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*News From Home* The Redux Version: Amodal Perception and 'la jouissance du voir'.

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PROLOGUE

*News From Home* (1976) is an approximately 90 minute film of mainly documentary static shots and tracking sequences of a pre-regeneration New York. The soundtrack is punctuated by letters from her mother that Chantal Akerman reads intermittently over the on-screen sounds of the city.<sup>1</sup> It is a 'heavy' film; the grey and brown buildings seeming to sink into the sidewalks, while vehicles languorously lumber through Akerman's frontally framed static shots. The speeds of the tracking sequences are slow and ponderous. Shot from moving vehicles, their crawling nature is dependent on the stop-start rhythm of off-screen traffic lights. Even when people move through the streets and trains chug through subways, 'bodies' seem weighted, exemplified by shots such as those of a black woman seated stationary at a corner as if guarding the street sign; the chance levity of a couple's caress on a subway platform is mechanically erased by trains as they cross the screen from left to right and vice versa. Akerman's intermittent voiceover adds to the heaviness, as she reads in a deadpan accented English (or French in the original version). The letters repetitively detail the minutiae of family life in Belgium, as well as her mother's concerns for her daughter: her safety, her financial situation, her career, exhortations to Akerman to contact her and her longing for their reunion. The film's weightiness may also derive from Akerman's positioning of the camera in relation to her body, her insistence on inscribing this in the frame being a technique she deployed in her previous film *Jeanne Dielman, 23, Quai du Commerce*,

*1080 Bruxelles* (1975). In relation to the latter film, Akerman stated: 'I didn't have any doubts about any of the shots. I was very sure of where to put the camera and when and why. It's the first time I had that feeling so strongly. You *know* who is looking; you always know what the point of view is, all the time' (Akerman, 1977: 119).<sup>2</sup> However, in the final 10-minute sequence of *News From Home*, the heaviness is gradually relieved and a certain levity is gained.<sup>3</sup> This sequence, which Catherine Fowler calls a 'zoom back' (1995: 146), punning on Michael Snow's 'zoom forth' in *Wavelength* (1967), is filmed from the Staten Island ferry. As the ferry pulls further out, the grid-plan layout of New York transmutes into a soft horizon line that lies on the water, gently cutting the image in two. Continuously recalibrated by the boat's motion forwards, this line eventually suffuses into a hazy skyscape, its muted greys vectored by the arc and dip of gulls in flight, the soundtrack consisting of their cawing, the lapping of the water and the vibrating of the boat's motor. This sequence is preceded by three others in which the city is viewed from various means of transport: a lengthy horizontal tracking sequence shot from a vehicle travelling kerbside, a sequence on a subway train, then back to a car. With each shift in transport, the pressing weight of buildings and the obstacles to traffic-flow have less impact. During these shifts in modes of transport, Akerman's reading aloud of her mother's letters finally gets drowned out by city noise and is completely absent in the last durational sequence.

In what follows, I adopt film theorist Raymond Bellour's appropriation of psychoanalyst Daniel Stern's concept of 'amodal perception' in order to read the levity and dynamism of this sequence. Amodal perception is a mode of sensory experience that originates in early childhood whereby 'the modalities of perception such as

intensity, shape, time [and] motion' are experienced globally, and more diffusely, rather than by separate senses (Bellour 2011: 232).<sup>4</sup> These early perceptual and kinetic sensations are the building blocks of later experience and accompany the acquisition of language, after which time they tend to be channelled more locally into the separate senses.

*News From Home's* final sequence is hypnotic, rhythmic and affectively moving and is a cinematic moment that I continually return to. In 2004, I analysed this sequence in an article entitled 'Intervals of Inner Flight: Chantal Akerman's *News From Home*'. There I approached its affective nature in relation to philosopher Gilles Deleuze's theories of 'pre-individual difference' in which difference underlies, rather than proceeds from, identity. In 2004, I had found this idea productive in order to release the sequence's sensory drift from being read in terms of identity, for example, that of a daughter returning to a mother. I now return to this significant sequence wanting to hold onto the affective nature of its sensory drift, but also wanting to consider how this might relate to a form of identity. My current return has been coloured by a number of encounters with Akerman's later work and with texts on her work that have made me want to reframe my initial Deleuzian-inspired focus. To this end, through Stern's concept of 'amodal perception', my goal is to consider Akerman's sensory drift in terms of an intersubjective relation, which does not need to be named as one between a mother and a daughter.

In order to do this, I shall go through a few detours that explore how I came to question my initial analysis and how I returned to it anew. Here, I am loosely following Tzvetan Todorov's theory that a narrative – which I intend this essay to be understood

as – comprises of three moments, beginning from as Laura Mulvey puts it: ‘an initial point of stasis [that] is activated into a process of movement and change which returns to a same-yet-different stasis at the end’ (2000: unpaginated). In my narrative, the initial point of stasis is my aforementioned 2004 analysis of *News From Home*. This earlier analysis is reactivated by a number of encounters with later works by and texts on Akerman, mainly by Griselda Pollock, which focus more on identity. I turn to the effects of these encounters on me, before returning to my initial focus on the sensory nature of the film’s final sequence: a focus that remains both the same as my 2004 analysis and yet entirely different. In this trajectory, I hope to illuminate, or highlight, the levity that often appears amidst the ponderous weights and durations in much of Akerman’s oeuvre.

#### THE INITIAL POINT OF STASIS

Some have read the silencing of the letters and the crossing of water as signifying a return home. As Richard Kwietnioski writes: ‘This closing shot can be seen as the only moment the film replies to its narrative, by implying a departure, a return, a journey back to the mother’ (1990: 113). However, he is also sensitive to the impact of the sequence as an event that figures ‘the city’s growth into singularity and its subsequent subordination to the presence of gulls, mist, churning water’ (113). Wanting to find ways of articulating the sensuous, affective, nature of this sequence, which is, of course, dependent on having gone through the previous 80-minutes of the film’s relentless articulation of the city’s subways and sidewalks, I turned in 2004 to Deleuze’s concept of unbound pre-individual differences, as elaborated in *Difference and Repetition*. In contrast to classical philosophy, where difference is a secondary development of

identity, pre-individual differences precede identity in Deleuze. They are the chaotic ground of socially constructed identities and their originary dynamism subsists in conjunction with identity. Much feminist art, film and theory has critiqued the power play involved in constructing identity according to binary definition. Much of this work asserts the complexity and multiplicity of female identities. However, in turning to Deleuze's notion of pre-individual difference and its relation to aesthetics, I wanted to bypass the identities explored by other Akerman scholars in relation to her work; for example, her identities as a Jewish, lesbian, second generation Holocaust survivor, whose relation to her mother predominates in her work.<sup>5</sup> In apprehending the final sequence of *News From Home* as an affective space of pre-individual differences that unmoor identity, I wanted to make a case for the indeterminacy of a diffuse gaze that yields an immediate, rather than a deferral of, pleasure. I claim this as 'feminist'.

Readings of this sequence in 1980s film theory by Stephen Heath frame it in terms of 'the impossible question of a woman's desire' (1981: 99), the latter being thought of as an unrepresentable excess in relation to the logic of the signifier, a reading influenced by the Lacanian psychoanalytic theory that dominated *Screen* journal at the time. In this theoretical model, female desire can only be represented as an excess that ruptures the Oedipal frame of narrative which is premised on resolution no matter how digressive the narration.<sup>6</sup> A good example of a feminist attempt to reframe this is Teresa de Lauretis' reading of the character Milena in Nicolas Roeg's *Bad Timing* (1980).<sup>7</sup> Although not a feminist film per se, de Lauretis reads Milena as a figure who unhinges the linear temporality of the Oedipal investigatory drive of narrative desire. She confounds male desires to possess and know her, a confusion that is

formally conveyed through Roeg's use of elliptical erratic montage. De Lauretis configures Milena's disruptions to Oedipal temporality in relation to Julia Kristeva's notion of women's time, as a time that 'is not yet' and that is 'other' to patriarchal concepts of time as historical (de Lauretis 1984: 95). For de Lauretis, it is here that a feminist spectator might be addressed differently, not simply in terms of identification with the image (of empowerment or disempowerment) but in terms of how a film might express another kind of time, the time of feminine desire.

If, for de Lauretis, the space and time of feminine desire can only be stated 'as negativity, as borders' (1984: 97), what I found useful in a Deleuzian approach to this question was that this space and time might instead be posed as a modality of being that is continuously in flux. I am not alone in thinking this. Whereas certain strands of 1980s and 90s feminist film theory only considered difference in relation to representation and identity, in the 2000s, feminist European film cultures were revitalised by Deleuze's non-oppositional concepts of pre-individual differences and affects. As Amy Herzog recounts, while historical feminist film theory either interrogated representation or focussed on reception, Deleuze opens up the possibility of another feminist methodology for cine-analysis, 'one that looks at the arts in terms of their affective potential, the new modes of looking and thinking they might engender in the larger service of life' (Herzog 2000: 83). While feminist scholars continue the necessary labour of interrogating representation and the politics of reception, many feminist scholars such as Patricia Pisters, Barbara Kennedy, Laura U. Marks, and Herzog, to name but a few, have subsequently adapted Deleuze's ideas to make productive cine-analyses that reconceive of the feminine as a materialist process of differentiation rather

than a singular identity. In aligning my 2004 analysis of *News From Home* with these kinds of cine-analyses, I posited a female spectator – me – who was immersed within a time and space of experience unhinged from identity. Enabled by Deleuze, my poetic reading of the final 10-minute sequence of *News From Home* concluded:

'I' move with the motor and animal calls that populate this new space, the curve of a wing, the ruffle of a wave. [...] Not the 'impossible question of a woman's desire', but the fluid dynamism of affective movements that disclose how 'I' subsist in time, fractured, and flowing like a river at the edge of a city (Walsh 2004: 205).<sup>8</sup>

#### ACTIVATION OF THE INITIAL POINT OF STASIS

In 2016, I was invited to compile an annotated bibliography of Akerman's work for Oxford Bibliographies. Researching the explosion of texts on her work since 2004, I encountered Griselda Pollock's text on Akerman's gallery installation *To Walk Next to One's Shoelaces Inside an Empty Fridge* (2004), which she saw in the Jewish Museum in Berlin in 2006.<sup>9</sup> Pollock's text had a profound effect on me, one that was much greater than my actual viewing of the same installation at Camden Arts Centre, London in 2008. I had found the work overly constructed, decorative even. The first gallery room was filled with an architectural spiralling structure akin to a Richard Serra 'Ellipsis' but, unlike the dense weight of the latter, Akerman's was made of tulle fabric, creating a modicum of porosity between the projectors' beams of light and the gallery walls. Fragments of text were projected at intervals and at angles across the surface of the

spiral, the soundtrack being comprised of these fragments voiced in French and accompanied by sombre music. On exiting the curvature, one entered an adjacent gallery showing a dual projection of a black and white documentary film of Akerman speaking to her mother in her living room, one version being projected slightly out of focus and out of sync. In front of the dual screens, a small static painted portrait of a woman was projected on a flat tulle screen, while another projection of pages of handwritten script wandered across its surface. These layers added to the general distraction of the gallery context itself, in which noise, uncomfortable or no seating, etc., made me feel excluded from the intimacy of the conversation occurring in the dual screen film projections. However, Pollock's recounting of her response to this work affected me greatly, bringing me face-to-face with Akerman's identity as a second-generation Holocaust survivor and as a filmmaker whose rationale for making films might have centred on her mother after all.

IMAGE OF INSTALLATION HERE?

As opposed to my distracted reception of this work, Pollock's encounter with the installation occurred after seeing the Charlotte Salomon installation of diaries, paintings and drawings, which was on display at the Jewish Museum at the same time. She says that seeing Akerman and her mother 'eventually talk about the latter's experiences during the Shoah clearly over-determined my reading of the work, and my own history of maternal bereavement and motherhood overlaid my affective responsiveness to it' (Pollock 2010: 2). Pollock is referring to the moment when Akerman's mother, Nelly, weeping silently, reaches out to kiss her daughter on the cheek, a gesture triggered by

Akerman's presenting of her maternal grandmother's diary, the pages of which were projected on the barrier tulle screen.

Akerman's grandmother had died in Auschwitz when she was in her 30s. The documentary footage used in the installation was shot by Akerman's assistant Renaud Gonzalez as research for *Tomorrow we Move* (2004): a part screwball comedy, part melodrama about a Jewish mother and daughter and the various prospective tenants who view their apartment. In the footage, Akerman asks her mother to translate her grandmother's diary, which Nelly had given Akerman in 1984, 'instead of talking' (Pollock 2013: 332). My memory of the footage is that Nelly reads the diary silently, so I am reliant on Pollock's reporting of Akerman's film notes which reveal that the diary contained three inscriptions: one by Akerman, aged 10, another by her younger sister, Sylviane, and a third one by Nelly to her own mother. All three inscriptions, as cited by Pollock, professed their love of and desire to protect their respective mothers. After her encounter in the Jewish Museum, Pollock retrospectively reads Akerman's oeuvre as an attempt to visualise the effects of unmourned trauma transmitted to the children of Holocaust survivors. Other scholars have previously explored this and it is affirmed by statements in recent interviews in which Akerman admits, referring to her mother's silence about what she went through in the holocaust, that 'I got sick from it myself' (Akerman 2016: 37). Prior to the moment of the exchange between mother and daughter in *To Walk Next to One's Shoelaces Inside an Empty Fridge*, Pollock, referring to feminist film aesthetics, writes that:

[w]e accepted the signs of her cinematic intervention, but we knew not the specifics of their causation in a deeper, still culturally unacknowledged

trauma that flowed beside but was not reducible to *the choked feminine voice in culture meeting a new cinematic formalism* (Pollock, 2013: 340 my emphasis).

Rather than continuing to situate Akerman's work in relation to the invention of new forms and methods of addressing female subjects and spectators, Pollock advocates locating it in terms of a transmission of maternal survivor trauma to Akerman. There is much evidence to support this reading.<sup>10</sup> Akerman's working notes on seeing her mother cry again on the set of *Tomorrow we move* as she watched the maternal kiss being acted out, read:

All these films have finally brought me to that. She finally feels better. She finally shed a tear, 33 years of work with so many turns and detours and she finally feels better. Is this what I was looking for? I have no idea. Maybe. I'd like to believe it. But honestly, *not just that* (Akerman in Pollock 2010).

Reading this, I found myself wondering: was it all about the mother after all? And if so, where did these revelations leave my desire to explore the affective nature of sensory drift in *News From Home*? Pollock was proposing that Akerman's work as a whole can now be read retrospectively as a long journey home:

as if an entire career had been undertaken, movie after movie, and since 1995, art installation after installation, to arrive at that possibility, that moment, that gesture, captured not by the filmmaker looking through the

lens, but as its recipient, the skin brushed by the touch of the mother's hand and lips (Pollock 2010: 3, 14-15).

These words are indefatigably moving. However, Pollock goes on to warn of the danger in thinking that a biographical key unlocks the secrets of thirty-three years of Akerman's filmmaking, saying that not only is autobiographical causation 'utterly ridiculous', but that we have to pay attention to Akerman's qualification in the above citation, her '*not just that*' (2010: 18).<sup>11</sup>

So while I found Pollock's reading of Akerman's oeuvre utterly compelling, I clung to the phrase 'not just that'. Perhaps I could find a way of returning to the final sequence of *News From Home* that would maintain an allegiance to its transformative aesthetic freedom from identity without denying intersubjective relations. To this end, I turned to Bellour's adaptation of Stern's ideas of early infantile development for cine-analysis.

In *The Impersonal Life of the Infant* (1985), Stern locates aesthetic appreciation in relation to early infantile experiences. This is a familiar psychoanalytic trope but what makes it of interest to film spectatorship, and especially to the emphasis on the maternal in Akerman scholarship, is that Stern's focus is not on narratives of what may or may not have happened vis-à-vis the mother/child relation as such, but on the kinetic and affective attunement between them as two bodies in space. Affects originate as rhythmic sensations internal to one's own bodily psycho-physiological processes. Projected outwards as gestures, they are responded to by others, a reciprocation or attunement that leads in turn to their further elaboration and *reinvention* by the infantile subject. The intersubjective relation that emerges in this projection of kinetic sensation and reciprocation of gesture is one in which perception is diffused in rhythmic

movement rather than harnessed to the identification of objects or subjects. One of Stern's examples is that of a mother who responds to her daughter's gleeful grabbing of a toy with a joyful shimmying movement of her own, a rippling movement, that in turn *informs* the child's range of gestural projection.<sup>12</sup> Bellour reads these kinetic and mimetic movements, what Stern calls 'vitality affects', in relation to cinema and to how film as itself a body might project such movements through the mediation of camera and screen, movements which in turn fold 'the spectator's body onto itself' (222). Although he does not mention it, the idea of film as itself a body resonates with Vivian Sobchack's idea of the 'film body'. For Sobchack the term 'film body' designates a kind of body that is not visible in the film or reducible to the cinematic apparatus, but 'is discovered and located only reflexively as a quasi-subjective and embodied "eye"' (Sobchack 1992: 66). Sobchack contrasts this embodied spatiality and temporality to the notion of the screen as a mirror, an idea popular in film theory inspired by Jacques Lacan's essay 'The Mirror-Stage' (1949). However, even Lacan's notion of the mirror is not simply a reflective screen of identification, as most film theory reads it, but is more of an intersubjective staging that incorporates the sensations and comportment of the infant into the order of the specular. And this staging is continually being redone. For me, the 'film body' projected and mediated by the final sequence of *News From Home* is one that propels its viewer to drift in the sway of a current in which perceptual movement is expansively joyous and full of durational rhythms that 'gaze' like a softly focussed stare.

Akerman claimed that 'filming has always been for me ....a sort of health' (Akerman in Margulies 1996:68). Rather than seeing this statement as a generalised idea about the therapeutic value of creative work, I want to hazard that Akerman's 'not

just that' relates to the search for and enactment of what she calls 'la jouissance du voir' (Akerman in *Camera Obscura* 1977, 121). With reference to her earlier film from her New York period, *Hotel Monterey* (1972), Akerman describes this pleasure of looking:

When you look at a picture, if you look just one second, you get the information, 'that's a corridor'. But after a while you forget it's a corridor, you just see that it's yellow, red; that it's lines; and then it comes back as a corridor (Akerman in *Indiana* 1983: 58).

Pleasure is generated by the oscillating movement between abstraction and recognition, a perceptual mode of shifting between concrete objects and diffuse fields of colour and line. This oscillating perceptual movement is echoed in her editing process. Desiring her spectator to feel time in the image, she describes how, when working with her editor Claire Atherton, we 'try to have a floating gaze, as an analyst might call it [...] moving from the concrete to the abstract and come back to the concrete – or move forward in another way' (Akerman in Rosen 2004: 126).

It seems to me that there is a productive connection between Akerman's floating gaze and the kind of multi-sensory seeing involved in 'amodal perception' where the gaze is indissociable from the other senses and where the infant has the capacity to 'transfer perceptual experience from one sensory modality to another' (Bellour 2011:225). Describing his response to the scene in Bergman's *Persona* (1966) in which the grown child touches the immense close up of the two female protagonists' faces, Bellour suggests that in this moment 'we slip from the gaze to the touch that the gaze

seems to exclude but contain, all of the senses mixed up' (225). For Bellour, the sense of an emergent self in 'amodal perception' provides

an analogy for the ontological, perceptual, and environmental reality of the situation – the room of a child or in a cinema – where the world is at every instant composed and re-composed for the spectator just as it is for the baby, in view of the learning of something new [which] is a matter of a micro-elemental analogy due to the processes of the formation of images (and sounds) and their effect as bodies and on the body, according to an affective, non-psychological logic (223-4).

On the one hand, this 'affective, non-psychological logic' in *News From Home* is derived from material and technical means such as the modelling of shape and sequence mediated via camera handling and the process of editing. Akerman's milieu in New York at the time included structural film-makers. On seeing Michael Snow's films during her time there,<sup>13</sup> Akerman said that: '[t]he sensory experience I underwent was extraordinarily powerful and physical ... I learned from [Snow's films] that a camera movement... could trigger an emotional response as strong as from any narrative' (Akerman in Brenez 2012).<sup>14</sup> In an earlier text, Bellour also refers to the dynamics of Snow's films being one of 'the pure alternation of rhythmic effects', saying that in Snow's *La Région centrale* (1971) 'alternation is reduced to an oscillation effect on the clouds – right-left, left-right at a given moment in the midst of that endless movement in a single shot' (in Bergstrom 1979: 81). At that time, Bellour related this principle of hypnotic alternation to a musical model of seriality: an important avant-garde aesthetic in Akerman's 1970s New York milieu.<sup>15</sup> Discussing his interest in hypnosis with Janet

Bergstrom in 1979, Bellour's appreciation of the oneiric qualities of film to engender regressive psychic states was tempered with a fear that the hypnotic effect of film is a means of mass control. But this ambivalence is gone in his recent positive appropriation of hypnotic rhythm and affect via Stern's concept of 'amodal perception', a move that echoes other recent psychoanalytic literature in which hypnosis is re-valued for its potential to effect a transformative and expansive imaginary space that allows us to move away from things that inhibit creative freedom.<sup>16</sup> On a narrative level, the hypnotic expansion of the gaze in *News From Home* is compromised by the ventriloquism of the mother's words, the reading of whose letters can be considered an act of exorcism. As Tijana Mamula states: 'To translate the mother is to agree to lose her: the literal translation of the mother's letters attests to a desire to betray, cast out, finally and forever lose the mother' (2008: 270). However, in focussing on the kinetic drift of the final sequence what might be a loss on the level of narrative is transmuted into the elusive sensory qualities of the vitality affects akin to those in amodal perception. As Bellour cites Stern: "These elusive qualities are better captured by dynamic and kinetic terms such as 'surging', 'fading away', 'fleeting', 'explosive', 'crescendo', 'decrecendo', 'bursting', 'drawn out', and so on'" (Stern in Bellour: 226). Rather than considering the diffuse perceptual states of amodal perception and hypnosis as negative or something to be feared, they can be seen as offering transitional states of revitalisation in which a viewer can reoccupy, at an aesthetic distance, the sensory chaos of the infant's capacity to intuit 'shapes, intensities and temporal patterns [...] variations of sonorous and luminous intensity, the properties of duration, pulse, rhythm' (Bellour: 225).

RETURN TO THE SAME-YET-DIFFERENT

Negotiating the recalibration of the horizon line as the ferry churns the water in *News From Home*, my perceptual embodiment is subject to rippling and ruffling effects under conditions of minimal visibility. A muted misty cityscape, whose skyscrapers meld in relation to the modulation of their liquid 'ground', contracts into opaque tones of blue and grey in the process. The screen becomes almost blank, yet it pulsates with subliminal movement, underscored by the swoop of seagull arabesques. It is as if the 'film body' generates a hypnotic transferential space that allows, like an ideal analytic setting, for openness to the life affirming rhythms of duration and the body.<sup>17</sup> The weight of architectural and topological obstacles is lifted and my gaze is released from the injunction to follow Akerman's tracking lines above and below the New York subways. Earlier in the film, I had followed the sadness of lines that dragged heavily in 'downward directions'.<sup>18</sup> I had also followed the camera's occasional tracing of 180 degree pans that semi-circled upwards, yet the claustrophobic spaces relentlessly drawn and redrawn before and by my eyes exhausted me, as did the continual exhortations of the letters to be safe, to be happy, to get in touch. It is with great relief that I follow the trajectory of the 'zoom back' and bathe in the silence of the voiceover. Tracking the spontaneous plunge and lunge of seagull flight and the contingent recalibration of the frame in the final durational sequence, I am not simply oscillating between recognition and abstraction, but basking in an abstract sonorous colour field. In this space, one is freed from having to choose between a here and a there, a past and a future; one is lulled in the expansive rhythms of a 'now' time of immediate pleasure. Akerman's 'jouissance du voir' generates a kind of health indeed; a non-possessive gazing, its dynamic openness shifting the viewer from the position of looking at an image to feeling

its undulating kinesis. The film ends, but its affects continue to reverberate as a memory of being held in a diffuse, perhaps maternalised, gaze that is and is not mine.

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<sup>1</sup>Akerman used letters her mother had written to her when she stayed in the city during her first visit in 1971.

<sup>2</sup>Kenneth White claims that for *News From Home* Akerman placed her camera in relation to her diminutive height of between forty-eight and fifty-six inches from the ground (2010: 366).

<sup>3</sup> The sequence lasts as long as a reel of film.

<sup>4</sup> The infant predominantly experiences amodal perception and vitality affects up to 2 months of age. The primary force of the latter is kinetic and is distinct from the categorical naming of affective experiences. Merger or fusion-like experiences occur at this point in early infantile life. At around 7- 15 months, affective attunement with others occurs via 'cross-modal mimesis' as described in the example of the shimmying mother and responsive daughter. See Bellour 2011, pp. 227-228 in particular.

<sup>5</sup> Scholars who read the film overtly in relation to the epistolary address between mother and daughter include: Penley and Bergstrom 1985. Longfellow 1989, Cerne 2002, Mamula 2008.

<sup>6</sup> For example, according to Peter Brooks's narratology, narrative desire is dependent on the digressive delays that postpone the end or resolution of the plot. In this trajectory there is a symmetry between the character's and the reader's fear of short-circuit, i.e. 'the improper end', as well as 'the fear of endlessness' (Brooks 1984: 109). This model of narrative desire aligns with a Freudian hydraulics of Oedipal resolution.

<sup>7</sup> De Lauretis attempted to rethink this notion of the end point, i.e. temporal closure, in relation to films by female directors such as Akerman, Sally Potter, and Yvonne Rainer.

<sup>8</sup> The 'I' here is a shifter. This shifter may refer to the person using it to refer to themselves, but it is also anonymous in that it can be used by anyone.

<sup>9</sup> For a phenomenological approach to this installation see Jenny Chamarette, 'Burlesque Gestures and Bodily Attention: Phenomenologies of the Ephemeral in Chantal Akerman', in her book *Phenomenology and the Future of Film: Rethinking Subjectivity beyond French Cinema*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp.143–186.

<sup>10</sup> For reference to this approach, see Janet Bergstrom "Invented Memories", in Gwendolyn Audrey Foster (ed), *Identity and Memory: The Films of Chantal Akerman*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003, pp. 94–116; and Alisa Lebow, "Memory Once Removed: Indirect Memory and Transitive Autobiography in Chantal Akerman's *D'Est*", *Camera Obscura*, 18.1 (2003): 34–82.

<sup>11</sup> Pollock takes the 'not just' in the direction of a working through of trauma and a generation of 'fascinace', the latter a concept developed by psychoanalyst Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger as a reworking of the castrative Lacanian gaze which Lacan calls 'fascinum'. 'Fascinace' by contrast is a transformational gaze in which a woman addresses another and that encompasses difference and mutuality in contradistinction to Lacan's emphasis on separation and lack.

<sup>12</sup> Of course, this playback will be influenced by an adult's capacity for play. Those interested in Akerman's autobiography might alight on her reference to André Green's theory, which he expounds in *Narcissisme de Vie, Narcissisme de Mort* (1983), of 'the complex of the dead mother, where he writes about the ways maternal depression abandons the child and his or her craving for being held, comforted, accompanied' (Akerman in Lebovici 2011-12). See also Bergstrom 1999 for a reading of Akerman's oeuvre in relation to Green's concept.

<sup>13</sup> She is reputed to have watched this 3 hour film with Babette Mangolte, her cinematographer, four times in a row during her stay.

<sup>14</sup> I would hazard that the tropes of 'structuralist film' gave Akerman a contextual framework in which to engage conflictual feelings in relation to maternal separation.

<sup>15</sup> See Margulies for a discussion of Akerman in relation to 1970s avant-garde aesthetic terminology including seriality. Note also that Bellour's 2009 book on hypnosis and cinema is only available in French apart from extracts translated into English by Alistair Fox. See Bellour, R. (2014) 'From Hypnosis to Animals', Alistair Fox (trans & ed), *Cinema Journal*, 53: 3, pp.8-24.

<sup>16</sup> See Jan Campbell's *Psychoanalysis and the Time of Life: Durations of the Unconscious Self*, London and New York: Routledge, 2006. Part of this reevaluation of hypnosis is a return to Freud's colleague Pierre Janet's work on dissociation. For more on dissociation and hypnosis in relation to avant-garde film, see Dirk De Bruyn, *The Performance of Trauma in Moving Image Art*, Cambridge Scholars: Newcastle upon Tyne, 2014.

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<sup>17</sup>There is historical precedence for considering the creative potential of trance states and hypnosis in Maya Deren's writings and her use of film as a psycho-physiological healing modality. In relation to sonic and visual rhythm, she writes: 'As we know, rhythm consists in the regularity of the interval between sounds. [...] Even more important, sustained rhythmic regularity and the fact that the source of it is outside the individual rather than within, means that consciousness is unnecessary, as it were, in the maintenance of this concentration' (Deren [1942] in Nichols, 2001).