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**Integrating Temporal Polyphony and  
Camera Consciousness into Literature:  
Inspired by the Cinema of Michelangelo Antonioni**

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## Abstract

Theorists and scholars primarily characterize Michelangelo Antonioni as a Modernist artist who uses Abstract Expressionist techniques seen through the geometric composition of framing: diagonals, counter-diagonals, vertical lines, and triangular figures. But what of the auteur's place in the Cubist tradition? My project consists of an analytical essay and a separate novella evaluating the Cubist aesthetics of fragmentation and time, as captured by the *human*, *inhuman*, and *superhuman* consciousness of camera movements in the Cinema of Antonioni. Further, both works explore and integrate Antonioni's employment of these techniques based on the film philosophy of Gilles Deleuze, who builds his concepts around the Bergsonian ideas of the *movement-image*, and the *time-image*. The unfinished novella (consisting of 5 chapters or *movements*) demonstrates narrative through both the conventional use of prose, and through unconventional employment of cinematic techniques as seen in Antonioni's cinema. In particular, the unconventional techniques appear through the subjective (human) or objective (inhuman) use of camera movements as consciousness. I tend to the issue of frame, shot, cut, montage, and the tension between what Bergson refers to as a "crisis of psychology": *movement* "as the physical reality of the external" and the *images* "psychic reality in consciousness." The analytical essay argues for instances of temporal polyphony in the films of Michelangelo Antonioni. The multiplicity of temporal perspectives within a filmic shot, what Deleuze calls *Aeon* and *Chronos*, in tandem with a human or inhuman camera consciousness, all serve the Cubist technique of integrating a type of polyphony into the work. The unfinished novella reflects this argument as well.

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Indeed, I view Dr. Lentricchia as a mentor. His film course allowed me to consider literature in a new way and exposed me to the films of Michelangelo Antonioni, who I now regard as one of the greatest Modernist artists. For that, I am sincerely grateful. Furthermore, the temporal concepts—as they relate to Antonioni's metaphysical cinema—presented in Dr. Lentricchia's novel, *The Sadness of Antonioni*, profoundly influenced my argument for Antonioni's use of temporal polyphony and camera consciousness as a Cubist technique.

I am forever an admirer of Dr. Lentricchia's provocative concepts and observations, his sharp prose, and his wicked wit. For his kind encouragement, sincere feedback, and absurd confidence in my abilities to pull off this apocalyptic (avant-garde) vision, I am beyond thankful.

## A Polyphony of Temporality in the Films of Michelangelo Antonioni

### INTRODUCTION

The origins of Cubism arise out of the avant-garde culture of Paris at the start of the twentieth century. Artists such as Picasso and Braque adopted an ethos of borrowing from popular forms of culture in order to subvert the traditions of high art belonging to academic and bourgeois realms.<sup>1</sup> Instead, the artists sought to inject a type of polyphony into their works—one that mixed the voices and expressions of high and low culture through anti-naturalistic portraits and landscapes. Indeed, the conventions of high art, and primarily Symbolists works, relied on classical (Renaissance) forms of perspective: a complex mimesis of the natural world from a single point of view. Instead of representing an object or subject in a static image, Picasso and Braque looked to divide a picture, and express time as an abstraction of movement.

So, what inspired this revitalization of time and fragmentation? According to scholars, popular Parisian culture was saturated with the fantastic of the Vaudeville stage and of trick photographers who truncated and rearranged human limbs in an unnatural manner—antithetical to popular understanding of medicine or science.<sup>2</sup> However, the advent of one artistic medium transformed the ability to demonstrate temporal simultaneity. Early critics of cinema—Symbolists—deemed the form too base to adhere to conventions of high art. Thus, film, served as a form of popular art—one viewed at billiard parlors or street fairs.<sup>3</sup> These critics claimed that cinema failed to evoke a higher truth as the machine merely captured images in a literal mimesis. However, the oeuvre of one filmmaker, one of cinema's earliest champions, profoundly impacted the early modernist movement of Cubism: Georges Melies. From Melies' work, Picasso and Braque

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<sup>1</sup> Staller, Natasha. *Melies' 'Fantastic' Cinema and the Origins of Cubism*. *Art History*: 12(2) 1989. P.202.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

synthesized the foundational sensibilities of Cubism. To that end, the artists appropriated the following techniques:

...jarring multiple perspectives, fragmented bodies and body parts, a comic self-conscious dialogue between apparent art and apparent reality, and the insertion of advertising copy, letters, numbers, and literally real objects into artistic contexts.<sup>4</sup>

The nature of Melies work in a Modernist cinema displays simultaneous spatio-temporal juxtapositions through montage. In the decomposition of an image, Melies presents truncated body parts recomposed through space and time—the image’s very reassembly a departure from Cubist works. Similarly, the film philosopher Gilles Deleuze describes the nature of the camera shot as a movement-image.<sup>5</sup> He further explains that pure movement, through the camera shot, divides the film set into various “fractions of reality”—the way a set decomposes and then recomposes.<sup>6</sup>

However, Deleuze suggests, Epstein best captures the idea of pure movement by comparing it to a Cubist painting:

Instead of submitting to perspective, this painters splits it, enters it...For the perspective of the outside he thus substitutes the perspective of the inside, a multiple perspective...The cinema even more directly than painting, conveys a relief in time, a perspective in time: it expresses time itself as a perspective or relief.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, scholars have debated whether the Modernist concept of a fourth dimension—a higher dimension of space—exists. While Einstein’s Theory of Relativity may have dissolved ideas of a fourth dimension, one might argue that the Modernist movement of Cubism yielded a renewed utilization of a higher realm of space: perspective as dimension. If, as Deleuze theorizes, time assumes its own perspective or relief—its ability to contract or dilate—perhaps, at moments, Michelangelo Antonioni’s work actually emulates the spatial dimensions of the Cubist?

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 217.

<sup>5</sup> Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema 1: The Movement-image*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986. Print. p. 22.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 23-24.

Theorists and scholars primarily characterize Michelangelo Antonioni as a Modernist artist who uses Expressionist techniques seen through the geometric composition of framing: diagonals, counter-diagonals, vertical lines, and triangular figures. The scholarly conversation regarding Antonioni's cinema focuses primarily on his concepts of: time; of emptied spaces or sets; and of the consciousness of certain camera movements, wherein the camera assumes its own point of view. To that effect, one might use what is known of his cinema to examine how it relates to the Cubist sensibility of perspective through time and fragmentation.

However, it is only once we delve into Antonioni's metaphysical cinema<sup>8</sup>, one that explores the abstraction of temporal perspective and inhuman camera consciousness—rather than only subject itself to an exact mimesis or representation of nature—that we find the aesthetics of time and fragmentation yield a higher truth: that of simultaneous multiple perspectives within the auteur's films. After all, Antonioni's shots of empty sets and landscapes, wherein the camera possesses an inhuman consciousness, function as filmic caesura: fragmentary spaces and time (space-time), in the midst of narrative, renders it elliptical and non-linear like a Cubist painting.

To that end, this paper will examine the use of inhuman and human camera consciousness as a Cubist sensibility of multiple perspectives in the following films of Michelangelo Antonioni: *L' eclisse*, *Blow Up*, and *The Passenger*. In the final scenes of these films, both of these camera consciousnesses will encounter a temporal perspective—or space-time dimension—either by way of *Chronos* or *Aeon*<sup>9</sup>, the two expressions of time defined by Deleuze. In order to understand how Antonioni achieves simultaneity through juxtaposed multiple perspectives within his movement-

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<sup>8</sup> In his novel, Frank Lentricchia's protagonist considers Antonioni's metaphysical cinema to encompass three criteria: Consciousness, emptiness, and time. Lentricchia, Frank. *The Sadness of Antonioni*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2011. Print. p. 156.

<sup>9</sup> Powell, Anna. *Deleuze, Altered States and Film*. Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 2007. Print. P.140.



image, we need to understand Deleuze's alterity of camera consciousness and his conception of time. Thus, let's inspect further.

#### CAMERA CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE MODERNIST CINEMA OF METAPHYSICS

In *The Movement-Image*, the philosopher Gilles Deleuze presents his theory of cinematic consciousness. The protagonists or, *us*, the spectators, he suggests, do not embody the consciousness.<sup>10</sup> Instead, the camera possesses a human, inhuman, or superhuman consciousness within a given film.<sup>11</sup> Even more, Deleuze further distills the camera's consciousness to the shot. So, what are the differences between human and inhuman camera consciousnesses?

In moments of the human consciousness, the shot follows the subjective movement of the hero or protagonist.<sup>12</sup> By doing so the frame changes along with the spatial distances between objects, subjects, and the camera. Conversely, inhuman consciousness frames the image obsessively. It departs from the subject to explore objects or landscapes. The camera wanders as if it has a mind of its own, then retraces the original subject at a later point in time and resumes a human consciousness. Moreover, the inhuman camera will hold still, its gaze almost frozen, as if completely beguiled by the landscape or other inhuman things. In this state, the camera waits for the human subject to enter the frame, carry out an action, and then exit; the space resumes its emptiness.<sup>13</sup> This autonomous form of camera consciousness Deleuze cites as a "Cinema of poetry."

The philosopher names Michelangelo Antonioni as a master of obsessive framing: "...the neurotic, or the man losing his identity enters into a 'free-direct' relationship with the poetic vision

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<sup>10</sup> Deleuze, Gilles. p.20.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Deleuze, Gilles. p.74.

of the director who affirms himself in him, through him, whilst at the same time distinguishing himself from him.”<sup>14</sup>

While Deleuze astutely cites Antonioni’s camera as a vision of poetic consciousness<sup>15</sup>, he oversimplifies its value by linking the auteur’s essential fidelity to aestheticism. Indeed, Antonioni’s inhuman camera may capture the silent beauty of landscapes and other geological terrain within a sequence of shots for the purpose of pure aesthetics: images not meant to evoke interpretation from the viewer.<sup>16</sup> However, Deleuze misses the totality of Antonioni’s philosophy within a given film. For, as novelist and literary critic Frank Lentricchia writes (through the voice of his character Professor Hank Morelli in *The Sadness of Antonioni*), Antonioni’s use of camera consciousness amounts to one-third of his metaphysical cinema: cinema that contains consciousness, coupled with *emptiness* and *time*.<sup>17</sup> Even more, Antonioni’s metaphysical films often present an ontology of being and becoming, and of identity—one that displays a tension between immanence and transcendence. Thus, the filmmaker deviates from pure aestheticism. Instead, he marries framing techniques with a multiplicity of consciousnesses—no simple feat. To that end, let’s discuss the sensibility of *time*.

#### CHRONOS AND AEON: PERSPECTIVES OF TIME

To understand Deleuze’s contribution to the metaphysical conception of time, we should note Henri Bergson’s role as Deleuze frames his theories around Bergson’s concepts of the *Movement-Image* and the *Time-Image*. As scholar of altered states Anna Powell suggests, Bergson’s concept of a *Time-Image* developed as a response to Einstein’s theory of space-time, where time

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p. 75.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p. 75.

<sup>16</sup> Lentricchia, Frank. Pp. 68-77.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p.156.

exists as a fourth dimension.<sup>18</sup> However, Powell writes, Bergson and Einstein diverge significantly in their definitions of time's duration.<sup>19</sup>

Deleuze, a close observer of Bergson's cinematic theory, recognizes two types of temporality in order to capture what occurs in film when the translation of movement into action fails to measure time.<sup>20</sup> Here, Deleuze classifies time as *Chronos* and *Aeon*. *Chronos*, Deleuze urges, emblemizes natural time—spatialized and measured by the humanly constructed clock—while *Aeon*, without limitation, presents a flux of past into future.<sup>21</sup> If *Aeon* functions as virtual duration itself, then *Chronos* dwells within the present moment—it measures out the actions of the human body.<sup>22</sup> Put simply, *Chronos* is made manifest in the attitudes of the human body, which Deleuze names as tiredness, waiting, and despair.<sup>23</sup> Thus, Deleuze asserts, “The body is never in the present. It contains the before and after...”<sup>24</sup>

While Deleuze attributes the demonstration of the characters' interiority through behavior to Antonioni's cinema, Frank Lentricchia best exemplifies the filmmaker's relationship, or engagement, between camera consciousness and time through what he calls *Interior* and *Exterior Time*. In *Exterior Time*, one assumes that a form of *Aeon* engages with an inhuman camera consciousness. Why? As Lentricchia suggests, the human subject functions as a marker of time.<sup>25</sup> It enters the camera's mesmerized frame, occupies it, and then exits as one born into a deteriorating process—a shot with a beginning, middle, and end.<sup>26</sup> Devoid of the human body, Lentricchia writes, the shot of the inhuman camera possesses no time:

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<sup>18</sup> Powell, Anna. P.140.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Deleuze, Time-Image, pp.189-190; 204-205.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.,p. 189.

<sup>25</sup> Lentricchia, Frank. P. 124.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

The camera has a mind of its own—its own point of view. Then the human bearer of time stumbles into the camera’s gaze—the camera’s domain of pristine space hitherto untraversed is now contaminated by human temporality. Intrusion occurs but the camera remains transfixed by its object. It doesn’t care. The camera has no human fears.<sup>27</sup>

In Lentricchia’s concept<sup>28</sup> of *Interior Time*, we notice a presentation of *Chronos* within an often human camera consciousness. In this encounter between time and human consciousness, the focus falls on the character occupying the shot in a long take. By this measure, Lentricchia suggests that interior time occurs as a time suffered and stretched without limitation—an unpassable time.<sup>29</sup> Put simply, the viewer endures the same natural time as the character, though the character emblemizes the mark of *Chronos*: a subjective time whose posture is waiting, tiredness, and despair. Thus, Lentricchia’s protagonist states: “Living death is Antonioni’s true subject.”<sup>30</sup>

#### CHRONOS AND AEON IN *BLOW UP*

In the penultimate shot of the film *Blow Up*, Antonioni gives us an unwavering view of the protagonist Thomas’s face. We no longer view the mimetic game of tennis between two revelers. Instead, the camera switches from the long shot where Thomas extracts the imaginary tennis ball from the grass and throws it presumably beyond the frame. Before he throws the imaginary ball, and before the subject moves toward the camera, Antonioni cuts to a middle-range shot. Thomas, then, moves closer to the stilled gaze of the camera until the bust of his body occupies the screen. In this frame, we witness his reaction to the tennis match. If we peer closely, we notice that the acts of retrieving and tossing have shifted his very abstraction—his lack of utility as a voyeur—toward a

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Again, to clarify, this is Lentricchia’s concept through his protagonist, Hank, a professor of film.

<sup>29</sup> Lentricchia, Frank. Pp. 158-159.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., P.160.

participant of the art. Even more, the actions of the mimes now reflect themselves off of Thomas' glossy eyes.

The movement leaves the exterior world of nature as a background to the human face and body, which occupies the foreground of the frame. Here, the subjective camera consciousness catches the interior dialogue playing out in Thomas's silent gaze: one that shifts from delight to stern contemplation, and perhaps even despair. The sound of the imaginary tennis ball, cracking against the rackets of the pantomimes and against the earth—this auditory representation or diagesis—reaffirms Antonioni's shift from an exterior action to an interior consideration. This we examine from Thomas' point of view. Perhaps Antonioni suggests that Thomas, devoid of his camera (an extension of his flesh), considers beauty in binary terms of transcendence: on the one hand he weighs the real/ideal (the abstraction) of its form and, on the other, the copy (representation). Elizabeth St. Pierre refers to this dialectic as the two-world ontology of Plato's theory of Forms<sup>31</sup>. The first world, St. Pierre suggests, consists of the origin of real objects (art in abstraction).<sup>32</sup> In the second world, we view objects in their ideal form<sup>33</sup>—a representation of their abstracted origin.

By that measure, Thomas' body serves as a marker of waiting—as an anthropomorphic form of *Chronos* in this frame—but to what end? In a moment of realization, or embrace, Thomas casts his eyes downward until the camera angle changes. This gesture perhaps suggests the subject no longer functions as a participant of the art.

Antonioni's camera cuts to an aerial shot denoting the switch from human camera consciousness to superhuman. The camera takes on its own omniscient perspective: one where it gazes down at a large plane of vibrant grass. The subject remains tiny, insignificant even, compared

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<sup>31</sup> St. Pierre, Elizabeth A. "Post-Qualitative Inquiry in an Ontology of Immanence." *Sage Journals*, 25. 1 (2018): 3-16. JSTOR Web. March 2019. P.4.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

to the representational landscape that engulfs the frame. Thomas maintains his own point of view. His role again functions as a spectator-voyeur toward the revelers' art of mimesis. Then, within the stilled gaze of the camera, we experience an abstraction—an erasure of human body altogether. Thomas dissolves from the frame leaving the camera in an inhuman consciousness, one of a spectator-voyeur hovering over a deserted landscape.

It is here, at this moment of transition, that Antonioni perhaps inspects the art from both the interior and exterior—simultaneous perspectives we view from the aerial shot—as Deleuze notes of Epstein's observation of the Cubist painter<sup>34</sup>. Thomas's erasure mirrors the emptying out of his interior, or departure from stable conceptions of being. Instead, the erasure demonstrates the intersection of two separate temporal perspectives: *Chronos* and *Aeon*. Similar to the continuum of *Aeon*, where past flows into future, Thomas rejects his own identity (his past) and closure<sup>35</sup> (a certain or set future), for the unknown of a self that is yet to become. This perhaps signifies a tension between what St. Pierre refers to as a one-world ontology of immanence<sup>36</sup> and transcendence. In tandem with *Aeon*, *Chronos* presents itself in the physical body of the human subject. At the moment Thomas dissolves into the green plane (1:50:53), he merges into Antonioni's metaphysical cinema where time, consciousness, and emptiness manifest as simultaneous, conflicting, multiple perspectives. This elision emulates the work of the Cubist.

Once dissolved of Thomas's form and presence, the empty set transcends the limitations of *Chronos* which is bound by the human clock—the human body as a marker of time. Now, time takes on its own ethereal form. But to what extent do we view a dimension of undisturbed space-time? To what end is the space actually emptied? In a world of immanence, defined by a dwelling within, does

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<sup>34</sup> Deleuze, Gilles. Pp.23-24.

<sup>35</sup> St. Pierre, Elizabeth. P. 5.

<sup>36</sup>According to St. Pierre, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's concept insists that *immanence* fails to be immanent to anything exterior to itself. It is already within it. Otherwise, it would be *transcendent*. Ibid.

beauty and nature remain within Thomas or Thomas within beauty and nature? Either way the deserted space functions as a visual caesura—although not a form of caesura that punctuates definitively. Rather, the empty space allows the viewer to pause—to consider how the film, and its end, does not close off in meaning. Instead, it opens up into the abstract form of the world beyond the film—the filmmakers’ ontology.

#### A MULTIPLICITY OF PERSPECTIVES IN *L’ECLISSE*

In Michelangelo Antonioni’s film *L’eclisse*, the auteur presents multiple perspectives within the experimental, final scene. The seven-minute scene comprises both *Chronos* and *Aeon* within the wandering frame of an inhuman camera consciousness. In this film, Antonioni presents the final scene in a pure montage. He fragments the scene by using a sequence of juxtaposed images and shots. This, in turn, creates a spatio-temporal whole, or totality of meaning, if we do not merely interpret the fragments individually.

In order to analyze the final scene, we must gloss the juxtapositions within the scene preceding it. At (1:50:37) we find the lovers Vittoria and Piero in a moment of passion. As the scene progresses, the two share a series of jokes and laughter. They delight in the company of the other which suggests a thriving relationship. As Vittoria leaves the office of Piero, the two make plans to meet later that evening. Once Vittoria departs from the office, the camera cuts back and forth between the solo movement-images of Piero and Vittoria.

Toward the end of these juxtapositions, we view Piero who sits at his desk in his well-lit office (1:56:47). His face transforms from worry to delight, and then back again. Conversely, the camera cuts to Vittoria as she slowly saunters down the stairwell of the office building. Before she leaves, she hesitates. The camera captures her facial expression of uncertainty while she basks not in the light of the natural world, but in a heavy shadow of the building’s artifice (1:56:58). Before we

enter our seven-minute scene devoid of the two lovers, Antonioni gives Vittoria's shadowy form the last word so to speak. She exits the building.

Once outside, Vittoria walks toward the familiar fence where Piero met with a casual love interest—she pauses in despair. Then, she turns toward the towering trees. The camera follows her gaze and then continues tracing the fullness of the trees so that Vittoria no longer occupies the frame. This action denotes Antonioni's inhuman camera consciousness—an objective consciousness. The camera finds Vittoria again, and views her from a low angle as she surveys the looming trees, though she ultimately leaves the frame. While the remainder of the scene most obviously presents Deleuze's continuum of time, *Aeon*, and Lentricchia's *Exterior Time*, is it possible that elements of *Chronos* and *Interior Time* lurk within the movement-images? Do not these juxtapositions parallel an expression of Vittoria's interiority as she engages the natural world and familiar landmarks?

Once Vittoria exits the frame, the camera maintains its fixation on the tree-scape. It cuts to the wide shot, and then to medium-range shots and close-ups of the various locations within the neighborhood that Vittoria and Piero once occupied. Through this series of cuts, *Aeon* presents itself through the various human bodies, which enter and exit the frame. While at one point, the camera follows a horse and buggy instead of maintaining a fixed gaze, the consciousness still remains inhuman. It moves on to other fixtures of the neighborhood: the barren and the occupied.

The absence of Vittoria and Piero in this sequence suggests the very emptying out of their relationship which dissolves into the void of time, emptiness, and consciousness. As within the Cubist work, the plurality of jarring perspectives decomposes the whole in a way that leaves the film open-ended and opaque. Thus, the final shot fails to reassemble the original, harmonious whole. Perspective, then, in terms of time and consciousness, remains in a fragmented state.



How do we determine the relationship's impending doom without any confrontation among the lovers? While we, the viewer, do not possess the powers of clairvoyance, we do interpret Antonioni's visual language. If we consider the opening scene of the film, where Antonioni first presents his dialectic of light and darkness, one could argue that it mirrors, and even forebodes, the outcome of the final scene.

As the scene opens, we watch Vittoria experience a drawn-out break-up with her boyfriend, Riccardo, in the excruciating long take. That is, from Vittoria's tired posture, where she waits for the end of the conversation, we experience the perspective of natural time in the shot. In a frame that most significantly parallels the film's end, at the exact moment of (2:00:40), Antonioni places Vittoria in the foreground of the scene with her face and body shrouded by shadow. Her black dress also serves as an indicator of an eclipsing darkness, as she decides the fate of their relationship. Even more, Antonioni places the well-lit Riccardo in the background of the frame, where he dons a white shirt. We should note that Riccardo sits in the background while Vittoria stands in the foreground to further demonstrate the consuming effect of her decision.

In the film's final scene, just as Vittoria draped in shadow eclipses the frame with Riccardo and the well-lit office of Piero on two separate occasions, the film ends with shots of barren and occupied landscapes, objects, and subjects enmeshed with shadow. At (2:04:05) the sequence of shots switches from well-lit close-ups of human subjects and landscapes to an obsessive framing of those immanent within the darkness. Here, we view a darkened landscape where the ominous clouds slowly descend over the sun. Finally, the camera zooms in on a single streetlight overshadowed by the darkness of the night. As the shot moves into a close-up, the bulb illuminates to the point that it overpowers the darkness. This cinematic gesture perhaps marks the film's climactic eclipse.

## THE METAPHYSICS OF *THE PASSENGER*

In the final scene of Michelangelo Antonioni's film, *The Passenger*, the filmmaker demonstrates his most spectacular use of camera consciousness and time. The scene consists of a near seven-minute long take, wherein the shot's filmic time and the natural time of the viewer coincide. The scene, like that of *L' eclisse*, begins in the human camera consciousness and then transitions to the inhuman for the remainder of the scene. However, unlike the cuts and juxtapositions of *L' eclisse*, Antonioni keeps the final consciousness of *The Passenger* in one continuous shot—one that holds still as it slowly creeps forward and then decomposes and reframes the moving images until its completion.

In this film, Antonioni perhaps uses the motif of the window to emblemize the struggle for identity of the protagonist, David Locke, in which he often teeters between being and becoming. Thus, at the beginning of the film, Locke's gaze outside of his hotel window mirrors his final gaze of the last scene. The gaze perhaps indicates that despite Locke's appropriation of a dead man's life—and despite his brief elation with an unburdened past—he still possesses the same overwhelmed outlook on life as before.

Similar to the inhuman camera consciousness presented in the film's opening scenes, in which a camera pans from the sunken land rover toward the barren landscape of the desert, the film concludes with a tired body who awaits the fruition of his despair. To better place the final scene, we should further note Locke's obsession with perspective. Indeed, he demonstrates this need to understand and perhaps connect with the exterior world by frequently asking his companion to describe what she sees outside the window of his hotel room. Even when registering the outside world through someone else's gaze, Locke retains his role of a voyeur-spectator: one who engages nature at a distance, a non-participant.

Antonioni sets the final shot soon after Locke, in the human camera consciousness, approaches the curvilinear window lined with vertical bars, and opens his shades to the outside world. The protagonist then retires to his bed where he lights and smokes a cigarette for only a moment. The camera now frames Locke within the bottom left of the screen. It moves forward slowly, almost imperceptibly so. Our only true indicator of the movement is the body of Locke, which, while lying still in the bed, slowly disappears from our frame. Now, the camera fully frames the window within its gaze. Human bodies and cars enter, wander within, and exit the camera's transfixed posture.

As the camera slowly moves toward the wrought iron bars of the window, we see figures of the Locke-Robinson<sup>37</sup> past, enter and leave the frame—markers of *Aeon's* presence and perspective. Yes, we notice Locke's female companion wanders in and out of the frame. She peers into the window or engages other human figures. Most interestingly, the two gentlemen of the weapons trade pull into the frame. After they leave the car, one stays within the camera's focus and the other leaves the screen—he presumably enters the hotel.

Before the camera phases through the gate, it pans just slightly to the right so that it frames the glass window shutter. If we peer closely, we notice the arms-dealer's reflection within the image. He lurks silently in the room with David Locke. We hear the door open and close and when we see the arms-dealer reunite with his partner and drive off the screen, the camera pushes in through the gates. The camera then, once a fixture of the inside, now wanders in the natural world. In fact, Antonioni perhaps suggests that at the exact moment where the camera phases through the bars, the interior and exterior worlds merge—the intersection of *Chronos* and *Aeon*.

The camera proceeds to sweep right into a semi-circle. In its slow pan, the shot captures the entrance of Locke's wife, now a ghost from his past, as she and the police hurry inside the hotel to

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<sup>37</sup> Robertson, the man whose identity David Locke stole.

find Robertson. The camera moves in toward the hotel as it captures Locke/Robertson's female companion try to enter from the adjacent room to warn him. However, the camera passes her until it frames the room it just departed from. In its gaze, we view the body of Locke/Robertson—his head tilted off-screen—his body lies limply on his bed. When the wife and police enter, they approach a dead body, mirroring Locke's encounter with Robertson toward the start of the film.

While Antonioni presents an unclear causality of death, we understand that physical death—whether self-induced or inflicted by the arms dealer—fails to represent the aim of Antonioni's art. Instead, the protagonist's function likely emblemizes Antonioni's temporal concept, *living death*<sup>38</sup>. However, the intersection of the physical death of the exterior body and the *living death* of the characters interior, best demonstrates the simultaneous use of *Aeon* and *Chronos* within the frame.

Even more, the simultaneity of perspectives, both expressions of temporal and camera consciousness, illustrate Epstein's poetic comparison of a camera shot to a cubist painting. In this final scene, Antonioni divides his art, so to speak, so that the viewer enters the temporal reality of the long take. Inside the shot, we explore the abstraction of Antonioni's art. We survey the interior, and inspect the exterior, until we view the erasure of identity from multiple, conflicting perspectives.

## CONCLUSION

The oeuvre of Michelangelo Antonioni unabashedly falls under the classification of Abstract Expressionism within the aesthetics of his cinema. Geometric framing techniques and compositions, the use of shadow and light, and the specificity of color all characterize the modernist's consistent tradition. However, the components of his metaphysical cinema—time, emptiness, and camera consciousness—point to a simultaneity of perspectives found radically in the tradition of Cubism.

In each of the above films, Antonioni marries the perspectives of *Aeon* and *Chronos*, with the human and inhuman camera consciousness. This merger, in turn, creates an alterity of consciousness

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<sup>38</sup> Lentricchia, Frank. P. 160.

within the film—a polyphony of voices. For example, Antonioni’s dialectic of darkness and light, as displayed in *L’ eclisse*, represents techniques of Abstract Expressionism. On initial inspection, one could assume the entire film solely follows this Modernist tradition. However, as we inspect closer, the jarring perspectives of *Aeon* and *Chronos* within the gaze of the inhuman camera create an altogether Cubist sensibility.

In each of the film’s final scenes, Antonioni presents an erasure to some end. This mysteriousness fails to comply with a Materialist universe but instead plunges the viewer into an abstraction of metaphysical movement. By not bracketing off his films with a sense of closure<sup>39</sup>, Antonioni leaves the essence of the work decomposed and open. This contrasts with the cinema of Georges Melies who reassembles his truncated figures and images by each film’s end. Thus, the opacity of Antonioni’s final scenes best emulates the Cubist technique of leaving an image in its fragmented state, wherein polyphony elides with flux.

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<sup>39</sup> Powell. P. 141.

The Posterity of Edom

A Novella

By

Michelle Canales Butcher

I.

Apodaca  
(Prelude)

II.

Fugue

III.

Hypnotherapist's Office  
Part 1

IV.

Jalopy

V.

Los Angeles

VI.

Tortilleria

VII.

Hypnotherapist's Office  
Part 2

VIII

Closing Scene

*Return to*

(the Antelope Valley Desert)

*Do you feel closer to the methods of painters or writers?*

I feel close to the methods of the *nouveau roman*, even though they are less useful to me than certain others. I'm even more interested in painting and in a scientific methodology, although I don't believe they influence me directly. In my film, the methods of the painter are not used; we are very far from the exercise of painting—or at least, so it seems to me. And of course certain pictorial needs, which in painting do not have any narrative content, find this content in cinema. That is where the novel and painting come together.

—Michelangelo Antonioni *in an interview with Jean-Luc Goddard*



## Author's Note:

In the spirit<sup>1</sup> of William Gas' concept of *Metafiction*, I, the author of these pages, insert myself here. I present to you, my sagacious reader, an unfinished novella.

You should know that I have a storied affinity for the use of a second voice through footnotes in essays of non-fiction<sup>2</sup>. They function as a contemporary technique to, say, distinguish Dante the Pilgrim from Dante the Poet.<sup>3</sup> In a past essay on the art of deadpan, I parallel my "Deliver X. Pivot to Y," formula to the use of footnotes as a way to split myself—my persona—into two, oft contradictory perspectives of my past and present selves. The past self, or the subconscious, often disrupts the authorial voice of the main text.<sup>4</sup> In this way, I compared the art of deadpan, and the use of footnotes, to the Captain and Stoker roles of the tandem bicycle:

*Consider the harmony of a tandem bicycle. The Captain steers, breaks, balances, and shifts gears while riding in the front seat; the Stoker emblemizes a motor by generating power from the backseat. When the Captain leans right, the Stoker must also lean right to keep equilibrium. What about this "second voice," you ask? She's the bitch in the back leaning left.*

And so, I give preface to my diluted understanding of the Bakhtinian sense of polyphony in literature. I do not write in the tradition of the Modernists, though I am a sincere admirer. My literary psychosis calls too much attention to itself. It feigns subtly like a rambling desert prophet<sup>5</sup>. These techniques serve the artifice of the fiction—the humanly constructed world of the protagonist finds its roots in the world beyond that of the story. They remind us we are all here together, but only in these pages. In fact, the techniques of these pages are inspired by the Modernist artists who transformed their modes of art in ways that transcend pure aestheticism. Artists who inject a sense of polyphony into their texts: Simultaneous, conflicting expressions of temporality and

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<sup>1</sup> Or séance.

<sup>2</sup> You've used them in two essays.

<sup>3</sup> A delusional comparison at best.

<sup>4</sup> Surely, one knows where you are leading. What you are, in colloquial terms, *getting-at*.

<sup>5</sup> Or, at times, like a hiker waving a fog-horn in front of a bear.

consciousness. I speak, of course, of the way Braque and Picasso mixed high and low brow forms of culture to create a higher truth in their art.

Mostly, I refer to the films of Michelangelo Antonioni who masterfully presents an elision of time and camera consciousness. While Antonioni gives no predominance to the perspectives of time and consciousness in his films, I prefer that of the inhuman camera. I prefer a wandering, objective gaze with a mind of its own. One that captures the beauty of barren or desolate spaces—either a nod to the Cezannian, “Dawn of Humanity,” or an erasure from a utopic ideal. Ultimately, I find profundity in those uninflected shots of empty spaces that offer visual caesura to an ontological narrative of becoming.

Before I subject myself to my own erasure from this story, I will invite you to witness my engagement with the upcoming litany of characters. Characters that I want to hold near to comfort, or punch squarely in the jaw. While all of their idiosyncrasies remain wholly fictional, I imagined these characters as a way to bring healing to my own family whose essence lingers within them. To that end, I include a couple family names.

Indeed, I hail from East Angelinos who endured struggles of prejudice and identity—acts of brutality and of violence—before and during the Chicano Power Movement of the late 1960’s. A family who has experienced violence symptomatic of their own Chicano/a culture—one doused in the accelerant of hegemonic masculinity propagated by misguided teachings of the church and of gang warfare. And while I, one of the staple coconuts<sup>6</sup> of my family, do not participate in their struggle, I hope to capture it in these pages if only for their sake. As a quiet observer, and often an outsider to the larger Chicano/a community, my family embraces me all the same.

This, all of this, is for them.

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<sup>6</sup> An educated, Volvo-driving, Frasier-watching, J-Crew wearing kind of specimen.

### Cast List (In order of appearance):

URBANA: Antonia's mother who lives in the backhouse of the three-bedroom home on Fischer Street. Urbana serves as the matriarch of the family—she dictates how money is spent, how medical care is sought out etc. A deeply superstitious woman, who remains wary of American doctors and medicine in general. Urbana smokes cigarettes constantly. The act serves as an extension of her character. Even more, the smoke adds a layer, a texture, to each room or corridor of A-65293's childhood house. However, we must ask, does the smoke function as mere visual texture or does it emblemize a character itself?

ANTONIA: Tony and Chino's mother. A savvy woman of her mid-30's. She owns an up-and-coming tortilla factory in East Los Angeles with her sketchy-at-best business partner, Hector. Our narrator presents her as a well-educated woman, though never addresses her engagement with formal, university-level education. In contrast to Urbana, Antonia functions as a voice of science and empiricism—and that of capitalism. She remains largely skeptical of her mother's quirks and religiosities: a less nuanced, less intelligible—an off-brand—mystical form of Marxism.

While Antonia, an intellectual, appears strong and independent, she possesses a fatal flaw: Her flirtations with the machismo, violent, Chicano male. A repeated pattern. Why? Perhaps leave that work to the psychoanalyst. Instead, try your hand in ethnography. Glean why don't you. Like the wheat-gathering Ruth in the eponymous Book of Ruth. Survey the culture and describe objectively. What do you see when you walk into a Spanish-speaking church in East Los Angeles? What sort of looming artifacts cleave to the walls with adhesive and screws? What icons of violence, do we say, *yes*, these images are suitable for children?

A-65293: Our protagonist and narrator experiencing a psychological fugue. His affinity for Hawaiian shirts leaves us breathless.

THERAPIST: The clinician leading A-65293 into a hypnotic state as a way to help determine his identity. An empathetic figure of the Anglo community who seeks to humanize his patients. Although, one might ask—why Lipton's tea? Why the specificity of snacks within the office?

ANALYST: The visiting psychoanalyst who observes the hypnotic procedure. Why? He likes to watch. The kind of guy who donned the ineffable bleached tips of the mid-to-late 90's. He just has that kind of face. A face that only his mother would squint at in a less obvious way than his peers. A face with the flatness of an L. Ron Hubbard deity. Is that a bit harsh? Certainly, A-65293 shares a similar distrust of the man, though he describes his sentiments in more colorful terms. While I mostly jest—hyperbolize—you should know, this *capital-B-Banana* (the analyst) is a touch racist.

TONY: Antonio Apodaca, the younger brother of Chino. A neurotic body. Tony, a sensible boy of 10 to 12 years, idolizes his mother, Antonia. He loves to cook and often helps her in the kitchen. To that end, the boy often mimics her actions and behaviors to the extent of one with obsessive compulsive disorder. You don't believe me? What other ten-year-old do you know who irons his pajamas? Indeed, Tony lives a crease-free life. One of collared, button downs; of striped t-shirts; and of *Baggies*—bell bottom pants with an inch-long cuff at the bottom. Also, a crust-free life.<sup>7</sup> But to what extent will his neurosis suffer in the wake of tragedy?

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<sup>7</sup> But, one must not make too much of a fuss over the business of sandwiches.

CHINO: Tony's brother and Antonia's oldest son. We will never know his given name. Only, the name assigned to him by his neighborhood gang. I place the boy between the ages of 12 to 14 years. Unlike Tony, Chino feels the pressure of attaining the neighborhood's masculine ideal. By that measure, he trains in the boxing ring with his good friend, Turtle. At times, Chino tries to impress Hector with his mimesis of toughness, the general posture of a *Rico Suave* defined cholo culture. While a stretch from the Zoot Suits of the 1940's, he dons the clothing of white t-shirts, Khaki's, and the black, pointy shoes called, *Imperials*. The kind of shoes one could use to shave in its reflection. If one had any facial hair other than the faint black whisper lining the upper lip. "But, hey, it's the 70's," as A-65293 would say. "Everyone looks like a 'lesbian', except lesbians."

TURTLE: An amateur boxer and neighborhood friend of Chinos. He's an ace in the ring but moves slowly in every other context. He finds Antonia's very presence beguiling. But, he would never admit that. No, he will call her a *straight-up hottie* to his peers. A *Chica Fantastica* while ogling a pair of imaginary breasts, to high acclaim, behind Chino's back. Then, within the confines of his bedroom, he will smell one of the floral dishrags he stole from the Apodaca kitchen. For a weird little guy—and a one-note character at best—he's surprisingly likeable.

HECTOR PEREZ: The business partner and lover of Antonia. A straight-up lothario of the former gangster persuasion. Hector's smooth talking (*like, Sup chica? Are you ready for a real man?*) and exposed chest-hair likely aids his efforts to repopulate the planet. Though, some might say, his actions suggest an overcompensation for his short stature. Insecure much? Indeed, we know his type. Just peer at the seedy (semen-stained) resume of Atilla the Hun. And, *voilà (le fromage)*—mimesis. Oh, and for his gun? It serves as another gesture of the literary foreboding sort. Or, perhaps, another phallus of the Freudian sort. You get the idea.

THE TIAS (1,2,3,4): Antonia's sisters. There's nothing more dehumanizing than numbers for a name. And for good reason. One views them with the awe and clinical distance of a hermaphroditic amoeba in spinal fluid:

Objectives: *To determine why Subject 1 appears indivisible from Subject 2, and to what extent the shape of the gelatinous sarcode appears amorphous? What, then, are the limitations of this study?*

Procedure: *In this randomized, clinical trial, these AyeDiosMio's were bunched together in the bouquet-form of a head of cauliflower before truncating their structure with a dull machete (again, clinically speaking).*

Intervention: *The experimental intervention exceeded 4 inflations with a peak pressure of 25 cm H<sub>2</sub>O for 15 seconds using a mask and some masking tape.*

Results: *The individual Tia-floret (so to speak) retains the same structure of the larger whole.<sup>8</sup>*

For a less clinical description, see A-65293's musing in footnote #22.

DR. CHAVEZ: The neighborhood doctor who makes house visits for friends and family. A notorious *bugger* to an almost Steinbeckian proportion. A Chicano *Lenny*? Not quite. Fortunately, Urbana's smoke-saturated hair feels coarse and yellowing to the touch.

DORA TORANGA: A potential love interest for Tony.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> And so, Mandelbrot developed fractal geometry.

<sup>9</sup> Deadpan.

I.

EXT. BASQUE COUNTRY—DUSK

In the southernmost province of Basque country—somewhere in Northern Spain—a bilberry tree sits untouched, and now unreconciled with its acidic soil. The low-hanging shrubs, I am told, produce circular, non-climacteric fruits native to Europe. They belong to the same genus—relatives even—to the American blueberry, but their structure remains distinct from one another. Just look at how the fruit emerges from their respective stalks. How can you compare a circle to a star?

Bilberries appear black in color, I am told, with just the slightest tinge of purple. They grow individually, or in pairs, but never in clusters like their distant, American relatives.

If we pull up and ascend into the ether, the camera would glean down at the unraveling pasture land beneath us. We would see the winding spine of the meadow—its sweat-prone ridges and the smooth girth of its curves. The camera would glimpse at the wooden, undulating bridges as the earth froths and quakes. As we ascend higher, brown, sloping monochromatic tones outline green, florescent swirls. Or is it the other way around? From this angle, everything moves. Or is it in stasis?

Imagine Cezanne's pictorial plane, I am told. But, with less sentimentality. But, all I know from Cezanne is the representational shape of an orange. Or in this case, in the close-up shot, the smooth sphere of a bilberry. What does the term "proto-modernist" mean to someone like me? Some say it matters if Cezanne ushered in our historical conception of "Cubism," and not Picasso. Why do we attach an action with a name anyway? To answer this, I am told, we need perspective. Away from here.

But first, we need a name. And mine just so happens to mean, I am told, *Place of* (‘-aka’) *the Bilberry Tree* (‘Apo’).

The camera jump cuts to:

EXT. THE AERIAL PERSPECTIVE—DAY

If we move across the Atlantic Ocean, pan right, we would see fragmented bits of acute blue and obtuse green corralled by white shadows of froth. In the close-up shot, we would note the vaporous simmer—each bubble, a self-similar eruption, a collection of infinitely collapsing foam. As we *punch-in*, the camera submerges into the dark waters slowly in a vertical stroke—it plunges its face into the deep. Time passes. Though, we wonder, as a dimension of film or a reality of the natural world?

The camera emerges displacing bulbous froth into an unknown radius. It wobbles, buoyant in its resolve for breath. In the limitations of the frame, we view a tilting horizontal line as the water beats against the lens.

We cut back to the aerial perspective. We hover over the unformed earth. As the camera continues panning Westward, in the wide-shot, the landscape changes dramatically. Deeply imbued ochers inhabit the soils of expansive farmlands, each concentration of the cornfield dizzies the senses. On to the rust (Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>), sienna, and umber pigments—the asymmetrical terrain—look how these crevasses of earth juxtapose with the cresting Rockies. And then, the unyielding barrenness of the Antelope Valley Desert. As we sweep across this frontier, we sense the erasure of the living, of the creeping, of the named. If this is our Edom<sup>10</sup>, as I am told, then we need to move away from here.

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<sup>10</sup> William Blake said where man is not, nature is barren. I read that somewhere. For some reason, his oeuvre of binary opposites speaks to me. So what contrasts with Edom? Eden, that garden-utopia of social justice guarded by the fat little cherub—that gordito—festooned with Rosacea and the flaming sword. What is the significance of Edom then? Does it function as an empty set in our physical or metaphysical cinema?

Finally, after a sequence of *jump-cuts*, we arrive at a residential neighborhood in East Los Angeles. Below us, a stationary line of homes, almost cross-hatched, form a grid system. Just look at how North Mariana Avenue, on the left, and North Eastern Avenue, on the right, book end our destination.

We close in on Fisher Street where a row of single-story terracotta homes sit, immovable, like fixed tumbleweeds. On the camera's descent, we notice continuous waves of shingles the color of burnt sienna. Their oblong, chipped, and impermanent form huddle together to create movement. They slope and crest along the surface of the roof.

As we approach a single house, we fall quickly toward the street-view and then pause—as if by the still frame. We see black numbers painted on the face of a grey curb, against the backdrop of a single-family home: 4247-4249. From this angle, we see the home clearly—its vibrant hue enmeshed with the azure panels of sky that frames its structure. Indeed, the background does not fade into the distant horizon. No, these contours of blue do not fade in the Classical sense. Instead, they overlap.

Then, forward, we move beyond the rusting wrought iron fence, over an unkept *quod*<sup>11</sup> of dehydrated grass, toward the plane of an open wide panel window. Toward a familiar voice shouting in her unsheathed Spanish tongue. The camera enters.

## II.

INT. 4247 FISCHER STREET-LIVING ROOM-DAY

“Oye—que te pasa, mijo!? Soy su Abuela!”

The camera moves into a middle-range shot of a woman.

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<sup>11</sup> Excuse me. I clearly mean, *quod*.

Meet my grandmother, Urbana Delores Apodaca III. Look at how she waves her hands as if to mime, or channel, or imitate something. “You’re *my* descendent. Vida da de mi vida y sangre de mi sangre!”

In this case, perhaps someone possessed by a demon.

The camera cuts to my brother. He kneels at the circular coffee table with his hands folded against the glass top. His eyes widen with every change of inflection and intonation in my abuela’s voice. If we peer closely, *yes—punch in* slowly—at his glossy, fear-struck orbs we see my grandmother’s arms reflected as they continue to move with wild, flickering abandon. For someone like her, there are not enough words to express her flammable, Mezcal-soaked feelings. So, she gestures, and smokes, and recites idiomatic expressions that she’s heard straight from the horse’s pulpit since she was a niña. “Vida da de mi vida y sangre de mi sangre!”

We pull out into the wide shot.

My grandmother bends down to press her hands against the glass table. As she leans over to whisper an improvised bad-cop/bad-cop bit, my mother enters the room carrying a small, ceramic bowl. Her graceful frame sways as she walks, each step gently ruffles the pleats of her floor-length skirt.

“What’s going on here, mamá?”

“Your son, my grandson, has called me by my given name—Urbana.”

“Okay. And—”

“And, that’s not my name. Not to him.”

“That’s it? Would you prefer if he called you Señora Apodaca?”

“Do not test me, mijá. He doesn’t respect his elders.”

My grandmother’s words emerge like unformed blocks of salt. She grinds her teeth again, and even I can feel their shape form against my face. In a close-up shot, my grandmother takes



another drag from her cigarette and, this time, releases the smoke slowly. It passes her curled tongue and fills the room.

The camera *creeps-out* to take in the quartet—it frames them as an ensemble cast now, with spatio-temporal relevance: a space, a piece of furniture, a brown body (Repeat). Fixtures of elliptical memory; of narrative; of time. We expand with the billowing smoke. In the wide-shot, the face of each subject slowly reveals itself through the breaking cirrus—fragments of a psychic reality that we enter.

“Mom. He’s eleven. He’s a boy. Let it go.”

“Mijo<sup>12</sup>, don’t call her Urbana anymore. Call her *Grandma*.”

“No. *Abuela!*” Urbana protests.

“Mom, why don’t you finish telling them the story you started at dinner last night? The one about Pancho Villa, remember?”

“But, Antonia—”

“No, *buts*, mamá.” Antonia, my mother, bends over to place the bowl on the coffee table. She walks toward the entrance of the living room and disappears toward the realm of the kitchen.

“And make sure you tell it in English,” we hear her yell from the other room. “No speaking Spanish in this house. This isn’t Mexico.”

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<sup>12</sup> By this account, you might think my brother’s name is Mijo. You would be wrong. That’s not his name, my dear white voyeur (*gringo*). Nor mine, for that matter. In Chicano families, everyone is Mijo/a. Your brother is mijo, your cousin Ignacio is mijo, and depending on your parents’ relationship with the neighborhood postal worker’s half-retarded kid, Juanito (That twitchy cholito with the one blue eye), he’s mijo too. *Mijo* (*Mi + Hijo*) serves as a term of endearment—it places emphasis on a beautifully tethered family unit, an extended Chicano community. How many basic-white kids do you know whose mom, aunt, and local librarian will refer to them as, *my son*? Okay, let me rephrase, how often does this occur outside of the Maury Povich Show?

What does the term, *Chicano*, mean? We will get there, *J. Crew*—you just wait.

My abuela rises to her feet and follows my mother out of the room. I can hear her muffled voice between the whistling tea kettle and my brother's sniffing. After a moment, he, too, flees the room from embarrassment. The poor kid.

In the same long shot, the camera moves slowly toward the coffee table and then jump cuts so that we view the contents of the bowl: Freshly picked blueberries from the cemented garden flanking the backside of this small, blue ranch-style house.

The camera cuts back to our fugue<sup>13</sup> subject. Or, is he the countersubject? The camera moves quickly around the back of the head (of my projected self): From the left ear, it swings, past the right temple, into an over-the-shoulder shot. One fluid movement.

I stare down at the round, glass table. In its reflection, I see myself. Or do I? My face distorts just slightly where my brother's tears gather in erect puddles. Just above my right eye, a dark smudge appears. It spreads across the surface. Fragments my face into pieces—rough, repetitive slices of a temporal image, bent and folded back. Its smoky texture remains somewhat translucent. An elision of solids and spaces. Though not a complete dissolution of form. Unknowingly, my grandmother left at just the right time. Any longer, and her cigarette might have left a more permanent tinge.

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<sup>13</sup> In order to understand a fugue subject, I am told, one must understand the concept of a *fugue*. In Western musical terms, a fugue serves as a polyphonic composition. In its exposition, a theme or subject is introduced as statements in each of the voices or parts. In a sort-of-call-and-response style, not to church-this-up, the answer corresponds to the statement accompanied by a counterpoint (the combination of various melodic lines) in another voice. If the voice persists throughout the piece, we would deem the contrapuntal point a *countersubject*.

Thus, the fugue subject functions as the countersubject's binary opposite. Have you heard of the adventures of Yin and Yang? You know, the bipolar surgeon from the throes of China's antiquity? Of course not. I made that up. Sometimes I'm a funny guy. But you already know this, my dear, colonizers. That's why you nod along. You say, make us laugh funny guy—you, enveloped in your cloud of smoke, wearing a wife beater, laughing at the television. Where's your better half, funny guy? Out of the stoner-duo, Cheech and Chong, tell us which one functions as the fugue subject and which as his countersubject. You fool. If I knew that, I wouldn't be stuck here right now. In this lower, dusty realm of consciousness. Besides, this is not a buddy comedy. This is a fable of redemption. But, for whom?

Good counterpoint, I am told, requires two characteristics: A significant relationship between the lines (a vertical consideration that works with harmony), and a certain autonomy or individuality within the lines themselves (a horizontal consideration that tends to melody). But what of this other meaning of *fugue*—what of its psychological implication, a Fugue State? We will get there.

“For Crissake, mamá! Turn off the stove burner! It’s not meant to light your cigarette. One of these days you’re going to burn this whole place down.”

This will be the last time I hear them quarrel.

Before we revisit this, let’s move on to another souvenir of memory. Let’s pan out slowly. We do not abandon this moment in our *creep-out*, though it may appear that way. We move forward—through this corridor and that—toward the hallway that contracts and expands. We pass a crucifix, and a picture of the Caucasian Divine holding a sheep. A cloud of smoke affixes to the wall. We call this texture; the image in front of us assumes this new layer. We assume it as well.

The camera follows the back of a head; a neck joins us. Then, a boy’s hunched shoulders donning a crisp, Hawaiian shirt marches us forward. The extra fabric juts out awkwardly away from the biceps—stiff. We approach a full-length mirror. An image focuses, unblurs, with each step forward. Who is this camera-subject, we say, as the hallway funnels us somewhere? Give it a minute, I am told, this memory is not fixed. Dude—and this camera—sometimes it’s a thing of itself, an entity: part collective spirit, part singular consciousness.

From our perspective, the subject we follow appears smooth and sculptural. But, the mirror reveals—in fragments—something airy in texture, non-linear, almost fading. A figure enveloped in static zig-zags before our fluid tracking shot. Its form, not quite ethereal, not quite hologram.

The camera moves forward through the darkened hallway. We sense our protagonist pick up speed. Moving this way and that. We sense a shift. Call it a *relief* in something. But in what—texture? Movement? Voice? Perspective? My likeness, I assume, wanders in the darkness. We, camera-subject-function, bump into something—a table perhaps. Something shuffles, something tips.

### III.

INT. CALIFORNIA STATE PRISON (ANTELOPE VALLEY)-HYPNOTHERAPIST'S OFFICE-PRESENT DAY

The camera pans 45 degrees in a high angle shot—it surveys the room and its inhabitants below. A man in a white lab coat and specs sits in a chair taking notes, one leg crossed over the other.

The camera takes in the subject, its lens zooms in, in its aerial pivot—leftward. Pauses. It pans up toward the crossed upper thighs, then halts, switches directions. Moves back to inspect the nondescript sneakers with thick suction-like soles. Laces, flat, white with a tiny black pattern running along the fringes in converging lines. A pattern of interlaced diamonds, or really an overlay of diagonal lines. Call it post-argyle. Call this guy the post-Duke of Windsor. Indeed, austere shoes. The kind of shoes only worn in uniformity. Worn during the 18-hole consummation ceremony of a rich white-people suicide cult. Welcome to the 3rd annual Grass Stain Open. Sponsored by Nike.

The camera retreats from its deep curiosity. Moves back into an aerial wide-shot. On the right side of the near still, the recently vetted nerd sits unscrupulously taking notes. Writing away in undistinguishable shorthand. On the left side of the frame lies an out-of-focus man on a worn-in couch. Bits of its interior poke out of its edges like crumbs of yellow cake. You know, straight-up busting out of the seams of *that*, token, squished chocolate-frosted donut. A dark shadow envelops this side of the room creating an optical illusion of a long diagonal line running between the conscious and unconscious subjects.

The room is silent, mostly. A tiny piece of lined paper flips over the spine of a reporter's notebook, its sharp crease rises. Fills the space only briefly. A simple melodic line with a beginning, middle, and end. The pen presses against the thick wad—it intones against the material with the softest footwork. Someone might prefer the metaphor of a voice screaming into a pillow—*intones*.

Or perhaps just the image. But, no, only a dance. Only a dance will convey this. What else could create such swift, rhythmic movement?

From the high angle, the camera feed cuts so that the scribbling clinician sits at the feet of the man lying in the shadow. The camera frames the top of the head: wispy strands of a fading chestnut combed over one side. The gaze catches the blunt beige frames of the specs and the right-footed white sneaker attached to the crossed legs. He faces the still man whose countenance appears masked by the absence of artificial light. The lamp instead highlights the small table framed in the bottom left corner of the shot. The clinician reaches out toward the table. He grabs his mug of tea—the Lipton’s tag repels limply down its ceramic side. Tucks his head downward as it encounters his lips. An audible sip. Sets it back down on the table next to the elongated paper box. The white box filled to the brim with dark, round things. Not bagels. Obviously. This isn’t the Upper East Side of Manhattan. No, an undisturbed 8-count of Entenmanns Classic donuts.

“Okay,” the man speaks finally. “We are going to try something else now.” The still body breathes slowly on his back with his palms facing upward. The air enters the belly and fills the space, then slowly releases from the cavity.

“As you wander through your consciousness, through your memories, try taking note of faces and movements. Sense your self—your conceptions of the self—and lead us toward the mirror of that truth.” He pauses. “Am I sounding like more of a mystic than a therapist? Maybe.”

The door to the room opens and another man in a white lab coat enters—his face as flat and beige as the paneled walls. He dons no specs—perhaps to better camouflage himself to his surroundings. He pulls a chair out of a stack in the corner of the room and drags it against the cool, concrete floor. Resonance or reverberation—something moves within the molecules of sound. Decomposes its own architecture of the room.

“Great. We have a visiting analyst who will be sitting in with us for the rest of the session. He is just here to observe for educational purposes.”

“Well put. Definitely not for personal edification,” says the anthropomorphic slab of wallpaper. The visitor-analyst. The human flesh-colored Q-tip. Paradoxical indeed. A bald head, a moving mouth. A limp-dick demure forever reduced to its juxtaposed parts.

“Let’s continue while you are still in this suggestive state,” says the spectacle-clad therapist, looking down at his notes. “As we already know, you are currently trapped in this psychological fugue—a state where a person under crisis leaps into another identity, takes flight rather. Typically, this occurs after a rather traumatic experience: physical or emotional. We are here to help you figure out who you are. Give you a past and a present, if you will.”

“Look out, folks, we’ve got ourselves a Fugue-ative,” says the visiting analyst. He slaps his knee with his reporter’s notepad. Clicks his pen several times.

The therapist flashes a look of disapproval his way. The analyst halts his laughter into warm, muffled air. Clears his throat. Straightens back.

Something moves. Whispers. The therapist switches his gaze back to the patient.

“If we consider the human body as a marker of time, Deleuze says there is no present in the tired, waiting subject of the camera’s gaze. There’s only a before and an after,” the patient says softly.

“What’s that now, chico? I didn’t realize he was awake.” The analyst shifts his body weight forward over his crossed left knee. Turns his left ear toward the patient. The therapist looks up curiously. Jots down a few notes.

“Giles Deleuze. On the Time-Image; on the Movement-Image. Cinema. I mean, look at Michelangelo Antonioni’s Cinema of Time. Both physical and ontological. Time seen through the interior and the exterior. The body. The tired, waiting body. Time as perspective. Simultaneous

perspective, she told me. Sometimes perspectives appear jarring—they conflict. A Cubist sensibility, then, she says.” He sighs.

The camera switches angles so that it captures the reaction from the clinicians from its high, resting peak. The therapist smiles a bit. Continues writing something with quick strokes of the wrist.

The spectator in the room gapes akimbo. His jaw tightly open and then slack to the drooping limit of Bell’s Palsy. “How do you know that,” says the analyst. His mouth devoid of saliva. “Who is the *she* you refer to?”.

The therapist interjects. “So, you are awake, sir. Very well. How about we review our relaxation techniques so that you may drift back into your consciousness? Let’s explore who you are. This time, I will ask you to guide us through your memories in the third person. The first person was fine. A sufficient exposition. It’s progress, that is, establishing important familial figures. This is just another technique. Another perspective, if you will. Once you reach this state memories will be of easier access, however disjointed or elliptical the narrative. Do not fixate on chronology. Only actions, faces, names. Sensory memories. Familiar things. Put simply, and in your filmic terms, really survey the space and feel time pass—let it wash over you in the long take.”

The flat-faced analyst drinks from the distracted therapist’s mug of Lipton tea. A linguistic lesson in glottal stops. Wipes his mouth delicately against the ocher-flavored golf shirt. The shade of his mouth molds to the sleeve. Of course, the therapist hears the sequence of actions despite the visitor’s best efforts. Ignores it.

“Are you ready to begin?”

The camera reverses its angle so that the patient’s dark face nods in its view from above.

“Lovely, sir. Here we go. I want you to sink back into the couch. As if your body weight lowers itself through its very fabric. Through every layer of foam. Sink into yourself. Feel the heaviness of your body as you lower every muscle toward the earth. The gravitational constant pulls

you now. Through the normal force pushing upward. Resist it. Gravity lulls you now. Feel your eyelids flutter, with a soft heaviness. Notice how your body continues to change. Your throat, dryer now. Your breathing, deeper still: up and through the belly. Good.”

The patient falls into an almost silent heaviness—a dimension beyond the waking, weighted and yet ethereal. His decorated forearms twitch discordantly. They fall flat.

“I want you to visualize a scene, a sequence of scenes, from your childhood. Somewhere before your most sensitive childhood event. The most significant one you carry. Really allow yourself to wander inside the space. View it from every angle. Describe for us what is happening. You are in your childhood home. Pick a room in the house. Pick a remedial task. Or, something routine, I should say. Or pick up a curious object. Inspect it. This is the primary action of your movement-image. As Deleuze says, the time-image subserves it. Bows to it. Inhabit the actor, if you will. That’s right. Bring your subject or object into deep focus. Set your frame. Visualize yourself within the limit of the frame. Remember, in memory, your gaze transcends: Human, inhuman, superhuman. Enter.”

#### IV.

INT. 4247 FISCHER STREET-KITCHEN-DAY

When you slice open a blood-orange, after cutting along its equator, and place both halves down to wobble on the white, tile countertop—something happens. Look at how this moment of awe, or shock, or beauty exists in the close-up shot. Tony finds himself in this very situation. The camera *creeps-out* slowly. The perspective switches into a medium-range shot.

Tony places the knife down. The camera assumes a high-angle so that the POV gazes at the downward strokes of short black hair affixed to a brown, adolescent body in the bottom right of the



frame. He peers closely at the crimson flesh, the darkness. For a moment he rubs his bony index finger along the blushing rind.

We reenter the medium-range shot that displays Tony's well-lit profile while the background appears dark in texture, out of focus. "Moro," he says slowly to himself. He takes one of the halves' and cuts the fruit two more times. He bites down into the flesh. "More bitter than the Sanguinello, mijo?" A voice calls to him from the other end of the kitchen. "Que asco, Mamá!"

The camera perspective switches to Tony's POV. A medium-build woman, with long black hair draped softly over her right shoulder, enters the frame.

Antonia smiles at her son's reaction. "No, it's *good*, mijo. It's delicious—I promise. What other citrus do you know retains berry notes?"<sup>14</sup> The camera lingers on her delicately-framed face—a glowing, milky, light-brown countenance—this time her full-lips separate into a wide, teeth-revealing smile.

We pan out into the wide-shot so that our subjects face each other—their side-profiles lean against the countertop so that their upper-torsos (well, not Tony's—only his neck and head emerge—he barely scratches the upper-third of our frame) hover over our horizontal line—their placement fulfills spatial equidistance in this shot. Tony shakes his head.

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<sup>14</sup> What's a foodist you ask? When another person writes or says something about you, a slur, say, in regard to your race or gender—we call them racist, sexist, or the colloquial, *dickhead*. Yet, as I am told, the term foodist reflects something else. Where assignment of labels such as racist or sexist implies that the bigot speaks or acts in a manner that lords their gender or race over another—like wow, gringo, that's some superior shit—*foodist* describes one who promotes food.

In fact, a foodist might provide a socio-political context for the food we eat, or the food of others before us—or those across the world. A foodist, then, is somewhat of a philosopher, or historian, an anthropologist, an analyst or artist—an intellectual.

You should note that I am none of those things. I am an Eastside Angelino—the son of Mexican immigrants. If you pass me in the street, I do not snap, or wave. I *lean*. Against the lawn chair in my driveway, against the white-stucco wall of Lopez's Tienda, against the hood of my burnt-orange *jalopy*. You feel me, gringo? You go ahead and walk by in your ribbed Mister Roger's cardigan. Just know, if you wear the wrong colors, I will bite my thumb. That's right—I'll bite my thumb at you, sir.

“I’m going out to light the coals, Mijo. People will be here soon. Finish marinating the carne<sup>15</sup> like I showed you.”

In a tracking shot, the camera follows Tony as he slides the tray of meat out of the refrigerator and places it on the counter. He rips off the foil and rubs in coarse salt, then ground black pepper. He washes his hands in the sink. During these actions, Tony appears to move at 2X the speed.<sup>16</sup> Next, he squeezes a couple wedges of blood-orange over the dish, while turning each slab over. He returns to the sink to wash his hands. Finally, a few sprigs of cilantro—he places them carefully. Then, returns the dish to the refrigerator.

We reassume the wide-shot.

Antonia enters the room and heads toward the sink. Black smudges dance along her ruffled apron. She washes the thick dust off her hands. “Perfect. You grab the masa from the fridge and I will start on the nopales<sup>17</sup>,” she suggests while drying her hands on a dish rag.

Antonia grabs a sharp knife and begins slicing off the spines on the bright green plant. She flips the cactus pad on its side and, with long strokes, slides the knife along the edges. It scrapes off both flesh and thorn.

Tony works quietly at the other end of the kitchen. He mixes masa flour, salt, and water together in a bowl. His hands work quickly. We see him knead every inch of dry dough. Tony heads back to the sink to wash his hands. He wipes them on the familiar rag. He places the dough into the refrigerator and pulls out the batch from thirty-minutes prior. He divides the now elastic dough into

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<sup>15</sup> Surely, Antonia refers to *Carne Asada* here. The Mexican technique of slicing, grilling, and often charring the select piece of steak distinguishes it from other Latin American dishes. It’s smoky texture melts with garlic, onion, and citrus—the flavors pervade in the mouth, linger.

<sup>16</sup> A speed that exists somewhere between our drunk Tio’s Heisman-trophy modeling in the middle of Thanksgiving Dinner and the time-lapse video of the star-gazing adventure-photographer camped deep within the Oregon mountains.

<sup>17</sup> Give it a minute, dude.

misshapen portions. Then he takes each clump and rolls it between his palms until eight separate balls of dough lie on the sheet in front of him. We watch seven spheres transform into a flat, round thing the size of a dessert plate. The thud of the tortilla press slaps down on the last bit of masa; Tony slides the clamp toward him and releases the press. He picks off the plastic sheets sandwiching the tortilla and places the flat dough on a hot pan.

“Is the stove-top hot enough, mijo.” Antonia shakes the excess water off her hands into the sink. Tony nods. He places another on the cast-iron skillet. She rubs the back of her hands against the dish towel.

“Mija, where are you?” a voice yells from another room. “We’re in here, mama,” Antonia replies flatly. The camera cuts over to the kitchen door as it swings open. Behind a cloud of smoke, Tony’s abuela marches into the room holding the boy’s older brother by the back of the neck. Urbana barks at her daughter. A lit cigarette balances toward the right-side of her mouth. Another set of feet enter the room behind her.

“Antonia, look at your son’s face?”

In our initial gaze, as we *punch-in* for a close-up, we see the blood-soaked collar of a white, crew neck t-shirt. As we pan up further, we notice the swollen, bloodied bridge of her son’s nose.

“Can I take these out yet, Abuela? I can’t breathe.”

We move into an extreme close-up of the nostrils. Two white balls of cotton have been stuffed into the poor kid’s nose presumably to sop up any residual dripping.

The camera moves into the wide-shot.

“Of course, you can’t breathe, mijo, your nose is probably broken.” Urbana’s inhales and releases the smoke from her mouth in one swift, hands-free movement. She coughs. “Maybe you should’ve thought of that before you—”

“Mamá, hush.”

“Mijo, let me see this.” Antonia enters the frame to examine the damage. Her skirt swishes in a limited rotary motion like the rhythmic long-axis strokes of the freestyler and backstroker: every 180 degrees, the torso, and that which hangs from it, rotates from side to side. “What happened? Were you boxing with Turtle again?” A head pokes out from behind Urbana’s back. “Hello Señora Apodaca.”

“Turtle you don’t need to hide. Come over here and tell me what’s going on.”

“Well, Chino and I were—”

“Chino—are all you boys still calling him that? That’s so racist. He’s not Chinese.”

“But, it’s the name he’s assigned. We all get one.” Turtle says casually. “Plus, he has Chinese eyes. Everyone thinks so.”

“Chinese eyes—that’s not a thing, Turtle. We all have different eye-shapes.” Antonia sighs.

“Mijo, you let them call you that?” Her son shrugs. “Who cares, mom?”

Antonia examines her son’s face closely while Turtle struggles to explain the incident.

The camera angle switches so that we assume the POV of Tony’s brother. The back of his head stays in the bottom-left corner of the frame while we peer at Antonia’s concerned face. She listens to Turtle describe the overnight growth of his biceps. He tells her he can point her in the direction of the beach.

The camera cuts to Tony as he lathers his hands with dish soap. He rinses them under the hot water.

The camera assumes the wide-shot so that we face Antonia’s back.

“No, Mamá. We weren’t boxing. I told you I wouldn’t do that.”

“Okay, so what happened?”

“We were playing *Sucker* with the guys. Adam Flannigan, well—”

“Aw, man, you played *Sucker*<sup>18</sup> without me,” Tony yells from across the kitchen.

We cut to Tony as he places his finger in the middle of the recently flipped tortilla—it immediately puffs up, expands, on the pan. As soon as he removes it from the heat, the tortilla deflates into its normal form. The camera switches angles—it assumes the wide-shot.

“Well, *what*, chico?” Urbana clenches down on the back of his brother’s neck.

“Ow! You’re hurting me!”

Antonia stands-up and flashes a look of disapproval toward her mother. Urbana loosens her grip.

“Okay,” well we are going to take you to the hospital to get this checked out.”

“No, Antonia. You know I detest hospitals! You always leave with more diseases than you had going in and then its suddenly your job to pay for them!”

“Mamá, this isn’t Mexico. Okay, fine. Let’s at least take him to Dr. Chavez a few blocks over.”

“Dr. Chavez is how you say, a weirdo, mija! What kind of a man lingers in a hug like that? Perverts and shopping-mall chiropractors. Last time I saw him he squeezed me so hard, the most unnatural sound came out of my body. I experienced a departure of the otherworldly.”

Turtles eyes widen. “Like a ghost’s scream?”

“No, Tortuga, ghosts are perfectly natural—super-duper natural. *This* was something else.”

“Yes, mom—it’s called, you had three helpings of black beans for dinner. The mysteries of the metaphysical universe reveal themselves once again. Mystics everywhere twirl and rejoice.”

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<sup>18</sup> Basically, your typical childhood game. First, you drain out the water of your half-Irish, half-Mexican friend’s swimming pool. Then you get a crew together. One person throws a tennis ball against the wall. If you fail to catch it—if you *muffle* it—everyone gets to slug you until you run and touch the wall. You gotta touch that wall fast, sucka.

“Mija, we can’t leave now anyway. We have people coming over. Tell your son to wash his face with some mud outside. And *be healed*.” Urbana waves her hand in the air in one fluid voila-gesture.

“That’s not how science works, Mom.”

“Oh, no? It worked for my diabetes.”

Urbana makes the sign of the cross and then removes the cigarette from her mouth. She releases a cloud of smoke that descends on her grandson and daughter.

“Hello!” Chino yells through the muffled tissue Antonia holds over his nose and mouth. He’s unable to breathe.

“Mom, I’m not messing around. Go take him to get cleaned up and call Dr. Chavez. Invite him to dinner if you have to. I’m not allowing another one of my sons to—” Antonia stops and looks over at Tony. The camera angle switches to her POV. We view Tony in the wide-shot. He’s finished cooking the tortillas and watches a pan of chopped nopales sizzle inside of their own juices. As the camera moves into an extreme close-up, we see that their bright green hue transforms into a deep olive color.

We cut to Antonia’s concerned expression.

“Please call Dr. Chavez, Mamá. Es muy importante.”

The camera catches Urbana and her adolescent posse as they leave the room and head toward the bathroom. We hear Urbana talking through her cigarette as they disappear down the hall.

The camera cuts to Antonia and Tony.

“Mijo, your shirt is wrinkled.” Antonia walks over to Tony and gently touches the short sleeve of his button-down shirt. “Do you want me to iron it, quickly?”

The door-bell rings.

“Mija, someone is at the door.” Urbana yells from the other room. The camera switches to frame the door in its gaze. It holds for a moment in anticipation.

The door to the kitchen swings open. “Que pasa, baby?” A medium-build Chicano man walks in with a bouquet of flowers. He wears an untucked button-up shirt. We follow him as he walks over to Antonia and kisses her on the mouth. His hand wanders down her lower back, then rubs against her backside.

“Hector<sup>19</sup>, not right now—okay.”

In the far right of our screen, we see Tony. With his head down, he grabs the platter of uncooked carne assada and heads out back to the grill. Hector and Antonia linger in the foreground of the frame.

Later that evening, we enter an unfolding scene. We take a gliding sweep of a dinner table, conversation abounds. Diners clang their forks as amateur tympanists; they play upon the kettle drum of English bone china. They sharpen their knives against their plates. They pass bowls and platters of Mexican dishes: Carne asada and grilled lengua<sup>20</sup>, a tossed nopales salad, arroz con pollo<sup>21</sup>, refried beans and freshly pressed corn tortillas. They sigh with contentment. They gulp down glasses of horchata. Side-conversations have mostly quieted as Urbana delivers a dramatic monologue of her family history.

“When I was a little niña, my father, Juan Rivas Canales, owned a tienda back in Monterrey,”  
Urbana starts.

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<sup>19</sup> Who is the slime, this shedding Proterozoic creature that coils himself around my mother’s body? My mother’s lover and business partner, Hector Ramon Perez. Indeed, she owns a thriving tortilla factory in East Los Angeles. Hector, he counts the money. She does everything else.

<sup>20</sup> Chopped up beef tongue grilled with garlic and onion.

<sup>21</sup> A dish of rice and chicken. Or, depending on your corny-ass old-man: i.e., The punch-line to every joke.

“So where’s my sister and nephew, Mamá?” Tia 1<sup>22</sup> inquires while passing a plate of rice and chicken.

“They’re in the kitchen probably. They’ll join us soon. As I was saying—”

If the camera glides toward the left and exits the dining room, we would enter the kitchen. We execute these actions—choreographed, as if following the penciled schematics of space and sound, and, when sketched with time, the very architecture of movement—we sweep left. The camera frames the wall in a low angle shot; it pauses, as if by hesitation, then lunges forward at 2X the speed. Then 4X. 8X. 16X. We move rapidly toward a closed off frame. We ascend each octave. It evokes a guttural, floor-dropping response deep within the belly of the viewer. Just as, simultaneously, one senses the torque of a twisting force and the thrust of forward motion. The door opens to a grumpy Dr. Chavez examining the facial wound of Chino. How *misleading* for such a fast dolly movement. This destabilized urgency suggests, what exactly? Antonia’s face peers closely over the doctor’s shoulder.

“I just need to reset this. Have your son ice it afterward on and off for the rest of the night. Twenty minutes on, twenty off. You get the idea.” She does.

“What do you mean by reset,” Chino snaps.

“Do you want to breathe or not, son” Dr. Chavez retorts. “Antonia, head in to your dinner. I’ll send him in when we are done.” Will you?

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<sup>22</sup> A denotation of the Chicano family, a staple, is the role of the Tia. Of course, Mexican-American aunts never come as individual entities. No, they appear in groups of 4, 8, 16, 32, ad infinitum—always doubling, never halving. A pattern of repeated self-similar structures.

They function as a Greek Chorus in that their voices and bodies blur together. A phenomenon of elision; of sound and space. However, unlike the Greek Chorus, the Tias do not serve as a helpful device of narration. Instead, they transform into tornadoes, a heat that rises and converges with the very force that mystifies them. They appear at every turn. Unpredictable masses devoid of form. This is their paradox. And as for their opinions? Always in Spanglish. Always Free-range.



We follow a hesitant Antonia as she moves from the kitchen, through the door. The camera cuts so that we watch her enter the dining room.

“So Juan Rivas decided he would move his family to the United States. He was so furious with Pancho Villa—for robbing his store on multiple occasions—that we were forbidden to even speak his name in front of him.”

The camera pans out, it takes in the expanse of the dining room.

Antonia takes a seat next to Hector and pours herself a glass of red wine.

“Hermana, you look exhausted. Are you working too hard in that business of yours?” Tia 2 says in a worried tone.

Antonia smiles faintly. “Business is good, sister. I’ve expanded into a full factory—I’ve got twenty-ish people mixing and pressing masa six days a week.”

“So why are you so tired, chica?” Tia 1 chimes in. “You’ve got all those tiny brown hands to do the heavy lifting.”

“It’s running a business, ladies. A woman has to work twice as hard. I’m selling to restaurants and some of those chain-grocery stores all over Los Angeles now.”

“*We* are doing well,” Hector corrects. “If our clients don’t pay, I flash them with my sophisticated manhood.” The camera moves into a middle-range shot. Hector lifts up his shirt to reveal the off-white handle of a pistol.

“Hector, we have children here for Crissake,” Antonia scolds. She forcibly removes his hand from her lap. The camera pans out. Everyone jolts uncomfortably in their seats around the table—side conversations, through whispers, erupt.

Urbana looks unphased by the display of hegemonic masculinity. She attempts to regain her audience by speaking loudly over the hubbub.

“By this time Benito Canales, a general in the Mexican army, swears that if he ever sees Juan Rivas again in Mexico, he would kill him.” Urbana takes her knife and stabs it into her uneaten steak. She makes the sign of the cross with her fingers.

“Remind me, Mamá. What’s the relationship between Benito and Juan Rivas?” Tia 3 appears concerned.

“They’re brothers, allegedly.” Antonia responds, unphased. Hector’s hand slides up her thigh. We catch this in the camera’s periphery.

The camera switches to a middle-range shot. “Not alleged, they are!” Urbana stands up waving her newly lit cigarette in the air.

A scream is heard from inside the kitchen.

“Jesus Cristo, Mijo.” Urbana falls back into her seat—startled. The camera pans out.

Two of Tony’s aunts argue over the last piece of carne asada. The other Tias burst into a rant about the current cholo culture—the gang violence. They switch to the violent outcome of the National Chicano Moratorium at Laguna Park and the “accidental” murder of Ruben Salazar. They argue over the systemic prejudice toward Mexican-American citizens. Who demonizes whom? They assign blame. They hold different politicians and socio-political circumstances responsible for the police-occupied neighborhoods in the barrio of Los Angeles. They speculate about the Kennedy Administration’s influence in the Chicano Power Movement<sup>23</sup>. They debate over which Kennedy is more handsome.

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<sup>23</sup> You’ve never heard of the Chicano Power Movement? In order to overcome social injustices, Chicanos rallied together through protests and marches—they emerged through a united sense of nationalism—on the heels of the Civil Rights movement of the 50’s and 60’s. *Scrickety-Scratch*—Hold up. Hold. It. Up.

Before I continue, fool, do you know the origin of the word Chicano? How about the word *Bitch*? As in, *if you squeal a little when I sock you in the arm, then you a little bitch like that bunny you got waiting at home*. Great, then you know where I am going with this: The term *Chicano* derives from a previous derogatory classification of Mexican-Americans by gringos residing in Los Angeles. Just as other pejorative terms, including “Bitch,” of the ~~lesbian~~ feminist movement, have been appropriated by the people they classify—in the 1960’s Mexican-American’s reclaimed the term. *Chicano*, they decided,

“Bobby stands with us,” Tia 4 says with blind certainty.

“That Jackie Onassis sure looks elegant, she’s almost stiff though—you think she makes love like a cardboard cut-out?” Tia 2’s husband says between gulps of horchata.

“Wait, a minute—Jack and Jackie? I’ll bet that gets confusing. Why doesn’t he just go by John?” Tia 3’s husband says in facetious contempt.

“That’s some serious white-people nonsense,” says Tia 4, almost spitting. “Whatever gets their jollies going.”

“What about Juan and Juanita?” Antonia says coolly. She takes a sip from her wine glass.

“Brown people also marry their nominal counterpart. Have you heard of Binomial Nomenclature? It’s a system. It’s a science.”

“Or, Miguel y Miguelita,” says Tia 1, nearly drunk—she spills bits of the crimson elixir onto her white dinner plate. Her ice cubes clink discordantly inside the proto-Bordeaux wine glass. Or is it post-Bordeaux? You know, the one described as statuesque and sparkling with its hand-blown crystal. The one that holds 29.5 fluid ounces. Dishwasher safe.

“Roberto y Roberta,” says Tia 4, or 2, or was it 3?

“Antonio and Antonia.”

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serves as an emblem of empowered identity. For the late 1960’s and 70’s, I am told, the term would define a heightened sense of Mexican-American consciousness.

That’s what’s up, man, don’t get it twisted. While protests and marches served as important actions of resistance to sociopolitical tensions of: disproportionately high deaths of Mexican-Americans fighting in Vietnam; of segregation from urban planning; of police-occupied neighborhoods in the barrio—the systemic racism—the art activism that sprang out of the movement proved most crucial to its survival. In its most heightened utilization, Chicano mural art and graffiti emerged out of the early to mid 1970’s as a way to protest the stereotyping of Mexican-Americans. Throughout this art activism, artists captured and iconized the images of cholo culture: “low riders,” and the “Virgen of Guadalupe”.

No longer did they struggle between the opposing identities of the term “Mexican-American”, which invokes a sense of one straddling the borderlands of Mexico and the United States. While they maintained an identity of the “in-between,” the term, *Chicano*, created something else, I am told—a sense of value and belonging, power and beauty, in the very land they inhabited. Though they were met with resistance and brutality, they themselves resisted: sometimes brutally, often nonviolently. How about those manzanas, ese? So, what of this art activism?

As Antonia scans the table of unconcerned faces, convivial and blurry faces, her gaze meets Turtle. He's been staring at her for longer than she'd like to consider. The boy makes a concentric motion with his arm. He flexes his muscle.

Tony emerges from the kitchen carrying a plate of freshly warmed tortillas. He walks toward the table slowly. We watch as he limps just slightly. "Dr. Chavez just left. Hermano will be out in a minute. He's in the bathroom. Um, not crying."

The camera cuts to Antonia's overwhelmed expression.

"You know what, we should call it a night. Mom, can you grab everyone's coats. They're on my bed." Antonia stands up, a little wobbly, and starts clearing the table. "Does anyone want me to wrap up their food for them?" She carries empty plates with her to the kitchen. This gesture ushers everyone to file out to the living room. They grab their coats from Urbana's outstretched, stocky arms and head out the door, one by one.

Only Tony remains at the table. He uses his tortilla to scoop up bits of lengua, carne, rice, and nopales. He bites into the creation.

In the wide-shot, the kitchen door swings open. A cloud of thick smoke descends on Tony. It envelops the frame, then thins out slowly. A female voice emerges from the kitchen in bewildered hysteria: "Ah, Mijo, who left a tortilla burning on the stovetop?" We hear the sound of heavy fabric beating against the cast-iron grates. A curse or two. Some superstitious chanting follows. While the tone of the screen, in the still-shot, changes, the texture of the room transforms into something more familiar. A light smoke releases against the backdrop of a now darkened dining room.

The overhead lights begin to flicker. On, off, on off. Urbana stands next to the light switch near the kitchen door. She wields a lit cigarette delicately between her fingers.

"What are you doing sitting there in the dark, Mijo?"

Tony continues chewing. “Where’s your hermano?” Urbana inquires.

“I haven’t seen him all day. Maybe he’s with Turtle.” Tony shrugs.

Urbana walks over to the dining room table and takes a seat next to Tony. The camera moves into a middle-range shot.

“Your brother is never with us, anymore is he? Not since that no-good Hector,” she pauses. “Not since that devil did that thing to your mother. And then to himself.” She swallows deeply.

“How does your hand feel, Mijo?”

Tony’s mind cuts somewhere. The camera *smash cuts* to an empty tortilla factory as if to simulate a flashback. We enter time itself. We jump cut to the body—his mother’s. We follow a sequence of juxtaposed images. The blood. The sound of three gunshots while the camera pans 360 degrees—a blur of brown faces. The other body—a man’s. The sound and close-up of his brother crying in a dark corner. We watch Tony realize his own pain—he looks down to inspect his hand. We *punch-in* slowly. As the camera moves into an extreme close-up, Tony moves his hand away from the frame. We linger at the still, silent shadows against a concrete floor. The camera *creeps-out*.

We cut to an aerial perspective just north of Tony’s head. The frame tucks his black hair in the top left-corner. The rest of his body forms a counter-diagonal wherein his right foot finds the crook of the bottom right corner of the frame. But to what diagonal does his body counter? We see his hand tucked between his knees. Our subject writhes in pain—the inside of his knees, his denim Levi’s appear stained in a deep crimson. We dissolve out. No, we cut away.

The camera reassumes the middle-range shot of our two subjects in the dining room. Tony moves his hand out from his lap. We notice the thick, gauze bandage wrapped around it as he places it on the table next to an overturned copy of *Romeo and Juliet*.

“You’re going to ruin the spine of that book, Mijo.” Tony shrugs again. He takes another bite of his food. This time, we notice that his plate consists of only corn tortillas and refried beans.

“I hope I never hear the sound of a gun again.”

Urbana places her hand on the top of Tony’s head. She strokes it gently. We pan out slowly.

We move in a 180-degree motion out through the doors into the empty kitchen. Our black-haired subject marches before us in his freshly pressed Hawaiian shirt. We zig-zag through a long hallway. Past the crucifix, past the picture of the divine holding a lamb. We pass the curio table—its surface covered in overturned family portraits. We exit through the open door—out onto the street—where the dry Los Angeles air smacks us against the face. We hover over the burnt-orange jalopy parked in the driveway. We enter it, we sit. We drive. Away from here<sup>24</sup>.

V.

EXT. LOS ANGELES COUNTY -DAY

At the base of the San Fernando Valley a river flows, molds itself to its geological shadow and stretches southward along the banks of Modern-day Los Angeles, down toward the gaping mouth of San Pedro Bay. Forty years ago, Angelinos reshaped the river into a concrete channel after a series of floods devastated the area. Los Angeles re-emerged from water. Indeed, mirroring its earliest conception. But at what cost?

In the early days, a formation of mountain ranges yielded the San Fernando and San Gabriel Valleys. Run-off from these valleys (I am told) forged with the waters of the Los Angeles Basin. Over time, this area, once liquid and amorphous, formed a topography of flora and fauna—a dense

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<sup>24</sup> You should know, this is the last time I’ll come here. You feel me, gringo?

forest emerged at the banks of the river. A Mediterranean oasis inhabited by countless species, and the Tongva peoples of a thousand years past.

The shades of that generation remain on these banks (I am told) unmoved from the predatory gaze of urban sprawl. Do you believe in transmigration? That the collective consciousness of the colonized re-inhabit their shape-shifting posterity? Back then, the river flowed westward. Now, look how it channels to the South.

If we pull up, from the slack-jaw opening of the river, the camera assumes its aerial gaze. We glean down where rain water merges with sea at the furthest point of San Pedro Bay. The coven of glimmering yachts, anchored and convivial to our left. To our right, the mirage of simultaneous bodies—sun-bathed and sculpted by their temperate afternoon jog.

Then, northward, we move toward the fog-dimmed range of mountains in the wide shot. After a sequence of bends and curves, we swoop down toward the river. Hover in between its converging banks, in the tracking shot. Our gaze, unfettered. We move. Past the bowing black-neck stilt. Past the snowy egret, the mallard, the green heron. Past the American coot, the muscovy duck the cinnamon teal. Beyond us, the camera captures the osprey in its frame. In its peripheral, we view the California high desert mourning dove, the black-chinned hummingbird.

As the osprey dives toward the waters, we follow. The camera skims the shallowing surface. Zig-zags past the white pelican and the Canadian goose. Beguiled by the peregrinations of birds and other things. Inhuman things. Their three-dimensional quality, a living mural between the paved slabs of concrete that flank the slithering river. Concrete, rising and sloping in the California tradition of the half-pipe. Initialed and tagged with curdling puddles of bird business.

We curve along the winding habitat of a declining 45,000 or so species until we reach the apex of Los Angeles. Pause, yes *there*, where the river hugs the 5 freeway. A place known as Frog Town to locals<sup>25</sup>. A gang-occupied territory.

A great blue heron swoops into the bottom left corner of our frame. Stays there. We separate, ascend higher, to capture the bird fully. The camera takes inventory of the undulating line below: a tilted beak, a sloping neck, a monochromatic body—azure and brilliant—as if sculpted from a slab of lapis lazuli, its wingspan stretching toward indigo. An aerial body superimposed with the landscape below. Its legs slant down toward the earth. Reminds us of the terrestrial creatures. Those who dwell in the midst of the other. Riparian, arid, and urban habitats. No matter.

We pull up, way up, toward the wispy cirrus, our underbelly stretches out toward the earth—parallels the horizon as we move slightly West. A city unravels below us. Swaths of grey, of black, of brown. In the limitations of the frame, we view a body, not a landscape. Truncated, divided and decomposed (I am told). A narrative with a beginning, middle, and end. A dimension of space-time with its jarring, multiple perspectives: An ear to the West, an eye to the South, a mouth to the East.

Forget Bronson Canyon, or the Griffith Observatory, dear Anglo. The wisdom tree at Cahuenga Peak. Never mind the Runyan Canyon loop or hiking up to the looming figure in its gaze—the Hollywood sign. Look how even the churches, with their glistening facades and curvilinear windows, bathe in its refraction. Instead, let it bow to us.

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<sup>25</sup> A place known as ^!?\$@\*\*?!^ to frogs.

Say the camera cuts to a montage of frogs underfoot. You heard me. Frogs decompressing under the human foot. Kids poking, inspecting, and throwing them into the river. The sound of butter crackling in the pan. French people licking their mustachioed upper lips. Pitbulls, and mutts, the occasional mixed doodle, the confused bi-doodle all sniffing at the croaking pavement. Just watch how these juxtaposed images and sounds create meaning in their totality. Crushing, crackling, licking, sniffing. Deep, Dark Web snuff. In our most vulnerable states, we are all of us snuff to someone's penetrating gaze. Just watch how they inspect our exposed bellies. The way they rub up against our flesh. How they turn toward us as we seize underfoot.



After all, it's only up here, in the aerial perspective, with our wide-angle lens, facing down at the pictorial plane, that we really see her. How they left her lying in the earth. Her tongue removed. Legs apart. Vivisected. Her blood, in its elision, smeared everywhere all at once. Her other eye positioned toward the Santa Monica Mountains. Slouching before her rectilinear breast. Waiting for the thing to pass over. Who are we really, our shadows and shades, if not the heresy of the iconoclast?

The heron reenters the frame below, way below, glides left of city center. Heads toward its nest. Tucked within the reservoir of a neighborhood slowly gentrifying. Exits.

The camera pans to the East.

#### EXT. THE EAST LOS ANGELES INTERCHANGE -DAY

Past the Consulate General of Mexico in Los Angeles sits the southernmost point of Rampart Village, the urban-shaped rhombus. Well, almost rhombus: The Y-axis of its Eastern aerial grid diverges from its lower border in a sort-of obvious way. In a, geometrically speaking, squiggle-squaggle—the way an appendage descends from male adolescence. Yes, the one flanking McArthur Park.

Beyond the corner of Beverley and Rampart Blvd, where the white-striped pedestrian walkways run perpendicularly like two disconnected rope ladders thrown over a curb-side impasse, indeed, redirecting us into the truncated horse-shoe parking-lot of the Original Tommy's Hamburger's—where burgers and fries rebrand<sup>26</sup> themselves in chili since 1946—where a line of hungry Angelinos wrap, shoulder to shoulder, around the next block. Anglos and Chicanos alike, Gucci-clad and Salvation Army-laden. Emaciated, modest, obese, disabled, sculpted. No matter. Past all of this we merge onto the Hollywood Freeway, the 101.

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<sup>26</sup> *Waterboard* themselves in chili.

Hovering. We follow it. Loop around downtown Los Angeles for 6 or so clicks<sup>27</sup> until we cross over Whittier Blvd where the highway changes into the Santa Ana Freeway while its persona as the [US] 101 intersects with the [Interstates] 5 and 10. Pretty straight forward stuff.

A half-click later, we approach the East Los Angeles Interchange. A place where the 5, 10, [SR]60, and 101 form a clogged artery dividing downtown from the Eastside. A place with an elision of highways: 4 in total with 6 freeway segments. Or, 6 ways of travel into the complex. A place with varying transitions from 4 to 1 lane highways, wide to narrow, high-speed to slow rolling, a place of shifting alignments and directions.

Just look how the cars enter the Santa Ana Freeway (Formerly the 101, now I-5) from the South but exit from the Golden State Freeway in the North. Then, how the 5 funnels to the West toward downtown Los Angeles. Look how 550,000 vehicles utilize the Southern portion of the interchange. Daily. Making it the busiest freeway complex in the world.

In the early 1960's the complex was considered a wonder of civil engineering. A marvel for the larger Anglo community. Over the years, the same community—its progenitors and their Anglo ancestors—assigned the nicknames *East Delay*, *Nickel and Dime*, and *Malfunction Junction*. We, us, yes all of us from the Eastside, call it by another name, *The Beast*.

The camera departs from the interchange, exits for Euclid Avenue toward Grande Vista. Descends into the neighborhood of Boyle Heights, a boot-shaped territory stretching from the San Bernardino Freeway to the BNSF Railway, North to South. Reaching from S Indiana St to S Alameda St, East to West. We turn onto East 8<sup>th</sup> Street.

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<sup>27</sup> Measuring distance in kilometers? Are we European now?

## EXT. BOYLE HEIGHTS -DAY

The camera hovers over the urban landscape as if held by a crane. Takes in the span of East 8<sup>th</sup> street including the rows of homes to the North. The ones flanking its side. As we approach South Dacotah St, a burnt orange vehicle rolls into our frame. A familiar jalopy of time.

The car moves forward. The camera follows in the tracking shot. We pass S. Fresno Street where a banditry of young boys plays inside a drained swimming pool. Against the sloping concrete walls, their narrative unravels: a thrown tennis ball, the scattering of brown bodies in mostly white t-shirts, the hustle of white converse sneakers and Hush Puppies<sup>28</sup> on, against, and over concrete. Finished with a sequence of punches, a pattern of left-right slugs to the arms, the gut, the back. The victim hunches over in his ruffled Hawaiian shirt, catches his breath. Straightens his back, resumes play. Learns not to be slow. Not to be a sucker. No, not the vulnerable fledgling after a failed first flight. Instead, a muscular jungle cat—its form magnificent and lithe. Predatory. We pass a mural with a beginning, middle, and end.

The camera slows to a near halt as the car below waits at a stop light. We watch the jalopy turn right onto S Grande Vista Blvd. We follow. After a click, the camera swoops down toward the vehicle and enters through the open window at the rear; we enter through the passenger side. Once we turn left onto East Olympic Avenue, we notice the row of complete and incomplete wall murals plastered to the side of the Estrada Courts apartment buildings. As we pass building 29, the camera *snaps zooms* to inspect the mural: *Moratorium*<sup>29</sup>. A black and white montage of scenes from the Chicano

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<sup>28</sup> Man, these shoes are the business. Makes men out of boys—a rite of passage. Also, most of these boys probably make these shoes for the men (they will become) in some dank ass factory down South: Redondo Junction, no doubt.

Hush Puppies have a suede-like material. If you brush them, those suckers will last for years.

<sup>29</sup> Fun fact, chico: The artists of this mural, Willie F. Herron III, and Gronk, are two of the original members of the conceptual art group: ASCO. Remember that art activism bit from earlier? Their group employed non-violent art tactics as a way to resist socio-political injustices in the barrio. They, a conceptual and performance group, adopted the tradition of the East-Coast Avant-Gardists. Those shiny bastards. Indeed, ASCO loosely followed in the tradition of the fop with

Moratorium at Laguna park. Representational scenes of violence and fear, as if painted by the documentarian, juxtaposed with the abstract aesthetics of the event: carnivalesque, grotesque, absurdist.

As we gaze at the man working meticulously on the scaffolding two buildings ahead, some of the images—men and women fleeing the LAPD—inflate into three-dimensional forms behind us. Living bodies. They detach themselves from the wall and spill out into East Olympic Avenue—stampede-like. They, black and white figures, chase the moving jalopy with their narrative unraveling behind us and then flanking our sides.

In the wide shot, police officers deflect thrown rocks with industrial-grade shields. Women and children scream and run, separated from their husbands and fathers. The fallen await the blows of polycarbonate batons. From a low angle, they see the pleats of the uniforms inch closer, ruffling in the air, attached to legs that almost saunter. Attached to light-skinned bodies that loom. Those on their feet clench to brace the strikes to the back, to the face, to the gut. The camera *punches-in* slowly. In the middle-range shot, we see those who crawl along the pavement meet the same fate.

Blood splatters against the rear window. A young body slides down the curve of this hatchback and collapses to the cement. A baton-ed figure stands, statuesque, in the distance. Our Hawaiian shirt-clad driver remains focused on the road ahead—completely unfazed by this mural of

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the ghost-white hair. The vain one whose pornification of Campbells Soup has since made me feel weird in the canned-foods aisle at Vons. Though, through these expressions, they created their own arsenal of the grotesque: Murals, walking murals, photo-novellas, essays, films. So, who founded the group? Harry Gamboa Jr.

For his participation in the Garfield High-School “Walk Out”, Gamboa was captured in a photo with Bobby Kennedy. However, once awarded with a fellowship from Education Opportunities Program (EOP) for the California State College of Los Angeles, the LAPD challenged his legitimacy to attend college. In courtrooms, they demonized him as a *militant* Chicano, not an advocate. Why? The mass media failed to find favor with Chicanos. Instead, they reassembled texts and images to suit their narratives. Chicanos had no evidence. No photographs or video recordings. Thus, they had no alibis. Gamboa dropped out of school. He bought a camera with his fellowship money. Real good dude.

The mural depicts an event known as the National Chicano Moratorium demonstration which began with 20-30,000 Mexican-Americans marching down Wittier boulevard toward Laguna Park to nonviolently protest the outstanding Mexican-American casualties wrought from the Vietnam War. A demonstration that ended with, well, let’s take a look.

flux. We drive, once participants, now spectators. Around the bend, we merge with oncoming traffic. Car traffic. We head northward. Toward the undulating rows of residential streets where the tired mamas and abuelas shake the dust from their rugs—bang them against the wrought iron railings of their porches. Where the Virgen of Guadalupe reigns supreme in her frame adjacent to the door posts. Marks her blessed dominion, her ontology of presence.

On the left, we pass the church of *Holy Something Sacred and Heart-like*, the one with the Chicano pastor. From its open doors we notice the stream of crucifixes flanking the walls of the sanctuary in converging lines. Until the icons stretch outside our depth of focus.

On the right, we pass the commercialized church, the one with its own literature and annual stadium crusades. While we miss the exact name, the brand, we notice the illuminated marquee with the words: *Jesus is coming*. If we *snap zoom* beyond the closed glass doors, we glimpse at the enlarged portrait hanging above the pulpit where a white pastor with long, blonde hair preaches in a t-shirt. What form of nature does the heady portrait represent? A pastoral landscape? A picture of the Caucasian Divine? No, the portrait bears a replica of this very church building from a street-view. Scaled down in size of course. No crucifixes in sight.

Our black-haired driver bears left onto East 1<sup>st</sup> street toward Mariachi Park,<sup>30</sup> where we pass an abandoned tortilleria on the side of the road. The head in front of us turns left for a split second. Then forward. Through the rear-view mirror, we see the top right-quadrant of a boy's face. The camera *creeps-in* toward the mirror capturing the bridge of a nose, an eyebrow, and then only an eye. We inch forward, almost touching the mirror, and then *whip pan* into the eye of our subject. Reverse

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<sup>30</sup> A plaza outside of a donut shop where Mariachi performers serenade those who pass by. The musicians of this tradition, don themselves in high-cropped black tops, and high-waisted pantaloons, similar to the conquistador-inspired garb of the Spanish bull fighter. Do you want to hire a Mariachi band to perform at your daughter's quinceañera, or your great aunt's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday party? Look no further. Grab your pick-up. Round them up. The huddled, ornate squad waits willy-nilly on a bench for hire—Monday through Sunday. What bench, you ask? The one at the corner of East 1<sup>st</sup> and South Boyle Ave. The one where, from a distance, you squint as the sombreros bob along the horizon. Ya dig? Shake your maracas due West.

our frame into the tightest close-up in the most abrupt manner. Moving toward the optical thing that contracts and expands. The camera enters.

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