuratif ou non, le transforme en création hypergraphique, le signe l'emportant sur la matière référentielle (Isou, *Le Lettrisme et l'Hypergraphie*).

¹¹ Cf. Brenez & Lebrat, *Jeune, Dure et Pure*; Man Ray & Tzara, *Tristan Les Champs Délicieux*; Bouhours, & Horrocks, *Len Lye*; Bassan, Norman McLaren; Holter, *Photography Without a Camera*; Villodre, "Les Récréations Photographiques à la Fin du XIXe Siècle;" Villodre, "L'Anti-Photographie."

¹² Isou, "Esthétique du Cinéma."

¹³ Ibid. Numéro unique d'une revue éditée par le Centre de Création, rééditée en 1999 par Jean-Paul Rocher.

¹⁴ Poet, visual artist, and poster designer who later became part of the New Realism movement.

¹⁵ Cf. Debord Guy. *Œuvres Cinématographiques Complètes*. Paris: Champ Libre, 1978 ; new publication: Gallimard, 1994. Before founding L'Internationale Situationniste, Debord, Wolman, Brau, Berna and a few others created L'Internationale Lettriste (1952-1957).

¹⁶ Polieri, *Scénographie, Sémiographie*, 29.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Nous découvrièmes en 1984 au théâtre du Rond-Point un spectacle de sa fameuse *Laterna magika* intitulé *Le Cirque enchanteur* qui faisait usage de la projection de film 35 mm sur un écran en arc de cercle d'où donnaient l'impression de sortir clowns et acrobates de chair et d'os.

¹⁹ Créateur de *cabarets équestres* mêlant théâtre, danse, musique extra-européenne, poésie. Bartabas a installé en 1984 sa troupe au Fort d'Aubervilliers dans un cirque en dur conçu par lui et l'architecte Patrick Bouchain, le théâtre Zingaro. Fondateur, en 2003, de l'Académie équestre de Versailles, qu'il considère comme un "corps de ballet" classique où les apprentis cavaliers pratiquent toutefois le kyudo (tir à l'arc japonais), la comédie et la danse.

²⁰ Intitulée *Darshan* (2009), cette pièce offre une scénographie complexe où le public est placé au centre de l'arène tandis que chevaux et cavaliers s'animent autour de lui, passent tantôt devant, tantôt derrière, en ombres chinoises, une bande de gigantesque zootrope, le prennent d'assaut. (Cf. Solis, "Darshan, Bartabas à Pas Comptés.")

²¹ Une partie seulement des triptyques du *Napoléon* a été utilisée lors des rares présentations du film depuis son avant-première en 1927 à l'Opéra de Paris. D'après Jean-Jacques Meusy (1895, n°31, Paris, 2000, p. 153-211), Gance recourait déjà au "fractionnement de l'écran" dans sa première version de *J'accuse* (1919). Selon Kevin Bronlow, Émile Vuillermoz proposa le terme de "polyvision" à cette formule multi-écranique. (Cf. Bronlow, *The Parade's Gone By*, p. 559).

²² Le regretté Nouredine Ghali admirait cette personnalité hors du commun. Pour lui, "Vuillermoz est une figure particulièrement méconnue de la critique et de la théorie cinématographiques françaises. Pendant la première guerre mondiale et durant les années vingt, il écrivit de très nombreux articles marqués du sceau de la lucidité et de la profondeur" (Ghali, *L'Avant-garde Cinématographique*, 327). Vuillermoz, qui publia une somme sur la musique, *Critique musicale* (1902-1960), Fayard, rééd. 2013, a fait l'objet de l'ouvrage monographique de Pascal Manuel Heu, *Le Temps du cinéma : Emile Vuillermoz, père de la critique cinématographique (1910-1930)*.

²³ Gance, *Napoleon*.

²⁴ John Cage publia en 1949 dans la revue française *Contrepoints* une partition inédite d'Erik Satie (1866-1925), un modèle de musique répétitive ayant pour titre *Vexations*, composée selon les spécialistes en 1893, à base d'un thème et de deux variations sur un tempo "très lent" devant être repris... 840 fois de suite, ce qui en fait une pièce d'une durée d'environ 18 heures ! Ce morceau fut joué au piano en 1963 à New York dans un marathon où se succédèrent John Cale, John Cage, David Tudor, Christian Wolff, Philip Corner, Viola Farber, Robert Wood, MacRae Cook, David Del Tredici, James Tenney, Howard Klein.

²⁵ Satie composa des morceaux néo-byzantins comme les *Gymnopédies* (1888) et, surtout, les *Gnossiennes* (1891) aux ornements grecs ou orientaux. Proche alors du prosateur décadent Joséphin Péladan, grande figure rosicrucienne, il écrivit pour lui *L'Hymne pour le salut au drapeau du Prince de Byzance*, qu'enregistra le ténor Nicolai Gedda en 1987, qu'EMI sortit en CD en 1996. On sait aussi que les gamelans javanais invités à l'Exposition universelle de 1889 produisirent sur lui comme sur Debussy forte impression et l'incitèrent sans doute à user de la répétitivité (cf. supra Note 24 : *Vexations*, 1893 ainsi que la musique du film *Entr'acte*, 1924).

²⁶ Lorsque nous analysons le rapport des surfaces entre elles, nous nous apercevons qu'à partir d'une distance, trop lointaine ou trop proche, et, pour le film, d'une relative accélération, on ne peut plus distinguer les détails et séparer les "atomes plastiques". Cette observation découle de la "logique des densités" chère à Alexandre Papadopoulo, qui a étudié l'organisation de l'espace spiralée dans la miniature persane, l'art non figuratif de la calligraphie, l'art abstrait de l'arabesque et l'esthétique de l'horreur du vide dans *L'Islam et l'art musulman*.

²⁷ *La Nature*, 119-122 donne une description de ce système nécessitant une dizaine de caméras synchrones et autant d'appareils de projection. Louis Lumière lui-même eut en 1899 l'idée, qu'il breveta le 29 décembre 1900, du *Photorama*, un système de reproduction complète de l'horizon, panorama non plus optique, comme celui de la camera obscura, mais photographique, qu'on a pu voir au Grand Palais dans le cadre de l'exposition "Lumière ! Le Cinéma inventé," 27 mars-14 juin 2015. Cf. *Les Lumières font leur cinéma*, 30.

²⁸ Meusy, "L'Énigme du Cinéorama," 1-16.

²⁹ Cf. Quoi, "Herbert Bayer et la vision étendue."

³⁰ Le découpage du film et les diverses interventions prévues dans la salle se trouvent dans : Lemaître, *Le Film est déjà commencé ?*

³¹ Technique de l'image anamorphosée développée par la 20th Century Fox et utilisée par l'industrie hollywoodienne, de 1953 aux années soixante, basé sur l'Hypergonar et l'*Anamorphoscope* brevetés en 1926 par le Français Henri Chrétien. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anamorphosis>

³² Le premier film en Circarama, *A Tour Of The West*, fut projeté lors de l'inauguration de Disneyland, en juillet 1955. (Cf. Nielsen, *Projecting America*).

³³ Ibid. La *Laterna Magika* fut présentée à l'Exposition universelle de Bruxelles en 1958. Cf. aussi note 18.

³⁴ Cf. le catalogue de l'exposition à l'Opéra de Paris: Auclair, *Les Ballets Suédois*.

³⁵ Cette "revue," écrite tantôt "ciné-sketch," tantôt "cinesketch," conçue par Picabia pour la "soirée de gala de Rolf de Maré," ainsi annoncée par le programme, fut mise en scène et éclairée par René Clair, qui usa d'effets stroboscopiques. Man Ray, l'auteur d'une belle photo sans doute prise pendant les répétitions, y aurait tenu un rôle de bavard, tandis que Jean Börlin y aurait interprété un flic ; la danseuse isadorienne Élisabeth Toulemont (alias Caryathis) s'y serait produite sur des musiques du groupe des Six ; des poèmes auraient été récités par Yvonne George ; du jazz "hot" aurait été joué par l'orchestre des Georgians. Cf. Lynn Garafola, *Legacies of Twentieth-Century Dance*, Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 2005, p. 114. Selon Carole Boulbès, des équivalents théâtraux au ralenti, à l'accélééré et la recherche de simultanéité cinématographiques y auraient été proposés (Boulbès, *Francis Picabia, Écrits critiques*, 555).

³⁶ Cf. Auclair, *Les Ballets Suédois*.

³⁷ Drame lyrique en trois actes de Sylvio Lazzari mis en scène à l'Opéra de Paris par Pierre Chéreau, chorégraphié par Nicola Guerra, incluant une projection de mer déchaînée traversant les diverses toiles peintes du décor de Maxime Dethomas. Cette interaction film/spectacle, on la retrouve dans des ballets récents tels que *Dance* (1979) de Lucinda Childs, suite gestuelle synchronisée à un film 35mm NB de Sol LeWitt projeté en fond de scène, ou *Biped* (1999), chorégraphie multimédia de Merce Cunningham ponctuée par les images géantes en 3D de lignes de force et de traces des danseurs traitées par les artistes-infographistes Shelley Eshkar et Paul Kaiser. Cf. la notice de la Bibliothèque de France FRBNF42047774 se référant à Wolff, Stéphane. *L'Opéra au Palais Garnier (1875-1962)*. Paris: 1962. Pour Childs : Boisseau, "La 'Dance'

Perpétuelle de Lucinda Childs;” pour Cunningham : Dahan & Gauville “Danse: Entretien Musical Autour.”

³⁸ Le mot “Happening” fut employé pour la première fois par Allan Kaprow en 1957 pour qualifier une “performance” artistique (Kaprow, Allan. “Happenings in the New York Scene.” *Art News*, May, 1961, rééd. : Kaprow, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*).

³⁹ Dans nombre d’exemples, l’effet s’obtient à la projection, la pellicule n’étant pas nécessairement plus “large” et la question de l’anamorphose ne jouant pas. C’est le cas de Man Ray qui aurait projeté des films en couleur de Méliès sur les danseurs, tous vêtus de blanc, lors d’une fête en plein air donnée en 1930 par Anna-Letizia Pecci-Blunt ou de Werner Nekes dirigeant les images clignotantes de son *Schnitte für ABABA* (1967) sur une forêt de sapins. Cf. Dominique Noguez, *Cinéma &*, 117.

⁴⁰ Whitman présenta *Prune Flat*, interprété par Mimi Stark, Simone Forti et Lucinda Childs. Cf. Uroskie, *Expanded Cinema*, 133

⁴¹ Bouhours, *Quel cinéma*, 166-167.

⁴² Pour la pièce de Cunningham, *Variations V* (1965), VanDerBeek utilisa plusieurs écrans sur lesquels étaient projetés des montages en 16 mm d’images publicitaires, de films d’animation et de série B diffusés par la télévision ainsi que des déformations électroniques abstraites signées Nam June Paik. On peut voir ces films expérimentaux dans la captation du ballet réalisée l’année suivante par Arne Arnborn pour la chaîne de télévision allemande NDR.

⁴³ Guido, *L’Age du rythme*, 194-200.

⁴⁴ Moholy-Nagy, Laszlo. *The New Vision and Abstract of an Artist*. New York: Wittenborn, 1947.

⁴⁵ Cf. David Vaughan, *Merce Cunningham: Fifty Years*, 65.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Vuillermoz, “Devant l’Écran,” 3

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Le Yorkshire Film Archive, British Pathé, la Wellcome Library, la London A P Archive, la British Movietone, la Religious Society of Friends in Britain, le National Grid PLC, Catalyst Housing, Les Films du Jeudi, Argos Films, Le Collège de France, le Museum of London, la Library of Congress, John Martin, la Photographic Society, le Science Museum, etc.

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Routines of Writing: Administration and the Poetics of Movement in Robert Walser's Works and the Film *All This Can Happen*

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Abstract

This article contextualizes Robert Walser's *The Walk* and *All This Can Happen* through Walser's literary practice and the social technologies of his time. It is argued that walking, perceiving, and writing in both works become part of a quasi-bureaucratic routine and therefore reflect certain historical changes in the office as an architectural and technical means of administration. Walser's earlier novel *Jakob von Gunten* is referred to in order to expand the argument and develop the final thesis that Walser's poetics of movement mirror an administrative control of "life" that was strongly shaped and remodelled around 1900.

Keywords: Robert Walser, body techniques (techniques du corps), biopolitics, poetics of knowledge

Introduction

This essay contextualizes *The Walk* and its interpretation in the film *All This Can Happen* through Walser's literary practice, which links perceiving, walking, and writing in a quasi-bureaucratic routine. Where the poetics and motives of *The Walk* and Walser's earlier novel *Jakob von Gunten* refer to this chain of operations in their portrayals of institutions, they reflect the historical changes leading to new techniques and practices of administration around 1900. Therefore Walser's poetics of movement make visible a biopolitical control of "life" that came into existence at his time.

Writing as a Chain of Operations

Robert Walser's *The Walk* is difficult to categorize as it defies expectations regarding plot, storytelling, or conventional form. In a stream of encounters, conversations, letters, descriptions, and uneventful stories without apparent thematic coherence, the narrator takes the reader on a rather random drift. Still, the text is anything but devoid of structure, it even seems to follow a preconceived concept whereby the narrator repeatedly stops to comment on his writing, to take a break from his work or to predict a future happening that he will describe later on. *The Walk* seems willfully

composed as a chain of narrative vignettes that are the effects of disturbances and contingencies during writing. The formal peculiarities of Walser's text then appear to reflect the importance of the practices of literary representation. Siobhan Davies and David Hinton's *All This Can Happen* has taken this as a starting point for its own comment on the relationship of film as simulation. The work's collection of archive material connects the places, people, and stories of *The Walk* with the early history of the scientific study of motion in film. Again and again, the images are paused, halted, and recontextualized, giving way to new perceptual associations. Walser's highlighting of the process of writing is mirrored in the way filmic montage is foregrounded in the work, as a giving way to different means of reproducing the living world rather than just presenting it to the viewer.

In an intriguing passage of *All This Can Happen*, the narrator's visit to the municipal tax office is described in the voiceover to historical images of administrative buildings and clerks working inside. We see hands flipping through a card index, then in another frame a woman walking through an office, followed by a tripartite frame containing a walker and two motion studies by Edward Muybridge. Meanwhile, the narrator defends the necessity of talking a regular walk to his tax officer: "Walk I definitely must to maintain contact with the living world, without perceiving which I could not write one single word. [...] With the utmost love and attention, a man who walks studies every smallest living thing."¹ Where the sonic and visual montage of *All This Can Happen* draws a connection between administrative procedures and the walking routine of the writer in Walser's text, it might be interesting to look at how much his poetics of describing life in nature writing, portraits, or biographies is based on the practices of an institution which also figures rather prominently in his work: the office, with its ways of recording, transcribing, and thus controlling society.

As a descendant from a poor, lower class family—his father's shop for writing equipment went bankrupt when he was still a child—Walser was forced to seek education as a bank-clerk in the 1880s.² After that, he worked mostly short-term as a lower-tier employee, an accountant for banks and insurances, or as copyist for a lawyer. His first published writing originates from that time. After moving to Berlin, he mostly gave up working as an employee, and instead tried to make it as a full-time writer. However, he never ceased to be obsessed with the routines of institutions. Be it in his diary of schoolboy Fritz Kochers Aufsätze,³ in his letters from the military, or in his well-known descriptions of the life of office clerks—the crucial role of imitation and repetition are always stressed when it comes to describing the transformative exertion of institutional power over the individual. And interestingly enough, a certain office routine appears to have persisted in Walser's self-discipline as a writer.⁴ In his *Diary Fragment from 1926*,⁵ we find the description of a writing process that comes very close to what we know about Walser's own writing habits in his later years: the diarist tells us about how he is always planning his day ahead in order to write down a text

which he thought about during his walks, just like the narrator of *The Walk*, who is struck by the idea of writing a text at the same time as wandering through the streets. Moreover, Walser's diarist from 1926 stresses the importance of a "routine"⁶ of writing, in which life and literature are linked together and in which a text whose length he plans ahead will keep him busy for about twenty days, making it possible for him to capture life as a daily stream of small events. To represent life as it really is, we are told, is his sole aim in writing, and the ideal would be a text devoid of any phantasies or fictional distortions of stories and novels. In this mode of production, the diarist calls himself the "Bediente im Dienste des Schriftwesens,"⁷ which could be translated as "servant in the service of writing," but the double-meaning of the German word *schriftwesen* is of significance here: on the one hand, it is an expression for official or judicial correspondence that has dropped out of use, and, at the same time, *wesen* is also being, a living entity. For Walser, the quasi-bureaucratic writing procedures, with a given text-length and alternating writing and walking hours, appear to turn scripture into a "writing-being." In this phase of Walser's writing, the text is not a fictional representation but a mimetic re-creation of the living world.

The idea of a carefully planned undertaking, an administrative technique and practice of writing to generate a text that comes as close as possible to life itself, is also crucial in what the narrator of *The Walk* says about the genesis of the narration:

Writers also, like generals, often make the most laborious preparations, before they dare march to the attack and give battle, or, in other words, fling their produce, or a book, into the book market [...]. I hope no estrangement will ensue, if I say that I am writing all these, (I trust pretty and delicate lines) with a quill from the Imperial High Court of Justice. Hence the brevity, pregnancy, and acumen of my language, at certain points well enough perceptible, at which now nobody need wonder anymore.⁸

In echoing the writing process of the *Diary Fragment from 1926*, this passage contains an accurate description of Walser's style in *The Walk*: The text might be a brief account, but the narrator's search for pregnancy often leads to intricate circuitousness that overstresses the minute details of small events. This seems to be one of the most particular features of Walser's prose; at the same time, one could perceive it as an artistic use of the formulas and idiosyncratic qualities of formal correspondence—its bureaucratic quality. Take, for example, the first sentence of *The Walk*, which describes the narrator's departure through constant circumvention and starts with what sounds like an official account or record of his actions: "I have to report that one fine morning, I do not know any more for sure what time it was, as the desire to take a walk came over me, I put my hat on my head, left my writing room, or room of phantoms, and ran down the stairs to hurry out into the street."⁹ The quasi-bureaucratic report frames the narration, setting the scene for *The Walk*. In a similar vein, the aforementioned

dialogue in the tax office concludes with an overview of the following events by the narrator: the totality of what is written down, everything that happens in the text and in life, is thus recorded as if for official purposes.

At this point, we can say something about the poetics of life in Walser's literature: the perception and capture—the “study” of “every smallest living thing,”¹⁰ which the narrator defines as the basic aim of the walker—does not only echo the intentions of our diarist but also very clearly resembles the poetic intentions of *The Walk*. Life, with Walser's stroller, is full of small and unimportant things, which are noteworthy because of their smallness, because of their uneventful and volatile nature. And this is recorded by a writing routine that links a certain form of data recording and the truthful recreation of impressions in daily literary office-work. Walser's poetics of small non-events is made possible by an administratively inspired practice of writing, a misuse of bureaucratic protocols, or chains of operations, as an artistic practice.

We can trace this connection between a poetics of life and an office-routine-turned-literary-strategy back to Walser's earlier work titled *Jakob von Gunten*, published in 1909. Here, we find the description of an administration controlling life, movement, and walking in a constant flow of institutional procedures like writing, guiding bodies, and modeling space. While showing how consistently Walser developed his poetics of life administration, I would also like to stress the wider historical context for this literature, in particular the rise of bureaucracy as one of the most dominant techniques of social control in the 20th century.

A New Institutional Regime

Judging from the title of its mysterious textbook *What is the Aim of Benjamenta's School for Boys?*, the institution in question in *Jakob von Gunten* was founded in a pedagogical spirit. But its initial ambitions seem to have waned significantly over time: “One learns very little here, there is a shortage of teachers, and none of us boys of the Benjamenta Institute will come to anything, that is to say, we shall all be something very small and subordinate later in life.”¹¹ There is only one class left when Jakob enters the program, held under the supervision of the principal's sister. From submitting to its ridicule and humiliating exercises, one can only expect “inward successes,”¹² as Jakob puts it, i.e. the boys will prosper only by developing a fatalistic attitude and cleansing themselves of any ambition other than to humbly serve and to acquire a dependent position in the world.¹³

For all the varying perspectives that the Benjamenta Institute has offered to critics as an ironic re-enactment of the *Turmgesellschaft* in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*,¹⁴ a parody of the *Lebensreform*-Movement at the turn of the century,¹⁵ or even a modern monastery¹⁶—the Institute has always been analyzed for its disciplinary approach in addressing its residents.¹⁷ Thus, one of its most prominent features has been overlooked. At one point, Jakob expresses his contentedness with the favorable

impression made by his résumé and by a photograph he had to submit when entering the Institute, fueling his hope of acquiring a position as a servant.¹⁸ Driven by material plight and an insistent ambition, he repeatedly and unsuccessfully requests the principal to find him a job.¹⁹ As it seems, Jakob's biography and portrait are elements of an application that Mr. Benjamenta sends to possible employers.²⁰ This means that the Benjamenta Institute—while in decline as a pedagogical institution—has taken up another line of business: it has become an employment agency. *Jakob von Gunten* describes a school that has become an institution, controlling and fueling a market economy rather than offering the individual the prospect of a higher humanist education. The Benjamenta Institute does not teach writing as a form of educational training, but uses it as a form of social control, with the aim of administratively integrating individuals into a market economy. Its primary function in the school is the recording of data, i.e. of the life of the students. The protagonist, Jakob, engages in writing his CV for Mr. Benjamenta in order to be placed in one of the jobs the principal finds for everybody. But as Jakob keeps postponing the submission of his paper, this seems like a foreshadowing of the end of the novel where he is the only one to not leave the institution. His biography seems to be part of an enclosed institutional realm that characterizes life in a milieu of control according to Deleuze: "In the disciplinary societies one was always starting again (from school to the barracks, from the barracks to the factory), while in the societies of control one is never finished with anything."²¹

This end of discipline and the beginning of a new bureaucratic regime of control is also reflected in the infamous body exercises at the Institute, which are as means of what Deleuze terms "administering their last rites and of keeping people employed until the installation of the new forces knocking at the door."²² Accordingly, a class titled "How Should the Boy Behave?"—presumably originally designed according to the disciplinary approach—developed a subsequent performance routine and order with at least three qualities that deviate from the principles of prisons, schools, and physiological pedagogy. First of all, the tight exercise routine of the boys seems neither restricted to temporal nor spatial limits as they submit to the strange rules of principal's sister Mrs. Benjamenta not only during class. They remain in constant training even after the lesson is finished. From the moment when Jakob enters the program, each and every one of his actions are subject to scrutiny by the school management, including the way he eats, his choice of sleeping chambers, and his feelings towards his classmates. Everything seems to be significant, while at the same time the categories of every assessment remain obscure, known only to the siblings Benjamenta.

This appears to be related to what Jakob exclaims at the beginning of the novel: "God knows, sometimes my whole stay here seems like an incomprehensible dream."²³ The discourse of dreams, rituals, and fairy tales in *Jakob von Gunten*, just like in Kafka's

novels, points towards an institution of control that is centered around a constantly transforming, but ultimately empty center of power. Living under constant assessment with unclear outcome, Jakob develops a general attitude of anxious self-awareness that clearly shows in the passages of his diary where he gets carried away by his dreams and wishes and then corrects himself abruptly at the end of every entry. There is a certain bodily tension related to this technique of self-observation in which he and his classmates constantly live, a tension or alertness that is part of the institutional exercise of waiting for somebody or something. Part of the student's training is to wait for Ms. Benjamenta's arrival, standing still with eyes locked at the door before the official lesson starts. Also, during the long and boring hours of his free afternoons, during which he is not allowed to leave the Institute, Jakob conducts yoga-like exercises to keep himself awake and attentive. Waiting also seems to play a crucial part in the way authority is exerted by Mr. Benjamenta in his office: when entering the school, Jakob has to wait eagerly for any sign of reaction to his application by the principal. And it is one of Jakob's favorite pastimes to eavesdrop before the usually very quiet office.²⁴ Therefore, even if their lessons appear on the surface to require discipline, the boys at the Benjamenta Institute are subject to a strangely seamless power that reigns through non-interaction or deflection. Its passive quality is best embodied by Mr. Benjamenta himself, who never shows up during the school lessons and remains idle in his office all day as Jakob ironically notes in his diary: "Such a Hercules cannot help falling asleep, that is, growling and musing as he reads his newspapers, when he confronts such a petty exercise as that of educating us."²⁵ Even though ironically tinted, this description of an educational strategy seems significant. Control in Mr. Benjamenta's institution not only has the tendency to exceed the classroom as the traditional arena of disciplinary instruction, but the headmaster also influences the boys through reflective withdrawal rather than direct confrontation. At first this might seem at odds with Ms. Benjamenta's strict teaching methods in the classroom. On a closer look though, the boys' uniform outward appearance—their equal facial expressions and their tiresome and repetitive training concerning the most mundane of activities, like opening a door or greeting someone—displays the effects of disciplinary control.²⁶ But what we know about the actual procedures in Ms. Benjamenta's class is far from a regime of miniscule regulations or an extensive body of unbendable laws and orders. The rules to be followed by the pupils are not extensive at all: "One of the maxims of our school is: 'A little, but thoroughly,'" as Jakob reminds the reader, and: "To learn a little! The same thing over and over! Gradually I too am beginning to understand what a large world is hidden behind these words. To imprint something firmly, firmly on ones mind."²⁷ The best pupil in class will be the one who acts, based on the few rules and regulations which he has internalized, "so to speak, engraved in metal."²⁸ Instead of directing the controlling gaze to the appearance and behavior of the pupil, the institution in *Jakob von Gunten* aims at his interior. It does not govern by confrontational rules, but by shaping thoughts, motives, and attitudes.

The administration in the Benjamenta institute is a ubiquitous power, ruling seamlessly by drawing on the inner motivations of the governed, engaging individuals in a constant training that is put into effect through writing. It has become a new, seamless way of governing life through a governmental-biopolitical institution. Instead of forcing life into the matrix of an ideal norm through disciplinary measures, the regime of writing in Walser's *Jakob von Gunten* controls individuals through flexible norms that are in constant transformation, as according to Michel Foucault.²⁹ Walser's writing practices in the later stages of his work seem to mirror this flexible chaining of "life" as both an object of interest and of scrutiny, as do the institutions of his time with their bureaucratic routines.

Administrative Poetics

The protagonist Jakob takes regular walks in the city surrounding the Institute, describing small events and encounters in the tradition of Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens*.³⁰ The aesthetics of movement and writing in *Jakob von Gunten* are closely linked to *The Walk* and *All This Can Happen*. "Life" in *Jakob von Gunten* can be discovered and described from the enclosed realm of the Institute with its strangely undead residents, through moving, observing, and exercises of writing. According to Jakob, walking in the streets has an ameliorative effect on him. Watching everybody else being industrious makes him think of his own goals and makes him serve them better—just like in the Institute, where the ruling principles appear to persist only because of their ongoing performative embodiment in class. "The city educates, it cultivates, and by examples, what's more, not by arid precepts from books. There is nothing professorial about it, and that is flattering, for the towering gravity of knowledge discourages one. And then there is so much here, that fosters, sustains, and helps," writes Michel Foucault in *Security, Territory, Population*.³¹ The crowd in the street does not issue guidelines for the appearance and attitude of the individual but instead shapes everybody's behavior by example. It is a self-regulating entity that rules by "fostering" and "sustaining," not by curtailing the individual through idealized norms, bringing every moving body together in a shared space of vital interests and driving forces. The Benjamenta Institute, in its constricted architectural space, also fosters this kind of self-governed movement, and it is no accident that the boys are repeatedly referred to in the novel as a "crowd."³² Nor is it surprising when Jakob describes the classes as a perfect re-enactment of the streets outside the institute: "For me, our classes in dancing, propriety, and gymnastics, seem like public life itself, large, important, and then before my eyes the schoolroom is transformed into a splendid drawing room, into a street full of people."³³ The biopolitical administration in the Benjamenta mimicks "life" through constant monitoring and exercising, and thus facilitates Jakob's entries in his diary, keeping him constantly alert and searching for small and unimportant details as well as humble in face of the common world in which he lives.

The connection between a moving crowd in the street and a drawing made in a studio in Jakob's diary is interesting in this context. If the school serves as a perfect institutional mirror of the crowd in the streets, re-creating its self-governance without reference to law or written words, then the rules of the Institute also have to be enacted without a written justification. The rule-book *What is the Aim of Benjamenta's School for Boys* is still used in class, but to Jacob and his fellow comrades its guidelines remain as mysterious as anything going on during their training. Accordingly, the reader is almost never told about the actual content of the book, and the only way for Jacob to grasp the idea of his education is through a puzzling allegory which he thinks about when looking at the door that leads from one classroom into the initially mysterious and forbidden inner chambers of the Institute, home to the principal and his sister. Here he sees a helmet, a sheath, and a saber hanging on the wall as a rather mundane, or "tedious-looking" wall-decoration. Looking at the standardized kitsch, he can't help but think about the strange normative base for the institutional procedures to which he is subject: "This decoration is like a sign, or like a delicate evidence, of the rules that prevail here."³⁴ This is an interesting observation by Jakob. If the rationale of the rules at the Institute is a sign and a "delicate evidence" at the same time, then essentially there is no justification for the rules but the effects they have on Jakob's body and those of his fellow comrades. The only way of exerting power over the individual in *Jakob von Gunten* is through an endless circle of performative self-validation. Thus, the institution in Walser's writing has been stripped bare of its idealistic goals and foundational principles. Chains of operations support and enable the existence of its power structure without any pre-existing law, they are the only rule to be observed by the pupils. As such, Walser's portrayal of the Benjamenta institute reminds the reader of the concept of *techniques du corps* discovered not long after him by the ethnologist Marcel Mauss on observing different ways of body training: according to Mauss' anthropological argument, we have to regard the human body as part of a chain of operations that links practices and technologies into one cultural continuum.³⁵

Considering the discourse of law and order as an ornament in *Jakob von Gunten*, it is intriguing that around the time Walser wrote his novel in Berlin, the architecture of employment agencies began to develop into what we could call *spatial ciphers of control*. From 1902 onwards, there is evidence of a new kind of architectural approach to mass unemployment in the centralized job agencies of the time. Rather than incarcerating and disciplining the body of the unemployed (as was the case in the poorhouses and of welfare-institutions), the administration buildings of public unemployment insurances started to allow for crowds moving through their offices in great numbers. They featured a layout that was specifically designed to let the masses flow freely through the building, i.e. by preventing the risk of clustering in certain areas or using counters that were specifically built to prevent confrontation between staff and the unemployed. Many examples of early crowd control architecture

followed after World War I, with the advent of public unemployment insurance in 1927. The buildings of the newly founded *Reichsansalt* for the unemployed—many of which were built by prominent members of the Bauhaus-school like Walter Gropius—for example, used state of the art interior architecture to safeguard the daily service of these institutions: revolving doors, security counters, and construction plans ensured an even distribution of people through the buildings, while modular walls made it possible to react to quick changes in the economy and to a subsequent rise and fall of the demand for the agency's services. Working with little or no supervision through security teams, the architecture of the buildings adapted to what was known about the behavior of crowds.³⁶ By establishing small chains of self-governed interaction between the bodies of the unemployed and the building, the unemployment agency of Walser's time and thereafter turned into biopolitical architectural milieus addressing the individual only as a particle of a moving crowd rather than as a perfectible body. This is precisely the strategy developed by the Benjamenta Institute and marks a new regime of controlling the individual as part of a mass. As Jakob puts it at one point: "The masses are the slaves of today, and the individual is the slave of the great mass idea."³⁷

Conclusion

To conclude, Walser's particular poetics feature in the later stages of his works, starting with *Jakob von Gunten*, and later in *The Walk* and in the *Diary-Fragment of 1926*. These are linked to his portrayal of institutions and the way they exert power over the individual. In Walser's time, the administrative institutions began to transform themselves into entities that stood in close contact with the vital processes of the society they sought to regulate, and the institutional scenes of the former employee reflects this change as much as his poetics of movement. The open and flexible qualities of the biopolitical milieus of control and the practices of representation they developed are turned into an administrative poetics of recording life events in literature. The digressive style and the formal limitlessness that is characteristic for Walser's writing seem to be not only the effect of individual aesthetic decisions but also are a reflection of the broader cultural practices and coercive mechanisms of his time. With its extraordinary use of montage, *All This Can Happen*, rather than just audiovisually enhancing Walser's *The Walk*, stresses the dimension of the poetics analyzed here. In its own depiction of institutional power and movement, multiple frames stop cinematic movement on the one side and continue it on the other. Movements, gestures, and mimetic expressions from various sources become interrelated, echo each other, or answer one another. Hence, *All This Can Happen* is analyzing biopolitical institutions in accordance with Walser, through motifs and formal choices: administration from this perspective creates an artificial yet organic ornament, social coherence and necessity out of chaotic and contingent expressions of life.

Biography

Simon Roloff is currently a junior professor for literary writing (creative writing) and literary studies at the University of Hildesheim. He studied philosophy, Kulturwissenschaften and Neue Deutsche Literatur at Humboldt University Berlin and Creative Writing at the University of Leipzig. He wrote his doctoral thesis about Robert Walser at the faculty of media studies at the Bauhaus-University of Weimar and has been working as a Research Assistant and Postdoctoral Fellow at Humboldt-University and the DFG graduate school Historiographies of Media.

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Notes

¹ Walser, *The Walk*, 85.

² Echte, *Robert Walser*, 45.

³ Fritz Kocher's Essays is part of the 2013 collection *A Schoolboy's Diary*.

⁴ See Walser, Fritz Kocher's Essays, and Kagen, *The Wanderer as Soldier*.

⁵ Walser, *Tagebuch-Fragment*.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 59-60

⁸ Walser, *The Walk*, 68-69.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁰ Wasler, *The Walk*, 85.

¹¹ Walser, *Jakob von Gunten*, 3.

¹² *Ibid.*, 3.

¹³ This has led many critics to believe that Walser is adding a dark twist to the motif of *Bildung* here, established in the German literature of Enlightenment. In works like Carl Philipp Moritz' *Anton Reiser* and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, the modern individual with its desires and character traits is evolving over time through a series of interventions by well-meaning authorities which shape its character and guide it towards the realization of a *Bildungsweg* that, at the same time, is presented as the narrative structure of the novel. In opposition to this tradition of reading Walser, I would like to explain the institution in *Jakob von Gunten* through the contemporary restructuring of institutions in its time.

¹⁴ Mayer, *Bildungsroman*, 210.

¹⁵ Middleton, *Introduction*, xvii.

¹⁶ Zimmermann, *Der Babylonische Dolmetscher*, 148.

¹⁷ With the exception of Hans H. Hiebel's Deleuzian reading of the novel in *Zerstörung der Signifikanz*, 242.

¹⁸ Walser, *Jakob von Gunten*, 61.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 64, 101, 137, 166.

²⁰ As such the Benjamenta Institute remains faithful to its inspirational counterpart, the actual servant school attended by Walser in the summer of 1905. The latest biographical research into Walser's life has identified the school in question (Echte, *Robert Walser*, 180). A publication entitled *Der Herrschaftliche Diener* authored by the school's principal Mr. Manthei features a summary introduction to the duties and manners of the servant, reminiscent of what we know about the institutional training in *Jakob von Gunten*, followed by a brief description of the newly founded administrative department at the school, billed as the *Herrschaftliche Dienerbüro*, or Grand Bureau for Servants, which intends, both to support unemployed graduates financially and to refer them to vacant job opportunities. See: Manthei, *Diener*, S. 11

²¹ Deleuze, *Postscript*, 3.

²² *Ibid.*, 5.

²³ Walser, *Jakob von Gunten*, 6.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 57.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 65.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 65.

²⁹ See Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 56.

³⁰ See Baudelaire, *The Painter*.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 46.

³² Walser, *Jakob von Gunten*, 15, 36.

³³ *Ibid.*, 117.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 34.

³⁵ See Mauss, *Les Techniques du Corps*. Recently the concept of "Kulturtechniken," or cultural techniques has referred to Mauss to describe chains of operations as the foundation of cultures by linking subjects, things or technologies and practices. Body techniques and technological structures stabilize and destabilize institutional power, regimes of discourse and modes of subjectication. For an introduction to the concept, see Bernhard Siegert, *Cultural Techniques* (2015).

³⁶ See also Roloff, *Der Stellenlose*.

³⁷ Walser, *Jakob von Gunten*, 69.

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INTERVIEWS

Siobhan Davies and David Hinton in Conversation with Claudia Kappenberg, Part 1

Siobhan Davies, Siobhan Davies Dance

David Hinton, Film-maker

Claudia Kappenberg, University of Brighton

Abstract

Siobhan Davies and David Hinton met with Claudia Kappenberg at the Southbank Centre London on 2/7/2015, for a conversation about the making of *All This Can Happen (ATCH)*. In Part 1 of the conversation, Siobhan Davies and David Hinton each give a snapshot of who they are now as artists and makers. The conversation then explores the current state of the art and the screening of *ATCH* in different contexts and venues.

Keywords: choreographer, film-maker, disciplines, experimental fields, constituency, Cinematèque Française, Maynard Festival, Siobhan Davies Studios

Claudia Kappenberg (CK): To start this conversation about *All This Can Happen (ATCH)*,¹ I would like to get a sense of where you each are as artists now. If I were to take a snapshot of each of you as a maker or a producer, what would I see in the snapshot?

Siobhan Davies (SD): You'd see someone who has been at work for over forty years. I am enjoying all the experiences which have helped me get this far, but I went through a period of time when I felt that I needed to dissolve them all and not let the new work be weighed down by the previous works' failings! However, now I enjoy the remembering and seeing all the long threads and the stuff that thrived from work to work. Then (and now) I wanted to find out how to work and make with other people, and dance has been the medium that I find continually beguiling. I enjoy the doing of dance and the thinking within and around it. Dance, and all that it relates to, has become the mulch I can now draw down from.

Initially I made work for theatres and also worked with the traditional but formidable companions to dance, design and music. As a young maker, I was conscious how strongly these two companion arts could shape my work, but over time I felt as if all the fine detail, the nuanced behaviors that can be revealed by people moving, were swamped by the customary forms put in place to support dance making. I wondered what would happen if I dismantled those relationships, or if I let a performance of

movement be un-accompanied and show it on its own terms? I got stuck into the craft of making solely with dance material. It was exciting for me to also find other dance makers and to explore with them what movements really mattered to us, to others, and why? And then there are the structures to frame them and make what we have found visible without using the weights and measures or presence of another art.

We can be connective tissue to so many disciplines within the arts, including architecture, design, and crafts, but also to the sciences, the social sciences, and for geographers, anatomists, curators, and more. We all have a relationship to movement, and much of our dance- and movement-related exploration is relevant to these other subjects. And when my work combines dance with another discipline in a new way, my own thinking is affected as a result, in that I relate differently to my materials, processes, and capacities.

Any snapshot of me would also have to include this beautiful building, the Siobhan Davies Studios, and what happens in it. I helped to instigate it in 2005. There are many other choreographers, teachers, and performers at work in the building, each with their own passions and motivations, and each with a history of working with or alongside others. That history of passing on information, of learning and making through exchange, is a fine tradition within dance. It could be valued more.

CK: Thanks Siobhan there is a lot going on in this image.

SD: I've had a bit of a roll rather than a snapshot.

CK: David, if I were to take a snapshot of your life as maker, film-maker, and collaborator, what would I see?

David Hinton (DH): I definitely regard myself as a film-maker, and I'm a film-maker who works with dance, but I'm interested in many other things apart from dance. My background is in documentary, and I could happily go out tomorrow and make a documentary about Chinese politics. Quite happily. But one thing I find increasingly is that I don't like fulfilling formulas. The world of television—where I learned my trade—is full of formulaic work, and resisting that was one of the things that led me to dance in the first place. I started making dance films partly because it allowed me to work within mainstream television and still make unique and experimental films. We are talking twenty or thirty years ago now, but dance then was regarded as such a minority pursuit within television that executives weren't interested in it, and that left me with a lot of freedom. Also, within television, and within the circles where I grew up, contemporary dance was regarded as pretty much a joke. I'm interested in investigating things that are despised, and why they are despised. This also relates to *ATCH*, which is preoccupied with paying heed to what is humble and un-regarded. When I first got interested in dance, it was the most humble of all the arts, and the people who worked in dance were the least arrogant among all the artists I worked

with. That was another good reason to work with the dance world, I think. It seemed to be full of good people.

The first dance film I made was *Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men* with DV8,² and that was about twenty-five years ago. The excitement for me was that I was working for ITV and making something that was essentially a silent movie! It was allowed onto television only because it came under the rubric of “dance.” That fascinated me and represented a fantastic opportunity. One of the things that I loved then, and continue to love, about dance film is that there are no rules about how it should be done. The very essence of this realm is experiment and adventure. There may be a time further down the road when people feel like they’ve solved the question of what to do with the combination of dance and film—then formulas will emerge, and dance film will become just as brittle as all the other genres of film-making. But at the moment, that isn’t the case. I always think that the best time to have worked in mainstream movies must have been at the very beginning—in Hollywood in 1910. Fantastic. People were inventing things as they went along. And, to me, dance film is the contemporary equivalent of that.

In terms of my own career, what I’m interested in is following my own mental processes. I like to get up in the morning and think about things that interest me—and that often has nothing to do with what executive types want me to think about. I don’t really regard myself as being part of any particular world or school of thought. I float around in a dream mostly. A man without a place! I prefer to keep trying to do new things, rather than repeating things I’ve done before. I’m always having new ideas, but I often don’t know how to fulfill my ideas in any practical sense. I don’t know where to find the money, and so on. And of course, that creates difficulties, because in order to survive in life, it’s usually pretty important to have a particular place in the world. You’ve got to have a system around you to support you financially and institutionally. In the case of *All This Can Happen*, of course, Siobhan’s organization supplied that—for which I’m profoundly grateful—but usually I’m walking a tightrope. I feel I have to live on my wits, but what I get in return is freedom. Freedom to think my own thoughts is what I like best.

SD: I am noticing that dance artists in the last few years have also struck out for a more independent practice, to take a risk, to conceive and make as individuals whilst using materials that are the best for their needs. Many of them don’t wish their work to be defined by structures put in place before they begin to make. Some dance-based artists develop a coalition of practices, with one informing the other, such as choreography, research, performance, teaching, connecting, and writing. This fluidity may be necessary in order for the artists to financially survive, but the different kinds of expertise also gives them a boldness.

CK: Both you and David talk about dance as an experimental field, where rules either don't exist, or can be questioned as part of the practice. In Paris or Vienna in the early 20th century, dance was also part of the experimental avant-garde, challenging ideas about the body, about dance, and trying out the new medium of film. Now, we have a new wave of galleries and museums reaching out to dance to do something "different" with regards to, say, the exploration of architecture, the relation to audiences, or the process of art making itself. What is it about dance or dance artists that allows for this?

SD: I like dance artists for their sense of questing: as if we know that we can do more. We can establish relationships not previously explored, or work in the gaps between different disciplines and connect to or release something unforeseen.

I am curious also how dance artists choose between their independence and when they want to work more as a collective, or join up with one or two others. To me there is an originality about how dance-based artists maintain degrees of authorship in both these structures. The experiment is in how to remain creatively agile in all the relationships needed to sustain a practice and a living.

DH: When I talk about "experimental" with regards to film, I'm not talking about that orthodox view of what "experimental film" means in academia and the associated film festival circuit. For example, there are some people from the academic world who frown on the narration in *All This Can Happen*, because they think it makes certain things in the film too explicit. This makes me laugh, of course, because as soon as someone suggests to me that it is not "experimental" to be explicit, then my instinct is to experiment with being explicit, and see what happens. Maybe that's one reason why our film is called "*All This Can Happen*." This also relates to Robert Walser, I think, because he was an artist who started off within the institutions and published in respectable journals, but strayed away from them. He drifted off and went his own way. I'm more likely to be inspired by an outsider artist than someone who is at the centre of the art world, or at the centre of academic thinking about film or art. I suppose that whatever the academy or the institution is telling me to be interested in, I'm suspicious of, whereas one person pursuing their own vision, however eccentric it is—that interests me.

CK: The context in which one works is hugely important, and I guess an artist and their piece of work always speaks to someone or some context; it implicitly comments on this environment. We can continue here with the idea of snapshots by adding a third image, which is of this world of dance/film/visual arts now, the world for which you've made *All This Can Happen*. What do we see in the snapshot of that world?

DH: A snapshot of the world for which we made *ATCH*? I don't think the world exists for which we made the film. By making the film, we're trying to will that world into being! I don't think the film fits into any particular niche, and that's the whole beauty

of it. Of course, when you launch into something like this, your dream is that it will eventually be of interest to all kinds of people precisely because it isn't a standard fit anywhere. But there's also the possibility that it will be ignored by everyone and won't find an audience at all. Mind you, I always hoped that *ATCH* would, at least, receive some respectful attention in the dance film world. I had already made two other dance films using found footage, and I knew that some people in that world would pay heed to the fact that I'd produced a new work of this kind. Siobhan has obviously got a much bigger constituency that is interested in what she does, because of her stature in the dance world.

CK: We have shifted from one issue to another: first we talked about the orthodoxy of experimental film, and how *ATCH* challenges this orthodoxy, and now we are talking about each of your constituencies. Are these two different issues?

DH: I think the issues are related. Where your work gets seen, and how it is received, is very much dependent on where you are known. In other words, it depends on where you already have a constituency. What gets exhibited within any "world" or "scene" within the arts is much less to do with the quality of any individual piece of work, and much more to do with whether you have built up a reputation in that world. Most worlds are clubbish and suspicious of outsiders, so it takes a bit of time to be accepted into any of them. That is one of the reasons why it is so hard to make original work that genuinely crosses the borders between genres. Such a work is bound to be something of a bastard child that, at first, no-one wants to acknowledge as their own.

I think anything that is designated a "dance film" is likely, first of all, to make people shudder in the wider world, because I don't think the form enjoys a very high standing, except among a small cohort of people who are professionally interested in it. Now, I certainly feel that that cohort of heroes is "my constituency" when I make a film like *ATCH*. They are the people who can be relied upon to watch the film, and take an interest in it, and I thank god that they exist. But if I make a film that only appeals to that constituency, then, to me, that is an abject failure. It is very important to me to try to make work that reaches out beyond an obvious audience and communicates with people *who don't think they are going to like it*. In other words, if I make "a dance film," then I see it as very much part of my job to try to defy people's expectations of what they are going to get when they sit down to watch a dance film. That is a big part of what I mean when I talk about not being formulaic. You have to try to move the form on beyond people's expectations of the form. You have to try to communicate with an audience who are not the obvious audience for the form. Otherwise, there is no challenge.

There's another point worth making about dance film here too. As I've said, I don't think "dance film" as a form has a very high standing in the film world, but because it is so open and flexible as a form, it allows you to make things which can find their way

into the film world under all kinds of other guises. I found this out when I made the film *Nora* with Alla Kovgan.³ That was made as a dance film, but it got shown in innumerable different contexts: at women's film festivals, black film festivals, African film festivals, short film festivals, experimental film festivals, all sorts of places. It was a clear example of making something for a dance film constituency, which then found its way to all kinds of other constituencies. For me, this was great. Whatever I make, I want it to reach as many people as possible.

SD: I think dance in Britain is going through positive changes. We are pursuing a less isolated position within the arts and we are active in other areas as well. Dance is now seen in and made for galleries, museums and other spaces, our constituencies are growing, and we are appreciated and judged from other perspectives.

David is right that dance has had a particular reputation, and the familiarity with that was what drew an audience to it; but now it has more heft of its own. I believe I am braver now when thinking about who I can approach or involve to be an essential part of a new work I would like to make. In *ATCH* we do have the extraordinary companionship of Walser who has been recognized more fully by the literary and the art world in recent years. In other words, without being conscious of it, we made a good choice; because for us *The Walk* was the best writing we could wish for, but his reputation has helped us to connect to others who could then connect to this film through their own interests.

I also enjoy the simplicity of the task, sending the film in its brown envelope to countries I have never visited and where we might create a new relationship.

And for me, this is one of the best dances I have made, because it is close to what I wish my dances to be. It is structured in order to see the immense orchestration of expressive acts each of us uses individually and collectively all the time. Oddly, by not using dance steps as a metaphor we can concentrate more on how our own movement, using all the scales, tells a story. There is my fascination with the million moments in fluid movement and expression. I know they are there, but we don't experience them unless we find the means to glimpse them by concentrating on a single chosen frame, by finding that fragile moment when an expression alters or the body shifts, almost imperceptibly, in a response.

Somewhere in this noticing is a kinship to painting and how an artist finds exactly the right pose to hold the thought needed to express a situation, a scene. Also I think there is a relationship to the flickers of psychological shifts that each of us goes through but think are hidden. These fragments of different attentions, I hope, help us to find audiences within and outside dance. Judging by the different festivals and countries the film has travelled to, we have created something that crosses borders between the arts.

DH: This is another of the reasons why I got interested in dance film in the first place, because I have this deep intuition that dance can enrich film to a much greater degree than it has ever been allowed to up until now. And in that, I feel great creative possibilities. For instance, one thing you've got with dance is a massive cohort of fantastic performers whose abilities have never really been fully exploited by film-makers. If we can work out how to properly harness the talents of dancers in the service of cinema, then we can create a whole new genre of film which can be just as powerful as mainstream movie-making. For me, a big part of that is to do with developing a cinematic conception of what dance is, which may be entirely different from the theatrical idea of dance.

CK: Thinking about where the film has been screened, are there particular memorable places or contexts, where you think the film was well placed, a particular curation maybe, or a certain physical space?

DH: Normally with a film, I'm happy for it to get shown and seen anywhere. The more places it's seen, the happier I am. But it's a bit different with this one, because the beauty of it is so dependent on the quality of the projection and the quality of the sound. I've made a lot of films where those technical things don't matter as much, but much of the character of this one is to do with subtleties—seeing the grain in the image, or hearing tiny things in the sound. When the film is shown in circumstances where the quality of the projection is low—and I've seen this a few times now—I get depressed, because a lot of what is beautiful gets lost. So the quality of the projection has become an important thing for me.

As to particularly memorable contexts, the screening at the Cinematèque Française in Paris was a good one, because the place represents so much about the history of cinema. This is where Godard and Truffaut received their education in film, and it felt like a great honor to be there, to see our film flickering on the same screen where so many iconic films have flickered before. We have talked a lot about which worlds might accept and endorse our work, and this felt like being embraced by the gods of cinema, because the Cinematèque is really a temple of cinema.

CK: Was it a homecoming of sorts?

SD: Seeing the film shown with the best technical equipment on a big screen in a cinema dedicated to the history of film was not what my young self would ever have imagined. So that pleasure was huge. The scale of the screen also meant that the audience could see the attention we put into the research to find the best image for our needs. We concentrated on finding the earliest photograph or film we could which would represent a moment in Walser's novella. There is an exquisite photograph of a parkland and tree which must be one of the earliest uses of color. I anticipate its arrival each time I see the film, and the pleasure is physical. In the brief time it is up on the screen I try to see the fineness of how the light, colors, and textures work together. My

eyes are surprising me as if they are not quite working, but they give me another slant on beauty. Then there are the decayed black and white films which appear so fragile, the images only just holding on to the celluloid. They allowed us to compose using texture and erasure as much as the image to tell the story.

To mention a very different kind of screening, I also saw *ATCH* in the Maynard festival in Wales, in a village hall, with very basic equipment. It was beautifully curated by Simon Whitehead and the generosity of attention by the audience was very special. In part it had to do with a community coming together to share an experience, and with the fact that they could talk about it for longer than they would in a more urban situation with a dispersing audience. It did not feel far from something Walser would have appreciated. Everything from curtained windows, single chairs, the smell of homemade popcorn, no rush to leave, people gathering intently to talk about what they had seen, and the smell of the countryside coming in through the door before it closed against the evening light. Everything gave our film a different context than the one at the Cinematèque, and both felt valuable.

CK: I asked you about screenings and contexts, because this influences so much how a piece of work comes across. As you say, in the Cinematèque Française the work spoke to the art of filmmaking and its histories, to the evolution of film technologies and the pleasure of image making. In the Welsh festival and the village hall, it spoke about community and humanity, and about the meaning of a place. Something very different is foregrounded in each of the screenings. I am glad we are touching on this, as I think it can encourage dancefilm-makers to think more about the dialogue between an environment and the work that is shown, and even to deliberately explore different kinds of exhibition contexts for a piece of work.

DH: I'm very happy when the work gets shown in galleries or art institutions, because then it feels like the film is doing valuable work to help break down those historic distinctions between film and dance and visual arts. Dissolving those distinctions is good for the kind of work that we're trying to make. It's great that the film had its premiere at Dance Umbrella in the building of Central St Martins College of Art and Design, and the screenings at the ICA had a real buzz about them. They made me feel that we could start to make an impression on the visual arts world. The film was also treated as a visual artwork in Korea, where it screened constantly in a gallery. And, of course, it is terrific when you feel that you are storming the great bastions of European culture, as with the screening at the Prado. That was an interesting one, because the film was being shown to people from museums all over Europe, as an example of how archives can be used to fuel creativity. So we felt that we were really part of something valuable there. Helping to shape the future, with any luck.

SD: If there have been formulas about how to make something in television or film, there are also formulas about where work is shown. Art galleries would not have

shown a film like this a few years ago, and now they will. This introduces the work to different kinds of audiences, and eventually dance and film audiences also go to galleries to see moving-image-based work, and gallery audiences go to cinemas or dance venues, etc. I'm generally excited about how audiences evolve alongside the different patterns in art making.

CK: And because of the different context, the film will be looked at in different ways. People will notice different things.

SD: People who go into an art gallery bring a sensibility of going into an art gallery to the situation. They will look at and speak about this work from that perspective and that not only enlivens how the work is experienced, but it also helps us to expand our subsequent work, whatever work it is.

CK: I was thinking that if there is a particular experience like the one in Wales that you're describing, it may also change how you yourself perceive the work, and it might give you something that you take to the next piece of work.

SD: In Paris at the Cinematèque Française, the film was an extraordinary object in an incredible circumstance, and it looked beautiful. In the other situation in the village hall in Wales, somehow the barrier between the film and the audience was less...visceral? It had warmth. I'm not saying that one was cold and one was warm, but the space in between the screen and the viewers had a unique quality in each venue. I think I can feel a physical sense of touch in an auditorium, and the different screenings allowed me to think of these different contexts and the impact they have on an audience. I was delighted that the film worked in both, but I don't know if that experience directly influenced the next work.

DH: One of the great things about the art world is that this is the place where you can show something without audiences worrying too much about what it is.

SD: Because the gallery context is less prescribed?

DH: Well, in the world of screendance, for instance, it has always been hard for me to show anything without people worrying about the question: "Is it dance?" I've never heard anybody actually give a convincing definition of what dance is, but still, there are always people worrying over this question. In fact, I'd still dearly love to hear a good definition of what dance is, if such a thing exists.

CK: How does this compare to film?

DH: Well, in the film world, I've never heard anyone asking: "Is this film?" They are much more likely to be asking: "Is this a good film?" But then their answer is likely to be based on a pretty standard set of criteria. In the art world, I think people feel much more free to react in whatever way they want, without worrying so much about "Is it

art?” or even “Is it good art?” The whole question of “Is it art?” was a 20th-century question and doesn’t seem to bother anybody anymore. So the art world now feels like the place with the most freedom, in terms of what you can show, how you can show it, and how people respond to it.

CK: Thank you for these three snapshots. They can serve us as a prologue for our following discussion on the making of *ATCH*, your research, inspirations, and the nitty-gritty aspects of the editing.

End Part 1.

Biographies

Siobhan Davies is a renowned British choreographer who rose to prominence in the 1970s. Davies was a founding member of London Contemporary Dance Theatre and in 1982 joined forces with Richard Alston and Ian Spink to create the independent dance company Second Stride. Founding Siobhan Davies Dance in 1988, she works closely with collaborating artists to ensure that their own artistic enquiry is part of the creative process. By 2002 she moved away from the traditional theatre circuit and started making work for gallery spaces. Davies applies choreography across a wide range of creative disciplines including visual arts and film. In 2012, Davies created her first film work *All This Can Happen* with director David Hinton.

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Film-maker David Hinton has won a host of awards for both his documentaries and his screendance works. He has made many films about the arts for television, including portraits of Francis Bacon, Michael Powell, Alan Bennett, and Little Richard. He has also made films about Dostoyevsky, visual comedy, and the Cultural Revolution in China. He has made film versions of two stage shows by DV8 Physical Theatre—*Dead Dreams* and *Strange Fish*—and he has collaborated with many choreographers to create original dance works for the screen. He has led dance film workshops all over the world.

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Claudia Kappenberg is a performance and media artist and Course Leader for the MA Performance and Visual Practices at the University of Brighton, UK, as well as founding editor of *The International Journal of Screendance*. She has published widely on performance and screen-based work, including in *Anarchic Dance* (Routledge, 2006), *The International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media* (2010), *Art in Motion*

(Cambridge Scholars, 2015) and the *Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies* (Oxford University Press, 2016). Her performance practice consists of minimal choreographies which have been shown across Europe, the US, and the Middle East in the form of live interventions, gallery-based performances, and screen-based installations.

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Notes

¹ *All This Can Happen*, Davies and Hinton.

² *Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men*, Hinton.

³ *Nora*, Hinton and Kovgan.

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Siobhan Davies and David Hinton in Conversation with Claudia Kappenberg, Part 2

Siobhan Davies, Siobhan Davies Dance

David Hinton, Film-maker

Claudia Kappenberg, University of Brighton

Abstract

In Part 2 of the conversation, Siobhan Davies and David Hinton reflect on the extensive work that informed the first proposal for the film. Key compositional elements are discussed such as the representation of the protagonist through a variety of images from different sources, the decision to represent both the inner and the external world of the protagonist, and, drawing on Étienne-Jules Marey's chronophotography, the decision to work with minutely choreographed image sequences that are composed from archive material. The conversation explores the forensic work with visual details and the intent to draw the viewer's attention to the richness of the found film frames. Davies and Hinton also reflect on the use of damage and decay in Chu-Li Shewring's soundscapes and the roles of film editors Danny McGuire and Matthew Killip.

Keywords: *All This Can Happen*, Portraits, noticing, protagonist, narrative, Muybridge, Marey, Stanley Spencer, Walsler, dance, dance film, walking, sculpting, found image, still image, collage, sound

Claudia Kappenberg (CK): We are now looking at the time before you made *All This Can Happen (ATCH)*.¹ When I read the proposal for the BFI, I was amazed as to how accurate it was and how closely it envisaged the film.² I was wondering how much and what kind of work you did even before writing the proposal. Could you talk a bit about that?

David Hinton (DH): We worked very hard on the BFI proposal. When Sue and I collaborate, we are quite likely to start from an intuition, but the minute we start to prod at that intuition, all kinds of questions come up. We then try to go one by one and answer all the questions in advance: if we want to do this, we will have to do that, and so on. So you end up having to think your way through the whole process. You start to see all the problems and decisions that are lying ahead, along the road. I suppose I have made so many films now that I can usually see what is going to be difficult.

CK: Combining an intuitive process with meticulous planning is not easy. Could you say more as to how you went about this?

Siobhan Davies (SD): At the beginning, we took time to talk to each other, to tell each other what was important to us, and what films, dances, writings had influenced us—even what frightened us as makers. For example, I spoke to David about *Portraits*, the second part of *Two Quartets* from 2007, a dance made for theatre which had not worked as well as the ideas behind it had promised, and David prodded me into saying more about this.³

The work involved four dance makers whom I asked to construct a solo which I called a portrait. Each solo was made using the following guidelines: the performers should make material which should mainly face forwards, presenting a front towards the audience. Each artist was then asked to make several strands of material, each one with a specific nature or character to it, ranging from recognizable gesture to movement altered by a change of scale and dynamics. Each strand needed to have clarity of movement and intent, and once that was established each artist could choose how to shift between one strand and another. I was searching for a kind of transparency in the body where one material could fade or intercut with materials from other strands. What was foregrounded at one moment could be superseded or seeped into by another layer. We were aiming to make visible in movement the slips between the concurrent layers of thought and feeling that we continually experience. Using this structure we aimed to shape a “portrait” out of movement and altering dynamics. We all enjoyed the process and learnt through the various difficulties we came across, but by the first performances we had worked out that there was far more to work with. So when David questioned me, it became one of the subjects that interested us both. *Portraits* unearthed something choreographic that I wanted to do more with, and David could see its potential from his perspective.

Over time, the idea evolved from the three-dimensional performative layering into a testing of several frames within one screen, each one showing a different perspective of a situation or character. One frame was more of a document, one more metaphorical, and another concentrating on a detail or an alternative scale. It helped me that this construction for the film arrived out of a choreographic problem. I felt as if I could begin from something I had already researched and knew something about.

CK: So this is how you arrived at the different threads that are running through the work: the observational, the scientific, the emotional, the historical. What else do you remember from this preparatory process?

DH: One interesting thing for me about the dance films I have done, is that they often come out of a process which is carefully planned but also very open. I think that’s a distinctive aspect of the marriage between the dance and the film worlds. Filmmaking is normally very expensive and therefore requires meticulous planning. You have to

learn how to visualize things in advance—and, when I say that, it is not just a question of visualizing the shots you want. Rather, it is a question of thinking: if it starts raining, what do I do then? How am I going to cope with the actual circumstances that I will be in? So the filmmaking process is often something like a military campaign, where you imagine all contingencies, then make your plans, and finally execute them. I think the dance world, on the whole, is inclined to have a much more open process throughout. You can correct me about this Siobhan. The practicalities of dance are so very different from the practicalities of making films.

SD: There are huge variations on how a dance can be made. I usually begin with the knowledge that I am going to be working with a living person with their own unique relationship to their own body as well as to everything else. All of the hardware and decisions that David is talking about will probably not be part of my initial work. Instead, our own histories give us plenty to think about, and the body is a structure already with its own necessities. We have a constant presence, gravity, and our own anatomy. Hence, when I begin to make work with a performer we can bring out the nuances of human behaviour and human timing, and these materials, our very liveness and how we shape what we are or can be in the continuous present, is very different from film as material.

DH: Even after we had written the BFI document, the work had hardly begun. That document laid out a set of principles, but so much of the actual work lay in deciding what kind of archive images we were going to use to make the film. It was almost limitlessly open, because, in a way, *Walser's Walk* contains the whole world.⁴ There was a terrifying amount of openness as to what images we might use. Then, even when we decided what kind of images we wanted, we still had to find them. That's the thing about working with found images, the images do have to be found! And that can be a massive enterprise, like an archaeological dig, where you have to shovel through tons of rubble before you find a single piece of treasure. We might easily watch three hours of documentary footage to find three seconds that we wanted to use, or we might look at two hundred stills to find two that we wanted to use.

CK: The BFI proposal also identifies the overall aim of the project and states: "The aim of the film, like the story, is to share one individual's perceptions of the world, to take us inside the consciousness of the walker, and to show how he sees, feels and experiences things."⁵ This is a familiar format in modernist literature, where you have the figure of the urban passer-by who observes the modern city, but it is a more unusual starting point for a choreographic project which would normally show the protagonist himself and what he or she does. In *ATCH*, you turn this around and we mainly see the narrator's context, the world in which he lives. We see the world through his eyes and through his experiences. Could you say how you came to this kind of approach?

DH: Most films represent people by showing what those people do. Did you see that film *Wild* (2014) with Reese Witherspoon?⁶ That's a film about a woman going for a walk, but the protagonist is represented as an active agent in every scene. What we wanted to do in *ATCH* was to try to render subjective experience, not showing our protagonist as an active agent, but representing through images what's going on in his head. We were experimenting with a different way of portraying character in a film, and we made many interesting discoveries—including the fact that you don't have to have the same person representing your protagonist throughout the film. In *ATCH*, we have all kinds of different people representing the protagonist. We'd find somebody in the archives, who would seem to us to be the right character to represent the narrator in a particular scene, and over the stretch of the film, there must be ten or fifteen different people. What fascinates me is that no viewer has had any problem with that. For me, that is a revelation and also great news, since I always want to experiment but I never want to confuse the audience.

SD: I am always intrigued by the extra-ordinary movements which are also the common ones to all of us, and our stories are often embedded in them. For example, the walk employs every part of us: from the desire to do it; dealing with gravity; the state we are in; what we want to reach; what else we might be thinking and experiencing; to the immense orchestration of every part of our anatomy adjusting, responding, and balancing all in the right timing with the right variations of intensity. Before finding the Walser novella, David and I were wondering how we could illuminate the different perspectives of one situation. And we were curious about how we could show both an experience and what was going on externally. We hoped that using several frames on one screen would give us the opportunity to create multiple and concurrent renditions of thought and experience.

CK: What sort of visual material did you research to inform the visual style and approach?

SD: Both David and I knew of Muybridge, and I have a love of Fox Talbot. I was thinking of the qualities, colors, and textures of early photography, and David was researching the earliest photographs of movement. He discovered a website on Étienne-Jules Marey, and we were delighted by his sequential photographs of movement, one action being the walk. They were not films but a series of still frames, ten to fifteen maybe, each one giving us an observation of distinct moments that are the elements of a fluid action. Marey was a scientist, and his studies include chronophotography in which lights on the body, filmed in the dark, are used to visually describe the pathways of certain joints in relationship to each other. These images are graphically beautiful, both ghostly and clearly revealing the position of the joints.

We also looked at cubist painting, where one object can be seen from different perspectives at the same time. We looked at the works by Stanley Spencer which show

men at work, people who are sometimes in half way positions of activity with a sense of rhythm going across from one body to another. I can remember *The Furnaces* shoveling coal into a furnace, or *Bending the Keel Plate*.⁷ Furthermore, I found early natural history films at the BFI in which we both felt the freshness of the filmmakers. What they were filming may never have been filmed before! Eventually we searched for the earliest photographs or films of a subject or of actions in Walser's *The Walk* which we could find. But the prints themselves showed their age, they had become scarred, bleached, partially erased over time and had, to me, a correlation with the weathering decomposition of the protagonist and us.

CK: In the BFI proposal you also address this play with multiple images: "It is a dance of mental images, where everything is connected by association within a single psyche."⁸ How did you come to see this as a dance? What makes it a dance?

DH: I think one way you can regard dance is simply as a way of looking at the world. It has certainly been that way for me. Through spending a lot of time with dancers, and working with them, I have come to look at the world differently. I'm sensitive to different things in an environment. That, in itself, has had a big influence on me as a filmmaker. And then, when it comes to making dance films, I'm always thinking about the fundamental affinities between dance and film. Not only are they the two art forms based on the principle of movement, but also making a dance and making a film are fundamentally similar activities in that they are both about giving structure to action. Or you might call it "giving structure to movement." A big breakthrough for me was thinking about the fact that, in a film, movement doesn't necessarily have to be supplied by the body of a dancer. You can use the camera as a tool to go out into the world to harvest movement, and you can use the editing room as a means by which to structure that movement. Once you start to think that way, the possibilities of what a screendance might be are massively expanded. You open the door onto the possibility of "making the world dance." From there, it is quite a small step to making a dance out of somebody's mental world—which is what we are doing in *ATCH*.

Also, if you think about the mental world of a person on a solitary walk, it is likely that several different kinds of images are going to co-exist in their mind at the same time. The solitary walker is aware of the world around him, but he is also deep in thought, turning over all kinds of things in his brain: memories and dreams, fears and desires, frustrations and illuminations. And, of course, what makes our film into a dance that is choreographed, rather than simply a confusion of images, is that we are carefully choosing the images we use, carefully placing them on the screen, and carefully juxtaposing them with each other. We then work hard on how one image moves in relation to another, and the timing of that movement, so that the whole of our dance has a constructed rhythm and music to it.

CK: Erin Brannigan and Cleo Mees focus on the question of the dance in their essay on *ATCH* and explore “how the film evidences the choreographic work undertaken in process.”⁹ They ask, “How do the disciplinary skills of dance figure amongst the strategies, techniques, and paradigms of the cinema?”¹⁰ Not wanting to create definitions of *dance* and *choreography*, they ask: “how can we think about how key choreographic terms and strategies such as weight, breath, tone and flow [...] are apparent in the film’s composition?”¹¹ Might you have thought in those terms when selecting and editing the material?

DH: The terms that Erin and Cleo use—weight, breath, tone, and flow—can, I think, be usefully applied to any composition that unfolds over time. I could imagine a musician using those terms, and I can certainly imagine a filmmaker using them. For me, it goes back to the whole question of creating a structure in time. Tarkovsky famously described filmmaking as “sculpting in time” and that is what dance-making is too.¹² Once you are shaping something in time, you inevitably have to think about where the breaths are going to be, when you want things to flow and when you don’t, and so on. In film-making, those things are determined in the editing, so you will always hear terms like *breath* and *flow* being used in the cutting room. A term like *weight* won’t have quite the same value as it would when a choreographer is working with a live dancer, but I could still imagine using it when working with an editor.

SD: *Weight, breath, tone, and flow* are not words I use when choreographing or working with others. I have to deal with weight, tone and flow, but I don’t call them by those names. With regards to *weight*, I might use terms relating to varying densities of muscular use or the idea of lightness of touch. How weights and strengths of imagination can influence the nature and character of a movement. *Tone* is not a word I use either, but I enjoy seeing a variation of attention to a movement, or the lightness and darkness in an image which feels like the equivalence of tone. *Sequential movement* also means more to me than *flow*, because the latter seems to erase the exactitude of moment-to-moment revelations. If a dancer breathes in, they must breathe out. If an arm rises, it needs to come down. In my earlier work I was always engaged with this logic and constancy of presence, but this fluidity began to represent something inhuman to me. Where were the difficult or tangled lines of thought, feeling and responses which are part of my day-to-day life? I wanted movement to look more like my thinking, given it is my thinking!

A step which helped me towards breaking up fluidity, and which is relevant to *ATCH*, was when I worked with the Composer Matteo Fargion who introduced me to replacing each note in a score with a precise movement, forcing me to work with movements that are not necessarily anatomically connected. During David’s and my preparation time, we translated this concept and re-sequenced a series of frames of movements according to a score. At first these felt as if I was de-oxygenating the

movement. But I was also thrilled by this new relationship to movement in these tiny increments.

Exploring sequencing earlier on in the process, David and I also reconstructed the movement of a young soldier bearing arms in different ways. This is a study by Marey. But soon David pointed out that we did not want to be gods manipulating figures. I completely understood this lesson, especially when we worked with an older figure, also by Marey, who, in the film, demonstrates how his stomach worked while breathing. We did far less with him, paused his action, made brief repeated phrases. This slight re-choreographing of the frames of action did just enough to make his movement less of an exercise and more about a particular moment in time. This was the kind of dimension we were looking for.

CK: David, you have made this kind of work previously, where you develop a choreography solely through the repurposing of material.

DH: The first dance film I made using archive images was *Birds* (2000), over fifteen years ago.¹³ It came about because the more I worked on dance films, the more aware I grew of how much of the choreography was actually taking place in the cutting room. I was working with dancers who were creating movement, but much of the ordering of the movement—giving it shape and structure and rhythm—was happening in the editing. I began to realize that film editing is itself a choreographic activity, and that led me to think: why not make a dance film where *all* the choreography happens in the editing? Around the same time, I was standing at a bus stop in Leeds, watching birds flocking over the town hall, and it occurred to me that birds had a wonderful vocabulary of movement. I thought it was completely legitimate to use that as the raw material for a dance, so I ended up making a film, together with Yolande Snaith, where we found all the movement content in archive footage of birds, and then we choreographed it entirely through the edit. Some people at the time were outraged, and refused to accept this as a dance film, but now, I think, it is better understood.

SD: This was however not the starting point for *ATCH*. The idea of using archive images came later in the process.

DH: Yes, we started from the idea that the whole field of dance film is vexed and difficult, and that one way we could get a fresh perspective on it was to go back to the very beginning—to look at the very first experiments in trying to render movement in a sequence of images. This led us to the work of Marey. But our interest in Marey also came from thinking about how mundane things can become magical. When Siobhan first suggested that we should make a film about going for a walk, my immediate fear was that it would be very boring. I asked myself: when has walking ever been interesting in a film? My mind went almost immediately to Muybridge and Marey. When they made their first experiments, it was a miraculous thing to see a moving image of a man walking—even if it was only two steps. I still feel that miracle when I

look at their work today, and this was a crucial inspiration. To be honest, it still makes me feel a little giddy to look at Marey's work. I feel that I'm confronted by the most profound magic and poetry of cinema, that I am looking at a moment of time saved from oblivion. A still image can freeze a moment in time, but a moving image is like a resurrection—it brings a moment in time back to life. Think of Marey, in the middle of the nineteenth century, setting up his camera and filming a soldier jogging across a field. Then look at those two seconds now, as a moving image, and it all comes back to life: the soldier's pack is still weighing heavy on his back, the grass is still moving gently in the wind, even though that soldier is now long dead. It is profoundly moving—that resurrection of lost time.

CK: Besides bringing Marey's scientific enquiry to life, you also place his work amongst very different kinds of visual material. What was the intention behind that?

DH: Every found image enriches the film by bringing its own history and its own story with it. It is very obvious in *ATCH* that every image is being re-purposed—that it was originally shot for an entirely different purpose—and I love this for many reasons. Most importantly, it makes each image deeper and richer than a specially shot image would be, because each found image brings its own dancing aureole of associations with it. If we use an image of a striking worker from a newsreel of the 1930s, that single image conjures up all kinds of historical associations, but also, because it has been torn from its original context, it brings a mystery: what was the reason for which this image was actually shot? What was the story it originally belonged to? I don't expect any viewer to be thinking consciously about this, but each image enriches our film with the mystery of its origins. It drags into our story the residue of many other stories, resonating away down the echo chamber of time. That's a beautiful thing.

The use of found images also means that nothing quite fits with anything else; the images don't match each other. Yet they are finally part of the same structure. I like this feeling that each image is distinct and separate—worthy of consideration in its own right—and, at the same time, one brick in a larger edifice. Your mind is encouraged to take in both the separateness of each fragment and the unity of the whole. This is a characteristic of collage, I suppose, and has always appealed to my sensibility.

Another reason for using found images from the archives was simply that Walser's story was written in 1917, and we wanted to create a world that he would recognize as something like the world he was describing. And finally, there's a practical reason for using old images, and that is that they are often out of copyright. So if you go to the right sources, you can get images cheaply or even for free. I doubt that we could have afforded to make the film if we had used modern images.

CK: Archival images are more, shall we say, “noisy” than specifically shot images, and because of all these other places, times, events and relations they refer to, they also come across as more “real”.

DH: Yes, a lot of the images were originally documentary images, and we have pressed them into service in what is essentially a fiction. This is interesting, because documentary images appear “truthful” in a way that makes our fiction feel “truthful” too. Often in documentary the action is not being performed for the camera but observed by the camera, and there is a precious authenticity about that. At the same time, all the images in the film are presented in such a stylized way that I don’t think the viewer will ever feel confused or misled about what is going on. It is now part of the richness of the film that it contains not only many different qualities of image, but also many different qualities of performance. In fact, just about every different kind of relationship than a person can have with a camera exists in our film, from extreme self-consciousness to a complete lack of self-consciousness. We might cut from someone performing directly to the camera, to someone far off in his or her own world, unaware that there is a camera present. In theory, these different performance modes probably shouldn’t work together, but they do.

SD: After much experimentation, we decided to collect frames from different sources. We looked at fiction films, as well as documentary and home movies, but it was the last two categories that seemed the richest to us. Early photography was a science and helped to support an urge for being able to take the time to look. The documentaries were amongst the first films to capture people’s behavior both at work and enjoying themselves. The natural history films explored the world through different lenses and scales. The home movies showed both the very affected and unaffected attitudes towards a lens. Everything I saw woke me up to a past.

DH: Another thing I like about using found footage is simply the economy of using recycled images, rather than shooting more stuff to add to the proliferation of images in the world. There is something almost nauseating about the number of images in the world now, and something unnecessary about it too. If you need an image of an apple in your film, do you really need to go out and shoot another image of an apple to add to the millions that already exist? So, one of our ideas was to go back as early as we could and use the first version we could find of each image that we wanted. That meant that our image of an apple was shot a hundred years ago—in about 1910—and it is a very special and beautiful image, because it was filmed using a very early color process. That gave it a unique color quality which you could never replicate in a modern image.

CK: Siobhan, you have talked about a forensic aspect in the work, could you expand on that?

SD: The forensic approach was used initially to draw attention to the more microscopic details which, if focused on, would add to the story. Maybe the forensic could highlight the emotional, as in the case of the botanical filming of the opening of a flower which in the context of the film is sexual. We could also choreograph tiny changes in an expression on the tailor's face, or play with the man remembering his cruelty to enhance the narrative, but in minute moves. The forensic allowed us to open up to different scales amongst the different frames.

CK: As part of this detailed work you have repeatedly frozen the action and created series of still images that suggest and promise movement. But quite often, all the viewer gets is a split second of a movement and then there is another still. To me, this felt like a cat on a string kind of experience. The play between movement and stillness was teasing me and playing with my expectations. Did you want to hold back on movement?

SD: When I made work for the theatre, I loved stillness on the stage and also the anticipation of something about to happen. Or I would allow for a sudden burst of movement and then reduce it to very little, but allow for the echo of a surge of movement. Sometimes I tried to think of movement phrases as a sentence structure; which movement is a noun, and which one is a verb? Where is the full stop or comma? While making the film, I could borrow some of that thinking when choosing which movements were still. For example, the children playing with the hay is very active. It's a game when they throw hay at each other, and it is a kind of chaos. How could we capture this? The hay in the air was a movement that would bring a particular kind of joy as to how the hay would separate and be suspended. But when you move from the child throwing to the hay being up in the air, you would need to find exactly the right timing in which you would feel the action even if you had edited some of it out. And when your eyes were given the chance they could witness a sliver of the unexpected or experience two things at once that are normally separated in a sequence.

DH: If you take the shot of the children in the hay, it starts off as straightforward documentary footage. Out in the world, some children are playing and the camera is recording it. It is not choreographed. But when you take that sequence into the cutting room you can start to choreograph it by freezing it here, speeding it up there, and then freezing it again. Then you are choreographing, because you are imposing your own time structure onto the raw action. A lot of our ideas about working in that way came from our experience with the Marey films. In his era, two seconds was a very long film. It might be 40 frames long and that makes every frame very important. The other thing is that, in a filmstrip that is 25 frames long and 150 years old, all the frames have aged in different ways. Hence every frame has its own character, and we became very interested in that. The damage and decay in frame 18 might give that frame its own special beauty.

SD: So we made sure we would freeze on frame 18, and it may be partly abstracted by having a big patch of white light over the body.

CK: As an audience, I shift my attention when I see such a still, away from the narrative. For example, in the sequence in the foundry with the shovel, those stills are gorgeous and make me look at the shapes and the play of light and dark.

DH: Well, that sequence with the shovel is supposed to give you pleasure. Normally, in a documentary, you will have a guy shoveling coal into a stove and it will be great, but you won't have time or space to relish it as something great in itself. The mantra in the conventional film world is "murder your darlings," meaning that all incidental pleasures must be sacrificed to the forward drive of the story. We are deliberately resisting that. One of the things we're trying to do in *ATCH* is to encourage the viewer to consciously enjoy things that would slip past in a more conventional film. We are using various tactics to say to the viewer: "Hey, look more carefully at this, isn't this great?" In the case of the shoveler, we imposed a kind of chronograph effect onto the images to make you vividly aware of the shape that his body is making and the dynamic of his action. It is only through working in the dance world that I could have arrived at this way of working with images. And, of course, by using this device, we are also saying: look, this is dance.

SD: The same applies to the scene where a man steps from one girder to another but remains constantly poised in between. You see the beauty and danger of this one step. By stilling the image, another narrative is quietly inserted, perhaps giving rise to a more precise kind of noticing of the in-between moment—one the eye or the mind does not normally hold—but letting that instant fill us.

DH: That is a key thing. Siobhan is really into noticing things, and that is one of the reasons why she wanted to do a film about a walk in the first place. A lot of what we have made is simply about what you notice when you go on a walk—and that feeds into the guy with the shovel. We are saying: *look at this*. We are being emphatic. Although the image is humble, we are emphatically saying: look at what's happening in this image. It's a quiet way of shouting.

SD: As we were speaking about Marey, the damage in the images, and the light—David said to me early on that film is made out of light. This is very obvious to him, but there is something thrilling to me about that. I have occasionally wanted to imagine my body as being more transparent, and working with the idea of people and places made out of light was intriguing. One way of working is not replaceable by the other, but working in film provided me with another way of saying, "look at what is happening in layers of light and time," in ways I can not achieve with a live performance.

DH: Many of these things that we are talking about here are to do with the fact that I want the viewer to have dual responses to what they see. I don't want the viewer to be seduced to the degree that they forget that they are watching a film. That's the kind of ambition that a Hollywood director might have. I want the viewer of *ATCH* to be both absorbed by, and alienated from, the content of the film. When they see an image of a man walking down a country road, I want them to be able to identify with that man, to feel drawn into his story, while at the same time having a powerful awareness that he is just a pattern of light on a screen. For me, that duality of response is very exciting and moving, that feeling that there is somebody there and nobody there at the same time.

CK: Besides working with light instead of real bodies, you also had to work with a flat and defined screen space, instead of the three-dimensional space you have in live work. How did this compare?

DH: Early on in the process, if Siobhan saw a walking figure on the left-hand side of the screen, she would expect that figure to cross the screen and disappear out of the right-hand side of the screen. Her first instinct was to think of the screen as though it were a space like a proscenium stage. It was hard for her to get used to the idea that, on screen, a figure can keep on walking forever without travelling anywhere at all. In fact, the figure can be looped so that he/she walks for an hour and remains in exactly the same place. This was a classic example of the difference between theatrical and cinematic thinking.

CK: Thinking more about the bodies on screen, *ATCH* also explores what happens to bodies in the 19th and 20th centuries, through references to industrialization and war, and through the different image technologies you deploy. Siobhan was talking earlier on about how these bodies have become scarred, bleached, and erased with time, and that this says something more broadly about aging and decomposition. Is *ATCH* also an act of remembrance?

DH: I think it's important to remember that, although we use a lot of very old images, the work that we have made is a modern creation, entirely dependent on modern technology. Our whole work process was based on being able to put many different moving images on the screen at the same time. And we needed the freedom to juxtapose images, to play with their sizes and shapes, to slow one down and speed another up, and so on. The technology that allows you to do all this, while working on a low budget, has only arrived recently. So what we've made may even count as a pioneering or cutting-edge endeavor in terms of collaging and compositing moving images with cheap modern technologies.

The finished work echoes the modern experience of sitting in front of a computer screen, with many different windows open, watching several images on the screen at the same time. Much of the technique and sensibility of the work is, I think, entirely

contemporary. There's a perception, perhaps, that it is "nostalgic" to make use of ancient images, but that's not how I see it. For me, ancient pictures are often simply more fascinating to look at than contemporary ones. Most of what is in a modern photograph is dull because of its familiarity, whereas a photograph of the same scene taken in 1918 is fascinating, because it is less familiar. Something as mundane as a man's hat or his moustache becomes interesting, because we don't see hats or moustaches like that any more. I subscribe to the idea that "the past is a foreign country," and I think it is great if a film takes you to a foreign country, rather than showing you what you can see outside your front door.¹⁴

CK: There is also the sound world of *ATCH*, yet another layer of textures and impulses, if not several layers with the narration and the sounds that complement the narration. Could you talk a bit about the conversations you had with the sound designer Chu-Li Shewring?

DH: As with almost any film, the soundtrack is more than half of the film. What made *ATCH* really interesting from the sound point of view is that there was no sync sound to work with. Every image that we used was either shot before the era of synchronised sound recording, or else it came from the kind of film that doesn't have sync sound, like a home movie. Well, there's one exception—the scene where the young boys do bird sounds—but, apart from that, I don't think there's any sync sound in the whole film.

Of course, that is unusual in a modern film. It meant that our sound designer, Chu-Li Shewring, had to create the whole sound track from scratch. It meant she had to do a massive amount of work, but creatively it was hugely beneficial, I think, because Chu-Li had to put real thought, energy and invention into every single second of the film. And the result, I think, is magnificent. Chu-Li made a soundtrack that is utterly contemporary in its subtlety and sophistication, but the sounds that she chose to use are entirely appropriate to the ancient images. Chu-Li is an absolute genius. She picked up on the way that we were playing with damage and decay in the images and she made that a feature of her sound textures too. She used this in really witty ways. And, if we were looking for a single distinctive sound to punctuate the action, she always found exactly the right one. There's a sound of a cork coming out of a bottle in the "Alice In Wonderland" section that still makes me laugh every time I hear it. Also Chu-Li made many inspired music choices. There's a lot of very strange and diverse music in the film that viewers are probably not even aware of, because its not music laid on with a trowel, but music simmering away in the mix in such a way as to create exactly the right atmosphere. You might half-hear a distant voice on the soundtrack that is wonderfully evocative, and, if you look into it, you'll find that its a few bars of a Romanian folk song that Chu-Li has found.

What it all adds up to is a soundtrack that, for me, succeeds brilliantly on both a representational and expressionistic level. The sound animates the images and brings them to life when it needs to, but it also does much more than that, because it offers an audio representation of the mental world of our protagonist. Another crucial thing that we had to get right in the sound was the voice of the narrator, and I don't think we could have had a better performance than the one we got from John Heffernan. For me, he got the tone and the manner absolutely right. Every time I see the film, I still get pleasure from the way he does the narration. The same goes for Chu-Li's sound design, I think it's magnificent.

CK: What about the film editors Danny McGuire and Matthew Killip. How did you work with them, and what was their contribution to the film?

DH: Well, Danny was certainly one of the heroes of the production. If ever there was a film "made in the editing," then it is this film, and Danny was central to the process from beginning to end. He was our technical wizard and he was also a core member of the creative team, because one of our key ideas from the beginning was that we were going to use editing as a "way of thinking" and a "way of creating" on this production.

We always thought of the compositing work—the arrangement of shots on the screen—as choreographic, and getting it right involved endless experimentation. You have to remember that Siobhan had never thought of herself as a filmmaker, and yet it was crucial to our conception that she be involved in "choreographing" the images on the screen. What this meant in practice was that she often worked with Danny with the same intensity that she might work with a dancer in the studio. The two of them would sit together for hours in front of the computer screen, experimenting with different ways of orchestrating the images within the frame. So this central aspect of the process was entirely based on Siobhan using Danny's film knowledge in tandem with her own dance knowledge.

SD: It was an extraordinary partnership to work alongside Danny. My creative environment became microscopic. Instead of having the palpable use of space and time of a stage or studio to work with, I could hold the image of something huge virtually in my hand. I had the kind of time we never have in a rehearsal studio. I could see a frame side by side with another again and again and make minute adjustments using my choreographic learning. I felt sucked into exquisite minutiae. Danny had great patience, kindness, and was very perceptive with regards to my searchings and our working side by side was a joy, although my heart was in my mouth a lot of the time. I need to also add that I have never worked with sound in the way that Chu-Li introduced me to. Again, microscopic in the details. She used unorthodox sounds to make a specific moment more poignant alongside John's reading of the text. I felt as if my sense of hearing was intensely employed, and the detailed soundscape now also enhances the audience's experience of the film.

DH: Then there was one period in the edit when Danny had to go off and do something else, so Matthew Killip took over his role for a while. That turned out to be serendipitous because Matthew is a director as well as an editor, and he brought his own unique sensibility to the work. There is definitely something about Matthew's way of seeing, thinking, and feeling that enriches the parts of the film that he worked on. Those sections have a special kind of beauty that belongs to him. So we were really lucky in all the collaborators we had.

CK: And how did you suture the whole thing together?

DH: Well, very early on in the process, we went through Walser's story and broke it down into about twenty-five different episodes, which gave us a kind of script, and a way of organizing all our thinking and all our raw material. But then, for a long time, we worked on sound and images quite separately. We talked to Chu-Li about each episode, and she went off and started assembling a sound world for each one. Meanwhile, quite independently, we worked with Danny on choreographing the images for each episode. Then Chu-Li would turn up with some sound ideas, and these would affect what we did with the images. Then we would perhaps send Chu-Li a rough-cut of the images and she would re-jig her sound to the rough cut. So the more the film was refined, the more the visual world and the sound world were drawn together. At the very end, the sound was tailored to make it absolutely frame-accurate to the finished picture.

Some of the cruelest decisions at the end were to do with cutting things down and leaving things out. Our work process meant that we would often work for a long time on the compositing of a single sequence of images, only to discover that that sequence then went on too long in relation to the film as a whole. So many things that we liked had to be cut out, in order to make the film work finally as a single structure.

CK: I very much like your notion of being "sucked into exquisite minutiae," Siobhan. This describes so much of what is going on in the film and what the work offers to its audiences. Siobhan and David, thank you very much for this conversation.

Biographies

Siobhan Davies is a renowned British choreographer who rose to prominence in the 1970s. Davies was a founding member of London Contemporary Dance Theatre and in 1982 joined forces with Richard Alston and Ian Spink to create the independent dance company Second Stride. Founding Siobhan Davies Dance in 1988, she works closely with collaborating artists to ensure that their own artistic enquiry is part of the creative

process. By 2002 she moved away from the traditional theatre circuit and started making work for gallery spaces. Davies applies choreography across a wide range of creative disciplines including visual arts and film. In 2012, Davies created her first film work *All This Can Happen* with director David Hinton.

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Film-maker David Hinton has won a host of awards for both his documentaries and his screendance works. He has made many films about the arts for television, including portraits of Francis Bacon, Michael Powell, Alan Bennett, and Little Richard. He has also made films about Dostoyevsky, visual comedy, and the Cultural Revolution in China. He has made film versions of two stage shows by DV8 Physical Theatre—*Dead Dreams* and *Strange Fish*—and he has collaborated with many choreographers to create original dance works for the screen. He has led dance film workshops all over the world.

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Dr. Claudia Kappenberg is a performance and media artist and Course Leader for the MA Performance and Visual Practices at the University of Brighton, UK, as well as founding editor of *The International Journal of Screendance*. She has published widely on performance and screen-based work, including in *Anarchic Dance* (Routledge, 2006), *The International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media* (2010), *Art in Motion* (Cambridge Scholars, 2015) and the *Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies* (Oxford University Press, 2016). Her performance practice consists of minimal choreographies which have been shown across Europe, the US, and the Middle East in the form of live interventions, gallery-based performances, and screen-based installations.

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Notes

¹ *All This Can Happen*, Davies and Hinton.

² Davies and Hinton, "Film Proposal for the British Film Institute," 2012. Published in this issue 175-181.

³ Davies, *Portraits* (2007).

⁴ Walser, *The Walk and Other Stories*. The text was edited for ATCH by Siobhan Davies and David Hinton.

⁵ Davies and Hinton, "Film Proposal," 177.

⁶ Vallée, *Wild*.

⁷ Spencer, *The Furnaces*; Spencer, *Bending the Keel Plate*.

⁸ Davies and Hinton, "Film Proposal," 178.

⁹ Brannigan and Mees, "Breaths, Falls, and Eddies," 40.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*.

¹³ Hinton and Snaith. *Birds*.

¹⁴ Hartley, *The Go-Between*. Prologue.

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Addendum to Interview: Film Proposal for the British Film Institute

Siobhan Davies, Siobhan Davies Dance

David Hinton, Independent Artist

Abstract

This proposal by Siobhan Davies and David Hinton formed part of a submission to the BFI (British Film Institute, London UK). It outlines the collaboration between the two artists and the general idea of a film based on the 1917 Robert Walser story "The Walk." The film was to be made entirely out of found footage and found photographs to create a "choreography of movement images" that would portray an individual consciousness. The proposal describes the overall idea, the deployment of Marey's nineteenth-century chronophotographic films, the structure and key narrative elements, as well as different observational, analytical, and emotional threads of images. The proposal was submitted to the BFI in April 2012, and an agreement on the use of archive between the BFI and Siobhan Davies Dance Company was first issued in May and signed off in October 2012. The proposal is reproduced here with the permission of the two artists.

Keywords: *All This Can Happen*, proposal, BFI, collaboration, Marey, Walser, choreography, collage

The Walk

Siobhan Davies/David Hinton Dance Film Project

The man who walks must study and observe, with the utmost love and attention, every smallest living thing. The highest and the lowest, the most serious and the most hilarious things are to him equally beloved and valuable.

– Robert Walser, "The Walk"¹

The Idea

What is the film?

The film is a collaboration between filmmaker David Hinton and choreographer Siobhan Davies, and is entirely financed by Siobhan Davies Dance (who are funded by

the Arts Council). It is being made initially for film festivals and art galleries, but we also hope to sell it to television.

The film is 20-30 minutes long, and made entirely out of found footage and found photographs. It is a single screen work, but one which often uses several different frames of action on screen at the same time. It is composed using many different juxtapositions, speeds, and densities of images.

The structure, sensibility, and narrative of the film are based on the 1917 Robert Walser story "The Walk." which simply reports what goes on inside the head of a writer as he takes a long walk from the city where he lives out into the countryside. There is no action or drama in the conventional sense. The interest lies entirely in the way that the protagonist observes, experiences, and thinks about the world around him.

The film is a dance film, or a "choreography of movement images." The raw material of the film consists of a constellation of brief film clips, each of which shows a brief burst of movement. Most of the movement consists of ordinary, everyday activities. The choreography lies in orchestrating the relationships between these clips to create a clear and constantly evolving structure of actions.

The aim of this choreographed collage of found images is to create a portrait of an individual consciousness and an individual way of looking at the world.

Marey and the Formal Ideas

About Marey

Formally speaking, our film owes a lot to the nineteenth-century chronophotographic films of Etienne Jules Marey, whose work represents one of the earliest attempts to record movement photographically. He made many studies of everyday actions like walking and running, jumping and throwing, and many studies of animals in motion.

Three key formal ideas in our film derive from our study and experiment based on Marey's work:

1. *Brief Glimpses of Action:* Each Marey film is only one or two seconds long. This has led us to the idea of "a choreography of glimpses." We work with very brief glimpses of action, looping them to give them a distinct rhythm, and then create more complex rhythms by juxtaposing one loop against another.
2. *Variety of Frame Formats:* Marey's works have no fixed frame format, but come in all kinds of shapes and sizes. This has led us to the idea of using many different configurations of frames within the fixed space of a 16x9 film frame. Our film aims for compositional richness and variety through the different ways we arrange different images on the screen at the same time.

3. *Using the Character of Individual Frames:* Each individual frame in a Marey sequence has its own character, because each frame has aged differently. This has led us to much experimentation with the tension between the stillness of a single frame and the movement in a sequence of frames. The constant interplay between stillness and movement is a distinctive aspect of the style of our film.

Robert Walser and the Narrative Element

The Aim of the Film

The aim of the film, like the story, is to share one individual's perceptions of the world, to take us inside the consciousness of the walker, and to show how he sees, feels, and experiences things. We aim to do this with wit, energy, and musicality, but there should also be a resonance about it: in our protagonist's walk, we should all find echoes of the walks we have taken ourselves.

Structure

The film is planned out as 25 one-minute episodes, with each episode inspired by an episode in the Walser story. At the centre of each episode is a mundane event that happens to the protagonist in the course his walk—he posts a letter; he goes to the bank; he visits a friend for lunch—but each such event leads him into rhapsody or reverie which takes him beyond his immediate circumstances into a deeper pondering about life.

Different Threads of Imagery

Each episode will be rendered in the film through the orchestration of different threads of imagery. There will be everyday images which represent things seen by the protagonist, combined with fantastical images of things he dreams about, fading images of things he remembers, forensic images of things he studies...

The Complexity of Consciousness

What interests us most of all is counterpoint: creating different rhythms and meanings through the way we place one thread of imagery against another. In doing so, we aim to show how observation and fantasy, memory, and speculation can all co-exist in the same mind at the same time. We aim towards the complexity of actual consciousness—what we might call “psychological 3-D” or “a cubist portrait of a mind.”

The Idea of Character

Obviously, we are not talking about a conventional dramatisation of the Walser story. We aim to convey the character and attitudes of Walser's protagonist, but we aim to do it from the inside—through showing the landscape inside his head—rather than

from the outside, by showing him as an actor in the world. In a way, we seek new formal means to represent the very idea of “character” in film.

A Meditation Rather Than a Dramatization

What we are trying to render is what life feels like to a particular individual. The finished film adds up to an impressionistic rendering of a singular consciousness. It is a dance of mental images, where everything is connected by association within a single psyche. We might call it a meditation on the Walser story rather than a dramatization of it. We linger over what interests us in the story, and omit what seems superfluous.

The Narrating Voice

The narrating voice in the Walser story is like a stream of consciousness, and we will hear some of this as part of the soundtrack of the film. The “voice” will drift in and out of the film (in the way that you are sometimes conscious of thinking and sometimes not).

It will be more like a musical element than a conventional narrating voice, but it will be carefully counterpointed with the images to illuminate and explain whatever needs explaining in the images.

Storytelling Through Found Images

The Use of Found Images

Every image in the film is a found image. In this respect, our film might be compared to the surrealist collage novels of Max Ernst: it is all about storytelling through the juxtaposition and ordering of found images. Much of our work is to do with scouring the archives to find the images which best tell our story.

Three Key Threads

There will be three key threads of imagery, drawn from three different genres of film, each representing a different area of the protagonist’s experience.

- There will be an **observational** thread of images drawn from documentary films, representing things that he directly experiences and observes on his walk.
- There will be an **analytical** thread of images drawn from scientific, medical, and educational films, which represent his close scrutiny and analysis of the world around him.
- There will be an **emotional** thread of images drawn from fiction films, which represent highly-charged moments of memory, dream, or imagination.

The Quality of the Images

Experimental and Pioneering Work

The type of images we seek are old images. The formal ideas for our film derive from looking at the very origins of cinema, and our basic rule regarding images is: the older the better. We are particularly interested experimental and pioneering work in photography. *Marey*, for instance, represents a moment of discovery, when an action as simple as walking became visible in a new way.

Aesthetic of Ancient Images

We also love the aesthetic variety of early photography—the range of printing techniques, colour processes, frame formats, and so on, which give the images a vividly alien quality.

We like technical novelties like hand-tinting, and technical aberrations like fogging or fading. We like it when the images are damaged or decayed, or otherwise showing their age.

Different Kinds of Images Render Different Kinds of Experience

For us, different image textures suggest different kinds of experience—a decayed image suggests the decay of memory, and so on. We use different looks and textures of images to represent different kinds of experience within the same mind—dark memory intersecting with bright fantasy, gloomy foreboding intersecting with pin-sharp observation.

The Fundamental Magic of Cinema

Every moving image represents a moment of time saved from oblivion. This is the fundamental magic of cinema, and the older the image, the more we feel this magic. We find a lot of poetry in the idea of creating a choreography now out of moments of movement which happened a hundred years ago.

Rights and Distribution

Where Will the Film be Shown?

Our film will be shown, first of all, at film festivals around the world—certainly dance film festivals like Cinedans in Amsterdam and Kinodance in St. Petersburg, and also maybe at festivals of short film and experimental film.

We then hope to sell the film to television. Based on our previous experience, we expect that channels like Arte and ZDF will be interested in buying it. We append information about the distribution of “*Nora*”—the most recent dance film made by David Hinton—to give a sense of the wide variety of places where the film might be seen and sold.

The film will also be shown in art galleries, in tandem with two live pieces specially designed to complement the film, which Siobhan Davies has commissioned from the distinguished contemporary dancers Deborah Saxon and Catherine Bennett.

Collage, Composition, and Choreography

The three key formal principles of the film are those of collage, composition, and choreography.

- The film is a **collage** in that it is an arrangement of found material, creating a complex, layered way of looking at the world.
- The film will be **composed** in the sense that we have to create visually satisfying compositions of different images within the same screen, but we also have to compose rhythmically satisfying relationships between different movement sequences.
- The film will be **choreographed** in the sense that the central work will be to orchestrate many different elements to create compositions which are visually complex but always clear and coherent and alive.

Biographies

Siobhan Davies is a renowned British choreographer who rose to prominence in the 1970s. Davies was a founding member of London Contemporary Dance Theatre and in 1982 joined forces with Richard Alston and Ian Spink to create the independent dance company Second Stride. Founding Siobhan Davies Dance in 1988, she works closely with collaborating artists to ensure that their own artistic enquiry is part of the creative process. By 2002 she moved away from the traditional theatre circuit and started making work for gallery spaces. Davies applies choreography across a wide range of creative disciplines including visual arts and film. In 2012, Davies created her first film work *All This Can Happen* with director David Hinton.

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Film-maker David Hinton has won a host of awards for both his documentaries and his screendance works. He has made many films about the arts for television, including portraits of Francis Bacon, Michael Powell, Alan Bennett, and Little Richard. He has also made films about Dostoyevsky, visual comedy, and the Cultural Revolution in China. He has made film versions of two stage shows by DV8 Physical Theatre—*Dead Dreams* and *Strange Fish*—and he has collaborated with many choreographers to create

original dance works for the screen. He has led dance film workshops all over the world.

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Addendum to Interview: *All This Can Happen* on Tour and in the Press

Claudia Kappenberg, University of Brighton

Abstract

This document lists over 80 screenings of *All This Can Happen* between September 2012 and July 2016. The list is evidence of the international interest the film generated and indicates the different contexts in which it was shown during its first four years. Most are screenings, often in the context of festivals, whereas others—much less frequently—exhibitions. The hosts vary between explicit screendance events, film festivals, art venues, and educational frameworks. For example, in Berlin’s doku.arts festival, *All This Can Happen* was screened alongside Mike Lerner und Maxim Posdorowkin’s documentary “Pussy Riot: A Punk Prayer” in a programme of films which transgress conventional narratives. The diverse contexts demonstrate that the boundaries between local and international communities and institutions are relatively porous and that films can travel widely. A second list of press reviews, existing review essays and selected blog entries on the film give a sense of audience reception and complement this review.

Keywords: Screening, Festival, Gallery, Premiere

List of Screenings September 2012 – July 2016

Date (d/m/y)	Type of Showing	Location
09/10/12	Private Screening	The ROXY Bar and Screen, London UK
13/10/12	Preview	Dance Umbrella at Platform Theatre, UAL: Central Saint Martins, London UK
25/10/12	Educational Screening	Connecticut College, New London, CT, USA

27/01/13	International Première	International Film Festival Rotterdam at Cinerama 5, Rotterdam NL
28/01/13	Festival Screening	International Film Festival Rotterdam at Cinerama 7, Rotterdam NL
07/02/13	Screening	Arnolfini, Bristol UK
25/02/13	Educational Screening	Cambridge University, Cambridge UK
03/03/13	Festival Screening	Cinedans Dance on Screen Festival at EYE Film Institute, Cinema 2, Amsterdam NL
16/03/13	Eastern European Premiere	Kinomuzeum at The Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw PL
11/04/13	South American Premiere	Festivales de Buenos Aires at Village Recoleta Mall [2], Buenos Aires AR
18/04/13	Festival Screening	Festivales de Buenos Aires at Village Recoleta Mall [2], Buenos Aires AR
21/04/13	Festival Screening	Festivales de Buenos Aires at Village Recoleta Mall [2], Buenos Aires AR
05/05/13	Screening	Cinémathèque de la Danse, La Salle Langlois, Paris FR
12/05/13	North American Premiere	Agite Y Sirva - Festival Itinerante de Videodanza at Público Libre, San Pedro Cholula, Puebla MX
05/07/13	Middle Eastern Premiere	Jerusalem International Film Festival at Jerusalem Cinematheque 2, Jerusalem IL
12/07/13	Festival Screening	Jerusalem International Film Festival at Jerusalem Cinematheque 2, Jerusalem IL
14/08/13	Asian Premiere	Jumping Frames International Dance Video Festival at Agnès B Cinema, Hong Kong Arts Centre, Hong Kong HK
14/09/13	Festival Screening	IMZ Dance Screen 2013 with San Francisco Dance Film Festival at Delancey Screening Room, San Francisco USA
21/09/13	German Premiere	DOKU.ARTS 2013 at the German Historical Museum, Berlin DE
29/09/13	Festival Screening	DOKU.ARTS 2013 at the German Historical Museum Berlin DE
11/10/13	Canadian Premiere	Festival du Nouveau Cinéma, Montréal CA

18/10/13	Festival Screening	Festival du Nouveau Cinéma, Montréal CA
02/11/13	Screening	Instituto Moreira Salles (DOKU.ARTS), Rio de Janeiro BR
03/11/13	Screening	Instituto Moreira Salles (DOKU.ARTS), Rio de Janeiro BR
07/11/13	Festival Screening	DANCE:FILM 13 at Filmhouse Cinema, Edinburgh Scotland UK
19/11/13	Exclusive Screening	Institute of Contemporary Arts, London UK
24/11/13	Festival Screening	CINECITY - The Brighton Film Festival at The Basement Pop Up Cinema, Brighton UK
07/12/13	Screening	Institute of Contemporary Arts, London UK
08/12/13	Screening	Institute of Contemporary Arts, London UK
07/12/13	Online Festival	En Route Dance Film Festival (7 - 14 Dec 2013), Worldwide
14/12/13	Screening	Institute of Contemporary Arts, London UK
15/12/13	Screening	Institute of Contemporary Arts, London UK
21/12/13	Screening	Institute of Contemporary Arts, London UK
22/12/13	Screening	Institute of Contemporary Arts, London UK
28/12/13	Screening	Institute of Contemporary Arts, London UK
29/12/13	Screening	Institute of Contemporary Arts, London UK
17/01/13	Screening	Institute of Contemporary Arts, London UK
19/12/13	Screening	Institute of Contemporary Arts, London UK
22/01/14	Screening	FACT, Liverpool UK
31/01/14	New York Premiere	Dance on Camera, New York USA
08/03/14	Exhibition	In the Frame: Dance on Film, The Lowry, Salford UK
09/03/14	Screening	Juncture 2014, Leeds UK
22/03/14	Screening	National Gallery of Art, Washington DC USA
21/03/14	Festival Screening	EPOS - The International Art Film Festival, Tel Aviv IL
24/03/14	Educational Screening	London Metropolitan University, Fine Arts Department, London UK

27/03/14	Festival Screening	EPOS - The International Art Film Festival, Tel Aviv IL
	Online Viewing Figures	Vimeo: 25 Countries
01/04/14	Exhibition	In the Frame: Dance on Film, The Lowry, Salford UK
06/04/14	Festival Screening	Alchemy Film and Moving Image Festival, Hawick Scotland UK
06/04/14	Festival Screening	Loikka 2014, Helsinki FI
24/04/14	Screening	Arnolfini, Bristol UK
04/05/14	Festival Screening	London Archive Film Festival, London UK
08/05/14	Screening	CGAI - Filmoteca de Galicia, La Coruña ES
11/05/14	Screening	Kino Kunstmuseum, Bern CH
14/05/14	Educational Screening	New York University, New York USA
23/05/14	Screening	Kino Kunstmuseum, Bern CH
23/05/14	Festival Screening	Maynard: Bodies in Land, Abercych Wales UK
07/06/14	Festival Screening	Dance Camera West, Los Angeles USA
09/06/14	Online Screening	Carroll / Fletcher Onscreen (9-15 June 2014), Worldwide
13/06/14	Screening	Colloquium for Unpopular Culture, part of A Particular Kind of Solitude: An Exhibition Inspired by the Writings of Robert Walser, New York University, NY USA
27/06/14	Screening	MK Gallery, Milton Keynes UK
05/07/14	Screenings	De La Warr Pavillion, Bexhill UK
11/07/14	Screening	Arsenal Kino, Berlin DE
19/07/14	Festival Screening	São Carlos Videodance Festival, São Carlos BR
03/08/14	Screening	KINOK - Cinema in der Lokremise, St Gallen CH
19/08/14	Screening	KINOK - Cinema in der Lokremise, St Gallen CH
12/09/14	Festival Screening	DOKU.ARTS 2014 at the German Historical Museum, Berlin DE

30/10/14	Screening	Europeana AGM, Madrid ES
08/11/14	Festival Screening	Light Moves, Limerick IE
17/03/15	Educational Screening	Falmouth University. Falmouth UK
10/04/15	Screening	School of Sound at Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room, London UK
07/05/15	Exhibition Screening	Film Montage (7 May - 11 July 2015), Coreana Museum, Seoul, Korea, South Korea
25/05/15	Screening	SMK Friday's, National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen DK
04/06/15	Screening	Videodrome 2, Marseille FR
15/09/15	Festival Screening	VIDEODANZABA (15-20 Sep 2015), Buenos Aires AR
16/10/15	Screening	DanceLive at Belmont Filmhouse, Aberdeen Scotland UK
15/10/15	Screening	Les Moulins de Paillard (15 Oct - 29 Nov 2015), Poncé-sur-le-Loir FR
30/01/16	Festival Screening	Tanzrauschen - International Dance on Screen Festival, Wuppertal DE
11/02/16	Exhibition Screening	Stills Gallery, Edinburgh Scotland UK
27/02/16	Screening	Siobhan Davies Studios (Film Retrospective), London UK
20/04/16	Exhibition Screening	Hannah Barry Gallery: Frequent Long Walks, London UK
08/06/16	Festival Screening	Whitstable Biennial, Whitstable UK
21/07/16	Festival Screening	International Kalamata Dance Festival, Kalamata GR

Note: This information was put together by Claudia Kappenberg based on information provided by Siobhan Davies Dance. An online listing with links to the screening venues can be found on the Siobhan Davies website: <http://www.siobhandavies.com/all-this-can-happen-screenings/>

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Biography

Claudia Kappenberg is a performance and media artist and Course Leader for the MA Performance and Visual Practices at the University of Brighton, UK, as well as founding editor of *The International Journal of Screendance*. She has published widely on performance and screen-based work, including in *Anarchic Dance* (Routledge, 2006), *The International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media* (2010), *Art in Motion* (Cambridge Scholars, 2015) and the *Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies* (Oxford University Press 2016). Her performance practice consists of minimal choreographies

which have been shown across Europe, the US, and the Middle East in the form of live interventions, gallery-based performances, and screen-based installations.

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REVIEWS

Review of *All This Can Happen*, by Siobhan Davies and David Hinton

Sanjoy Roy, *Guardian*

Keywords: narrative, composition, montage, connotation, adaptation

Ed. note: This review is a reprint, originally published in *Aesthetica Magazine* on November 5, 2013.¹

All This Can Happen, a 50-minute film by David Hinton and choreographer Siobhan Davies, opens with images of men who cannot walk. One lies immobile in a hospital bed, his head trembling, eyes vacant with torment. Another, also institutionalised, tries to walk but fails. He falls, scrambles, and falls again, his whole body stiff with malfunction.

All this did happen. Every frame of this remarkable film comes from old, mostly black and white archive footage, complete with scratches and fingerprints. It is neither documentary nor constructed reality, but rather a wholly unexpected film adaptation of a short story by Swiss writer Robert Walser (1878-1956), about a man going for a walk.

The story, to which those opening images serve as a prologue, recounts the sights, sounds, encounters, and musings of a day's meandering: children playing in a school, a visit to the tax office, a display of women's hats, a stroll through a forest, an argument with a tailor. Lovingly voiced by John Heffernan, the narration treats each moment, each thought and perception, with equal consideration, whether it is a gripe about automobiles, a memory of unbearable anguish, the sound of sublime music, or a chat with a dog. "The highest and the lowest, the most serious and the most hilarious things," he explains, "are to the walker equally beloved, beautiful, and valuable."²

The footage often illustrates the story very directly, showing manual labourers on scaffolding when the narrator mentions workers, bookshelves for a bookshop, a spinning globe for the world. Yet the images constantly surprise us, and not only because of the non-sequiturs in the story as it wanders from street to restaurant to office, from anecdote to reflection to remembrance. Sometimes it is simply the strangeness of the scene: boys imitating birdsong; tiny books with minuscule print; a screenful of blinking eyes; a giant man, towering above everyone else. Sometimes it is

the potency of the association: birds caught in the hand flying off into bushes, buds opening slowly, like blooms of arousal. Sometimes it is the unflinching simplicity of the image itself: the shock of a child being beaten, the natural beauty of fern fronds, the matter-of-factness of a man milking a cow, all accompanied by the unobtrusive marvels of Chu-Li Shewring's soundtrack.

But always it is because of a startling disjunction: the narration establishes a supple continuity, yet though the imagery follows the story devotedly, it has no continuity. It leaps between locations, splices scenes, switches subjects, and roams freely between poetic and literal modes, between the fantastic, the scientific, the surreal, and the mundane. It seems able to let the whole world in, and still stay true to a singular storyline. The imagery is discontinuous in other senses too. The screen is often split into multiple frames so that we notice how highly composed the film is. The frames themselves often freeze fleetingly, arresting the flow of time. Such stops literally give us pause; they let us take a moment. In fact, the whole film could be seen as the encounter between continuity—the story, the voice, time itself—and composition, or indeed choreography: the framing of action, the placement of sound, the arrangement of subjects and space.

But the reason to watch this film is not because it is artful and thoughtful, though it is that. It is because it restores us to our senses, because it touches—gently—both body and soul. To walk, it suggests, is to be in the world. A world that is physical, full of texture and sound and sensation; that is abstract, a matrix of space and time; that is imaginary, teeming with fantasies and terrors, desires, hopes and regrets; that is social, marked by encounters, engagements, negotiations; a world that is human. As a walk of life, *All This Can Happen* is, quite naturally, also shadowed by death, by not-walking, by not moving in space and time. "Where would I be," asks the walker, "if I was not here? Here, I have everything. And elsewhere, I would have nothing."³ All this it finds equally beloved, beautiful, and valuable.

Biography

Sanjoy Roy is a dance writer and reviewer, who has been writing for the *Guardian* since 2002. From 1989–2000 he was publications editor and designer for Dance Books Ltd, where he was also co-editor of the magazine *Dance Now*. He has contributed to many other publications, including the *New Statesman*, *Dance Gazette*, *Dancing Times*, *Pulse*, and *Dance International*. He is author of the popular *Step by Step Guides to Dance* (2008–11), a series of 59 accessible and informative profiles of choreographers and

companies, published in the *Guardian* online. He maintains an archive of his published writing at <http://www.sanjoyroy.net>.

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Notes

¹ Roy, "Review of All This Can Happen."

² Davies and Hinton, *All This Can Happen*, 36:35.

³ *Ibid.*, 43:08.

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The Mighty Walser: From a Short Story by Robert Walser, a Choreographer and Director Have Made a Mesmerizing Piece of “Perambulatory Poetics.”

Sukhdev Sandhu, New York University

Keywords: Robert Walser, *All This Can Happen*, Siobhan Davies, David Hinton, perambulatory poetics, archive film, split-screen, review

Ed. note: This review is a reprint, originally published in BFI’s international film magazine, *Sight&Sound* in December 2013.¹

By Christmas Day 1956, when his frozen body was found by schoolchildren in a field of snow near the asylum where he had resided for more than twenty years, the Swiss writer Robert Walser had been largely forgotten. There had been a time when the failed actor and former butler, born in 1878, was well known among Europe’s literary intelligentsia: Robert Musil, Herman Hesse, Stefan Zweig, Franz Kafka, and Walter Benjamin all admired his short stories and novels. During the 1920s, though, he was increasingly afflicted by hallucinations. In 1933 he entered a sanatorium, announcing: “I am not here to write, but to be mad.”²

Since his death, Walser has attracted a new and equally ardent following. Susan Sontag, J.M. Coetzee, and W.G. Sebald have all been compelled by the vagrant, almost bathetic trajectory of his life, the mysteriously self-erasing qualities of his prose (which, according to Sebald, “has the tendency to dissolve upon reading, so that only a few hours later one can barely remember the ephemeral figures, events, and things of which it spoke”)³, and the mesmerizing isolationism his writings project (his *Microscripts*, originally assumed to be written in a secret code and composed on tiny strips of paper, were so small that a whole story could fit on the back of a business card).

Now *The Walk*, a 1917 novella, has become the basis of *All This Can Happen*, a remarkable filmic treatment by Siobhan Davies and David Hinton. Its storyline is simple: a writer decides to go for a walk through a provincial Swiss town one morning and along the way encounters a bookseller who proffers him an acclaimed bestseller that he loathes, a bank official who gives him a large sum of money, a former actress, a giant who forces him to eat a huge lunch that leaves him in pain, and a tailor whom he berates.

Who is this writer? He constantly refers to his modest means and frugal habits, but wears a dandyish yellow suit. By turns, he likens himself to a vagabond or vagrant, but also to a great lord or marquis, while coming across as a pompous Pooter type too. On his walk he displays a notary's or actuary's eye for detail, rendering his prose almost indexical, yet his language can be florid to the point of baroque. The landscapes through which he moves come across as stage sets, memory prompts, launch pads for pontifical disquisitions. The line between past and present, self and others, reality and unreality becomes blurry. At one point he even labels the walk "a fantasy."⁴

All This Can Happen is a particularly bold example of perambulatory poetics that is, in different ways, informed by Rebecca Solnit's study *Wanderlust* (in which she celebrates walking for its ability to unite the heart and the head, emotional and analytical intelligence) and by the writings of Sebald—more than once, its haunted topographics and dense language recall Grant Gee's 2011 visual essay *Patience (After Sebald)*.

It might be expected that Davies, a distinguished choreographer, and Hinton, a BAFTA winning director who has often been drawn to the work of dancers in his films, might be attracted to a fiction in which walking becomes an elaborate and idiosyncratic dance of thoughts and bodily gestures. What's striking is the emphasis they place on stasis, hesitancy, immobility: they incorporate often upsetting medical footage of men—presumably World War I veterans—trying to stand on their feet, hinting not only at the traumas Walser may have undergone during his own military service, but also at modernism's systematic preoccupation with breakdown and incapacity.

All This Can Happen is equally arresting as an archive film constructed entirely out of late-19th and early-20th-century home movies, natural history footage, and the pioneering photography of Étienne-Jules Marey. Streetscapes recall the accelerated poetry of 1920s city symphony films. Shots of office workers' body parts or mechanized labor evoke classic time-motion studies and European art's inter-war obsession with processes of atomization and psychological fragmentation.

Much of the film's movement is generated by the splitting of screens: a triptych of a man in various stages of washing resembles the slurred paroxysms of a Francis Bacon painting. At times there are fifteen images on screen, edited and arranged with a precision both forensic and intimate, all speaking—however tangentially—to each other. It's easy to imagine the work being presented in an art gallery, but Davies and Hinton's conceptual rigor, imaginative reach—to say nothing of the intricacy and subtlety with which they trace resonances between images—makes most art world split screen work seem gauche.

All This Can Happen could also function independently as an audio essay. Chu-Li Shewring's sound design creates a molecular illbience whose potency grows and grows. John Hefferman's voiceover is by turns droll, absurd, plaintive, stricken. Davies

and Hinton have achieved the near-impossible: a film both harrowing and full of levity, pathological and poignant, microscopic and expansive. They have not so much captured as liberated Walser's unclassifiable genius.

Biography

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Notes

- ¹ Sandhu, "The Mighty Walser."
- ² Middleton, introduction, 12.
- ³ Sebald, *A Place in the Country*, 122.
- ⁴ Walser, *The Walk and Other Stories*, 68.

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Screenance as a Question: *All This Can Happen* and the First Edition of the Light Moves Festival of Screenance

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Abstract

This article aims to extend the idea that screenance is a set of dispositions and elements which can create a common practice for artists of various backgrounds. Instead of focusing on formal qualities and the type of works that may result from these, this review envisions screenance as a posture towards art making: a way of accessing new creative ideas, a way of looking at new and old artworks, a way of creating works, and a way of thinking. This review first provides an overview and assessment of the inaugural edition and curatorial framework of the Light Moves Festival of Screenance which took place in Limerick, Ireland in 2014 and which propels alternate ideas about screenance. This is followed by a critical review of Davies and Hinton's film *All This Can Happen* (2013), in particular its approach to narrative and the construction of meaning, to expand on the discussion. The review closes with a statement in favor of independent and experimental approaches within this rich playground where dance, performance, digital media, visual arts, and cinema meet.

The review was first published on the blog of the Centre for Screenance (November 2015)¹ and is updated and reprinted here to draw attention to the interplay between curatorial approaches and creative practice.

Keywords: alternate perspectives, experimental approaches, discussion, extended definitions, critical review

Defining *screenance* (or *dancefilm*, or *videodance*, or *dance on screen*, or *dance for the camera*, or *cine-dance*, or *moving-picture dance*)² as an artistic discipline is a divisive exercise that forces many of us to justify our word choice—an inherently defensive position. Instead of diving into the poetics of this eclectic form and its many entry points including choreography, movement, performance, virtual presence, and the moving image, such debate—related both to the materials used and to the methods of creation—has intensified the importance of the two primary artistic components of this practice: dance and cinema. Of course, such ontological dilemmas remain interesting in that they allow us to unpack some core concepts of the practice. Ultimately, however, we are stuck in a paradoxical position: while screenance calls for

a dismantling of artistic categories, its denomination as a discipline in its own right ultimately encloses it in an uncomfortable box.

Wouldn't it actually be liberating to focus a little more on what screendance *does*, and less on what it *is* or *is not*? What if we take screendance as a *question*, instead of an *answer*? What if we don't consider the encounter between dance and cinema as an *end*, a *discipline*, or a *hybrid form*, but rather as a *starting point*, an *experiment*, a *method*, or a *question*?

Claudia Kappenberg, in her chapter "The Politics of Discourse in Hybrid Art Forms,"³ shares Hollis Frampton's concept of the "film machine." Frampton proposes to envision as one machine all parts that constitute a filmic work, i.e. to not only think of the camera used to capture moving images as one machine, or of the projector that projects those images to an audience as another one. Rather, the "film machine" would be the sum of the parts that constitute the artistic experience of cinema, from its making to its presentation.

Accordingly, Kappenberg suggests that,

We should perhaps be less concerned with individual projects and whether they are Screendance or not, but rather consider a wider body of works and even include that which occurs in the everyday through interactions with cameras and screens, digital media, and the internet. If a person is caught on a CCTV camera in a public building, perhaps this is also part of the contemporary machinery of Screendance.⁴

In doing so, Kappenberg invites us to look at the big picture of the practice, rather than its specific features.

My aim is to extend the idea that *screendance* is a set of dispositions and elements which can create a common practice for artists of various backgrounds. I will therefore give less importance to its formal qualities and to the type of works that should result from it. Instead, I will envision *screendance* as a posture towards art making: a way of accessing new creative ideas, a way of looking at new and old artworks, a way of creating works, and a way of thinking.

I had the opportunity to share these questions during the first edition of the Light Moves Festival of Screendance in Ireland,⁵ curated and directed by Mary Wycherly and Jürgen Simpson. This event was special in many ways. First, because the launch of a new international festival means that the field is further developing its networks and structures, and that more professionals are involved in its development. Second, because this festival's curatorial choices put forward works, conferences, and teaching approaches that proposed screendance as a starting point and a perspective, rather than as a fixed discipline. Amongst the films presented, *All This Can Happen*⁶ from Davies and Hinton represented this idea particularly well.

I will first provide an overview and critical review of this inaugural edition of Light Moves. I will then comment critically on Davis and Hinton's film in order to illustrate my argument. Finally, I will close the discussion with a statement in favor of independent and experimental approaches within this very rich playground where dance, performance, digital media, visual arts, and cinema meet.

First Edition of the Light Moves Festival of Screendance

The Festival⁷ took place over four days, from November 6 through 9, 2014. It was organized around four axes: teaching (a two-day workshop), screenings, symposium, and discussions with the artists. Douglas Rosenberg made his keynote address, stating how important it was to welcome a new structure in the field and how precious those moments of beginnings were. He mentioned that, due to the hybrid nature of our field and its international—rather than geographical—development, moments of gathering were especially significant, as they allow for the sharing of knowledge and information. Through the choices made by the curators, debates and questions emerged, as well as affinities between the professionals attending the event. Those encounters are the fuel we need to continue our investigations, the mental and creative support that pushes us to innovate.

One of the most interesting things about Light Moves was the manner in which its curatorial choices challenged many common assumptions about screendance. The eternal question, "Was that dance at all?", was pronounced several times during the festival. Few films featured choreographed dance sequences performed by trained dancers, yet they all engaged with movement in a singular way. Dance was at the core of the festival, but in a different form than the one we are used to seeing in such settings. The attention given to the intersection of academia, creation, and pedagogy also reinforced a desire for a holistic comprehension of screendance.

Short Films Highlights

Amongst the short films presented, some stood out for their novel presentation of dance and movement. *Vanishing Point*⁸ proposed a minimalist transformation of a performance-installation. The hyper-slow evolution from frozen landscape to running water brought the spectator into a meditative state; bodies seemed lifeless and unmoving. Yet as the film evolved, details emerged: a subtle alteration of the set up, or the quiet movement in the sound-scape which pointed to the deterioration of the initial image. In contrast to the fast editing so common in advertising, music videos, and action cinema, this film challenged our conception of bodies in [slow]motion. *Vanishing Point* was not necessarily what one might call a "dancefilm," yet it fit in perfectly at this screendance event.

*Nation for Two*⁹ featured a novel use of editing in order to put bodies into action. This stop-motion film presented two individuals diving underground in order to meet each

other from opposite sides of the planet. Digging their way towards one another, their bodies were nearly absent from the film, although the spectator felt them traveling underground and saw the repercussions of their passage as the ground surface was displaced and destroyed by their movement. One can only imagine how it would feel to dig a tunnel underground, traversing sand, rocks, gravel, and grass; and when the two bodies finally emerged again, I, as a spectator, was left relieved, yet curious. This investigation was fascinating for its simplicity, and made real use of the cinematic potential to convey a choreographic idea involving movement of the human body.

*Beach Party Animal*¹⁰ traced pedestrian movement proper to Brighton beach life (UK) and transformed it into a dance, simply by juxtaposing a series of lightly staged everyday situations. From dog walkers to yogis, from moms with babies to an old man in a leopard g-string swimsuit, the characters in this hilarious episode were bursting with honesty. Simple gestures became choreographic when repeated or looked at from a different perspective. Normal behaviors became grotesque when seen through the eye of the camera. With its frank use of humor and dynamic dramaturgy, this film brought us into a more pedestrian expression of the body and its evocative features.

Feature Films and Installations Highlight

While most of the program was focused on short films, the curators also included feature films that addressed the question of movement and choreography in unexpected ways. With *Russian Ark*¹¹ and *Playtime*,¹² Light Moves brought together cinema lovers and screendance specialists. In doing so, they invited the spectators to discuss matters that are often neglected in screendance contexts—for instance, the physical body of the cameraperson or the choreography of architecture and props in relation to human bodies. Instead of screening films that correspond to the idea most people have of screendance, the two artistic directors pushed the audience to watch works with a specific mind set, indirectly asking them to consider where the dance was.

Installed in a gallery space as well as in a smaller room next to the screening space, video installations brought yet another layer to this question of screendance. *Distant Wars*¹³ proposed a video installation on an iPod with headphones, in which a collage of archival footage evoked the fear of war imposed on us by the State apparatus. People were documented, animated, and presented at a very small scale, putting the body of the spectator in the foreground. Alone in that small room, one could engage in a very personal way with the material for as long as one wished. Perception of time was altered and one could experience an intimate relationship with the [dancing] bodies on that small iPod screen. *If the invader comes*¹⁴ welcomed the viewer into a gallery space in which three screens were juxtaposed. Here again, the spectator was free to determine the duration of their experience. The piece evolved from one screen to another in a minimalistic way, with very few bodies in motion appearing on screen

and a lot of space for contemplation and silence. Again, watching this piece with “screendance” in mind highlighted some of its most striking aspects: temporality and spatiality. I noticed how my eye was drawn to some details, some “possibilities,” some “potentialities.” So many things could have happened during the time spent watching this video installation, and yet it is an economic work, where less is shown and less is done. Though formal at first sight, this work manages to convey a real kinaesthetic charge and a subtle choreographic construction completely at odds with a more action-based or narrative dance-film style.

Workshop and Symposium Highlights

Finally, a two-day workshop and the symposium were also curated for this occasion.¹⁵ First, the workshop’s facilitators/teachers offered a rich palette of approaches to screendance creation and theory, while introducing ideas that were later echoed at the symposium. Led by Douglas Rosenberg, Katrina McPherson, Simon Fildes, and Jürgen Simpson, the workshop brought together international filmmakers, performers, and choreographers. Each facilitator shared their personal vision on the practice, proposing exercises and questions of debate to the group. While those individual visions were sometimes divergent or even contradictory, the combination of these perspectives created a strong playground for the participants to further develop their own, personal approach to the field. The discrepancies emerging from the various backgrounds and profiles of the facilitators ultimately consolidated back into a common desire to challenge the field and to be challenged by other professionals. Their curiosity made up for any disagreement that might have weakened the workshop, highlighting the positive impact of envisioning screendance as a starting point, rather than a rigidly defined field. Second, the symposium gathered speakers from diverse countries and proposed a wide range of conferences, including both performative approaches and academic presentations. Experimentation, cross-disciplinary approaches, and alternate conference styles were at the core of the program.

Another key feature of the festival was the overwhelming majority of female scholars included in its symposium. Since its beginnings, cinema has had influential female artists and authors who were responsible for initiating some of the most groundbreaking techniques and ideas for the screen. However, their work and writings were not given as much attention as those of their male counterparts and were often forgotten or dismissed. Yet, some initiatives now try to reconnect the dots by retracing influential works by women in the film field, such as Robin Blaetz’s book gathering several experimental women’s work and practice.¹⁶ In Québec, the disparities observed in the field of cinema notably gave birth to the non-profit organization *Réalisatrices Équitables* in 2007, that strives to attain equity for women directors in Québec’s film industry.¹⁷ Screendance, however, seems to have developed differently than the wider industry of cinema regarding this issue: several key artists and authors

in the field are women, and their contribution to the milieu is often recognized.¹⁸ The current community of screendance is indeed witnessing a wide consolidation of women's writings and knowledge: symposiums, conferences, and panels often feature a large majority of women; peer reviewed publications (such as this one) also dedicate a high percentage of their articles to women scholars; a strong cohort of female directors emerge from screendance festivals and events; and, finally, major curators internationally are also in good proportion, women. And within our specialized circuit, festivals with a strong experimental component—such as Light Moves—seem to gather even more women in their programs.¹⁹

In terms of academia, this phenomenon within the screendance circuit has already had a significant impact on both the content of the artworks presented and the academic discourse that is being developed around it. This field is fed largely by alternate voices, namely, those of women who interact with the form on several levels (academic, artistic, curatorial, etc.). While those voices don't get as much exposure or opportunities in male-dominated experimental and commercial cinema festivals, they decidedly grow in number in our specialized niche and offer marginal perspectives to audiences, artists, and scholars.

Light Moves²⁰ thus inscribes its curatorial vision in the international network in a political way, instigating new debates and creating space for alternate voices. Working as a counterpoint to mainstream cinema, the festival incarnates an important fringe of the screendance's network—one that is resolutely experimental, searching for new connections or marginal discourses, and digging further under the surface of commercial excitement.

Curating Screendance

Curators Mary Wycherly and Jurgen Simpson made risky choices, putting forward experimental approaches instead of mainstream ones. Worldwide, a lot of screen time is dedicated to mainstream 'dancefilms' in the festivals circuit, while little space is reserved for experimentation in screendance, on both formal and conceptual levels. For instance, established festivals such as San Francisco Screendance Festival and Dance on Camera Festival in New York feature a great percentage of films that have more in common with the commercial film circuit. On an artistic level, those (more often than not) high-budget productions seem to come with a certain image quality and a certain camera work: HD or 3D images, stable camera, long shots with steady cam, impressive bird-eye views, expensive slow motion shots, etc. In addition, those films frequently feature a certain type or style of dance, and more or less codified expressions of moving bodies as in ballet vocabulary, acrobatic movements and circus techniques, modern dance technique, social dance, etc. Those films move away from experimental approaches to movement and camera work, and render a homogenized version of screendance, one that is somehow reduced to a recognizable "style" or

“type” of dance, filmed with the visual qualities of Hollywood movies with an impressive production team. To counter balance such expressions of screendance in the art milieu, alternate platforms are needed. Not only should they feature marginal approaches to both dance and cinema, and create space for independent filmmaking/choreography, to challenge the dominant forms of cinema.

For all these reasons, I find Light Moves to be an important new player in the larger circuit. This festival creates space for strong voices that have been present in the field for decades, and highlights them with audacity through a bold program of films, installations, conferences, and workshops. In addition to positioning themselves in a dynamic and competitive international film festival circuit, Light Moves’ curators integrate their event in a growing alternate circuit that gathers symposiums, festivals, scientific publications, and other projects through which a community of artists and researchers find a sense of belonging outside the mainstream standards. Annually, a series of encounters and events are now available to professionals interested in experimentation and alternate visions of screendance, in several countries. The development of this international community becomes a statement against normalized approaches in cinema and dance and in the arts in general.²¹ In parallel, the two curators deal with a diverse audience, ranging from specialists in the field to citizens of the City of Limerick who may not already be familiar with screendance. The curators manage to present a radical program, while also gathering diverse audience members together around some cinema classics, which are re-considered under the “lens” of screendance (e.g. *Russian Ark*, *Playtime*).²² In the program notes, Wycherly and Simpson mentioned their desire to present an array of approaches, while also “providing a platform for new works and a forum for development and enquiry in this exciting area.”²³ They aim to “showcase the unique diversity of movement on screen via a series of curated events.”²⁴

While the distinction between curating and programming is being debated and questioned in the art sphere, Light Moves proves that there is a need and a place for strong curatorial voices in the field and that audiences’ engagement with such voices is enthusiastic. Traveling from film to video installations, from classic cinema to an intimate iPod screen, the viewer may enlarge their range of perception and discover new sensations.

***All This Can Happen* / Davies and Hinton, UK, 2012**

In the midst of this rich programming, *All This Can Happen*²⁵ engaged with most of the more exciting questions debated during the festival. Even the title of the film seemed to point to the very concerns of the participants, reassuring them that, yes, all this can happen [as screendance]. Put into that context, the film incarnated several alternative visions of choreography for/by/with cinema, without actually making explicit references to “dance.” Yet one could argue that this film had many dances in it: a

dance of moving images, from shot to shot; a dance made out of cinematic potential and editing strategies; and a dance in which body movements are not choreographed by a choreographer during the shooting, but rather by the choreographic choices of the two editors in post-production.

Choreographic Editing

In *All This Can Happen*, made out of archival images and footage from the earliest days of cinema, several choreographic strategies are at play: repetition, creation of a trajectory, and juxtaposition of bodies through the use of split screens. Temporality and spatiality are at the center of the choreographic qualities of this work.

Karen Pearlman, in her book *Cutting Rhythms: Shaping the Film Edit*, compares the way choreographers work with the way editors do, mentioning how movement is actually created and choreographed “within a shot, through the juxtaposition of shots, or both.”²⁶ Movement expresses duration: time goes by and modifies our reception of a movement, just as time goes by and modifies the movement itself as it ends, continues, slows down, or accelerates. She writes, “Editing involves the phrasing of movement, or the aesthetic shaping of movement into that aspect of empathetic engagement with film that we call rhythm.”²⁷

In *All This Can Happen*,²⁸ the creators play with choreographic material composed of bodies, landscapes, architectures, vehicles, animals, nature, and everyday objects. From this vibrant palette, rhythm is built and space is sculpted. Davies and Hinton choreograph the screen using the cinematic parameters of film; its temporal potential is exploited through a precise editing that interrupts, repeats, accelerates, and decelerates actions with a tempo that keeps the viewer captive. Its spatial potential is multiplied and confused through the use of the split screen, making the action jump from one place to another—or happen in two distinct places at the very same time—while remaining in constant dialogue. A shot from the right side of the screen interacts with a shot from the left side of the screen. Movement is choreographed within those shots, but also for the relation they have to one another. Still shots cohabit with moving images, creating another type of tension between stillness, movement, and the potential of the still image to move again. Like in a painting, one’s eye is guided through the composition of moving elements on screen. A new reality is choreographed through dramaturgic choices and a fine orchestration of time/space.

Similar to the work of Dutch documentary filmmaker Johan Van der Keuken, (who is not considered a screendance maker at all, but who produced many films that have a strong choreographic feel),²⁹ *All This Can Happen* invents new dances, new bodies, and new locations that can only exist in the reality of the film. Like Van der Keuken, Davies and Hinton make a dance without dancers. From a choreographic editing perspective, this achievement is another step in the blurring of artistic disciplines to the profit of singular artistic voices.

Narration and Coherence

Another element that is dominant in this work is the use of a voice-over throughout the film. While at first this voice-over seems to guide us through the chronology of the images, it quickly becomes clear that it is neither a reference for a chronological storyline, nor a descriptive voice. The voice here acts as another body in the film, sometimes incarnating a character that we see on screen, at other times acting as a feeling, a texture, or even a nostalgic presence. Those various identities are intertwined, dismantling and reconstructing several possible storyline associations. Fiction cinema has often been put at odds with experimental filmmaking, notably because of the question of narration. Also, "narration" is frequently thought to provide chronological "coherence." While several feminist filmmakers discarded narration for the benefit of abstraction in the '70s, hoping to reinvent representations of the female body and liberate themselves from the rules of Hollywood cinema, some scholars such as Laura de Lauretis envisioned narration differently. Shohini Chaudhuri writes:

De Lauretis points out that the closure is only a contingent feature of narrative, particular to certain forms such as the Hollywood classic. More important to her is the fact that narrative is a mechanism of coherence—that is, a mechanism of meaning. She advocates the strategic deployment of narrative in order to 'construct other forms of coherence, to shift the terms of representation, to produce the conditions of the representability of another—and gendered—social subject.'³⁰

Chantal Akerman, in her very first film *Saute ma Ville*³¹ created a mechanism of coherence that borrowed from linear narration, while using no dialogue at all and giving very few indications about the character's history. The film presents a woman going up an elevator, entering her house, preparing for some disaster (taping the doors, blocking the windows), then "cleaning" the kitchen while throwing Tupperware on the floor, awkwardly eating spaghetti, putting water on the gas oven, lighting it up, and sitting on the floor . . . This sequence of actions, apparently random, slowly organizes into a coherent whole, even though it might not happen chronologically on screen. From a state of latent hysteria, the woman seems to find some internal peace through this mysterious ritual. No narrator is present in the film, yet the woman makes sounds, sings creepily, and talks to herself—offering glimpses of her internal thoughts to the viewer. While *Saute ma Ville* is not carried by a typical voice-over, the mumbling and singing of the main protagonist acts as a strong expression of her emotional states. Without actual words, this form of vocal presence in the soundscape also reinforces another form of logic and narration in the film.

The actual actions she performs and her mental state converge in a coherent whole. *Saute ma Ville* is probably not included in any screendance repertoire, yet it has many features that allow us to relate it to both dance/performance. Movement is central,

carried on by a logic that creates meaning, while no dialogue or character are clearly presented or described. The choreographed sequences of actions recall Chaplin's films, albeit with a much more "trash" aesthetic.

Davies and Hinton's film holds similarities with Akerman's work in *Saute ma Ville*, challenging our conceptions of narration, while using a form of voiceover that differs from a linear storyline. This voice in *All This Can Happen* is notably poetic, not only prescriptive. Here the voice is integrated into the choreographic editing and neither the voice nor the movement is subordinate. Instead, they collaborate in the creation of coherence throughout the film. The viewer might look forward to actually seeing the face of the voice they hear, chasing the subject or principal actor of the film, and getting lost in his memories and stories instead. *All This Can Happen* succeeds at establishing a dialogue between bodies and voice, images and content. Meaning is created through the succession of images, sound, and text from shot to shot, and through an accumulation of those same elements within shots. From a screendance perspective, it stands out as a strong model for the development of new strategies for building interaction between dance and other languages.

Conclusion

In conclusion, both the Light Moves Festival of Screendance and Davies and Hinton's film suggest a wider understanding of screendance: its position in the field of contemporary arts challenges both dance and cinematic conventions, while also putting screendance in dialogue with other art forms. Indeed, if screendance remains a question—one that leads us to think outside the box or to connect ideas in a novel fashion—then there is no limit to its creative potential.

Experimental filmmaking and contemporary creation in dance are not simply pushing forward the formal qualities of the medium, but also our understanding of them. Experimentation demands that we dare to imagine new ways of working, not just new categories within which to operate. The strength of experimental creation is an oscillation between knowing where we are going and not knowing what we are doing, even at the moment we do it. Like walking, which is a constant adjustment, a constant fall-and-recovery, these works are impossible to envision if we don't allow ourselves to fall in the first place. Experimental creation demands that we get lost from time to time. Posing *screendance* as a question seems an interesting way to revisit some cinema classics, while being a strong tool to envision creation and innovation in this field of creativity.

Biography

Priscilla Guy is a multidisciplinary artist and academic researcher based in Montreal (Canada). She is founder of Mandoline Hybride, a company that creates screendance projects, site specific choreographies, and multidisciplinary stage performances. Mandoline Hybride has presented works internationally since 2012.

Priscilla Guy participates in the development of crossings between dance and cinema, and collaborates on international publications such as *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies*, *The International Journal of Screendance*, *La creación híbrida en videodanza* and *The Dance Current*. She is currently a PhD candidate in cinema at Université de Lille 3 (France).

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Notes

¹ Guy, "Review of the 1st Edition of Light Moves Festival."

² Carroll, "Toward a Definition of Moving-Picture Dance."

³ Kappenberg, *The politics of discourse*.

⁴ Ibid. 25.

⁵ Light Moves Festival, November 2014.

⁶ *All This Can Happen*, Davies & Hinton.

⁷ Light Moves Festival, November 2014.

⁸ *Vanishing Point*, Hecher, Beate, and Keim.

⁹ *Nation for Two*, Hertog and Nadler.

¹⁰ *Beach Party Animal*, Aggiss and Murray.

¹¹ *Russian Ark*, Sokurov.

¹² *Playtime*, Tati.

¹³ *Distant Wars*, Edmunds.

¹⁴ *If the Invader Comes*, Dobowitz and O Conchuir.

¹⁵ Light Moves Festival, November 2014.

¹⁶ Blaetz, *Women's Experimental Cinema*.

¹⁷ Réalisatrices Équitables aspires to a more equitable space for female directors' concerns, world vision, and imagination on all our screens. Réalisatrices Équitables is deeply concerned by women's image in the media. To this end, RÉ seeks to heighten awareness in the media arts community with regards to reducing gender stereotypes by diversifying male and female characters written and brought to life by creators here and abroad. (Réalisatrices Équitables).

¹⁸ Since the imprint in the 1940s of Maya Deren, who is one of the most famous figures of early screendance discourses, one notices numerous great female artists, teachers, and thinkers who marked history and have contributed to the establishment of screendance practices/theories.

¹⁹ For instance, the International Videodance Festival of Burgundy (France), which also has an alternate curatorial signature had an academic panel constituted only of women for its May 2015 edition (International Videodance Festival).

²⁰ Light Moves Festival November 2014.

²¹ In addition to the Videodance Festival of Burgundy (France) mentioned above, one can also think of International Screendance Festival in Durham (USA) and Festival Itinerante Agite Y Sirva (Mexico), two other examples that gather alternate voices of theoreticians, practitioners, and curators at the heart of their curating preoccupations. (International Videodance Festival of Burgundy; International Screendance Festival in Durham; Festival Itinerante Agite Y Sirva).

²² *Russian Ark*, Sokurov; *Playtime*, Tati.

²³ Light Moves Festival (online).

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *All This Can Happen*, Davies & Hinton.

²⁶ Pearlman, *Cutting Rhythms*, 41.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *All This Can Happen*, Davies & Hinton.

²⁹ Such as *Temps/Travail* (1999); *On Animal Locomotion* (1994).

³⁰ Chaudhuri, *Feminist Film Theorists*, 69.

³¹ *Saute ma Ville*, Akerman.

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POSTSCRIPT

Postscript

Sarah Whatley, Coventry University

Abstract

An issue of a journal that focuses on just one art work may be unusual, but the range and the breadth of the perspectives adopted by all the authors included here demonstrate that there is much to appreciate in this single work. Such attention given to *All This Can Happen (ATCH)* might also suggest that, as editors of this issue, we regard it as a landmark screendance work, and in many ways it is. It arrived at a time when changes were taking place in the art world. *ATCH* reflects, or perhaps contributed to, some of these changes, including: that of the shifting relationship between dance and visual arts that has subsequently posed a challenge to established hierarchies, the fascination with early technologies as source material in the production of new art work, and a growing interest in reconnecting with the past through reusing and reimagining archival content.

Keywords: archive, Siobhan Davies, David Hinton, Channel 4, Etienne-Jules Marey, Screendance Symposium

At the time of its first showing, *ATCH* also seemed to mark a departure for Davies from her live dance works although it actually revived a relationship with film that had begun much earlier. Davies was one of the first dance artists to take part in a Channel 4-backed project, *Dance-Lines*¹ in 1987, which brought together British-based choreographers, dancers, and filmmakers to learn about each other's craft and make work. This experience seeded Davies' affinity with the film medium and led to her acknowledging soon after this time that her dance work was more closely related to film than other performing arts, for its poetic and multi-layered compositional possibilities. But *ATCH* was her first partnership with filmmaker (and veteran screendance maker) David Hinton. Their partnership has clearly been a strong one from the start, built on years of respecting each other's practices, growing through more than 30 years of making dance and screen work.

Reading in this issue their own reflections on making *ATCH* in conversation with Claudia Kappenberg reminds me of the time at the Screendance Symposium² at the University of Brighton in 2011 when Davies and Hinton were invited to come and speak about *ATCH* as it was beginning to take shape in their thinking. They shared with

us their starting points and inspirations. As we reported in the 2012 volume of this journal, Davies contemplated her choreographic practice and asked, "How can I bring this body of information into the language of film? How can we witness the shifts/the thoughtfulness of the action?"³ Davies voiced curiosity about the way in which moving to a screen would influence her thinking about "dance," and she expressed something that has always been a characteristic of her choreographic explorations: the complexity of the moving body. Davies described how even in the orchestration of an apparently simple activity such as walking, the motion embodies a "massive amount of information—probably about 1000 activities in the body which allow us to walk."⁴ In the interview with Kappenberg, Davies reiterates her curiosity with detail in moving, commenting on how the film medium might meet her "fascination with the million moments in fluid movement and expression."⁵ She continues, "I know they are there, but we don't experience them unless we find the means to glimpse them by concentrating on a single chosen frame, by finding that fragile moment when an expression alters or the body shifts, almost imperceptibly, in a response."⁶ Davies also recounts in this interview how they "re-sequenced a series of frames of movements according to a score"⁷ to break up fluidity in her movement and to challenge her to rethink her previous way of constructing movement, reflecting that: "At first these felt as if I was deoxygenating the movement. But I was also thrilled by this new relationship to movement in these tiny increments."⁸ This preoccupation with the subtleties and density of detail in the human body is where dance and film find a fertile congruence.

Whilst the partnership between Davies and Hinton might have spawned a very different kind of project for Davies in particular, there are traces of ideas and gestures that have recurred throughout her oeuvre in different ways. The fascination with human motion and the early photography of nineteenth-century scientist Etienne-Jules Marey (1830–1904) links back to her interest in his contemporary, the anatomical photographer Eadweard Muybridge (1830–1904), whose work revealed itself as a reference point in earlier choreographic projects, including *The Art of Touch* (1995) and *Birdsong* (2004), as source for researching the articulation of the body in motion or as compositional device. The creation of her own digital archive, *Siobhan Davies RePlay*,⁹ may also have prompted a deeper interest in archives and the potential of retrieving and re-rendering archival content for *ATCH*, even if Davies and Hinton's time spent digging into the archives came later in their project. Nonetheless, as the conversation with Kappenberg about their creative process makes clear, archival research played a key role in sourcing content; Davies talked some time later about the miles of film rushes that this research generated and the subsequent hours spent with Hinton selecting, editing, and composing this content.¹⁰ Their meticulous work results in a "constant interplay between stillness and movement"¹¹ that conveys the contrasting expressions of solitude and collectivity, and a journey that weaves its way through myriad images drawn from social, historical, scientific, and artistic records. From

botanical images stilled in time to allow the viewer to appreciate the delicacy of the vascular structures to stuttering movies portraying human frailty and failings, the visual and rhythmic interchange is surprisingly poignant—an observation made by many. Knowing something of Davies' rich artistic career to this point and considering Hinton's previous screen projects, one may see *ATCH* as a more personal shared essay. The sense of mapping an individual journey or career, of time unfolding, and the way a life is imprinted on or inscribed by changing patterns in our working, social, and emotional lives is embodied in the narrative of the protagonist, the walker.

Soon after *ATCH* was completed, I remember Davies questioning where it would be shown and how that would influence its reception. If "framed" as a dance project, would it not be welcomed in the art gallery or cinema? If promoted as a film project, how would it be received by dance audiences? The conversation with Kappenberg reveals both Davies' and Hinton's thoughts about their constituencies and where the work might "sit." The multiple screenings of the work in a wide variety of contexts and the many responses to the work (as illustrated by the articles in this volume) might suggest that this is a non-issue; but how work is received, critiqued, and appreciated does matter to artists, particularly those artists who are working across disciplinary boundaries, or artists developing "a coalition of practices" that, according to Davies "makes them bolder."¹² Hinton notes how the screening conditions can alter and detract from the subtleties of the film quality, the grain of the film, and the lighting—all of which impact on its reception. However, Davies also talks about the beauty of the different contexts in which the film is viewed; *ATCH* "transports" the viewer, but how it is received is deeply informed by and is situated within the wider context in which it is screened. Consequently, *ATCH* defies simple categorization. It has been appreciated and enjoyed as an art work, a dance work, a screendance work, a film, or even an archival art documentary.

What this issue has aimed to demonstrate is that, for many commentators, critics, scholars, promoters, and other artists, *ATCH* resonates on numerous levels and in myriad ways. Each author reveals a specific engagement with the work, a different way of tuning in to the subtleties and layers of the film, and a preparedness to take time to *notice*. These responses will likely please Davies and Hinton, who were preoccupied for much of the making process with "noticing." As Hinton explains, "One of the things we're trying to do in *ATCH* is to encourage the viewer to consciously enjoy things which would simply slip past in a more conventional film. We are using various tactics to say to the viewer: 'Hey, look more carefully at this, isn't this great?' [...] It is only through working in the dance world that I could have arrived at this way of working with images. And, of course, by using this device, we are also saying: 'Look, this is dance.'"¹³ Or as he neatly summarizes, "Although the image is humble, we are emphatically saying: 'Look at what's happening in this image. It's a quiet way of shouting.'"¹⁴ Whilst *ATCH* continues to be screened and generate yet further

responses, the partnership between Davies and Hinton also continues with a new project, *The Running Tongue* (2015),¹⁵ a film installation in collaboration with 22 artists that continues their joint investigation into the intimacy and delicacy of human action. And still we are looking forward to what next they will make happen.

Biography

Sarah Whatley is Professor and Director of the Centre for Dance Research (C-DaRE) at Coventry University. Her research focuses on dance and new technologies, dance analysis, and documentation, somatic dance practice and pedagogy, and inclusive dance. The AHRC, EU, and the Leverhulme and Wellcome Trusts fund her current projects. She led the AHRC-funded Siobhan Davies digital archive project, RePlay and is Academic Advisor: Digital Environment for The Routledge Performance Archive. She is also founding editor of the *Journal of Dance and Somatic Practices* and sits on the editorial boards of several other Journals.

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Notes

¹ Dance-Lines, supported by Channel 4, began with a series of short pieces directed by Terry Braun and Peter Mumford in collaboration with different choreographers. In 1987 for the first series, Davies produced three untitled pieces for television. The following year she worked on two longer dance films, both filmed versions of staged works (*White Man Sleeps* and *Wyoming*). See: <http://www.siobhandaviesreplay.com/record/34>; <http://www.siobhandaviesreplay.com/record/38>

² The Screendance Symposium was the culmination of the AHRC-funded Screendance Network that brought together artists and researchers to debate the practice. The Network also led to the establishment of the *International Journal of Screendance*. See: <http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/projects/screendance/screendance-network/symposia>

³ Kappenberg and Whatley, "A Report on the Screendance Symposium," 144.

⁴ Sally Banes and André Lepecki, *The Senses in Performance*, 1.

⁵ Davies, Hinton, and Kappenberg, "Siobhan Davies and David Hinton in Conversation with Claudia Kappenberg Part 1," 152.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Davies, Hinton, and Kappenberg, "Siobhan Davies and David Hinton in Conversation with Claudia Kappenberg Part 2," 163.

⁸ Ibid., 164.

⁹ Davies and Whatley, "RePlay:" See: <http://www.siobhandaviesreplay.com/>.

¹⁰ In conversation with Whatley, Siobhan Davies Studios, March 2012.

¹¹ Davies, "All This Can Happen." See: <http://www.siobhandavies.com/works/all-this-can-happen/>.

¹² Davies, Hinton, and Kappenberg, "Part 1," 149.

¹³ Davies, Hinton, and Kappenberg, "Part 2," 168.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Davies, "The Running Tongue"; See: <http://www.siobhandavies.com/work/the-running-tongue/>.

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