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In the early 1970s materialist experimental film was cogently rejected by feminist theorists for its inability to deliver a feminist counter-cinema addressing its political agenda. The concomitant development of feminist psychoanalytic readings of “dominant cinema” against its grain also discounted such work. This split is marked by Peter Wollen’s formulation of “two avant-gardes”, one narrative and explicit about its political position and the other non-narrative and focusing directly on implicit perceptual processes. Materialist film’s fixation on structure jettisoned content, and extended post-war painting’s essentialist move to pure abstraction manifest in abstract expressionism and minimalism. The emergence of trauma theory and the recent explosion of moving image digital media with its non-linear bias and the complex layering of “technical images” have created a new situation opening up alternate readings of such discounted materialist practices. As well as a historic precursor for digital media, it is suggested that a materialist cinema, represented here by the found footage films: *Alone: Life Wastes Andy Hardy* (Arnold 1998) and *Dreamwork* (Tscherkassky 2001), signposts a belated return for materialist film within the context of trauma studies. This materialist turn rescues such experimental film from its traumatic excision and extends an understanding of what has been termed a “trauma cinema” by Janet Walker. Rather than pure, abstract or visionary such practice is read here through trauma theory as performing implicit mechanisms of denial and erasure. It is no wonder that materialist film was avoided in the seventies by a feminist project concerned with moving out of the debilitating “victim” positions women identified as their lot. In the seventies women had had enough of direct experience of denial and erasure. The view of “content denied” enables the practice of materialist film to speak to the laying bare of the debilitating traumatic flashback experience in a way not available to the narrative approach of Wollen’s second avant-garde. To further legitimize materialist film’s link to trauma, correspondences are drawn between Wollen’s two strands of implicit and explicit film-making practices and Brewin’s neurological research into trauma which clarifies the interaction be-
tween two parallel memory systems; one implicit (Situational Accessible Memory) the other explicit (Verbally Accessible Memory).

**Historical Background**

The history of artists working with the moving image forms a significant dialogue with technology that has been variously described as an experimental, avant-garde or non-narrative or more specifically, as a formalist or materialist practice. (The more specific term “materialist film”, that has evolved through Peter Gidal’s practice and theoretical writing (Gidal 1989) will be the favored term used in this chapter.) John Hanhardt suggests the pre-reflective or non-narrative space has been a traditional area of interest for avant-garde film: “The avant-garde continues to explore the physical properties of film and the nature of perceptual transactions which take place between viewer and film” (Hanhardt 1976: 44). Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology’s perceptual emphasis is particularly suited to frame and describe this materialist practice: “a movie is not a thought; it is perceived” (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 54).

As one of its practitioners and theorists, Malcolm Le Grice points out that 1970s materialist film’s “action on the automatic nervous system seeks to create a nervous response which is largely preconscious” (Le Grice 1977: 106). Such interest corresponds to the primary Merleau-Ponty assigns to perceptual processes and that pre-reflective space before thinking occurs. The implicit register of this work is linked to recent neurological research into the effects of overwhelming experience on memory processing as discussed later in the body of this text.

The specific area of found and stolen images and their re-processing within such an experimental practice can be experienced as transforming the originating material and emphasizing aspects previously hidden. According to William C. Wees such avant-garde found-footage films “are intended to ‘undo’, deconstruct, or ‘detourn’ images produced and disseminated by the corporate media” (Wees 2002: 4). Such an intervention empowers a marginalized and impoverished practice to work with images produced by a commercial film and television apparatus to which it has no economic access, but to which its practitioners are nevertheless subjected to in daily life. Such a “detournement” performed on historic material is examined in the recent film work of Peter Tscherkassky, Dreamwork (Austria 11 minutes 2001), and Martin Arnold's Alone: Life Wastes Andy Hardy (Austria 15 minutes 1998).

**Alone: Life Wastes Andy Hardy** reprocesses sequences from the Andy Hardy series of black and white features (1937–58). This series, designed for mass consumption by a general audience, reflected back family values and family life to nineteen forties and fifties Middle America. In 1939, 1940 and 1941 this MGM series made Mickey Rooney the most popular Hollywood star despite its comparatively low budget and low-brow register. The series charted Andy Hardy's growing up years through childhood and adolescence. Judy Garland starred in three of these films as Andy's love interest. Tales of small town morality are resolved with man-to-man discussion between Andy and father Judge Hardy. The films pioneered a formula that later became the staple of general television viewing. Arnold samples this resource and focuses on perceived ideological cracks in this material.
The second film to be considered, *Dreamwork*, re-edits sections of the nineteen eighties horror color feature film, *The Entity* directed by Sydney J. Furie (1982), whose title sequence asserts that its story is based on real events. *The Entity* follows the drama of a woman (played by Barbara Hershey), a single mother, who is raped by an invisible assailant and is not believed. The assailant is later identified as the devil. In her struggle to be believed Hershey's character comes into contact with a cluster of skeptical psychiatrists who dismiss her as a hysteric plagued by her "single" status. There is also a group of ghost-busters who try to set an elaborate but misguided trap for the entity. *Dreamwork* is Peter Tscherkassky's compacted re-configuration of Hershey's relationship to a home environment saturated with para-normal activity and a recurring rape experience. By re-editing and layering shots and parts of imagery from the film over the top of each other he creates a complexity that overwhelms and challenges the viewer. In both *Dreamwork* and *Alone* narrative is fractured to uncover the hidden from within the originating Hollywood melodrama. Each film is examined in turn in relation to trauma and placed in a larger historical and cultural context.

*Alone*

Martin Arnold identifies his practice as one of revealing the suppressed:

In the symptom, the repressed declares itself. Hollywood cinema is, as I have already said, a cinema of exclusion, denial, and repression. I inscribed a symptom into it, which brings some of the aspects of repression onto the surface, or to say it in more modest words, which gives an idea of how, behind the intact world of being represented, another not-at-all intact world is lurking. Maybe this is my revenge on film history. (MacDonald 1994: 11)

In *Alone* Arnold repeats obsessively sampled extracts and gestures from the Andy Hardy series of films. Arnold's repetitions are sometimes as little as a couple of frames long, turning the actors into tic-riddled puppets with accompanying stuttering soundtracks reminiscent of scratch video and other sampling strategies employed in contemporary experimental music. Judy Garland's song, in its repetitions and looping movements, unearths new meanings and moves the performance from the lyrical into the fragmentation of concrete poetry. Through similar technical manipulations a Rooney and Garland kiss is transformed into a long and tentative primal grimace. Similar sexual innuendo is unsettlingly teased out of a kitchen scene between Hardy (Rooney) and his mother as they rub up against each other ad infinitum while washing and drying the dishes.

The back and forth scrubbing of gesture evident here is not comedic, but hones in on a melancholic moment of fracture in the gesture itself. It is through such fissures that the hidden obsessions of the characters emerge to be inscribed or re-inscribed into this obsessively stretched out, repetitive performance of selected sequences from the film. The archaic technique of the cut becomes the film's central character. Though its directness and as a trace of the amusement parlor of pre-cinema and a
cinema of attractions where “an attraction” aggressively subjects the spectator to “sensual or psychological impact” (Gunning 1990: 59), Arnold’s hyper-editing unleashes a psychoanalytic joyride inside a phenomenological framework.

Arnold has stated his interest in this obsessive repetition as a way to bring back or reveal hidden elements. These repetitions perform as tics and stutters in the film. In Arnold’s psychoanalytic reading, a tic moves over, works against an opposing movement at the visceral level of the body itself, in stuttering “a message that is in conflict with what is being said wants to be expressed” (Arnold in MacDonald 1998: 362). For Deleuze stuttering “puts language in perpetual disequilibrium” (Deleuze 1998: 111). As well as stigma and anxiety, stutterers tend to have “greater emotional reactions and more problems with flexibly controlling attention and emotion” (Prasse and Kikano 2008: 1272). Tics and stutters offer rich sites of ambiguity, conflict and multiple meanings. Through such breakdowns of expression the body performs the unspeakable. Through such repetitions, tics and stutters, Alone can be read as the baring of an unspoken trauma resiliently embedded under consciousness, endlessly replaying as some undecipherable situation. Arnold’s technique is about the obsessive location, repetition and making visible such scarring moments.

As a filmic field of a thousand cuts this trauma is read productively as a societal trauma rather than a personal or individual one. Kirby Farrell suggests that the “contagiousness” of personal traumas can lead to a general social impact “when particular social conditions and historical pressures intersect” (Farrell 1998: 12). It is such a trajectory from the self to the social that Maggie Humm identifies for feminism in screen studies in the seventies when she points out that “understanding the personal as political – how identity is constructed and represented – is the task of feminist theory” (Humm 1997: 179). It is this discursive formation that in recent times has accommodated trauma theory within its discourse, initially through the work of Shoshana Felman, Dori Laub and Cathy Caruth (Radstone 2001: 188).

Caruth’s view on repetition offers some insight on the perceptual operation of Alone. The flashback repeatedly returns trauma’s suffering. In normal processing of an event, the instant of “seeing” becomes “knowing”; yet in trauma this instant is seen but remains unknown, returning over time repeatedly to an unknown or “unspeakable” gap. These repetitions suggest “a larger relation to the event which extends beyond what can simply be seen or what can be known and is inextricably tied up with the belatedness and incomprehensibility that remain at the heart of this repetitive seeing” (Caruth 1997: 208).

Correspondences can be drawn between Arnold’s found-footage practice, the 1970s feminist use of textual analysis and their shared mobilization of psychoanalysis. For one, Arnold trained in psychoanalysis at its Viennese source. In his film practice he translates into visual and performative form the strategy of textual analysis developed via feminism in screen studies. Generally textual analysis operates to expose the unconscious or repressed through identified fissures in the smooth operation of a particular ideology. As Annette Kuhn points out, within feminism it was used to uncover the work of patriarchal ideologies in mainstream cinema and show that “such disjunctures are discernible within the text in the form of ‘symp-
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toms'—cracks, ruptures and so on. These symptoms provide us with clues as to what, ideologically speaking, is going on" (Kuhn 1982: 86). Arnold has described his practice in constructing Alone in very similar terms at the beginning of this section. Within screen studies, such a psychoanalytically grounded textual analysis arose in the nineteen seventies out of an appropriation of French critical theory that included Lacanian psychoanalysis. As one of the initiators of this tactic Laura Mulvey stated that "psychoanalytic theory is thus appropriated here as a political weapon, demonstrating the way the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form" (Mulvey 1975: 6).

Textual analysis's migration and metamorphosis from written into visual and performative form re-emphasizes the pre-reflective moment. Alone, in its tics and stutters continually and obsessively returns to the immediacy of the perceptual event from which its analysis is read. As viewers we seem to be in the same immediate space in which the critic or theorist (or the artist) is sitting in front of the film-editing machine. In this moment and space of genesis, the critic is actively stopping and starting the film, re-inspecting frames and sequences, creatively grazing. He or she is at the point of constructing critical understandings on the film being "analyzed".

We have moved from one way of thinking to another. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology's ability to theorize and describe this pre-reflective realm of perception accurately recognizes this space:

My field of perception is constantly filled with a play of colors, noises and fleeting tactile sensations which I cannot relate precisely to the context of my clearly perceived world, yet which I immediately place in the world, without ever confusing them with my daydreams. Equally constantly I weave dreams around things. (Merleau-Ponty 1962: x)

This view produces insights unavailable to psychoanalysis. The viewing experience is one in which the repeated performance of these cracks and ruptures impact directly as a pre-reflective stun. Does not such a stun itself produce anxiety, fear and deliver back the trauma rather than the memory? There is an unresolved tension between a re-constitution and a stun or stutter. What comes back in this break? How easy is it to think, to negotiate when you have just been "stunned"? Analysis comes after.

Dreamwork
Tscherkassky's title of Dreamwork references the psychoanalytic method. Like Freud's Interpretation of Dreams (Freud 1971/1900), Peter Tscherkassky articulates his technique as unearthing something underneath narrative:

It's like digging. You have something like a landscape, and you know that there is something covered, and you dig it out- in that sense 'archaeologist'. It's not primarily about ideology, but you have that sense of uncovering new meanings. (Blumlinger 2002: 25)
As well as this digging into this material, Tscherkassky's film moves beyond *Alone* by charging a new visual complexity into the original material. The multi-layered imagery of *Dreamwork* suggests Merleau-Ponty's world of colors, noises and fleeting tactile sensations. Having identified "Arnold's" fissures and cuts in the narrative, Tscherkassky layers these sequences on top of each other, creating a compact multi-layered field of movement and re-presentation. We see images of a room, a window, Hershey's face and body, we glimpse snatches of movement, see strips of film and other textured artifacts (rayograms of nails and grains of sand) often as afterimage, flickering and in negative and all at the same time. This layering suggests that the film and its narrative content is being materially shattered before us.

Through his technique of "manufracture", "contact printing and the simultaneous manipulation of the elements" (Horwarth 2005: 44), the scene of the rape is re-directed back into the audience's face. The aesthetic cacophony of multiple meanings being presented concurrently or simultaneously mirrors the psychic disorder of the rape experience. This is a strategy of construction that recreates the force of the originating event directly and imparts a sense of overwhelming trauma. Given the nature of the originating material, Felman and Laub's approach to trauma as articulating an "an event without a witness" (Felman and Laub 1992: 75) is pertinent here.

Is what is presented here a compact narrative of dreams as the title suggests? As with *Alone*, it can indicate a trace of something more immediate. This is not an imagined rape that is being communicated but something more real, direct and immersive. It is more about the "here and now" than the processing of dreams. *Dreamwork* can be read as a perceptual performance that re-enacts the rape directly by bringing us back to the pre-reflective cacophonous moment of its initiating, implicit bodily impact.

In describing his strategy of folding the narrative back on itself Tscherkassky appropriates Maya Deren's concepts of vertical and horizontal editing:

What I really try to do is convert the horizontal structure of a narrative film into a vertical structure. This was something that Maya Deren pointed out... well if you take the narrative structure of prose, you have the story unfolding on a horizontal line. And you have poetry, where you may have, within every single word, several multiple meanings, in terms of connotations. (Blumlinger 2002: 26)

Deren uses the horizontal structure of a film to refer to its linear cause and effect progress, its narrative or story. But she is also acutely aware that an event can be read in multiple ways, has various levels of meaning so that an event can be returned to repeatedly to reveal these layers. This Deren describes as an event's vertical structure:

The poetic construct arises from the fact, if you will, that it is a 'vertical' investigation of a situation, in that it probes the ramification of a moment, and is concerned with its qualities and its depth, so that you have poetry concerned, in a sense, not with what is occurring with what it feels like or what it means.
A poem, to my mind, creates visible or auditory forms for something that is invisible, which is the feeling, or the emotion, or the metaphysical content of the movement. (Sitney 1970: 173-4)

Deren demonstrated and applied such a relationship between the vertical and the horizontal in her *Meshes of the Afternoon* (Deren 1943, USA, 15 minutes). Through its similarities *Dreamwork* can be viewed as a contemporary response to *Meshes*. Stated very simply, *Meshes* shows a woman entering and moving through her flat. This situation is serially re-iterated from different points of view. These views are represented by her multiple selves that finally appear together onscreen. *Meshes* has been read as unpacking the traumatic thinking and dissociation of a suicide. Kaplan observes that Deren's film:

> Produces a visual correlative to the subjective, emotional and visual experience of trauma, leaving the situation uncertain and to be deduced by the viewer. That is, the entire world of the film is ‘inside’ the traumatic experience. (Kaplan 2005: 125)

The physical difference between Tscherkassky and Deren is that Deren places her multiple readings of the one horizontal or linear event in series, one after the other, whereas Tscherkassky gives them to you overwhelmingly compacted and layered, all at once, as a complex field of moving images. The experience of the vertically charged moment for the viewer is “here and now” and has to be graphically unraveled. In *Dreamwork* is as if the pre-reflective moment of, in this case, the rape is re-constituted re-assembled like a raw flashback that is experienced as REAL.

From a neurological perspective the traumatic flashback takes “the form of relatively brief sensory impressions such as images, sounds, tastes or smells which are accompanied by the original emotions that the individual experienced at the time of the event” (Kleim, Wallott and Ehlers 2008: 222). Through this compartmentalized, fragmented nature, traumatic memories are implicit, unspeakable. “In some people the memories of trauma may have no verbal (explicit) component at all; the memory may be entirely organized on an implicit or perceptual level, without an accompanying narrative about what happened” (Van der Kolk 1997: 255).

Maureen Turim makes the connection between the flashback in film and trauma. She notes that in melodrama the cinematic flashback breaks settled narrative to mark the visceral and unexpected return to the senses of a significant or traumatic experience. She identifies twenties European avant-garde films as instrumental in developing its form: “similar abrupt flashbacks mark 1920s avant-garde films” (Turim 2001: 207). These are the same films claimed by experimental film-makers as initiators of a non-narrative tradition (Michelson 1978: 175–6). In *Dreamwork* Tscherkassky pays particular homage to twenties avant-gardist Man Ray, whose Dadaist work *Retour à la Raison* (1923) is considered an important contribution to this cinematic form “which can function essentially on the psychophysical rather than the psycho-interpretive
level" (Le Grice 1977: 106). Tscherkassky explains: "I added some of Ray's more famous objects—needles, tacks and coarse salt—to my found material and interpreted these objects as sexual metaphors within the framework of the plot of the film" (Tscherkassky in Horwarth and Loebenstein 2005: 158).

**Neurology**

Deren's concept of vertical and horizontal editing and Tscherkassky's use of it are ways of thinking about the relationship between implicit and explicit memory systems that predicts recently developed models of memory processing. Recent neurological research summarized by Bessel van der Kolk (Van der Kolk, McFarlane and Weisaeth 1996) into the processing of trauma, dissociation and the flashback throws some light on the nature of these interactions. He points out that Pierre Janet, working with the victims of shell shock in the late 1800s showed that such shock or trauma is precipitated by severe emotional responses and that such responses effect how memories are stored in a fragmentary manner: "Intense emotions, Janet thought, cause memories of particular events to be dissociated from consciousness, and to be stored, instead as visceral sensations (anxiety and panic), or as visual images (nightmares and flashbacks)" (Van der Kolk 1996a: 214).

Brewin Dalgleish and Joseph's (1996) clinical research into memory processes in post-traumatic stress proposes a dual processing model in which there is a dialogue between two memory systems - verbally accessible memory (VAM) and situationally accessible memory (SAM) - to help explain such traumatic responses. Verbally accessible memory (VAM), also referred to as declarative memory (Squire and Zola-Morgan 1991, Van der Kolk 1996a: 285) involves the "encoding and storage of conscious experience" (Brewin 2001: 161). Verbally based, VAM enables narrative with retrieval upon request. Because it is linear and consequential in assembly its process speed is limited. This has the same effect as the impact of low bandwidth in computer technology. VAM exhibits a strong sense of time. The hippocampus is involved in the formation of conscious memories, of building up a unified "cognitive map" (Van der Kolk 1996b: 295) that allows flexible access to these memories. These neurological structures enable objective or reflective thinking.

"Situationally accessible memory" (SAM) or implicit memory allows no retrieval upon request and displays no sense of time. You do not have "at call" access to your own stored experiences. It is the situation that triggers the memory that is re-experienced rather than recalled. This describes the unexpected flashback triggered by external cues or thoughts in traumatized individuals. SAM is "unable to encode spatial and temporal context" (Brewin 2001: 161). It focuses narrowly on risk and is detail rich. According to Hellawell and Brewin (2004), SAM consists of "the exclusive automated mode of retrieval, the high level of perceptual detail, and the distortion of subjective time, such as the event is experienced in the present." (Hellawell and Brewin 2004: 3) This memory system is aligned with Merleau-Ponty's notion of the pre-reflective and with subjective experience before thinking. These memories are processed through an older part of the brain known as the amygdala.
The amygdala's functions are not flexible and are concerned with attaching affect to incoming cues and the "establishment of associations between sensory stimuli" (Van der Kolk 1996a: 230).

How do "samming" and "vamming" interact when these two systems are operating normally in parallel to each other? When you have a conversation, for example, or travel from A to B, information is laid down in both memory systems. You may recall or explain what you have done and seen (vamming) but there are certain gestures, impressions that somehow do not fit in and are not part of the recounting. Such moments may come back to you unceremoniously or unexpectedly (samming) and belatedly. These flashbacks may pre-occupy you. You may talk to someone about them until, somehow, you re-work or reconsider these impressions, integrating them into a cohesive "story" with the events already understood. In this way visual replay (flashback) is rehearsed and then inserted into narrative, moving from the SAM to the VAM memory system.

Metcalfe and Jacobs (1998) have identified that high levels of arousal (trauma) breaks down hippocampus functioning and inhibits vamming so that, when the situational memory returns there no narrative for this flashback to be inserted into. Like a broken record it has nowhere to go and is destined to try again later. Rich in detail with no temporal context, such "affect fragments" periodically redial into a network that was never built and jolt the receiver as if they are happening right now.

This model can describe how Dreamwork, for example, as a "pre-narrative" film can be experienced with its immediate narrative context stripped away. It is in the shock of the perceptually rich performances, in their immediacy and directness that the film is encountered (or more accurately perceived) in samming mode. The film has been constructed by working backwards, folding back to the pre-reflective moment. In Tscherkassky's technique of construction its integrated vamming (explicit) memory is broken down into its high definition samming (implicit) fragments. The perceptual and making sense process of being in the world is retraced back to the pre-reflective perceptual moment of "first contact". We experience this moment of first contact with an overwhelming immediacy.

This relationship between vamming and samming also re-calls the relationship between verbal and visual thinking. Brewin's model is also a much more systemic and dynamic model than the left brain/right brain oppositions that Small (1994: 6) employs in his argument in Direct theory. Here Small argues that the visual reflexivity that occurs in experimental film as a form of theorizing with a right brain emphasis. It is also more developed than the old brain/new brain dichotomy used by Len Lye to talk about his "doodling" film work as old brain work (Horrocks 1979: 33). As previously emphasized, Maya Deren's thinking on vertical and horizontal editing also resembles Brewin's dichotomy. The body-centered samming and the cortex-centered vamming can also be applied to the perennial mind-body split present within Western culture. Traumatic experience itself in fact has been conceptualized as an extreme mind-body dissociation.
The Two Avant-Gardes
Peter Wollen's influential article "The Two Avant-gardes" (Wollen 1982), first published in Studio International in 1975, places the avant-garde into two camps that uncannily resemble the two memory systems that Brewin's Dual processing model identifies as SAM and VAM. Wollen's dichotomy is performed at the point of emergence of feminist film practice and its critical textual analysis of dominant cinema. Partner and film collaborator Laura Mulvey's influential feminist text on male scopophilia in cinema also performed an initiating function in these developments. At this stage Wollen and Mulvey had already collaborated on Penthesleia (1974), which according to Al Rees "attempts to construct feminist discourses in a triangulation of Marxism, semiotics and psychoanalysis" (Rees 1999: 91).

Wollen's text splits the avant-garde in two. The first comprises non-narrative and formalist (materialist) work residing in the multi-voices and collective emphasis of the artisanal "co-op movement" that emerged out of the fine arts (painting, sculpture) and the second embodied a more politicized narrative practice employing psychoanalytic and Marxist ideologies in its analysis, with a relation to literary criticism, theatre and the margins of commercial cinema. One focuses on vision, perceptual processes and the image and the other emphasizes the social implications of the text and language.

Wollen observes that a similar split can be seen in the twenties between the Cubist influenced cinema of Leger, Richter and Man Ray to extend the scope of painting and a Russian avant-garde in which Wollen includes, Eisenstein, Dovhenko and Vertov (Wollen 1982: 24). This Cubist cinema identifies those same films that Turim suggests display the characteristics of the flashback in melodrama and contains the work of Tscherkassky's exemplar, Man Ray.

Interestingly, the contrast in qualities between Wollen's two avant-gardes, the visual and visceral, direct impact nature of materialist film and the referential, intertextual, verbal and narrative emphasis of avant-garde's political arm match the implicit and explicit qualities of SAM and VAM in Brewin's dual processing model developed though neurological research of traumatic experience.

Wollen identifies the work of Jean-Luc Godard as the contemporary exemplar of the political arm of this avant-garde. Through semiotics, he describes this political avant-garde as focusing its "work within the space opened up by the disjunction and dislocation of signifier and signified" (Wollen 1982: 98). There is a dismissive tone for those working in the materialist arm of the first avant-garde: "it is as if they felt that once the signifier was freed from bondage to the signified, it was certain to celebrate by doing away with the old master altogether in a fit of irresponsible ultra-leftism and utopianism. As we have seen, this was not so far wrong" (Wollen 1982: 99). Though there is an appearance of evenhandedness, clearly Wollen prefers the second avant-garde in which his collaborative practice with Mulvey is placed.

Wollen's criticism of ultra-leftism and utopianism may well have been directed at his contemporaries Malcolm Le Grice and Peter Gidal. Gidal's didactic texts in favor of materialist film were placed at a further extreme end of any negation of the status quo than any feminist counter-cinema: "Without a theory and practice of radically
materialist experimental film, cinema would endlessly be the 'natural' reproduction of capitalist and patriarchal forms' (Gidal 1989: xiii). Gidal identifies materialist film as influenced by abstract expressionism and minimalism and stresses a post-Warholian stance so that "to intervene crucially in film practice, the un-thought must be brought to knowledge, thought" (Gidal 1976: 15). For Rees the breaking point between these two camps rested upon "the issue of narrative, realism and representation, which Screen analyzed critically but which the avant-garde rejected as primary goals for film" (Rees 1999: 93).

Rather than utopianism, the freedom of form from content that Wollen identifies, can today also be read through trauma as "content denied", as an erasure, or the signified's absolute gutting. A viewer could receive a materialist film as a trauma inducing dissociative experience. This is the belated rejoinder that both Alone and Dreamwork make to this debate from thirty years earlier. Caruth has underlined the importance the belatedness in the experiencing of trauma that not only informs the thirty-year gap in materialist film's response, but also the unknowability of the experiences addressed in these films at the heart of Wollen's dismissal:

Traumatic experience, beyond the psychological dimensions of suffering it involves, suggests a certain paradox: that the most direct way of seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it, that immediacy, paradoxically may take the form of belatedness. (Caruth 1995: 6)

From this new perspective, rather than utopianism materialist film re-performs the trauma of overwhelming experience for the viewer both historically and experientially.

The critical splitting made visible through Wollen's text was a decisive strategic move that sets up a space from which a critically and politically aware feminist counter-cinema can be asserted. As argued by Wollen's then partner and collaborator Laura Mulvey:

Women cannot be satisfied with an aesthetic that restricts counter-cinema to work on form alone. Feminism is bound to its politics; its experimentation cannot exclude work on content, and it has, in this way, more in common with the avant-garde tradition that has tried to radicalise the signifier. (Mulvey 1979: 9)

Constance Penley's critical textual analysis of the writings of Le Grice (1977) and Gidal (1989, 1976) on structuralist/materialist film in the Imaginary and the Avant-garde (Penley 1977) enacts this split by operating on materialist film with the same scalpel of psychoanalytic theory mobilized to unpack melodrama. A closer look at her arguments there are productive when re-examined within the emergence of trauma theory, the digital media explosion and the speed-up of information flow associated with it. Penley argues that in avant-garde film there is an overemphasis on the technical and as a predominantly male, "narcissistic" enterprise using a politically ineffective language devoid of fantasy and desire. She enlists Metz's understanding of film viewing as an "authorised scopophilia, legalized voyeurism" (Penley 1977: 13) against
films that are "presented as near scientific investigations of scientific process" and reads this latter position as containing a tendency "to suppress a knowledge of the imaginary" (Penley 1977: 13).

After her marking of materialist-structural film as "fetishist impasse", Penley reveals her own preference for a political avant-garde, in line with Wollen, as the preferred response for the "current" socio-historic situation for a feminist cinema. She observes that:

The films of Godard have consistently taken into account this work of language on image, as have those of Straub-Huillet, and Mulvey and Wollen. These film-makers realize that images have very little analytic power in themselves because their effects of fascination and identification are too strong. This is why there must always be a commentary on the images simultaneously with the commentary of and with them. (Penley 1977: 24)

Penley is not concerned with the "advanced solutions to formal problems" (Penley 1977: 25) or "perceptual processes" (Penley 1977: 8) identified in materialist film but about working at the limits of narrative and fiction that she finds in the works of Chantal Akerman, Marguerite Duras, Yvonne Rainer and Babette Mangolte. That same area of feminist practice more recently identified by Kaplan (2001, 2005) and Walker (2005) twenty years on, as fertile for articulating aspects of traumatic experience under the banner of "trauma cinema". Such a "trauma cinema" includes at its vanguard that same group of films that Penley identified. Of these examples of trauma cinema Walker observes that:

These films are characterised by non-linearity, fragmentation, non-synchronous sound, repetition, rapid editing and strange angles. And they approach the past through an unusual admixture of emotional affect, metonymic symbolism and cinematic flashbacks. (Walker 2001: 214)

Kaplan similarly identifies those "independent cinematic techniques (that) show paralysis, repetition, circularity- all aspects of the non-representability of trauma and yet of the search to figure its pain" (Kaplan and Wang 2004: 204).

Commenting at the time on the tenor of the face-off between these two avant-gardes, Turim has observed that in terms of abstract film "the avant-garde has been engaged in a rhetorical arsenal aimed at granting or denying these films power as tools or weapons in an ideological struggle" (Turim 1980: 144). In this seventies period, we may well be at that cultural moment when the "resistance" politics of May 68 is being domesticated to move off the streets back into theory and the academy. The time had come to transform banner slogans like "the technological is political", "less is more" and "the personal is political" back into cultural capital. This is a contested space of academic careers, of prominence and priorities which leaves Turim to wonder: "How many critical tautologies can be set up which circumscribe with their own assumptions their own conclusions" (Turim 1980: 144).
The New Situation

Read through the contemporary prism of "trauma theory" and Brewin's neurological model Penley's criticisms of Gidal and Le Grice's writings on materialist film read like the deficiencies that define implicit memory (SAM) through its graphic intensity, immediacy and lack of story or context. Penley could just as easily be describing situationally accessible memory (SAM) in noting: "the first tactic of structuralist/materialist film is the emptying from the cinematic signifier of all semantic, associative, symbolic, representational significance" (Penley 1977: 8). This is what trauma does to memory. Mulvey's description of Gidal's strategy of "rejecting all content and narrative" (Mulvey 1979: 9) articulates Laub and Auerhahn's trauma's "not knowing" (Laub & Auerhahn 1993: 290).

Nor do Gidal or Le Grice situate or understand their seventies anti-illusionist materialist practice in any relation to trauma or VAM. Yet this practice, as Penley's criticisms suggest, may be read productively today through trauma as "content denied" and as making evident the mechanics of erasure at the heart of traumatic experience rather than a sublimely radical position that frames cognition and the apparatus of film as its intrinsic de-facto subject. There is a trace of a traumatic view discernible in the practices of abstract expressionism and minimalism available to support this view, given that Gidal sourced these New York art movements in developing his arguments for materialist film. Guilbaut has made this point: "avant-garde art became an art of obliteration, an act of erasure" (Guilbaut 1983). With reference to Frank Stella's minimalist black paintings with such Nazi invoking titles as Die Fahne Hoch!, Reichstag and Arbeit Macht Frei, Anna Chave suggests that "minimalism generally might well be described as perpetrating a kind of cultural terrorism, forcing the viewer into the role of victim" (Chave 1990: 49). I am also reminded of Robert Rauschenberg's erasure of a Willem de Kooning drawing gifted to Rauschenberg in his "Erased de Kooning Drawing" (1953) over one month with forty erasers (Solomon, 1997: 238). Gidal's "un-thought" (Gidal 1976: 15) describes trauma. His description of his self-reflexive practice as "a filmic practice in which one watches oneself watching" (Gidal 1976: 10) brings to mind dissociation's out-of-body experience. By Le Grice placing the "flux of perception" (Le Grice 1977: 10) at his practice's core, he focuses on the pre-conscious realm of the traumatic flashback experience.

Alone and Dreamwork mark a return of the first avant-garde to critical scrutiny within the context of trauma, a scrutiny not only dismissed by Penley but also Mulvey and Wollen. Neither did its proponents envision this return or predict its new shape. It comes back by transforming the method of textual analysis used to discount its political relevance into a performative visual and perceptual practice.

Thomas Elsaesser utilizes trauma theory in screen studies to suggest that a general traumatizing has occurred of "the moving image in our culture as the symptom without a cause, as the event without a trace" (Elsaesser 2001: 197). Vilem Flusser identifies this as a world of "technical images" pre-occupied with surface and a new inherent magic not penetrable by those linear forms of critical thinking available through a written text. This world of magic is a
World in which everything is repeated and in which everything participates in a significant context. Such a world is structurally different from a linear world of history in which nothing is repeated and in which everything has causes and will have consequences. (Flusser 2000: 9)

Prensky suggests that, with young people today, their "thinking patterns have changed" through the impact of digital technology on their daily lives. They "think and process information fundamentally differently" (Prensky 2001: 1). Digital Natives are used to receiving information really fast. They like to parallel process and multitask. They prefer graphics before their text rather than the opposite. They prefer random access (like hypertext). On the other hand, Digital Immigrants place more emphasis on the type of reflection enabled by literate culture. Here again we have the VAM and SAM split with an identified shift to SAM like processing.

Bellour (2001), Penley (1977) and Mulvey (2004) have also identified in their more recent writing this digitally enabled shift, situating a preferred "pensive spectator" for a "fetishistic" one. They point to the computer's desktop manipulation, freezing, slowing down and speeding up the moving image as indicators of a more sophisticated and interactive consumption. Mulvey observes that, "As the spectator controls the unfolding of the cinematic image, so the drive of the narrative is weakened and other, previously invisible or unimportant details come to the fore" (Mulvey 2004: 90). Mulvey's "invisible and unimportant details" have always been the subject of Gidal's materialist practice. For Bellour this shift marks an end for a textual analysis that as early as 1985 in "Analysis in Flames", Bellour marked as "an art without a future" (Bellour 2001: xii), as technological developments allowed a form of textual analysis to be performed by the multitudes on the VCR. This has since expanded further to home computer use. This is an incisive insight given Bellour's remarks about the rise of the critic in the nineteen sixties and his own participation in this rise through his practice of textual analysis in such publications as Screen.

For Bellour there was an important shift in the role of the critic in the nineteen sixties, which up to then depended on sitting in the darkened theatre scribbling notes with eyes fixed on the screen. In this posture:

A vertigo and a hysterical trembling remained: the vertigo of not being sure of my text, and with it, by the relative impossibility of doing so, a different kind of profound vertigo by what the implications would be if I were someday able to be sure of it. (Bellour 2001: 3)

This changed with access to the then new technology of the film editing machine (e.g. Steenbeck), and the film analysis projector. The vertigo migrated elsewhere out of the body of the critic. The critic could privately stop, start, freeze and replay the film outside of its theatrical screening context, creatively transforming the possibilities of criticism and analysis. Bellour could be sure of it.

The connection has previously been made between seventies textual analysis and recent found-footage films. When Humm outlines textual analysis she could be de-
scribing Tscherkassky or Arnold’s practice: “By examining condensations, ruptures and excess stereotypes in the filmic text, critics aim to reveal a hidden sub-text which may structure a film’s ‘identity’” (Humm 1997: 15). In discussing the film critic Bellour’s textual analysis, Belton notes its transforming effect:

Bellour, like all critics, necessarily rewrites the film he is analyzing to reveal or make clear its operations. For the original text he substitutes, out of necessity, his engagement with the text and this becomes the subject of his analysis. (Belton 2006: 243)

This viewer position of replay that emerged for the critic in the sixties and for the general public in the eighties resembles the pre-reflective and performative space that materialist film presented to the viewer. It is discernible in the found footage work of the period, for example, Le Grice’s Little Dog For Roger (1967, 12 minutes) and Berlin Horse (1970, nine minutes, one and two screen versions) and, of course, the two contemporary films identified here. This realization opens up reading the face-off between the two avant-gardes as a contestation over ownership of the production of cultural meaning between the artist and the critic. Who owns the space in front of the film-editing machine? In the 1970s the critic’s claim prevailed.

With the advent of the digital the situation changes. Alone and Dreamwork perform for the viewer those image manipulations that provided the source and re-configurations of Bellour’s value adding work. In so doing the critic’s position is bypassed and perhaps rendered redundant. That the ground has shifted, perhaps even inverted, is clear. When Penley asserts that “now we can do research on cinema history and theory by quoting images rather than by turning images into language” (Penley in Bellour 2001: xiii), she displays an unexpected affinity with the materialist position she so effectively dismantled thirty years before. Penley’s earlier assertion on the necessity of “a commentary on the images simultaneously with the commentary of and with them” (Penley 1977: 25) reduces in authority.

The importance of this new prevalent accessibility is also part of Mulvey’s reading of this new digital multi-platform situation:

I have tried to evolve a different kind of spectatorship, one driven by curiosity and a drive to decipher the images unfolding on the screen. However the curious spectator was, by and large, the product of feminism, of the avant-garde, and of a consciously alternative relation to cinema…this spectator is the ancestor of the one formed by new modes of relating to the screen image now immediately accessible to anyone who cares to experiment with the equipment available. (Mulvey 2004: 89)

I begin this summing up with a series of questions. Is Mulvey’s pensive spectator not that same spectator created by materialist film in the seventies? Is it not its history that has to be belatedly re-inserted here? Is this not the wound that flashes back as a trace in the work of Tscherkassky and Arnold, in their repetitive, cyclical and
layered sampling strategies? Do not these technical operations excavate the pre-conscious of textual analysis? Although the film text itself may prove an “unattainable text” for the critic as Bellour suggested in *Screen* in 1975 (Bellour 1975) this may not be the case the other way around for a new materialism that, in a display of its ascendancy, visually lays bare the critic’s own practice and recontextualizes the search for the sublime in painting and an essential perceptually based film-making practice in terms of its shadow; the articulation of the mechanics of denial. Trauma theory enables a re-integrating of feminist criticisms made of seventies formalist materialist film-making practice, retooling that practice for critically unpacking the digital image in an emergent visual culture where, according to Nicholas Mirzoeff, “the world-as-a-text has been challenged by the world-as-a-picture” (Mirzoeff 1998: 5).