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## Drowning in Pictures

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### Comments

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by Kenneth Cmiel

In 1945, the most compelling images made in America were huge. Larger than life. Wondrous. They glided across movie screens at hundreds of local theaters and paraded through the hugely popular weeklies, *Life* and *Look*. Millions looked at these pictures each week. These images caught the life of the country – sometimes with a maddening superficiality, sometimes with great profundity. Yet they caught it. The country was *in control* of its visual culture. The story of the next fifty years was of the gradual erosion of that assurance. By the new millenium, the country's images were far more chaotic. There was more play than before, more freedom. But there was also more nervousness and concern. To cultural conservatives by the 1970s, and even many moderates by the 1990s, the image culture seemed dangerous, even sinister. Internet pornography, movie violence, the erosion of TV censorship, the mind-numbing distraction of video games – it all seemed so crass, so ugly. Technology, style, and the law had all somehow colluded to ruin the mid-century safety. Images had spun out of control.

### ***A Defined America***

At mid-century, the single most important purveyor of human-made images in the United States was Hollywood. Through World War II, weekly movie attendance was in the tens of millions. Even in the first few years after the war, although attendance was dipping, movies remained the most compelling images there were. Hits of the 1940s and early 1950s, films such as *Casablanca*, *Singin' in the Rain*, *High Noon*, or *Stalag 17*, each attest to the import of Hollywood in producing images for the nation.

Hollywood also produced most of a second sort of image – the newsreel. Newsreels were 2-6 minute shorts shown before movies in theatres. They usually combined short snippets of four or five stories. Recent events in Europe or Asia might be one story; the latest jitterbug another. Made from the 1910s to the early 1970s, newsreels were most important during the years of the famous “March of Time” reels – from 1935 to 1951. Sometimes serious, sometimes fun, the newsreels were always wholesome. They were other important pictures trying to define the life of the nation.<sup>1</sup>

A third defining image was the documentary photograph. The thirties and forties witnessed the emergence of new magazines devoted to giving the news through pictures. *Life* Magazine was the first. It began publishing in November 1936 and was an immediate success, quickly becoming the most popular magazine in the nation. Shortly after, *Look* was founded by the Iowa newspaper publisher, Gardner Cowles; then the *Saturday Evening Post* adapted itself to the genre. Led by *Life*, they brought the “photo essay” from its European origins and perfected it, stringing together one to two dozen pictures on a single theme, which told a story. For the first time in modern journalism, the pictures were the stars and the prose played a supporting role.<sup>2</sup>

Apart from the great weekly magazines, documentary photography also was produced by some government agencies. The New Deal’s Farm Security Administration (FSA) hired dozens of photographers to scour the country and, as Jack Delano, one of these photographers said, “search for the heart of the American people.” Some 80,000 photos were taken for FSA between 1935 and 1943. Although the project ended in 1943, the pictures continued to circulate. Some became phenomenally famous, such as Dorothea Lange’s “Migrant Mother” or Walker Evans’ photos of Alabama sharecroppers.<sup>3</sup>

Hollywood and photojournalistic images, despite their very obvious differences, did share certain features. There was an ease of expression and a gracefulness about them, even when they took on somber subjects. They drew the eye in, held its attention. They were fascinating to stare at.

During the twenties and thirties, Hollywood learned how to weave countless bits of film together into seemingly seamless stories. By the forties, cameras were mobile and directors and editors had mastered techniques like the “eyeline match,” “180° rule,” and “shot/reverse shot” to move action along in scenes. The introduction of incandescent lighting in the twenties helped directors use light to draw viewers’ eyes to particular points on the screen or to create mood. Light no longer just lit a set.<sup>4</sup> An ethos grew in Hollywood, one not as strong among European filmmakers, to create smoothly edited product. By mid-century, it was the conventional wisdom: “The use of pictorial continuity is the secret of *good* movie making.”<sup>5</sup>

The results were dazzling. While all the techniques had been developed in the teens and early twenties, it still took some time for them to work into routine practice. But by the forties, classic Hollywood films like *Casablanca* or *Citizen Kane*, fade in and out, their cameras roll along as actors move, their lighting pulls our eyes to particular figures or objects. Each scene is carefully sutured together, linking establishing shots, close-ups, character reactions, and cuts back and forth between speakers. Within each shot, characters are posed with nearly the same care that Caravaggio set subjects in his paintings. There was nothing casual about it.

The elaborate staging and editing was done in a way to make the final product seem utterly effortless, to pull attention away from the movie-making process and to the characters and story. Directors didn’t care that movie goers didn’t know what the “shot/reverse shot” was. They wanted to keep the public staring at the screen, eyes riveted on the unfolding stories. The

staging and editing were elaborate devices to keep people fascinated with the images but ignorant of the mechanics. Some of the technology was there before the thirties, and all of the particular editing techniques had been invented earlier. But by the middle of the thirties, it had been codified into a system. There was a way to do it now. These were movies, not plays on film.

The documentary photographers of the thirties and forties had their own craft and technology. The photojournalistic movement owes its origins in large part to a new sort of camera – the leica. The leica was the first small, hand-held camera that could produce high quality pictures. In the early 1900s Lewis Hine, the photographer of American slums, had to carry his box camera and set it upon a tripod. It was big, clumsy, and Hine often had to pose his subjects. The leica, on the other hand, was light, easy to carry, easy to use. Its shutter speed was phenomenal for the time, allowing it to catch unposed action. Invented in 1911 by Oscar Barnack, a German microscope technician, the leica was mass produced for the first time in 1925. Germany's first photomagazine appeared the next year. In the United States during the thirties and forties, every major *Life* photographer except Margaret Bourke-White used a leica.

Technology might have made photojournalism possible, but its characteristic style was not dictated by the camera. Photojournalism, and documentary photography more widely conveyed an attitude about the image. While the leica allowed swift unposed action to be captured cleanly on film, on other occasions documentary photos could still be as carefully crafted as any Hollywood production. According to Arthur Rothstein, one leading documentary photographer, the picture taker had to be “not only a cameraman but a scenarist, dramatist, and director as well.” Roy Stryker, who ran the FSA documentary photography project, argued that there were “times when you simply have to pose your model.” The key, for Stryker, was how you did it, “honestly” or “dishonestly.” It did not have to be natural. It had to look natural.

Henry Luce, the owner-editor of *Life*, put in another way: picture-takers should use “fakery in allegiance to the truth.”<sup>6</sup>

Documentary photography, then, wasn't defined by its artlessness as much as by the feel of artlessness. Most important, the image had to be more than just a picture, more than an illustration of an event. Form and content had to merge to say something important. Wilson Hicks, the Executive Editor of *Life* in the forties, recalled that the magazine's photographers had to grasp “the camera's extraordinary capacity for recording more than a mere image.” Good photojournalists used pictures to grasp an “essence interpreted.” The great and famous pictures of the era – Dorothea Lange's “Migrant Mother,” Robert Capa's soldier falling in Spain, Margaret Bourke-White's 1945 Buchenwald photos, Joe Rosenthal's picture of the flag raising at Iwo Jima – all echo far beyond the event recorded. There was great faith that great photographs could capture the soul of the nation and that adversity would not destroy the human spirit. They were mythic in stature.

In this they were just like classic Hollywood movies. Hollywood didn't express as much pain as the photos did. Yet their images were just as mythic. The stories were fables – of everyman fighting corruption (*Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*), of overcoming class and gender divides (*It Happened One Night*), of confronting the unknown (*Wizard of Oz*), of learning to stand up for yourself (*The Grapes of Wrath*). The convention of generally uplifting endings limited Hollywood's range but also helped shape the films. They defined values to the nation-at-large. Academics, literary people, and journalists of the time would commonly claim that movies had “the power to create the nation's myths and dreams.”<sup>7</sup>

Apart from the desire to guide the eye and the national mythic focus, the images of the 1940s were shaped by the law. Censors finally got firm hold of the movie industry in 1934.

The Production Code, in effect until the 1960s, seriously limited what might be shown on screen. There needed to be a generally uplifting ending to most movies. And there could be no undress and only the most chaste contact between the sexes. Even mild profanity was strictly forbidden. Viewers had to fill in all the blanks with their imaginations. World War II only intensified the censorship. The most censored war in US history touched film, newsreels, and magazines. Movie scripts had to be OK'd by the Office of War Information. Pictures had to be cleared by Army censors. Between 1942 and 1945, the nation monitored its images like no other time in its history.<sup>8</sup>

Some visual modes existed outside of these parameters. "Blue movies" and "dirty pictures" quietly circulated at the margins of the culture. And in the open, the popular tabloid press fed an appetite for the sensational and violent that no censors tried to stop.<sup>9</sup> Pin-ups also became popular in the 1940s. And while they might now be seen as a hint of the future, at the time they had a patriotic feel about them, a healthy diversion for the boys in uniform. But while the system was not seamless, it was still powerful. Law, technology and aesthetics merged to produce pictures that were meant to be great summaries of the nation's soul. The mid-century visual culture of the United States strove to find mythic images and stories to capture the essence of American life.

### ***Fade-Out***

This system slowly crumbled during the 1950s and 1960s. The first sign was shrinking movie attendance. In 1946, the industry pulled in \$1.7 billion, the top box-office take in American film history. But by 1953, weekly movie attendance was only 25% of what it was five years before. And the decline continued. By 1962, movie box office receipts were only \$900

million. In those same years production costs were rising, really putting the pinch on the industry.<sup>10</sup>

Although the decline started before the explosion of television, the competition of the new medium after 1950 intensified the pressure on Hollywood. TVs were in about 1 million homes in 1949 but in 10 million by 1952. Within a few years they were ubiquitous, contributing to the decline in movie attendance and the death of the movie newsreel. TV news provided the same images, more immediately. Newsreels now appeared to be old-fashioned, and by 1960 they had no important role in the distribution of the news.

TV, moreover, produced a new sort of image. TV pictures were, at first, grainy and without the clarity of movie images. Even when the quality improved later in the decade, television remained different. The larger than life image of the movie was gone. TV images could not overwhelm you, draw you in to their magic the way movies did. Television did its work differently, by allowing the viewer to watch in a comfortable, private setting. One could stretch out on the couch, lounge on the floor, talk during the show, even watch in underwear. TV's attraction was not its pictures, but the comfort and privacy of the viewing environment.

Other changes in the visual culture were underway at the same time. A stream of darker images about American life began to surface outside the grimy world of tabloid newspapers. The vogue for film noir was one sign. Films like *Mildred Pierce*(1945) or *Out of the Past* (1947) explored murder, female duplicity, and the general hardness of urban life. Such themes were portrayed as the norm rather than the exception, and unleavened by any happy ending. The visual style of noir helped build the mood. Interiors tended to be dark and grim. Characters often found themselves enveloped in shadows, contributing to the pervasive sense of unease and



claustrophobia. Bleak and shadowy streetscapes painted a menacing picture of the modern city. Noir was a black and white medium at the moment when Hollywood was going color.

The same darkness turned up in the increasing creepiness of Alfred Hitchcock's films through the fifties and early sixties – *Rear Window*, *Vertigo*, *Psycho*, *The Birds*. Similarly, Robert Frank's 1959 book of photos, *The Americans*, displays a very different United States from the great photojournalism of the thirties and forties. Harsh light and grainy texture created a grittier, bleaker mood than the Depression-era pictures of a Dorothea Lange. While Lange portrayed poverty, there was also a dignity to her subjects. They were holding up under adversity. Frank's late 1950s camera, however, was less forgiving. The bleakness was not offset.

The censorship that had kept the system running was also breaking down. The legal regime that had propped up the 1940s image culture came under attack shortly after the war ended. By December 1953 it was possible for *Playboy* to publish without recrimination. The now-famous nude pictures of Marilyn Monroe appeared in that first issue. In the first few days after publication, Hugh Hefner kept waiting for the police to pull the magazine from the newsstands, but they never turned up.

In 1952, the US Supreme Court overturned a 1915 decision and gave movies First Amendment protection. The decision, though, did not end censorship immediately. In 1934, the Motion Picture Association of America, Hollywood's trade organization, established the Production Code Administration (PCA) to review—and censor—scripts and images. The 1952 ruling did not eliminate the PCA but it did give directors new courage to fight it. In the next few years, various movie makers locked horns with the PCA: Otto Preminger for his light sex-farce, *The Moon is Blue* (1953), and his grim portrayal of heroin addiction, *The Man with the*

*Golden Arm* (1955); Laslo Benedek for his tale of roaming motorcycle hoodlums, *The Wild One* (1953); and Elia Kazan for *Baby Doll* (1956), his nasty Southern gothic of adolescent female sexuality and slobbering men on the prowl.<sup>11</sup>

Censors were on the defensive but they weren't dead. Kazan had to negotiate scene changes in *Baby Doll* just as he had five years earlier for *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Through the fifties and early sixties, such negotiations continued. The movie industry was not willing to make a full-front challenge. In the 1950s and the early 1960s, new things were portrayed on film, but there were still limits to what was shown.<sup>12</sup>

The same was true of other visual media. Few in the magazine business wanted to challenge conventions. *Life*, *Look*, and the *Saturday Evening Post* all fixed limits on what they portrayed. Television was the most conservative. In the 1950s, shows like *The Adventures of Superman*, *Father Knows Best*, and *Gunsmoke* portrayed a strong, self-confident, and benign United States of America. Nuclear families were intact. Leaders cared about the public good. "For truth, justice, and the American way" was how Superman was introduced each week during the show's run from 1952 to 1958. Even into the next decade, family fare like *Bewitched* or *The Dick Van Dyke Show* was the norm. *The Beverly Hillbillies* and *Bonanza* remained among the most popular shows on television. Between October 1967 and April 1968, the most watched television shows in the country were *The Andy Griffith Show*, *The Lucy Show*, *Gomer Pyle*, *USMC*, and *Gunsmoke*, all of them far, far removed from any counterculture influence.<sup>13</sup> Despite the occasional "daring" show in the late sixties, TV was a very conservative medium.

Still, the fade-out of the old system continued. Despite a renewed idealism among early 1960s photojournalists, particularly around the civil rights movement, the long-term trend was against striking print pictures. Television news and shifting patterns of advertising revenue

would soon kill the great photo-based magazines. *The Saturday Evening Post* died in February 1969; *Look* in October 1971. *Life* hung on until December 1972 when it too shut down. The old photojournalism, with the centrality of the photo-essay and iconic picture, was dead.

The old censorship system, the movie Production Code, staggered along into the mid-sixties, but then it too died. In the end, a British movie directed by an Italian struck one of the final blows. Michelangelo Antonioni's 1967 film, *Blow-Up*, broke all the old rules. *Blow-Up* was the story of a hip London fashion photographer who accidentally took pictures of a murder in a London park. Since there was nudity in the film, the producers worried about the censors. After a bout of hand-wringing, they decided simply to ignore the censors and release the film in the United States without any rating. The film did well and there were no repercussions. The old censorship system was now dead.<sup>14</sup>

*Blow-Up* marked the end of an era in another way. In the film, the photographer only suspects that he has seen the murder being committed. When he returns to the park, the body is gone. He finds no trace of the crime there. He returns to his darkroom, gradually blowing up his photos in larger and larger versions to find proof of the crime in the background. But as the picture gets larger, the resolution gets worse. In the end, the resolution is so poor that that the pictures appear as incomprehensible fields of dots. They can't provide evidence that there ever was a murder.

For over a century, since the invention of the daguerreotype, it was an incessantly invoked truism that the camera helped us see more clearly. It was a window on the world, leaving evidence of what wasn't immediately viewable. *Blow-Up*, however, suggested that the camera did not necessarily leave us with a better picture of the world. In a few years, the idea that the camera captured reality would be increasingly suspect.

## *The New Regime*

In the 1970s and 1980s, a new image culture started to take shape. It was a far more varied than before. At the same time, however, there were fewer icons. Nothing defined the country the way the great mid-century photojournalism had. Movies didn't code national myths with the same confidence. The rise of niche marketing was one factor. Corporate culture in practically every industry marketed to precisely delineated audiences rather than to the whole nation. The rise of cable television was an expression of this marketing. There were now fewer images that everyone saw.<sup>15</sup>

Separating the whole into its parts, however, was not the only force at work. Video and film-editing became so quick-cutting that images seemed to blink right by viewers. Similarly, the rise of multicultural sentiment made everyone more suspicious of mid-century presumptions about images. The nation was too diverse to be caught in any single image.

Pictures multiplied. There were more of them, more types of them, and more machines on which to watch them. Video games, cable TV, the internet, and home video cameras all became popular in the twenty years after 1975. The nation now seemed to be drowning in pictures. The box itself proliferated – in the late fifties the average home had one television in it but by the late 1990s the norm was 2.9 sets per household. 65% of teenagers had televisions in their bedrooms.<sup>16</sup> In the 1950s, TVs outside the home were generally found only in the local tavern. In the eighties and nineties, they spread to sports bars, hotel lobbies, casual restaurants, doctors' waiting rooms, airports. New channels surfaced for televisions in special places – the Airport Network, the Food Court Entertainment Network, Channel One in the public schools. By 1993, over 28 million people watched television outside their homes each week.<sup>17</sup>

The country increasingly did not look at the same pictures. In the forties, movies, newsreels, and the newsmagazines were generally marketed to the great mass of adult Americans. In the 1970s and 1980s, however, marketing to segments of the population took over. Apart from the rare movie blockbuster, people tended to watch different things. Magazines were now addressed to increasingly fine age-group gradations. Cable split up the TV audience in the 1980s and 1990s. There were stations for kids, teenagers, adults, and seniors, for men, for women, for African Americans, Hispanics, country music fans, news junkies, sports nuts, old movie buffs, and more. During these same years, the number of people going to the movies continued to shrink. Hollywood ceased to define the cultural center of the nation. No image really did. To be sure, certain images could still capture the nation's attention – Bill Clinton denying he had sex with “that woman,” the Challenger space shuttle exploding – but day-to-day, the country's viewing habits were increasingly fragmented.

The picture itself got smaller, diminishing the power of the image. First there was TV in the fifties and sixties. The “small screen” was starting its takeover. Then, in the late seventies and after, videotape and then DVD allowed people to watch films on television. This changed both the scale and the experience. Movie pictures could now be watched with the same casualness of a TV show. Consuming movies was less of a special event – set off in a distinct social space with the expectation of quiet, sustained attention – than it had been at mid-century. By the new millenium, teens were starting to download whole movies on the internet, making the images even smaller than TV. 1940s Hollywood had been larger than life. By 2000, moving images were increasingly smaller than life.

One place to see the diminished role of the image was in *People* Magazine, the Time-Life Corporation's replacement for *Life*. *People* was first published in 1974, just over a year after

*Life* had folded. Almost immediately, *People* became one of the top selling magazines in the nation, just as *Life* had been in the 1940s and 1950s. The differences between the two were instructive. The shift in names caught something important – from trying to record modern life to chatting with celebrities. The difference in pictures was just as telling. There were actually more pictures in a typical *People* issue than in *Life*. Yet where *Life* struggled to make the image open out to something large and important, *People*'s photos were smaller and generally inconsequential. Two sorts of shots overwhelmingly dominated the new magazine – the home family snapshot and the paparazzi shot. One tried to reproduce what families did with their home cameras – genial images of friends and family in comfortable surroundings; the other was the voyeuristic ambush of the famous. Both were ephemeral. Unlike its Time-Life forerunner, *People* did not produce memorable pictures. It didn't try to. *People*'s cascade of photos was passing eye-candy.

Even when the pictures were not physically smaller, the new image culture was faster paced, more frenetic. While the 1940s films—“moving pictures”—were meant to flow smoothly, the new image culture of the 1980s and 1990s seemed less coherent, far jumpier. Increasingly, the motion itself – rather than any story or myth – was what fascinated.

There was an explosion in special effects. Spectacle, of course, has always been a part of the movies: the burning of Atlanta in *Gone with the Wind* (1939) or the splendor of the Emerald City in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). Yet beginning with the first James Bond movie (1962), the poetically slow motion deaths in *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), and the cavernous portrayal of outer space in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), Hollywood spent more time (and vast sums of money) finding new ways to create stunning images of violence, mayhem, and the extraterrestrial.

The creeping trend turned to a gallop in the seventies. The mayhem of the popular disaster movies (the *Airport* series from 1970 to 1979 or *The Towering Inferno* in 1974) were done without any new special effects, yet they had great explosions. Two 1977 films, *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, combined new and elaborate use of older techniques like optical compositing and model building with innovative early computer animation to make all sorts of action seem possible in outer space. And while these were widely considered the turning point in the history of special effects, there were other, less well-known innovations. Viewers of the first *Godfather* (1972) watched Sonny Corleone's (James Caan) murder in grisly detail, thanks to both the slow motion photography and the perfection of a small squib put under fake skin that simulated with great realism the effect of flesh and blood bursting after a bullet hit. By the end of the decade, special effects people were nearly as important as the actors.<sup>18</sup>

In the 1990s came the digital revolution. George Lucas' company, Industrial Light and Magic, became a hub for the new technology, although many others were also involved. In movies like *Terminator 2* (1991), *Jurassic Park* (1993), and *Forrest Gump* (1994), digital moviemaking matured. Whole characters were now created digitally. Digital backdrops were commonplace. There were flashy new techniques like "morphing," the seamless transformation of one shape into another. (Morphing was an important part of *Terminator 2*.) Perhaps most important was the digital editing of film. Once film could be shifted to a computer, edited there, and then put back on film, all without loss of quality, there was practically no end to what stunning things moviemakers could portray. The awesome tilting of the Titanic in James Cameron's 1997 epic is a perfect example. The hundreds of bodies sliding down the deck into the ocean were digital inventions.

By the nineties, the new technology was changing popular moviemaking. Some critics have overemphasized how much recent computer technology has changed the product. Violence and spectacle have been a key to mega-popularity since the 1970s. Still, it was the case that by the nineties, stunning explosions and digital aliens, freaks, or dinosaurs were disproportionately part of the nation's most popular films.<sup>19</sup>

The very "wowness" of the effects, moreover, often replaced character development. Spectacle overwhelmed story. Unlike the classic Hollywood cinema that meshed national myths with seamless editing, for these movies the effects were the attraction. The critic Scott Bukatman termed flics like *Dick Tracy* (1990) or *Jurassic Park* (1993) "theme park" films. On amusement park rides, we care about the thrills, not any story. These new movies were the same. Hostile critics complained of "rootless, textureless images," of lousy plots and one-dimensional characters. Most of the independent film movement, at least in the eighties and early nineties, was devoted to bucking mainstream Hollywood by making smaller movies with interesting characters and no extravagant effects (another sort of niche marketing). But mainstream movie goers, most importantly young males, loved the new movies. Big, flashy, jumping pictures – computerized dinosaurs galloping toward us, chiseled-bodied tough guys impossibly leaping clear of fantastic explosions, martial arts heroes and heroines running up trees – these were now among the most popular images on the screen.<sup>20</sup>

The new flashiness invaded television as well. Early television, like mid-century cinema, rarely called attention to its "made" quality. It preferred what has been called a "zero-degree style," so little emphasis on style as if to seem that it wasn't there at all. In the 1970s and 1980s, however, electronic nonlinear editing machines, new fast film stock, and the ability to warp, move, and bend images in editing rooms were all new. In the 1980s, television production



started to shift away from the “zero-degree” aesthetic. Shows like *Miami Vice* used the new technology to create images that called attention to their very stylishness. Other shows, like the popular *Hill Street Blues* and later *NYPD Blue*, adopted exaggerated cinema-verité. These jumpy images made with hand-held cameras had the paradoxical effect of at the same time both seeming to be very naturalistic and so unusual that viewers clearly saw them as artfully constructed for a TV show.<sup>21</sup>

The new special effects changed the viewing experience at all levels. Even ads and promos were a part of it. In the 1960s, the famous logo for NBC was the peacock – a single picture, unmoving, on the screen for a few seconds to identify the network. In the late seventies, however, such logos started to move. Now in network promos, ads of all kinds, and news and sporting events, images, graphics, and logos floated, jumped, bent backwards, and sailed on and off screen. Viewers often didn’t realize all that had changed, how much of their television experience – prime-time, news, ads, network promos, sports – was different than before, how much of their attention was now being grabbed by jumping pictures and graphics. Insiders, however, knew what was going on. By the early 1980s, many veteran newsmen were indignant. One observed that “bells ring, pictures flip and tumble, and everybody seems to be shouting at me.... The news is bad enough without added jingle and flash.”<sup>22</sup>

One of the most striking new visual genres of the late twentieth century directly attacked Hollywood’s continuity editing. The music video premiered in August 1981 during MTV’s first broadcast moments. Within a few years, the video network was a huge success, mirroring the growth of cable in general at that time. From the beginning, music videos simply ignored continuity editing. Each video generally mixed three sorts of shots randomly: musicians performing, a fantasy motif or two, and good looking women for males to look at. Individual

shots were extremely short, with an editing cut every 2 to 3 seconds. Scenes shifted abruptly. Jump-cuts were de rigeur. Perspective changed with similar abruptness. Unlike classic Hollywood cinema, videos were not sutured together to appear as if one shot “naturally” led to another. Quite the contrary, discontinuity was the goal. It was the rare video that created defined narratives with beginnings, middles, and ends. Instead, video makers created moods. Surrealism was an important visual forebear.<sup>23</sup>

Videotape was remarkably important for the new visual culture. Videotape had been large and unwieldy in the 1950s, principally used for television shows. In the late sixties and early seventies, the size of the tape became more manageable, the costs shrank, and the general ease of use increased dramatically. In 1974, the first commercial computerized videotape editing machine was put on the market. At the same time, relatively lightweight video cameras became available for news outlets. Now “live from the scene” reporting was possible. News could take on a less-edited, more cinema-verite style. The OJ Simpson car chase (1994) and the beating of Rodney King by the Los Angeles police (1991) – events that captivated the whole nation – were only seen because of the videotape revolution of the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>24</sup>

But when news was edited, there was the same motion, the same artfulness that appeared in ads and sports. Once computerized video editing machines came on the market in the mid-1970s, news editors could effortlessly rearrange image and sound. Editing film (as opposed to video) had required the cutting and splicing of the actual tape, a time-consuming, clumsy process that was unsuited to the daily deadline pressures of the evening news. The new equipment, however, allowed video to be edited with the press of a button. Moreover, unlike the splicing of film, which could not be readily undone, digital editing could be turned around with just another click of the mouse. The ease of electronic editing left ample time for experimentation even in the

daily news shows. The result was increasingly slick meshing of image and sound, with far more editing cuts and montage than before, and far less uninterrupted talk. In 1968, the average uninterrupted time a politician spoke on network news was about 40 seconds; twenty years later, it was just 9 seconds. Politicians themselves altered their speechmaking to develop the one, catchy “sound bite” that would make the news. The new style changed the way reporters worked as well. An Executive Producer for CBS news observed that because of the new pacing, “the correspondent is not allowed to talk more than twelve or fifteen seconds before there is some intermediate sound.” An NBC reporter observed that he was now “making little movies,” directing camera crews, writing script to illustrate images, and spending a lot less time than before searching out information.<sup>25</sup>

The technology made these new images possible, but they were not determined by the technology. They were part of a new style, a new aesthetic. “Special effects were no longer just a way of producing difficult or impossible shots – they were becoming the star of the show, and audiences wanted to see more.”<sup>26</sup> Newsroom editors looked for flashier, quicker paced news stories. Unlike the zero-degree style of earlier television, by the 1990s many directors were committed to “*showing off* their proficiency at *picture making*.”<sup>27</sup>

Slick editing, fantastic special effects, cinema verite, and direct attacks on continuity editing all contradicted the effortless feel of the mid-century popular visual culture. But one last innovation did as much as anything else to increase the discontinuity and jumpiness of the new image culture. Between the mid-eighties and the mid-nineties, the number of households with television remote controls jumped from 29% to 90%. This device altered viewing habits dramatically. New slang like “grazing,” “zapping,” and “surfing” described characteristic uses of the remote, such as running quickly through all channels, following multiple shows

simultaneously, and avoiding commercials. Research, in case you needed any convincing, showed that men wanted to control the remotes and flipped far more frequently than women. The result, for the men with the gadgets and the women who loved them (or who just put up with them), was one more way that in now appeared normal that images would quickly leap about without a care for the continuity between them.<sup>28</sup>

### ***The Vanishing Censor***

Something else contributed to the new sense of disorder in the visual culture – the erosion of censorship. Images that would have been illegal a generation before – most notably of people having sex – were now so easily accessible that a time traveler from the past would have been astounded. The inability to contain such images contributed mightily to the widespread sense of images out of control.

Movies and magazines were the first to change. Pressed from the early 1950s, the old film censorship system fell apart completely in the mid-1960s. A string of Supreme Court decisions in the 1950s and 1960s liberalized obscenity law. Shots of frontal female nudity started to appear in movies like *The Pawnbroker* (1965), *Blow-Up* (1967), or *Five Easy Pieces* (1970). In response, between the late sixties and mid-eighties the Motion Picture Association of America developed a new system that differentiated between G, PG, PG-13, R, and X movies. Unlike under the old Production Code, in the new regime movies weren't censored, they were rated. One result was that simulated sex scenes started appearing in movies like *Last Tango in Paris* (1972) and *Don't Look Back* (1973), the former portraying anal sex. Over the next few decades, slowly, more taboos peeled away. In the early 1990s, Hollywood for the first time

portrayed glimpses of genitalia of both men (*The Sheltering Sky*, 1990) and women (*Basic Instinct*, 1992).<sup>29</sup>

Mainstream Hollywood, however, looked tame when compared to its nastier cousin, the porn industry. The popularity of soft-core pornography like Russ Meyer's *Vixen* (1968) or Just Jaeckin's *Emmanuelle* series (1974 to 1977) was one thing. In 1971, though, hard core pornography, showing real intercourse and oral sex, became readily available to large audiences. Between June 1972 and June 1973, the "big three," *Deep Throat*, *Behind the Green Door*, and *The Devil in Miss Jones*, all produced in 1971 and 1972, earned more in theaters than almost every mainstream movie.<sup>30</sup> The porn industry put itself on really firm footing, however, a few years later. In the late seventies, pornography, just like television news, shifted from film to videotape. The porn industry's discreetly but widely marketed tapes meant that viewers could watch it on their VCRs in the privacy of their homes. They no longer had to venture to some seedy downtown theater. No one had a good handle on who exactly was watching pornography, but that was exactly the point. Porn had become a private pleasure. By 1985, it was credibly estimated that 65 million X-rated videotapes were played in American homes each year.<sup>31</sup>

Magazines addressed to male voyeurism underwent a parallel shift. *Playboy* found itself being challenged in the United States by a rawer *Penthouse Magazine* in 1969. (It was first published in Britain in 1965.) *Penthouse* reached the height of its popularity in the 1970s and 1980s. In August 1971, it showed female genitalia for the first time. *Playboy* followed five months later.<sup>32</sup> In 1980s, *Penthouse* found itself gradually outflanked by Larry Flint's even rawer magazine, *Hustler*. In response, *Penthouse* in the late 1990s added pictures of men's penises, oral sex, as well as close-ups of penises entering vaginas. *Playboy*, meanwhile, seemed hopelessly passé.

A variety of factors contributed to the new obscenity. Technology was one. Videotape, as mentioned above, changed the porn industry. The regulatory environment also mattered. HBO and Cinemax, with their doses of nakedness and sex, only became commercially viable when the Federal Communications Commission opened the door to the cable industry in 1972.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, the Supreme Court simply gave more space to sexual images than they had in the past. Even the outer limits of what the court would tolerate, first announced in *Miller v. California* (1973), did not stem the porn-flow. Commercial pressures were a third force propelling the new explicitness. The men's magazines had market pressures to keep up with each other, and to not lose audience to the porn movie trade.

Television held on longer and never went nearly as far as other media, but by the 1990s, the older codes were reeling there as well. Television in the 1950s had adopted the same production code used by the film industry. While there were some tangles with censors in the 1960s, controversy really accelerated in the early 1970s. Beginning with *All in the Family* (first aired in January 1971) and its spin-off, *Maude* (Fall 1972), prime-time TV was willing to tackle new, controversial ground. "During the season that began last week," *Time* magazine reported in 1972, "programmers will actually be competing with each other to trace the largest number of touchy – and heretofore forbidden – ethnic, sexual and psychological themes. Religious quirks, wife swapping, child abuse, venereal disease – all the old taboos will be toppling."<sup>34</sup> A few years later, the new thematic explicitness was joined by new visuals. "Jiggle" or "T & A" shows like *Charlie's Angels* added a dollop of adolescent titillation to prime time line-ups. Between 1950 and 1970, the main pressure groups trying to alter TV content were liberals who pushed for more black faces and integrated programs. At the end of the 1960s, feminists joined this liberal push, looking for better portrayals of women. In the next decade, however, conservatives took

over as the dominant critics of TV. New organizations, mostly led by Christian ministers, organized to complain about the “new era” of TV: “reckless hedonism and hostility toward morals, religion, marriage, free enterprise, family, and country.”<sup>35</sup>

This expansion of the possible had limits. TV images were not nearly as explicit as movies or magazines. Still, the 1970s shift created controversy and was one factor in the turn of evangelical Christians to conservative politics in the late seventies. Certainly, this was one piece of what mobilized evangelical Christians for Ronald Reagan in 1980.

But one paradox of the last decades of the century is that while conservatives have been winning an increasing number of elections, they have not been able to change the visual culture. Ronald Reagan’s 1980 victory did not turn TV back to the 1950s. Instead, during the 1980s, images were appearing on the mass media that would have been unthinkable just a few years before. The rise of cable – particularly the channels outside the standard cable package-- featured nudity, simulated sex, and foul language. With cable stations winning more viewers, the networks responded in kind. In 1992, the popular comedy *Seinfeld* ran an episode about a contest among friends to see who could avoid masterbating for the longest time. The next year, the Reverend Donald Wildmon of the American Family Association denounced the popular police drama *NYPD Blue* as “soft core porn” for its signature shots of unclad rear ends and occasional short sex scenes (breasts and genitalia tastefully obscured). In 1994, the *Roseanne* show aired a lesbian kiss. All this appeared on network television in prime time. (In the lobby of Rockefeller Center, NBC happily sold t-shirts commemorating the *Seinfeld* episode.) By 2003, *TV Guide* was asking “how much freedom is too much?”<sup>36</sup> The idea of an evening “family time” safe from such material folded under the networks’ struggle to prevent the audience from switching to cable.

Far outweighing the erosion of TV censorship in the 1990s was the emergence of internet pornography. With the explosion of the world wide web between 1992 and 1996, literally millions of images of every conceivable kind of porn were now entering homes, school computers, and public libraries. Kids had enormously easy access. With both parents now commonly working, afternoons after school was becoming prime-time for porn viewing! Congress tried twice to regulate this in the 1990s, hoping to force filters onto school and public library computers to block this material. Unfortunately, these filters also blocked sites with information about birth control, abortion, and even sites devoted to preaching abstinence. Although Congress was supported by both the Clinton and Bush administrations, the first law was struck down by the Supreme Court; the second is still being tested in the courts. As late as 2003, the new images were still easily available in thousands of homes and in your local public library.

### ***Drowning in Pictures***

By the year 2000, American visual culture differed fundamentally from that of 1950. The image culture seemed more chaotic, more out of control. Visual culture seemed less a force of integration than of fragmentation. And while there were always cross currents to complicate the story, there were three important changes in the way that the image – the very nature of the image – was perceived.

There was a growing sense that images did not portray reality. Since the mid-nineteenth century, the photograph had been widely seen as accurately portraying the world. In the 1950s and early sixties, the dominant position of intellectuals was that both photography and the movies had some intrinsic bias toward realism, thanks to that trace of the real world inevitably



captured on a film negative. This connection to “the real,” moreover, was something celebrated, not condemned, by these intellectuals.<sup>37</sup> The dominant mid-century popular aesthetics – documentary photography, continuity editing, and zero-degree style television – reinforced these presumptions. Reproduced images were a “window on the world.”

But digital culture tore a hole in this perception. Indeed, crowds, explosions, and complete characters were now conjured up in computers with no link to reality. Then, artfully meshed with film, these digital inventions were inserted into movie scenes where reality and invention mixed promiscuously. Digital photographs, at the same time, increasingly smoothed edges, removed blemishes, and made pictures look better, while also raising questions about their “realness.” As early as 1982, *National Geographic* found itself embroiled in controversy when it was discovered that it had digitally moved two pyramids to create a more attractive cover picture. In August 1989, *TV Guide*’s scandal came from putting Oprah Winfrey’s head on Anne Margaret’s body in an effort to create a slimmer Oprah. By that year, the *Wall Street Journal* estimated that a full 10% of color pictures published in the United States had been digitally altered.<sup>38</sup>

TV’s new stylishness raised its own questions about realism. The cool visual brio of a show like *Miami Vice* called attention to the craft of making pictures instead of hiding it. Music videos were even more dramatic, aggressively parading their anti-realism. “Rather than the ‘window on the world’ concept that was so important in the early years of television,” one observer noted, “contemporary televisuality flaunts ‘videographic art-objects’ of the world.”<sup>39</sup>

Intellectuals started attacking the very idea of realism. In 1968, the French literary critic Roland Barthes wrote an influential essay suggesting that there was no such thing as “realism.” There were, instead, “reality effects,” assorted techniques that successfully created the illusion

that the artifice was real. Translated into English, this essay proved to be a seminal contribution for contemporary discussion of visual culture. Within a decade, countless American academics were writing books on “the social construction of realism.” Nor was this the position only of academics. By the early nineties, variations could be easily found in *The New York Times* and other mainstream media.<sup>40</sup>

Visual culture also now seemed to be disruptive. Since the middle of the nineteenth-century, photographs were thought to stop time, to interrupt the flow of experience. A photo forever captured the fleeting moment. Even the new “moving pictures” of the twentieth century did not dramatically change that perception. Especially once the censorship system was in place, movies tended to reinforce myth.

In the closing years of the century, however, production methods and new technology made the visual culture less soothing, far jerkier. Music videos ignored continuity editing. Pictures now jumped, warped, and faded in and out of our screens. The aggressive violence of the contemporary action film portrayed worlds out of control. The kids were watching porn at the local library – or in their own homes when the adults weren’t around. Pictures were increasingly spoken of as something that upset the culture instead of stabilizing it.

Finally, the new visual culture was one where images were not intensely watched but glanced at casually. Grasping the difference between *Life* and *People* made this point: just as many pictures now but none as iconic. So many of our images had become so random and fleeting that we look less carefully. The new visual culture was a culture of distraction.

In his famous 1936 essay, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” Walter Benjamin argued that in the modern industrial world we looked at movies distractedly.<sup>41</sup> Benjamin – who was thinking of avant-garde Soviet film with its heavy use of montage – had it

entirely wrong. At the very moment he was writing, Hollywood cinematographers had perfected the narrative, editing, and lighting techniques that drew the audience's eyes to the screen and kept them raptly staring. Beautiful sets, beautiful stars, and a story nicely packaged in a beginning, middle, and end – it was all designed not to distract us but to hold our attention. All of this, moreover, was consumed in dark, quiet theaters, with silent gazing at the screen the norm. Psychologists of the day contrasted the intensity of movie viewing with casual radio listening at home.<sup>42</sup> Classic Hollywood movies, in other words, wanted to draw us into their worlds. They were part of ongoing efforts, reaching back to the late nineteenth-century, of not only entertainers, but also of industrialists, psychologists, artists, and moralists, to make us pay attention.<sup>43</sup>

But if Benjamin was wrong in 1936, he is correct today. Increasingly, we view our images distractedly. We glance at televisions in sports bars or at the airport. In our homes, we watch and chat at the same time. We flip casually through internet images. When we watch a music video, the disjointed images catch the eye as the ear finds the music. While some early critics, such as Marshall McLuhan, thought that television demanded more attention, others saw it differently. The movie critic Pauline Kael spoke for many when she claimed that TV viewing, with “all its breaks and cuts, and the inattention, except for action” was contributing to the “destruction of the narrative sense.” People didn't want to follow detailed stories anymore.<sup>44</sup> By the end of the century, the spread of moving images to all sorts of public venues, the manic pace of digital editing, and the quick flip of the remote control and computer mouse has made such distracted viewing commonplace. The one grand exception was the video game, where intense concentration made virtuosos. But apart from that, there was far more skipping through images and far less gawking at them.

The drift from reality, the sense of disruptiveness, and the increasing distractedness of viewers all made critics nervous. Stark images of violence and sex were dehumanizing, or so the critics claimed. In the early nineties, the crassness of music videos and video games became part of what was called the “culture wars,” a series of clashes between cultural conservatives and cultural liberals about the shape and future of American art and entertainment.

In the next few years, the opposition grew. By the mid-1990s, opposition to the visual culture was not, as it had been in the late seventies, coming overwhelmingly from the right of the political spectrum. The widespread support for efforts to keep internet porn from kids was one sign. Nervous discussions about how hard it was to raise a child, and how the mass media did not help, were another. Recent polls showed solid support for the idea that mass media imagery had gotten out of control. When the singer Janet Jackson briefly bared her breast at in the 2004 Superbowl half-time show, there was national outrage.<sup>45</sup>

Yet despite the politicians, and despite the polls, not much really changed. “House of the Living Dead II” was still at the local video arcade. Kids continued to log onto porn websites when parents were at work. Various music videos gave lessons in lapdancing. Parents continued to struggle to keep young teens (even pre-teens) from seeing the simulated sex scenes now so common in popular movies.

The widespread concern did not lead to any dramatic cultural rollback. The inability to craft law able to satisfy even a fairly conservative Supreme Court was one reason. The suspicion that government censorship was not a good thing, no matter what, was another. The quiet and private enjoyment of porn by many adults was still a third. Finally, the sheer dazzle of the music video, internet, Hollywood explosions, TV flash, and video games was also undeniable. Their

energy was enormous, their creativity inescapable. They could be wildly entertaining, whatever their flaws. American media, with all its vulgarity and crassness, was loved by millions.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Raymond Fielding, *The American Newsreel, 1911-1967* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972).

<sup>2</sup> For the best discussion of *Life*, see Erika Doss, *Looking at Life Magazine* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), particularly the essays by Doss, Terry Smith, and James Baughman.

<sup>3</sup> For the Delano and Stryker quotes, see “Masters of Photography” webpage, [http://www.mastersofphotography.com/Directory/fsa/fsa\\_background.html](http://www.mastersofphotography.com/Directory/fsa/fsa_background.html). (viewed on July 18, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> On incandescent lighting and the increasing sophistication about lighting on movie sets, see “Art of Lighting Film Sets,” *New York Times*, February 22, 1925; “Art-Director Explains Intricate Task of Side-Lighting of Settings,” *New York Times*, August 15, 1926; “New Lighting for Movies,” *New York Times*, February 12, 1928.

<sup>5</sup> Arthur L. Gaskill and David A. Englander, *Pictorial Continuity: How to Shoot a Movie Story* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1947) p. 146.

<sup>6</sup> Edwin Rothstein, “Direction in the Picture Story,” in Willard Morgan, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Photography* 20 vols. (New York: National Educational Alliance, 1949) IV: 1356-57; Roy Stryker, “Documentary Photography,” in *Encyclopedia of Photography*, IV: 1372; Luce is quoted in Richard Whelan, *Robert Capa: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985) p. 119.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America*, rev. ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), p. 195.

<sup>8</sup> Gregory Black, *Hollywood Censored: Morality Codes, Catholics, and the Movies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); George Roeder, Jr., *The Censored War: American Visual Experience During World War II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

<sup>9</sup> On porn and the efforts to suppress it, see Jay Gertzman, *Bootleggers and Smuthounds: The Trade in Erotica, 1920-1940* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); on Weegee, see Miles Barth, *Weegee's World* (Bulfinch Press, 2000) and Weegee, *Weegee's New York, 1935-1960* (New York: teNeues, 2000).

<sup>10</sup> Gerald Mast, *A Short History of the Movies*, fifth edition, revised by Bruce Kawin (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1992), p. 275.

<sup>11</sup> Jon Lewis, *Hollywood v. Hard Core: How the Struggle over Censorship Saved the Modern Film Industry* (New York: New York University Press, 2000),

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> See the website, “TV Ratings,” <http://www.fiftiesweb.com/tv-ratings-60s.htm#67-68>. Viewed July 2003.

<sup>14</sup> Lewis, *Hollywood v. Hard Core*, pp. 146-48.

<sup>15</sup> On the rise of niche marketing, see Joseph Turow, *Breaking-Up America: Advertisers and the New Media World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf, 2003), pp. 292-344.

<sup>16</sup> Todd Gitlin, *Media Unlimited: How the Torrent of Images and Sound Overwhelms our Lives* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2001), pp. 17-18.

<sup>17</sup> “Morning Report: Where They're Watching,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 11, 1993; Frazier Moore, “From Schools to Truck Stops: ‘Place-Based’ Media Flourish,” *TV Guide* (March 1993) 7. Also see, Anna McCarthy, *Ambient Television: Visual Culture and Public Space* (Duke: Duke University Press, 2001).

<sup>18</sup> “Hollywood's Secret Star is the Special-Effects Man,” *New York Times*, May 1, 1977; “The Black Hole Casts the Computer as Movie Maker,” *New York Times*, December 16, 1979.

<sup>19</sup> For a casual, but undocumented, assertion about the shift in popular moviemaking from the 1970s to the 1990s, see José Arroyo, “Introduction,” in Arroyo, ed., *Action/Spectacle Cinema* (London: British Film Institute, 2000), pp.

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x-xi. It is worth remembering, though, that films like *Jaws*, *Jaws II*, *Star Wars*, *The Exorcist*, *Moonraker*, and *The Spy Who Loved Me* were among the most popular movies of the 1970s.

<sup>20</sup> On “theme park” films, see Scott Bukatman, “The End of Offscreen Space,” in Jon Lewis, ed., *The New American Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), p. 266; on “rootless, violent images,” see Warren Buckland, “Between Science Fact and Science Fiction,” *Screen* 40 (Summer 1999), p. 178. For the best overview of new special effects technology, see Richard Rickitt, *Special Effects: The History and Technique* (New York: Billboard Books, 2000). Other useful literature includes Stephen Keane, *Disaster Movies: The Cinema of Catastrophe* (Wallflower, 2001); Yvonne Tasker, *Spectacular Bodies: Gender, Genre and the Action Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1993); Michelle Person, *Special Effects: Still in Search of Wonder* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Brooks Landon, *The Aesthetics of Ambivalence: Rethinking Science Fiction Film in the Age of Electronic Reproduction* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1992).

<sup>21</sup> In general, see John Thornton Caldwell, *Telesuality: Style, Crisis, and Authority in American Television* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995).

<sup>22</sup> On network logos, see Margaret Morse, *Virtualities: Television, Media Art, and Cyberculture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), pp.74-80; the indignant newsman quoted is Charles Kuralt, “The New Enemies of Journalism,” in Les Brown and Savannah Waring Walker, eds., *Fast Forward: The New Television and American Society* (Kansas City: Andrews and McMeel, Inc, 1983) 95; also see, Av Westin, *Newswatch: How TV Decides the News* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), p. 51.

<sup>23</sup> On the background to MTV, see R. Serge Denisoff, *Inside MTV* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1988); for analysis of the videos, see P. Aufderheide, “Music Videos: The Look of the Sound,” *Journal of Communication* 36 (1986): 57-78; M. Kinder, “Music Video and the Spectator: Television, Ideology, and Dream,” *Film Quarterly* 34 (1984): 2-15; E. Ann Kaplan, *Rocking Around the Clock: Music Television, Postmodernism, and Consumer Culture* (New York: Methuen, 1987), pp. 33-88.

<sup>24</sup> Frank Davidoff, “Digital Recording for Television Broadcasting,” *Journal of the SMPTE* 84 (July 1975): 552; Thomas Battista and Joseph Flaherty, “The All-Electronic Newsgathering Station,” *Journal of the SMPTE* 84 (December 1975): 958-62.

<sup>25</sup> Kiku Adatto, *Picture Perfect: The Art and Artifice of Public Image Making* (New York: Basic Books, 1993) 25, 63; Lawrence Lichty, “Video versus Print,” *The Wilson Quarterly* 6 (1982): 52.

<sup>26</sup> Rickitt, *Special Effects*, p. 33.

<sup>27</sup> Caldwell, *Telesuality*, p. 152.

<sup>28</sup> Robert Bellamy, Jr. and James Walker, *Television and the Remote Control: Grazing on a Vast Wasteland* (New York: The Guildford Press, 1996). For statistics on household ownership of remotes, see pp. 1-2.

<sup>29</sup> See Jon Lewis, *Hollywood v. Hard Core: How the Struggle over Censorship Saved the Modern Film Industry* (New York: New York University Press, 2000).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p.192.

<sup>31</sup> For an excellent discussion of the shift to videotape, see Carolyn Bronstein, “Have You Seen *Deep Throat* Yet? American Culture and the Growth of the Commercial Sex Industry in the 1970s,” a chapter of her forthcoming, *Porn Tours: The Rise and Fall of the American Feminist Anti-Pornography Movement, 1976-1986*; for estimates of porn video circulation, Edward de Grazia, *Girls Lean Back Everywhere: The Law of Obscenity and the Assault on Genius* (New York: Random House, 1992) p. 583.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 578.

<sup>33</sup> William Donnelly, *The Confetti Generation: How the New Communications Technology is Fragmenting America* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1986), p. 80.

<sup>34</sup> “The Team Behind Archie Bunker & Co.,” *Time*, September 25, 1972.

<sup>35</sup> Mary Leis Coakley, *Rated X: The Moral Case Against TV* (New Rochelle: Arlington House, 1977), p. 13. For a discussion of the emergence of conservative critics of TV, see Kathryn Montgomery, *Target: Prime Time: Advocacy Groups and the Struggle over Entertainment Television* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) 27-50, 154-73.

<sup>36</sup> Steven Daly, “Blue Streak,” *TV Guide* (August 2-8, 2003), p. 28.

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, Sigfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960).

<sup>38</sup> On *National Geographic*, *TV Guide*, and the *Wall Street Journal*, see Vicki Goldberg and Robert Silberman, *American Photography: A Century of Images* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1999), p. 224.

<sup>39</sup> Caldwell, *Telesuality*, p. 152.

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<sup>40</sup> Roland Barthes, "L'Effect de reel," *Communications* 11 (1968): 84-89; for examples from the *Times*, see "New Picture Technologies Push Seeing Still Further From Believing," *New York Times*, July 3, 1989; and Andy Grunberg, "Ask It No Questions: The Camera Can Lie," *New York Times*, August 12, 1990; for examples in other mainstream media, see Jonathan Alter, "When Photographs Lie," *Newsweek* (July 30, 1990): 44-48; Robert Mathews, "When Seeing is Not Believing," *New Scientist* (October 16, 1993): 99-104.

<sup>41</sup> Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), pp. 217-51.

<sup>42</sup> Hadley Cantril and Gordon Allport, *The Psychology of Radio* (New York: Harper, 1934), pp. 14-16.

<sup>43</sup> Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000).

<sup>44</sup> See Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964); Pauline Kael, *I Lost It at the Movies* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1965), p. 9.

<sup>45</sup> For some polling data, see Daly, "Blue Streak," p. 34.