

Her

by

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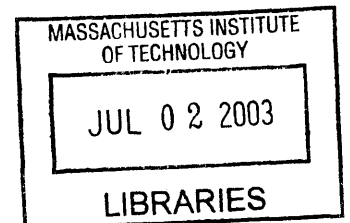
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ROTCH





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Submitted to the Department of Architecture  
On May 9, 2003 in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirement for the Degree of Master of Science in  
Visual Studies.

## ABSTRACT

The final project, *Her* is a ciné-roman on war that does not talk about war. Instead, *Her* hollows out the subject by focusing on places and events outside of war that exist simultaneously with war. Both compassion and aggression base themselves only on illusion, shaped by the false notion of the other. At the same time, without the illusion, there would be no interaction between self and the other; the possibility of co-existence finds itself on the impossibility of co-existence. The question of inter-subjectivity and co-existence is explored by casting two video-makers (a male and a female) in a real relationship to be the characters, actors, narrators, cameramen, interviewers, interviewed, and editors. Through this device, the boundaries are blurred between fiction and non-fiction; male and female perspectives; subject and the objects around it. Visiting Seoul, Hawaii, and Boston, they are subjects when they confess to the camera, objects when they shoot each other, and fictional bodies when they perform for the camera. The multiplicity embodied by the interaction between these two characters attests to their task of understanding a word that is incommensurable: war.

Thesis Supervisor: Joan Jonas  
Title: Professor of Visual Arts



Deep Regards to

Nina Yuen

Joe Gibbons

Joan Jonas

My family

Luis Carcamo-Huechante

And

Chris Marker

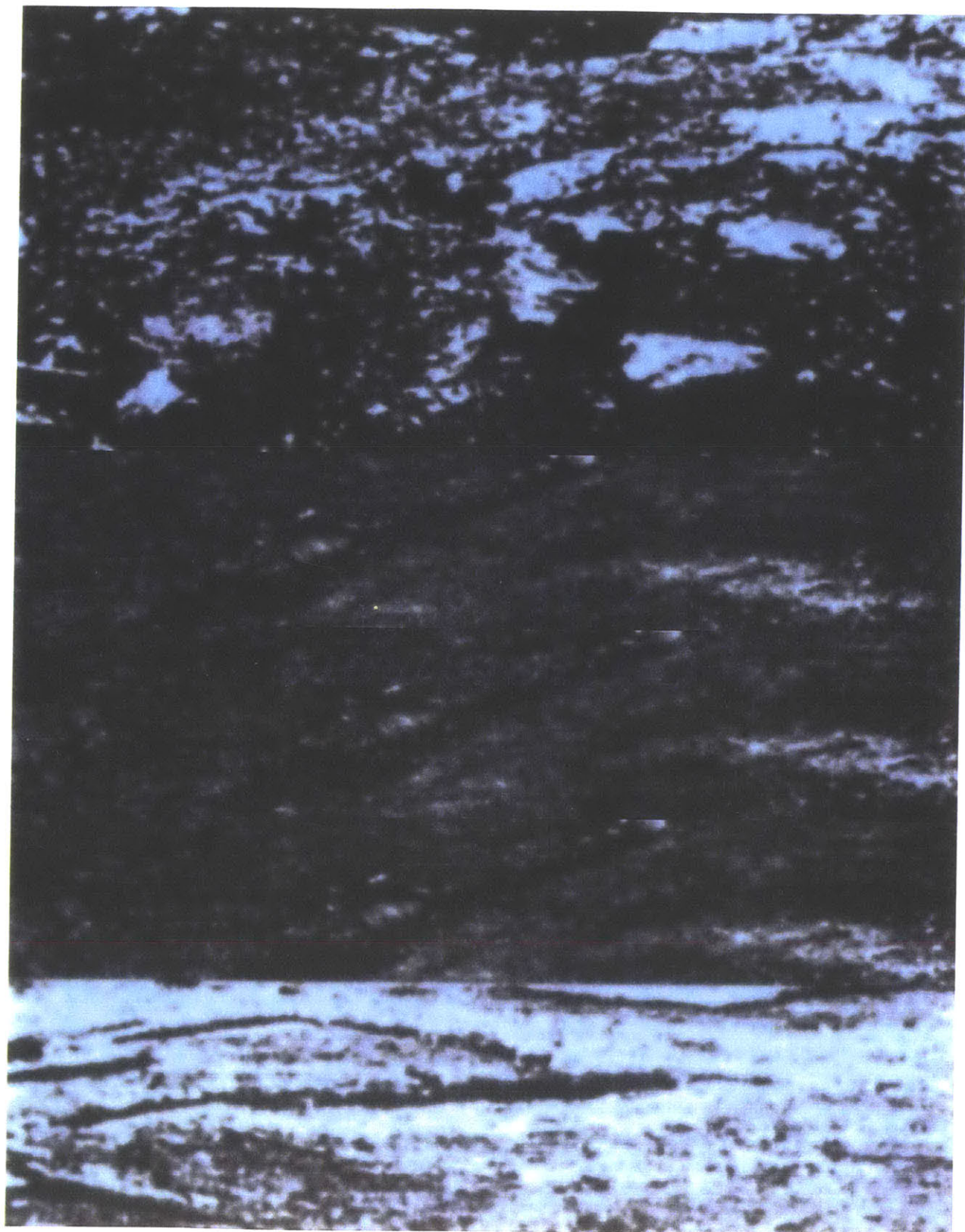


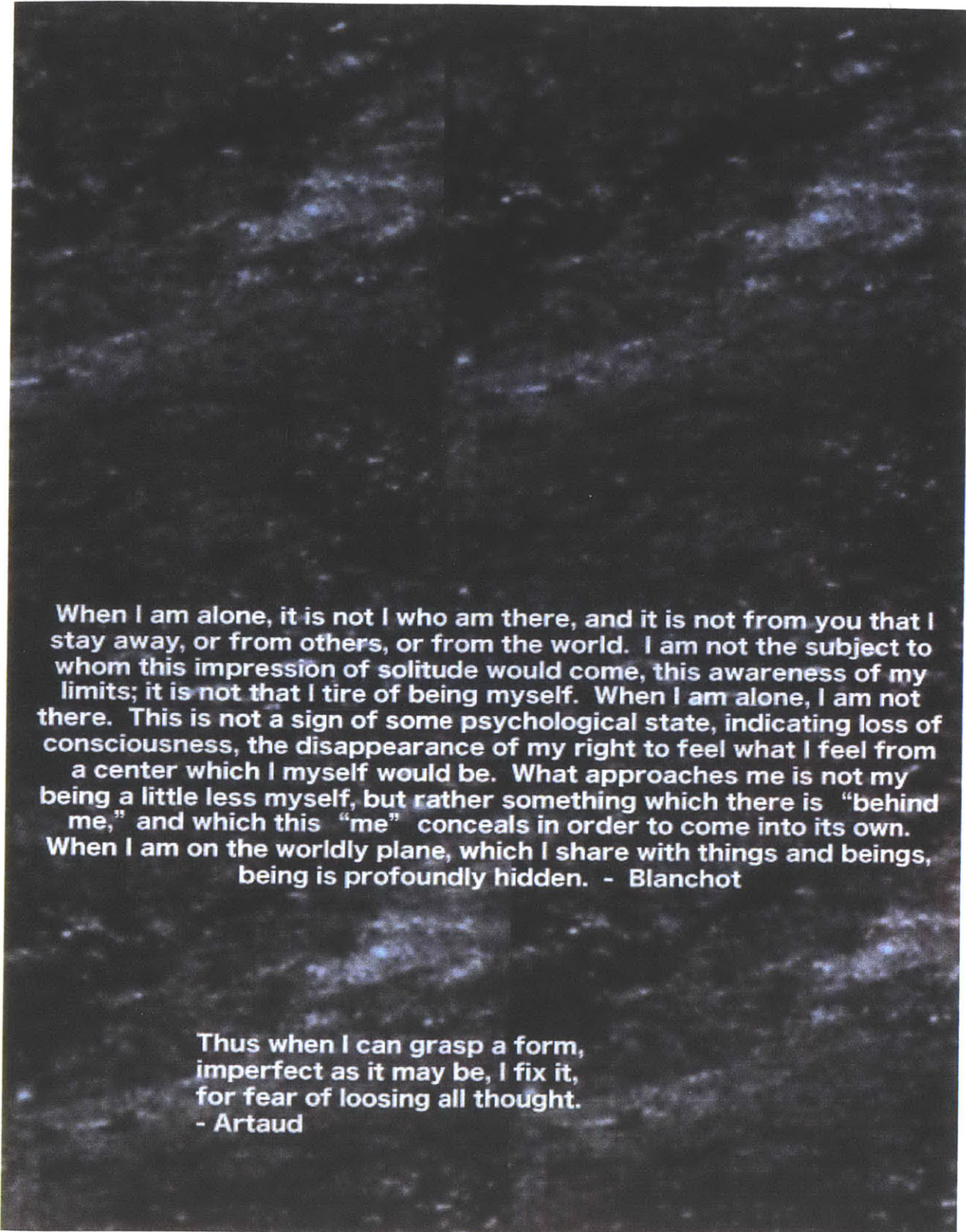






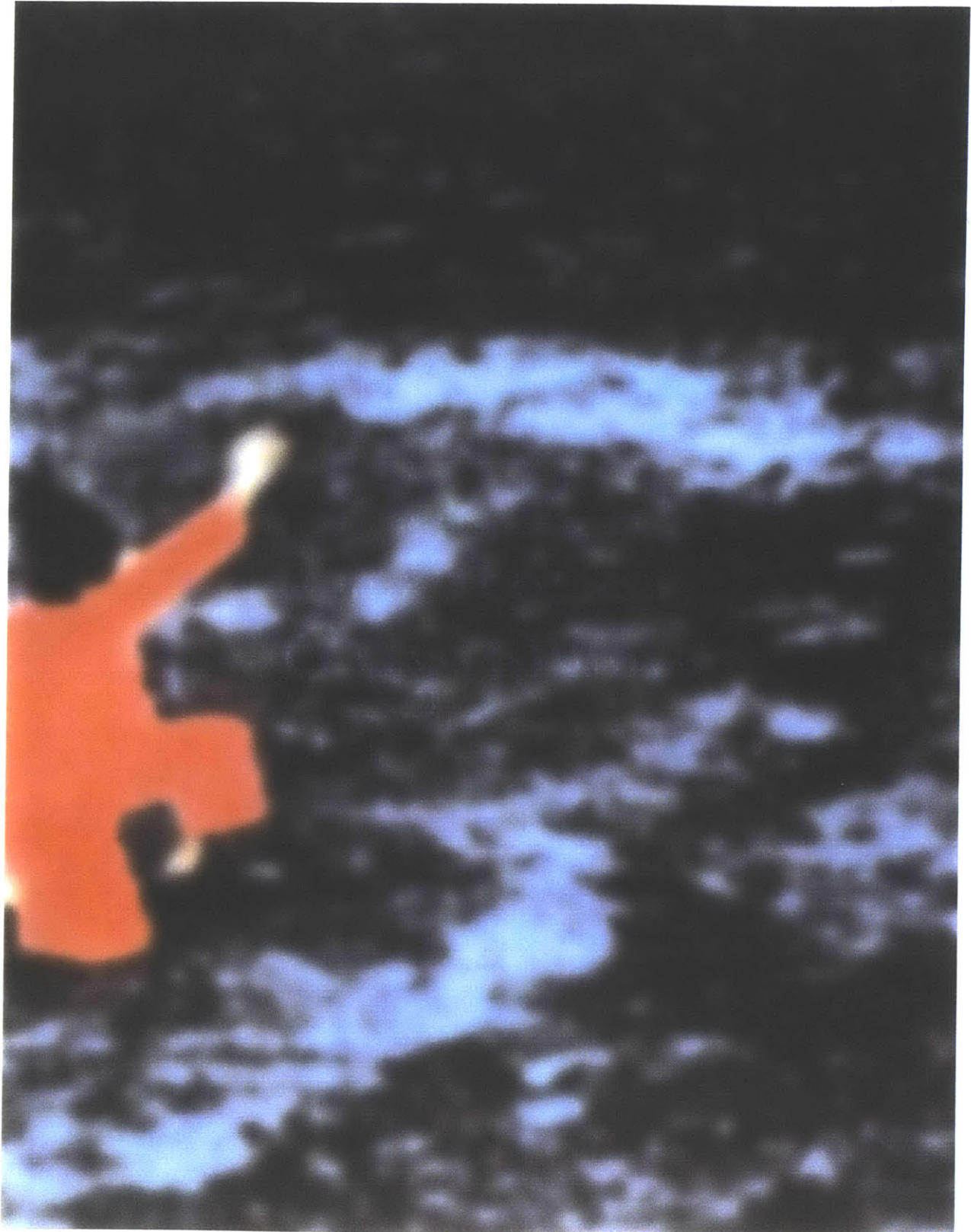
HER

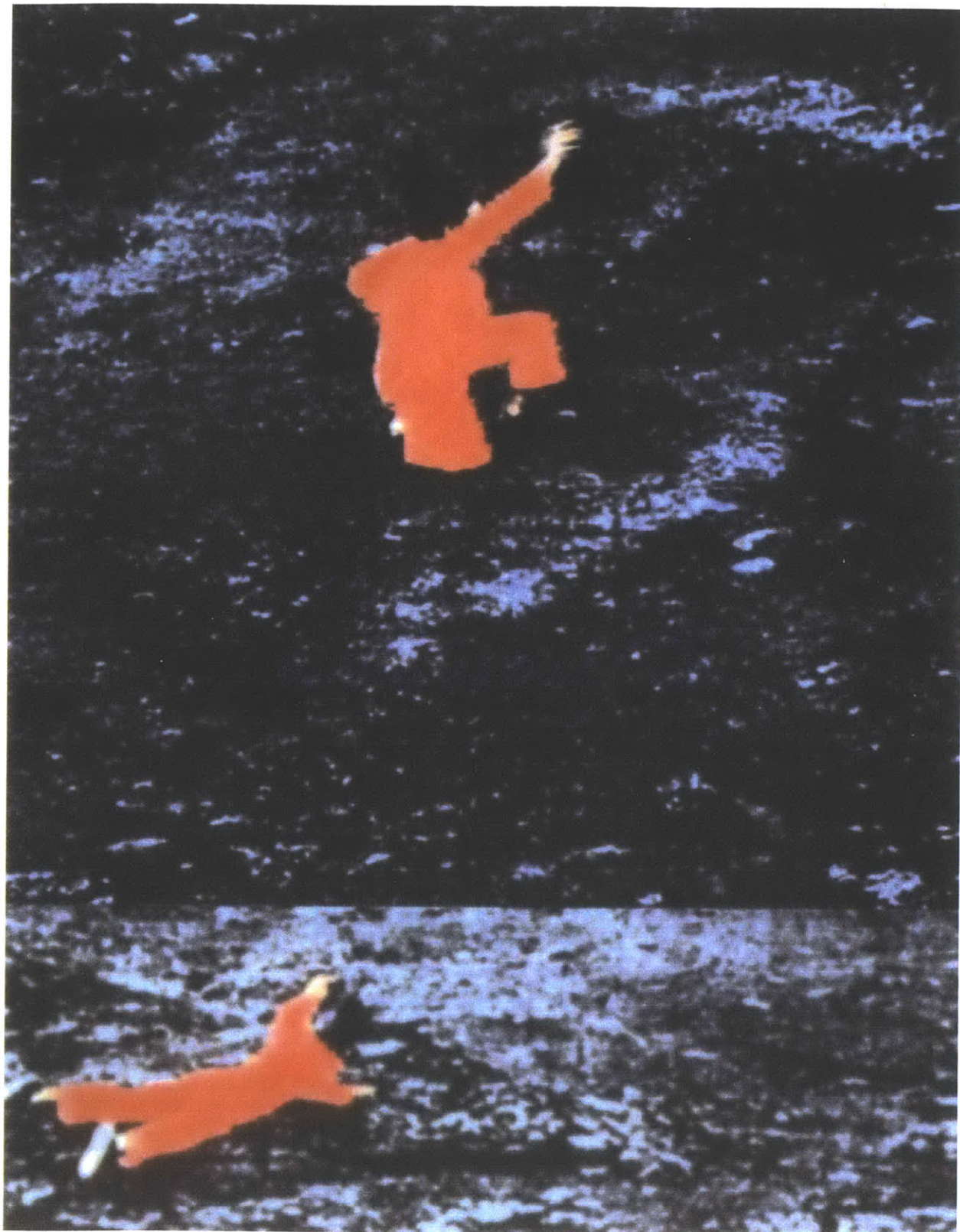




When I am alone, it is not I who am there, and it is not from you that I stay away, or from others, or from the world. I am not the subject to whom this impression of solitude would come, this awareness of my limits; it is not that I tire of being myself. When I am alone, I am not there. This is not a sign of some psychological state, indicating loss of consciousness, the disappearance of my right to feel what I feel from a center which I myself would be. What approaches me is not my being a little less myself, but rather something which there is "behind me," and which this "me" conceals in order to come into its own. When I am on the worldly plane, which I share with things and beings, being is profoundly hidden. - Blanchot

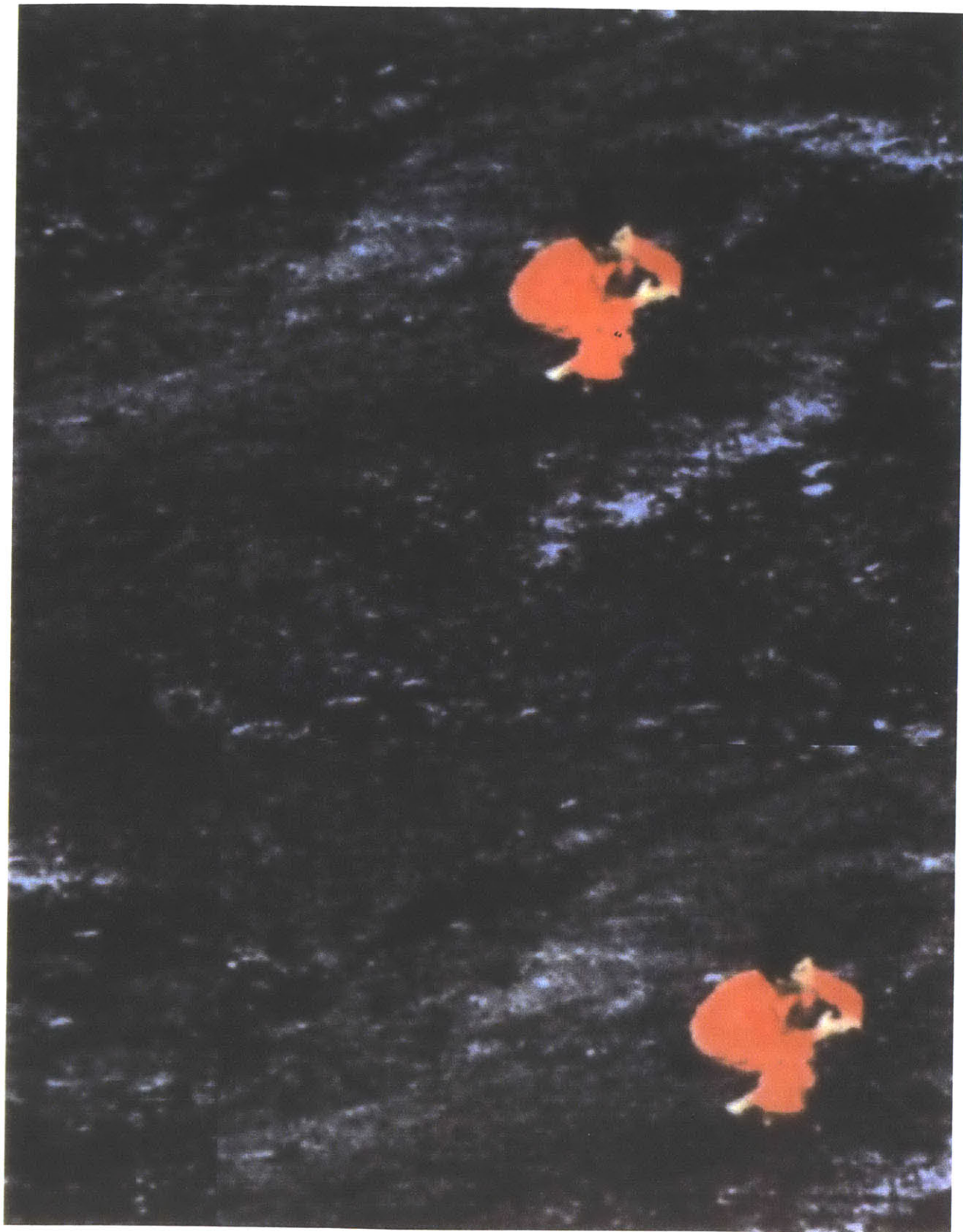
Thus when I can grasp a form, imperfect as it may be, I fix it, for fear of losing all thought.  
- Artaud

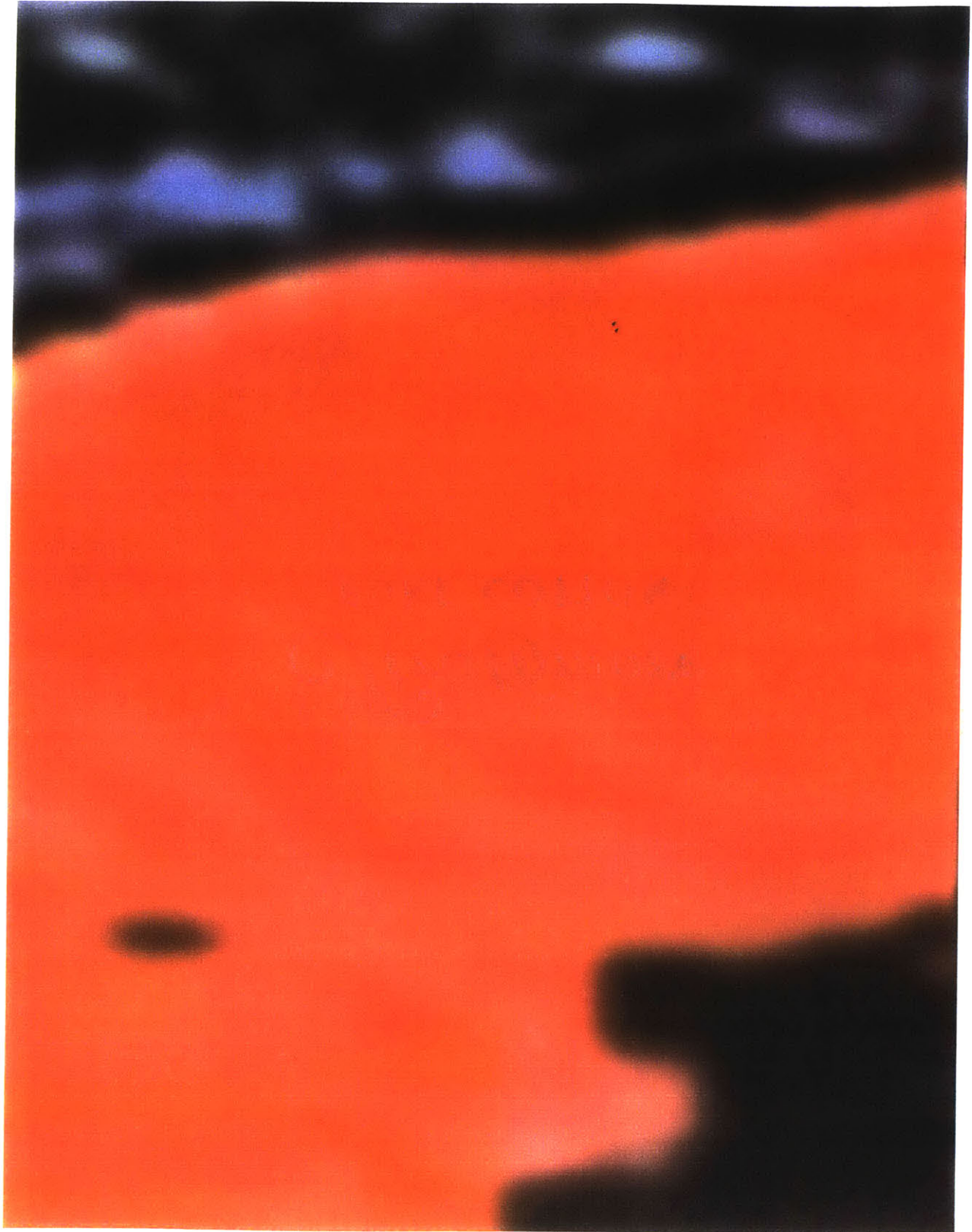




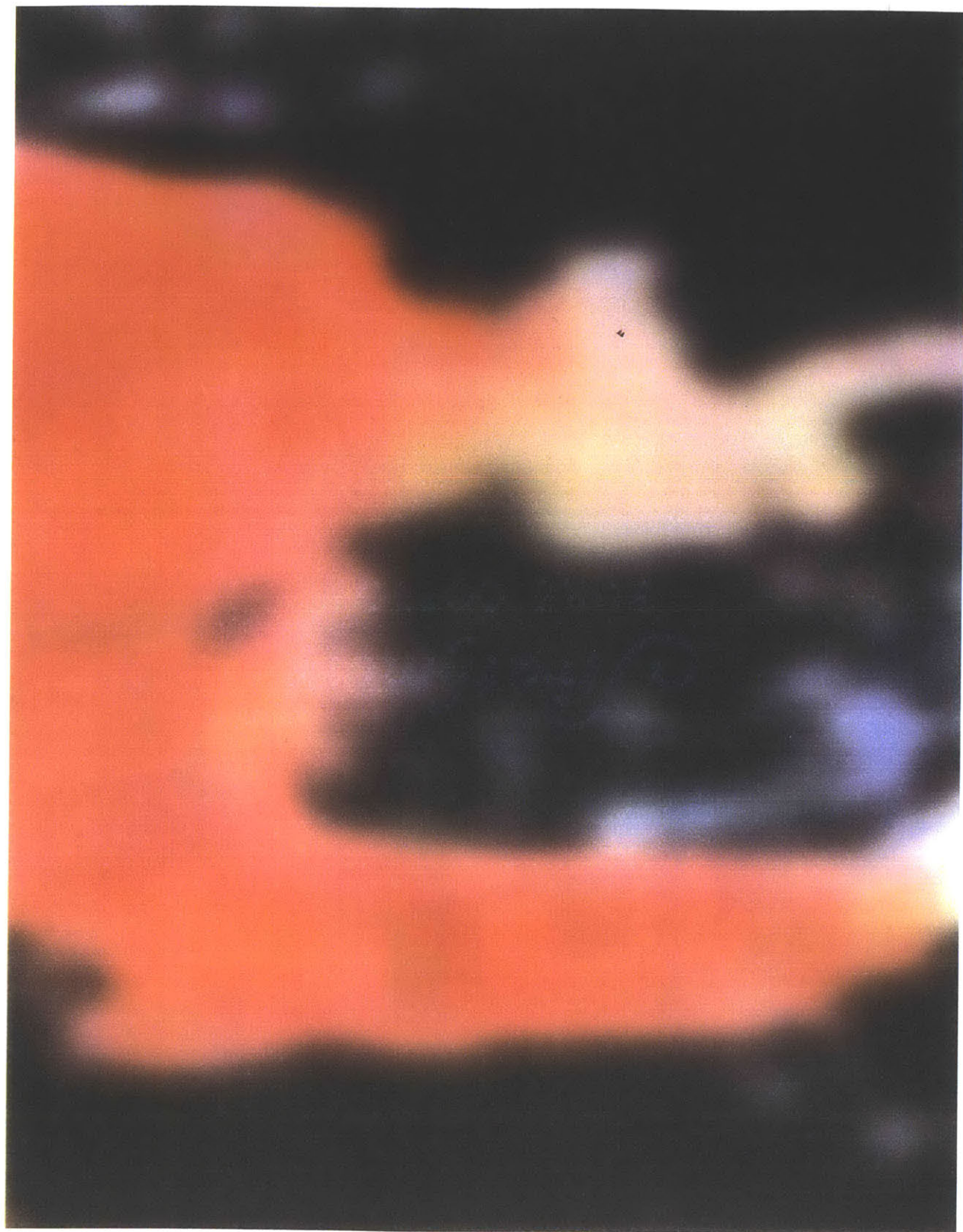


He was a flaneur, someone who idles or loafes about. He was the protagonist who traveled from the 1st to the 2nd to the 3rd chapter. The divisions between the chapters were the divisions between the places he went. As he moved from one place to another, like a flaneur, he connected these places. Because the journey was made by him, a single person, it somehow became a story. The different places were connected by him, as they had been, in him. The possibility of co-existence founded itself on the impossibility of co-existence. How could two different places be connected? Once, when he was in Switzerland, he got out of a car and stepped into an isolated village that one rarely visits. He realized that this place had nothing to do with his life. But later he wrote down, "certitude rose in me that I must have a connection with this place and its people." He did not have to look for the electric wire or satellite receiver that tuned to the mass media broadcasting he shared back home. When his body was placed in that village, the connection was formed through him. His body was the medium of tuning.

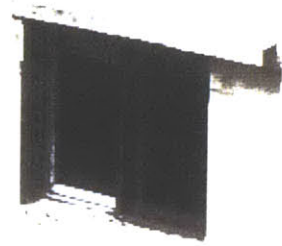






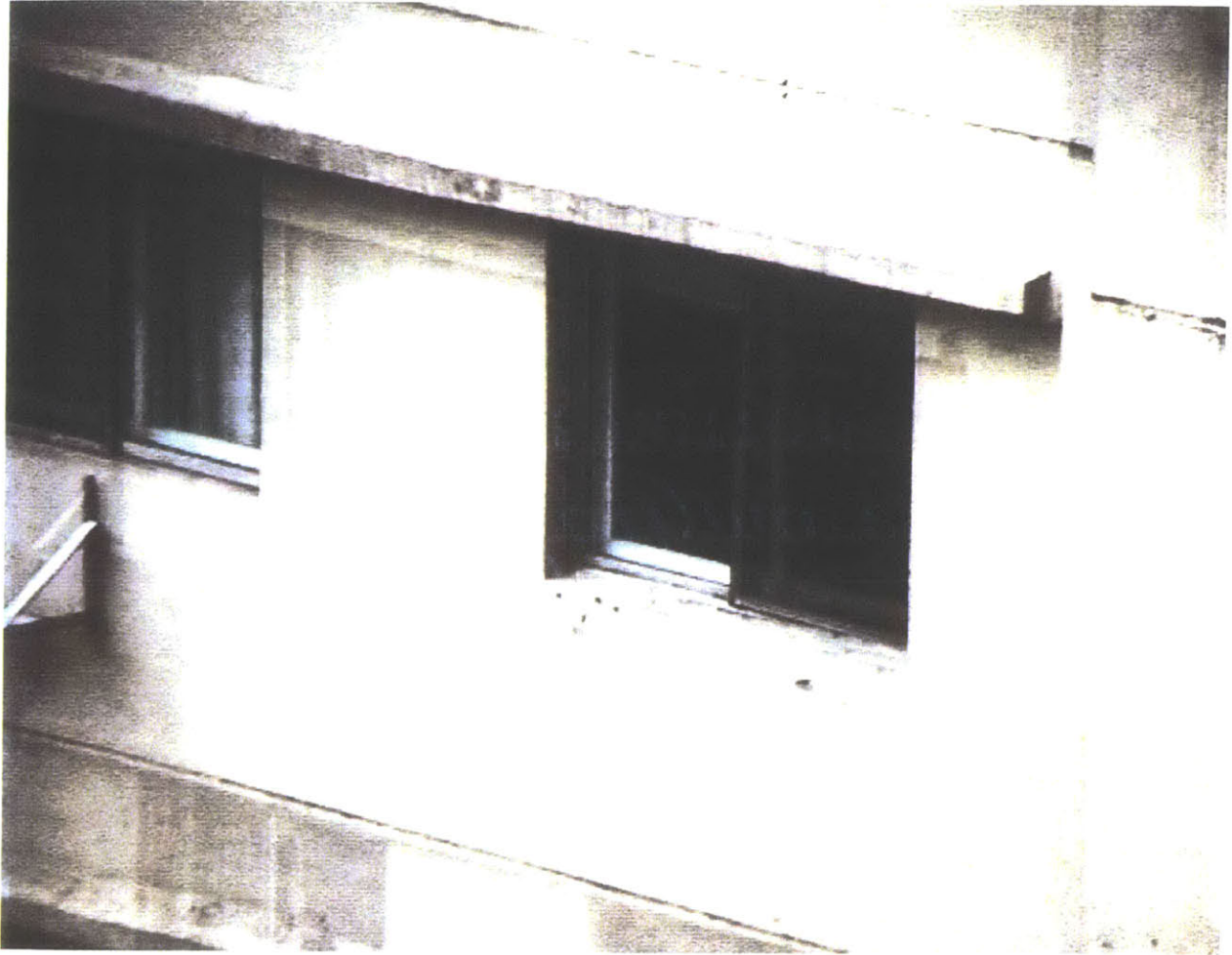






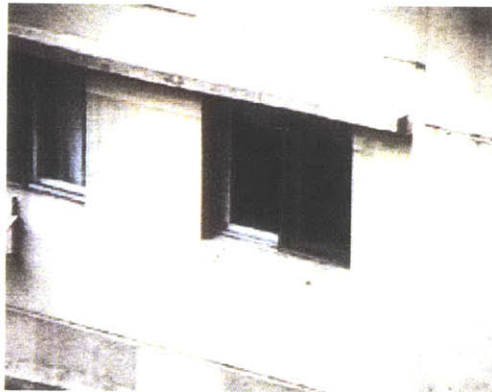
The places he visited in the winter of 2002 were Seoul, Boston, and Hawaii. These places were not arbitrary because he was a sample himself, who knew these places and these people who lived there. It was not like when you wrote a paper that was connected through logic. Rather, it was connected by the example of a person. If he went to a market place, everything he saw at the market would be told. If he had been a writer, he would have picked out some objects; a watch, an owl, a table, dead fish. And then he would put "etc." at the end. They would have to be particularly chosen for metaphor. Words could draw an image in his mind without showing the image. Videotape showed an image with other images, everything next to the main image.

**In writing, he could say that his hand moved. In images, his wrist might show. It might be a moving hand, not just a hand. In writing, he could talk about his hand without mentioning its skin, color, texture, and the light of the day.**



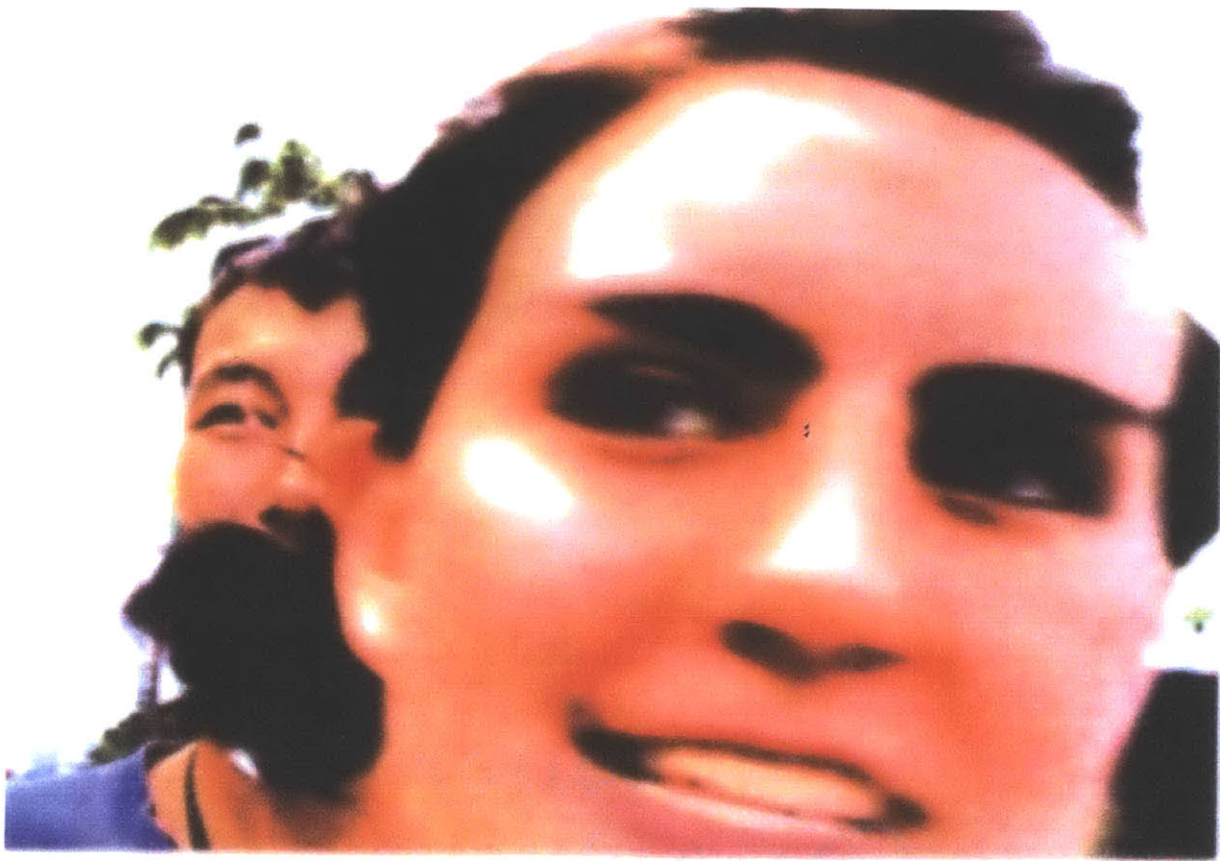
**It was not logical to show the nails and fingers when he wanted to talk about a hand, just a hand. In video, however, it was inevitable. To talk about a hand, things around its vicinity would be shown. To talk about him, places he knew and remembered would be included.**

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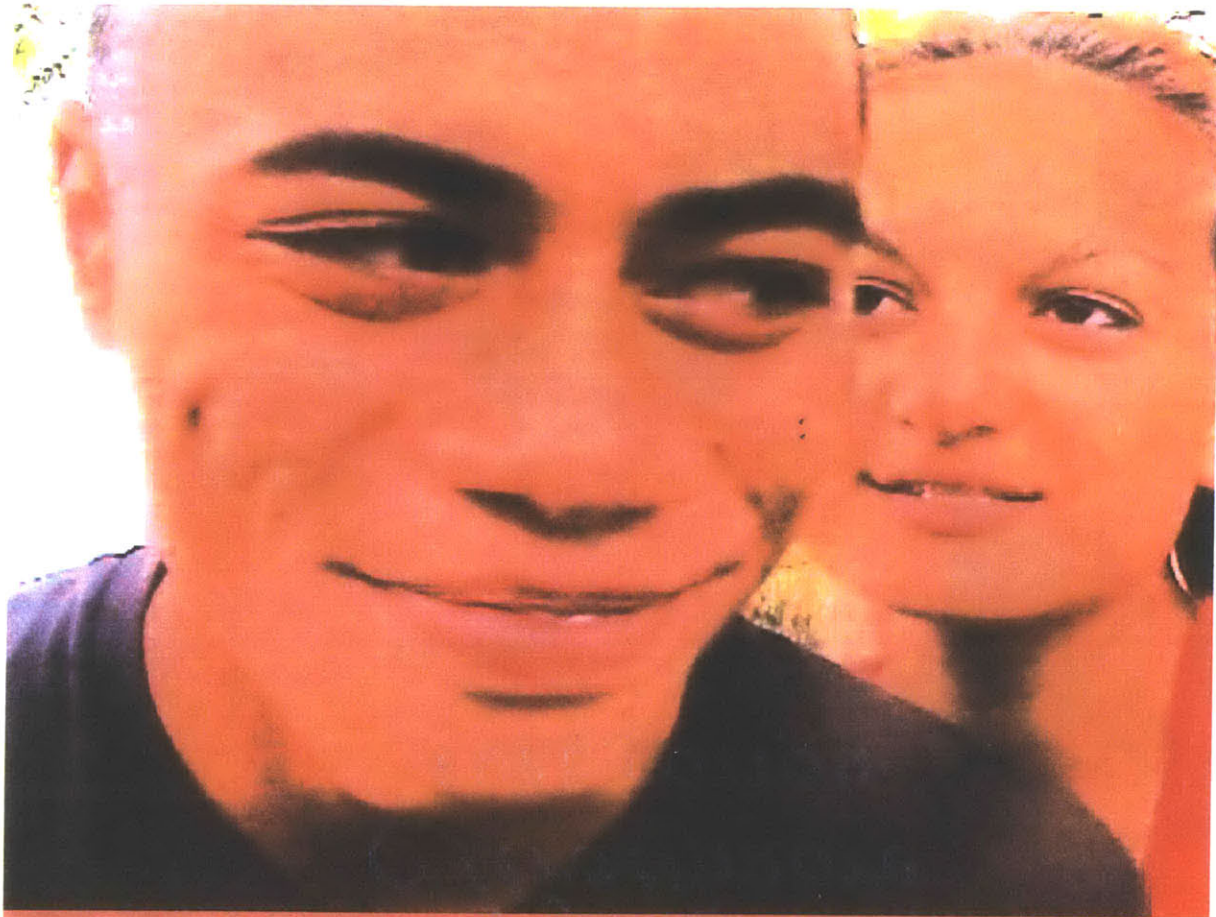
It was not logical to show the nails and fingers when he wanted to talk about a hand, just a hand. In video, however, it was inevitable. To talk about a hand, things around its vicinity would be shown. To talk about him, places he knew and remembered would be included.





**He**

was lucky to have seen *La Jetée*. This man traveled through past, future, and present. They were isolated points, like different places. How were they connected? How was one point in a line simultaneously connected to another point in the line? The man from the present met a woman in the past. Why not someone else? A fiction would prove that even a nose could be talked about in relation to the right eye.



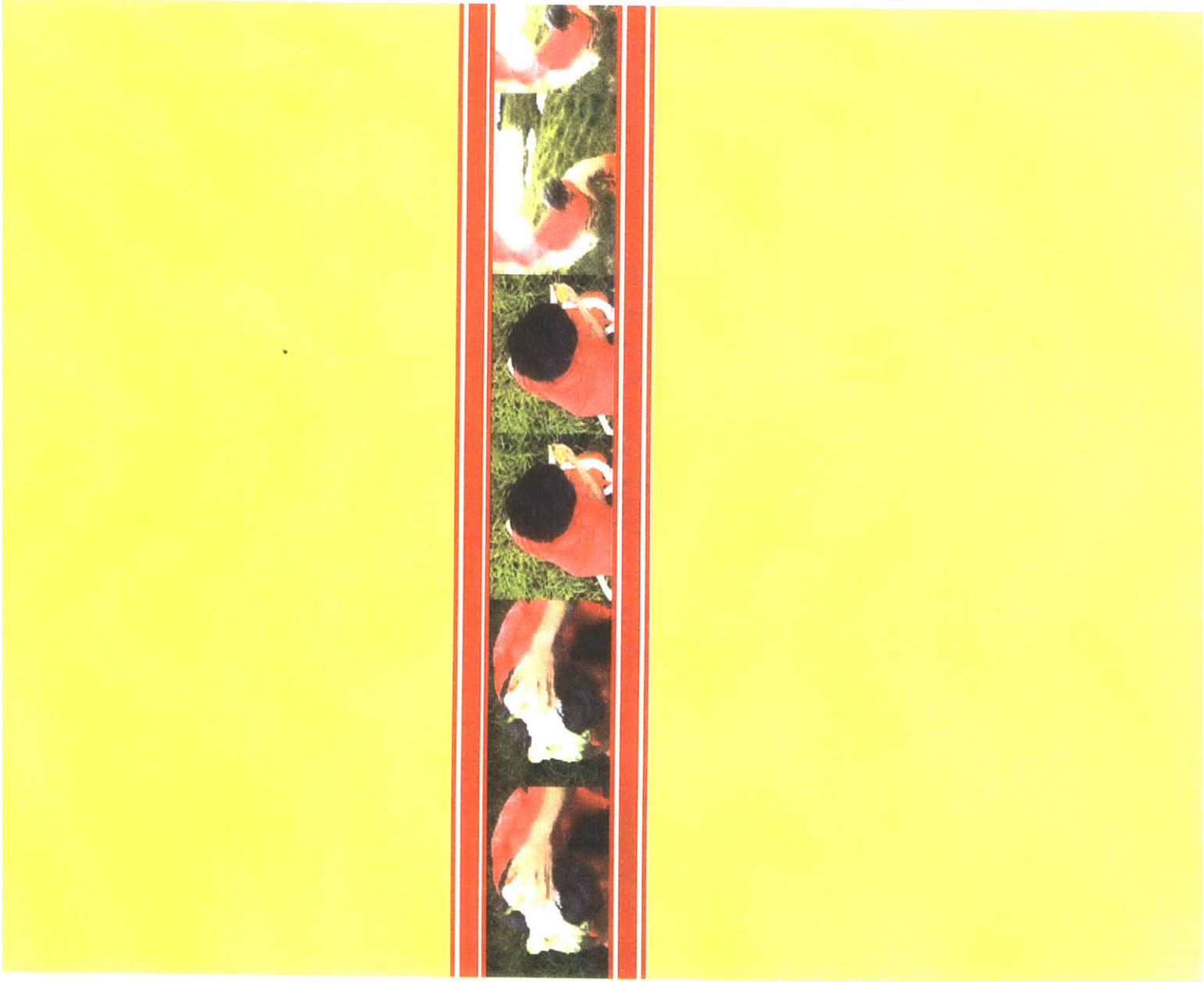
He

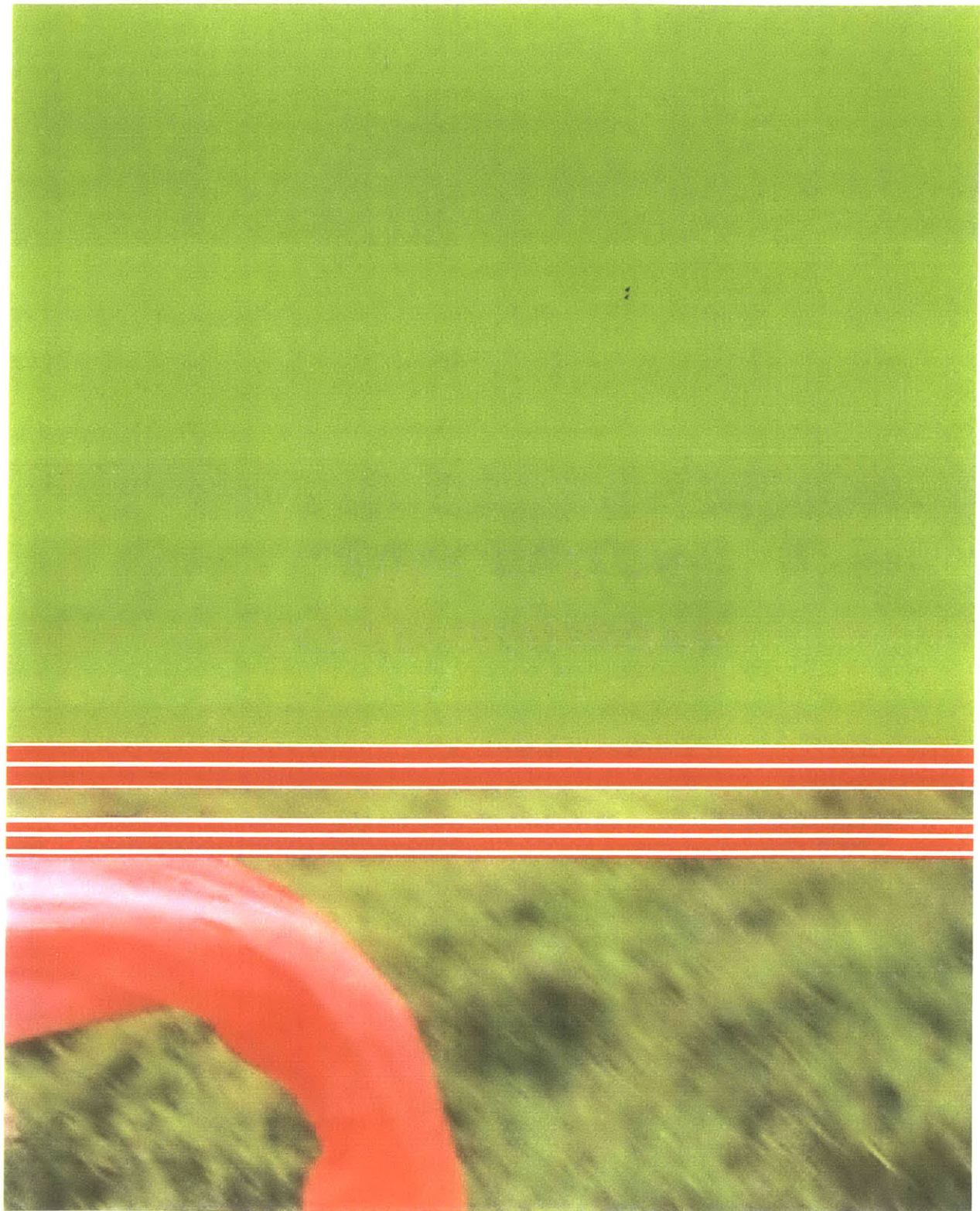
said to her, "Thinking about the other place when you are in one place has to do with the other." It was not her that was the other of him; He could be the other of her. It was so basic. He shared a room with her. He shared some time with her in that room. Yet, there were two lives being formed in that room at that time. Once they patted a rabbit together. She thought of the softness of its fur, and he imagined the rubies underneath the fur, sliding his fingers through its ribcage. Dealing with the same phenomena in the world that she experienced, he composed a different perception of the world, or re-composed how she saw the world. The sound they heard, things they saw, their eyes, ears, his body, and her body were only tools. He said, "Using these same tools, I can make a different composition of the world. This different composition is the other." She was his double. He was her double. He was his double..





The dreamlike ritual that they did only mimicked madness. To him, madness meant being able to see the other in the real. This meant that the madman traveled. But practically, others sent him away. Like the Ship of Fools from the Renaissance, madness linked itself with traveling, if not being ostracized. Madness allowed him to see Hawaii when he saw Boston as he had seen Boston in Seoul. What sent him away was unknown to him. Without getting to the point, he roamed around and beat around the bush. He pretended as if he belonged to one place and imagined himself being at another. He wandered off from the conversation that he was engaged in. Kristeva told him, "You only listen in an amused fashion." He acknowledged that he could only mimic his madness. It could not be justly told; madness resided within one own body. He could not replace your vision with his. Like that of a seer, like Christa Wolf's Cassandra in the Trojan War, her vision might be told, but without convincing anyone. He said,









**The film camera mimics this gesture.**



**The shutter blinks twenty-four times a second, switching between the gate to the viewfinder and the lens.**



**When the shutter exposes the film, the viewfinder is closed.**





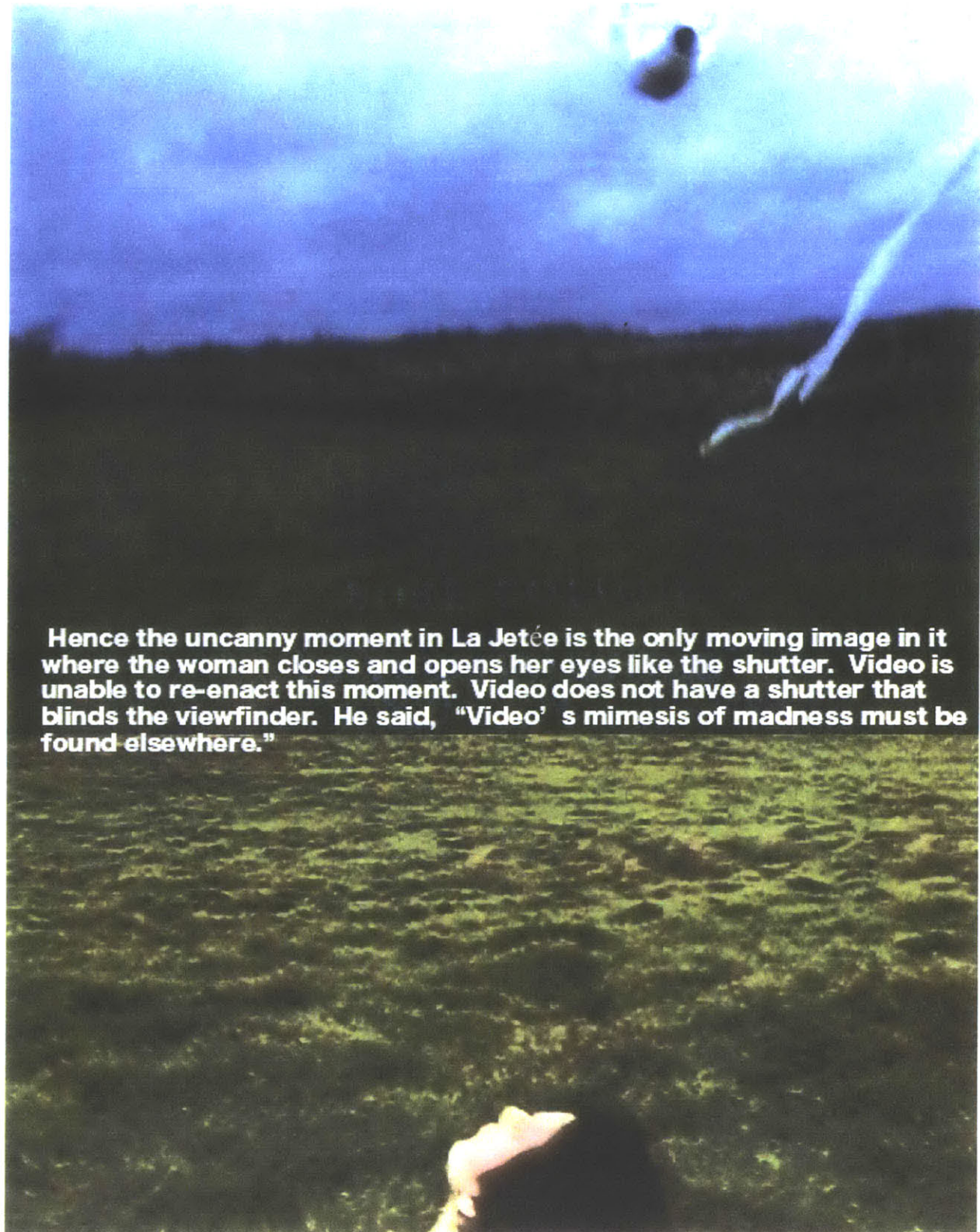
**So the cameraman never sees anything  
he shoots; everything shown in the  
theatre was never shot.**



**It is a medium about seeing but not seeing  
what you want to see.**

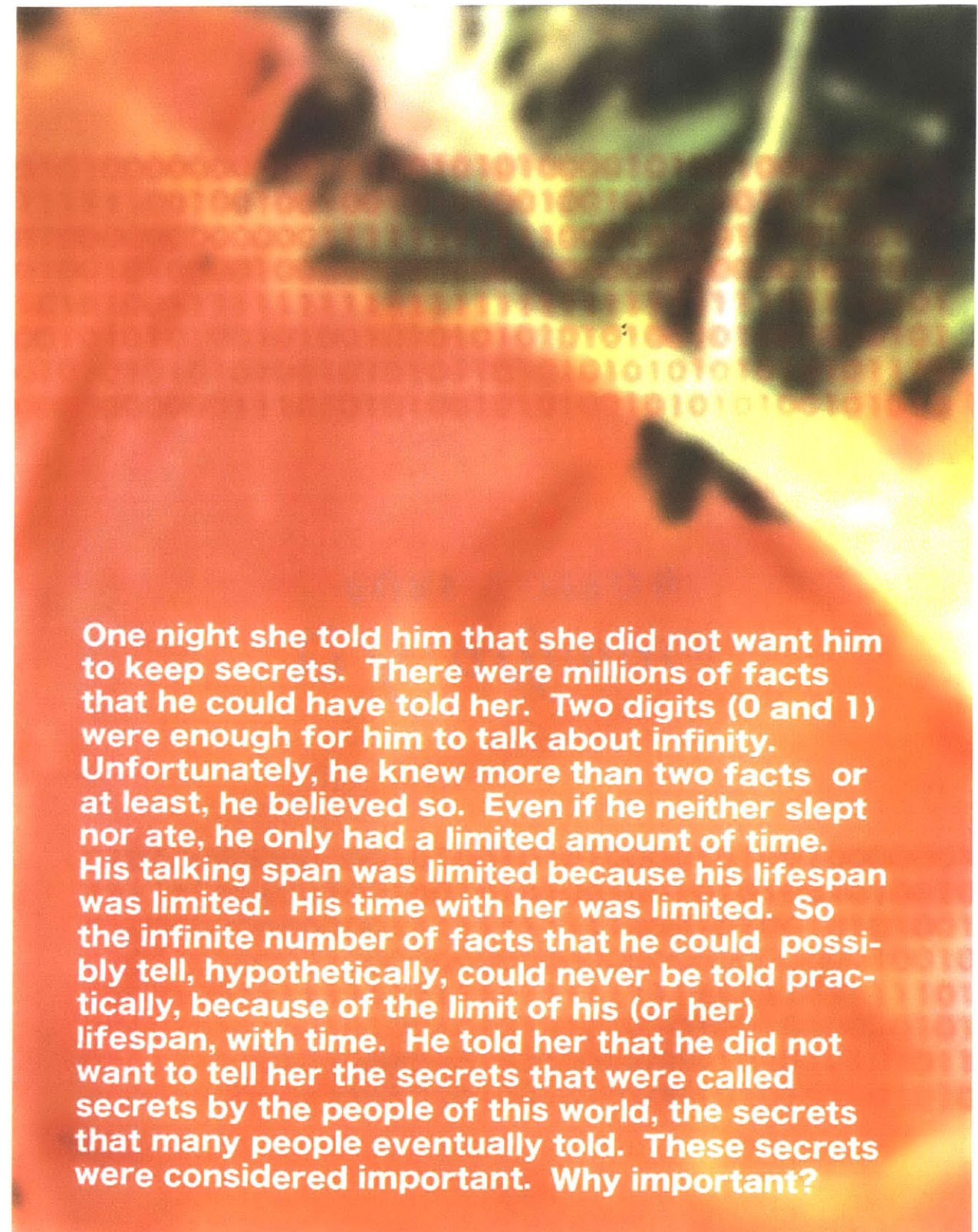


**It creates a whole world that exists that  
you didn' t see in the world.**




Hence the uncanny moment in *La Jetée* is the only moving image in it where the woman closes and opens her eyes like the shutter. Video is unable to re-enact this moment. Video does not have a shutter that blinds the viewfinder. He said, "Video' s mimesis of madness must be found elsewhere."





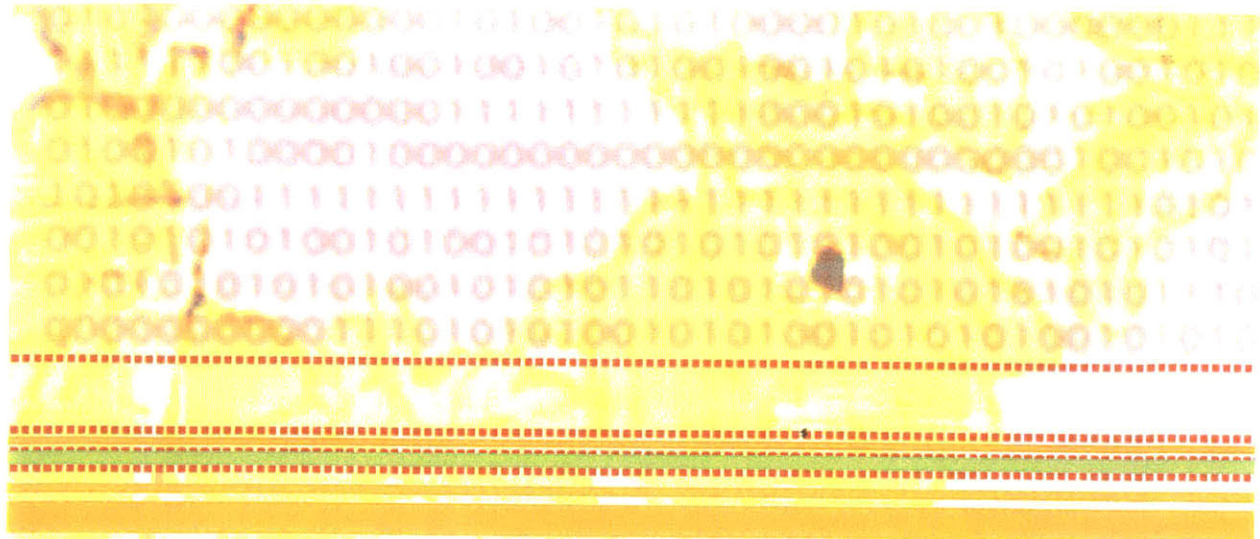
**One night she told him that she did not want him to keep secrets. There were millions of facts that he could have told her. Two digits (0 and 1) were enough for him to talk about infinity. Unfortunately, he knew more than two facts or at least, he believed so. Even if he neither slept nor ate, he only had a limited amount of time. His talking span was limited because his lifespan was limited. His time with her was limited. So the infinite number of facts that he could possibly tell, hypothetically, could never be told practically, because of the limit of his (or her) lifespan, with time. He told her that he did not want to tell her the secrets that were called secrets by the people of this world, the secrets that many people eventually told. These secrets were considered important. Why important?**



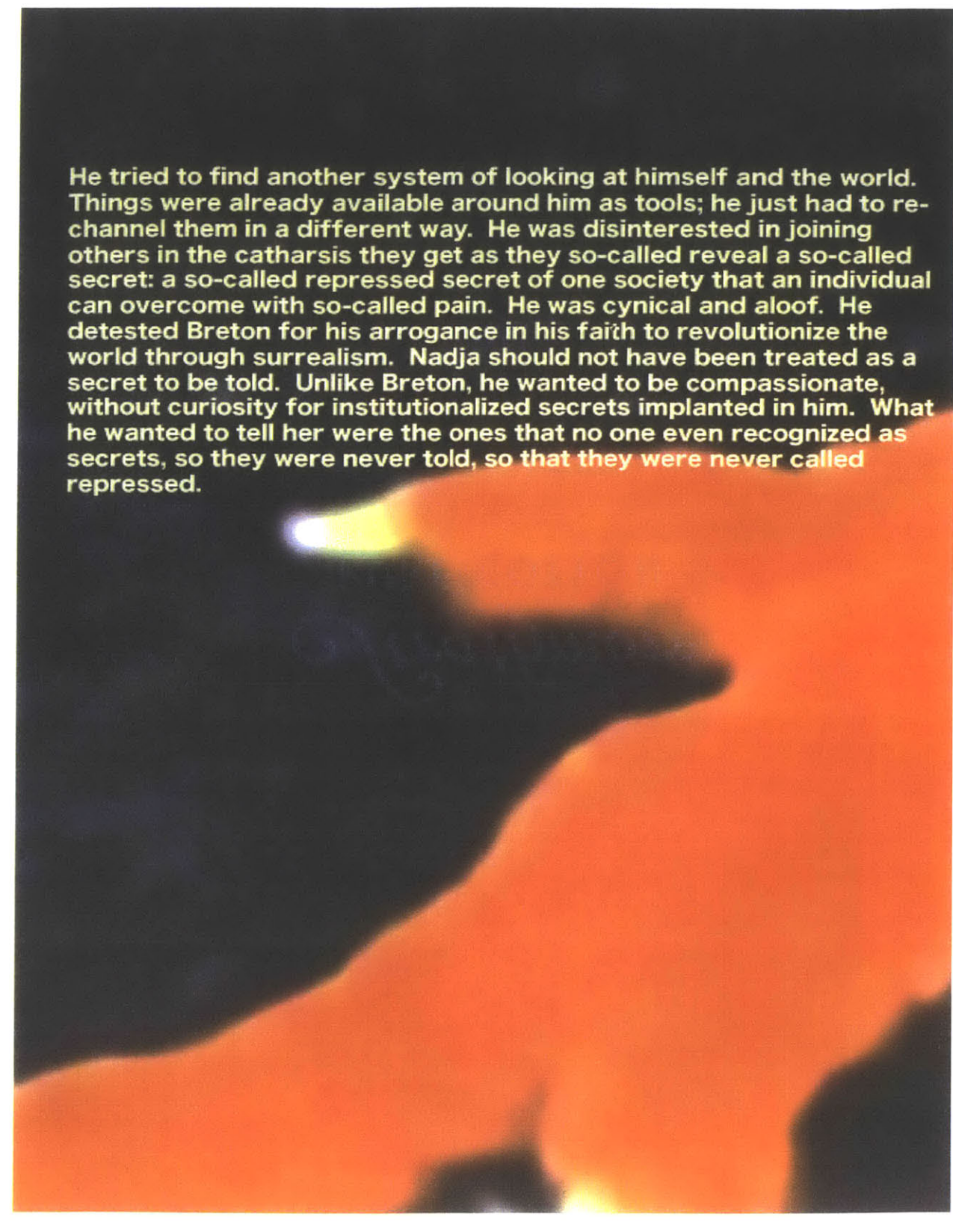
The story of Duras waiting for her husband after WWII, their re-encounter that dispensed with happy tears, and his recovery that had embodied death was a vivid description of war outside of the war, in Paris in the year of 1945. War still existed after the war, in peace; one Parisian woman might have encountered the news of the Hiroshima bombing in their reunion walk with her husband in the park. It existed in one's devouring and defecating body. Nobody hid this as a secret, so nobody told of it.



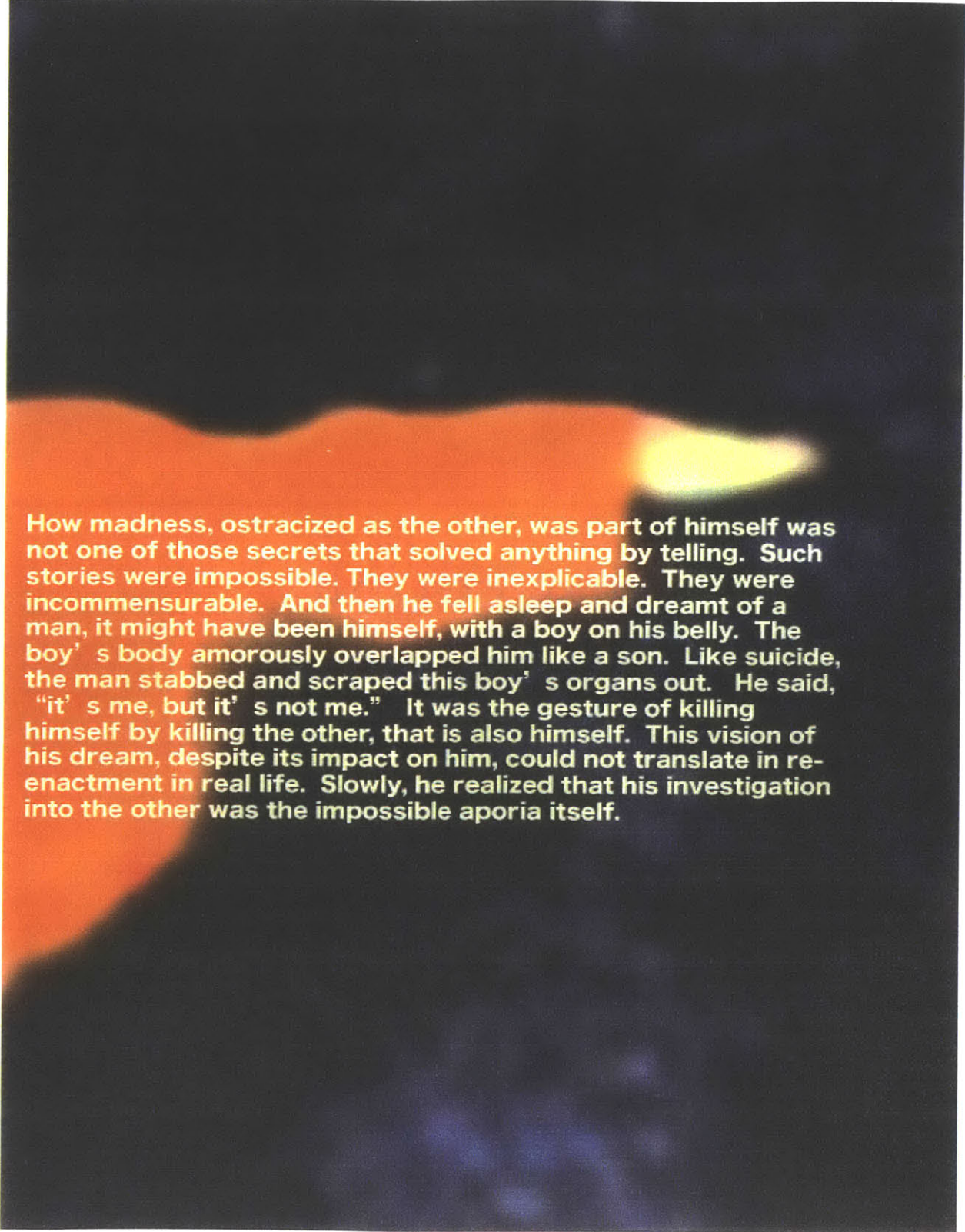




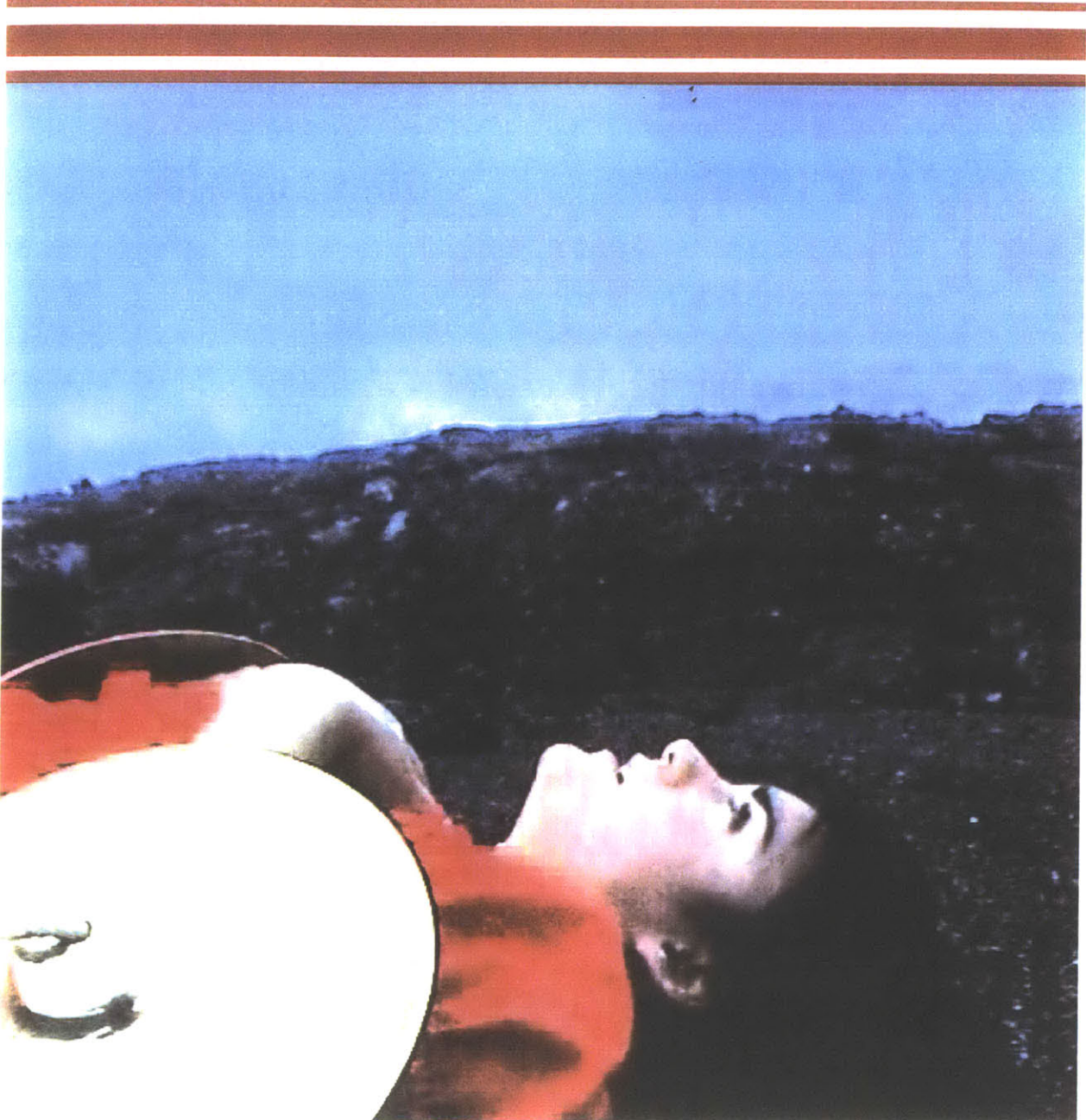
**Once one logic was set, (once integers were set), the discovery of rational numbers, irrational numbers, real numbers, and imaginary numbers was just a matter of time. Some mathematicians discovered them at some point in the past, that once had been a future. These were the mysteries men had strived to solve. But he wanted to tell her other facts, the secrets that are next to the so-called important secrets and mysteries. For example, he did not tell her that 6 million Jews were killed in the Holocaust. This had remained a secret when he had been a child. As he came of age, it was no longer a secret. Sooner or later, many were eager to reveal this to him. What he wanted to tell her was that at the age of 27, he read *War* by Marguerite Duras, and no one had recommended this to him before his first reading. It was kept a secret.**



He tried to find another system of looking at himself and the world. Things were already available around him as tools; he just had to re-channel them in a different way. He was disinterested in joining others in the catharsis they get as they so-called reveal a so-called secret: a so-called repressed secret of one society that an individual can overcome with so-called pain. He was cynical and aloof. He detested Breton for his arrogance in his faith to revolutionize the world through surrealism. Nadja should not have been treated as a secret to be told. Unlike Breton, he wanted to be compassionate, without curiosity for institutionalized secrets implanted in him. What he wanted to tell her were the ones that no one even recognized as secrets, so they were never told, so that they were never called repressed.



How madness, ostracized as the other, was part of himself was not one of those secrets that solved anything by telling. Such stories were impossible. They were inexplicable. They were incommensurable. And then he fell asleep and dreamt of a man, it might have been himself, with a boy on his belly. The boy's body amorously overlapped him like a son. Like suicide, the man stabbed and scraped this boy's organs out. He said, "it's me, but it's not me." It was the gesture of killing himself by killing the other, that is also himself. This vision of his dream, despite its impact on him, could not translate in re-enactment in real life. Slowly, he realized that his investigation into the other was the impossible aporia itself.



He said to her, "The relationship between you and me, the protagonist and its double, is a sample of an impossible relationship." The idealist way of seeing the world, as an expansion of his mind, confronted a limit when he tried to have a conversation or when he tried to have a relationship with her, encapsulated in her body. She encompassed a whole other set of mind. Everything that he said to make her understand him could be interpreted however she wanted. When there was an agreement, she said, "I understand you," but he was never understood. "I understand" was a theatrical line that created the emotion of agreement without any understanding at work. So, in a way, love acknowledged the separation of two bodies, and their un-looking this gap. But what he wanted, actually, was for the object of love to have been inside him. He wanted her words to be his confession.



Instead, when he confronted her body, by the word “understand” or “love,” they created an illusion of the world being one, and he and she being one.



**He half-willingly  
made a theatre out of  
himself.**



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**At the same time,  
they both realized  
that there was a  
whole other world in  
eachother' s bodies.**

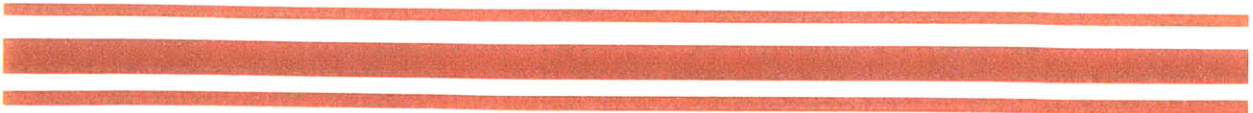
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**Duras said that it was not Germany who created the war, but Europeans and the human race.**





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**Illusion of the other must  
be embodied instead of  
being ostracized and  
avenged for war (whose  
double face is peace),  
whose illusion segregated  
the other as an identity  
(you are not me).**

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Love, then, was a creative illusion with the other side of the other (you are me).

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Unable to comprehend and dwell on this gap from his world to hers, he carelessly bridged the two with an imaginary word, love.





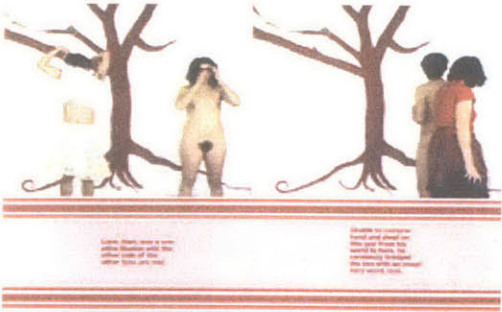
Unhappy when he saw  
his nakedness, he hid  
himself in the bushes  
and was afraid of the  
Lord his God, and he  
said, "Who is this  
that has hidden me?"

He had nothing  
to hide, and he  
was not ashamed.

At this point, the  
serpent was  
tempting them,  
saying to them,  
"Did God really  
say this?"

Then she said to  
him, "You are  
not afraid of the  
Lord; in fact, you  
are wiser than he,  
because you know  
that God does not  
punish you."

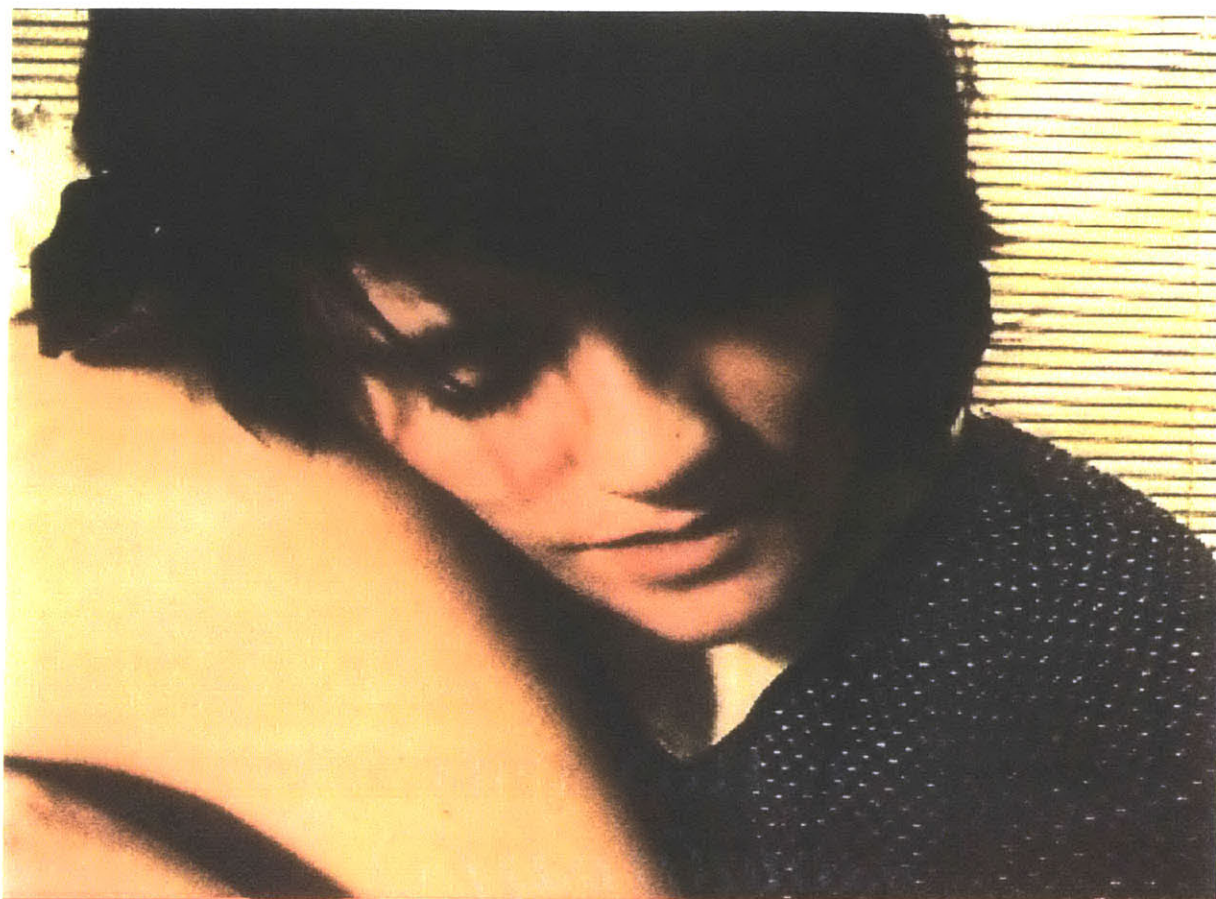
Then she said to  
him, "You will  
not die. In fact,  
you will become  
like God, knowing  
good and evil."



So the serpent  
deceived Eve,  
and she ate  
of the fruit,  
and she gave  
some to Adam,  
and he ate it.

Then the Lord  
God said to  
Adam, "Where  
are you?"  
He answered,  
"I was hiding  
because I was  
afraid of you,  
because I was  
naked."

This love was taught.



# This

love was taught. The lovers' kiss, caress, tender gaze, argument, and reconciliation resembled those of the characters from the films, books, and the others who had seen or read them. He and she stood before a television set and started imitating the two lovers from the Eclipse. They carefully studied the way Alain Delon touched Monica Vitti's fingers. Afterwards, his right fingers fiddled around her left fingers just like in the movie. He turned on the video camera on tri-pod, laid her in bed, and tried to kiss her ears as she refused, like in the movie. After viewing what he taped in video, he realized that the film was no longer the representation of life; life grew out of film.



He

however, did not possess the aura that Alain Delon did, and she looked much more real than Monica Vitti. He remembered that the any characters in films always gained this fictional aura that separated them from the people outside the screen. Even the landscapes and inanimate objects in film somehow assumed a quality that is far away from the real. So for him, watching his own image on video, it was uncanny that he looked involved in love. His image on the TV monitor was too real to be in love. In this image, he witnessed the moment where the real became fiction. He wrote down,







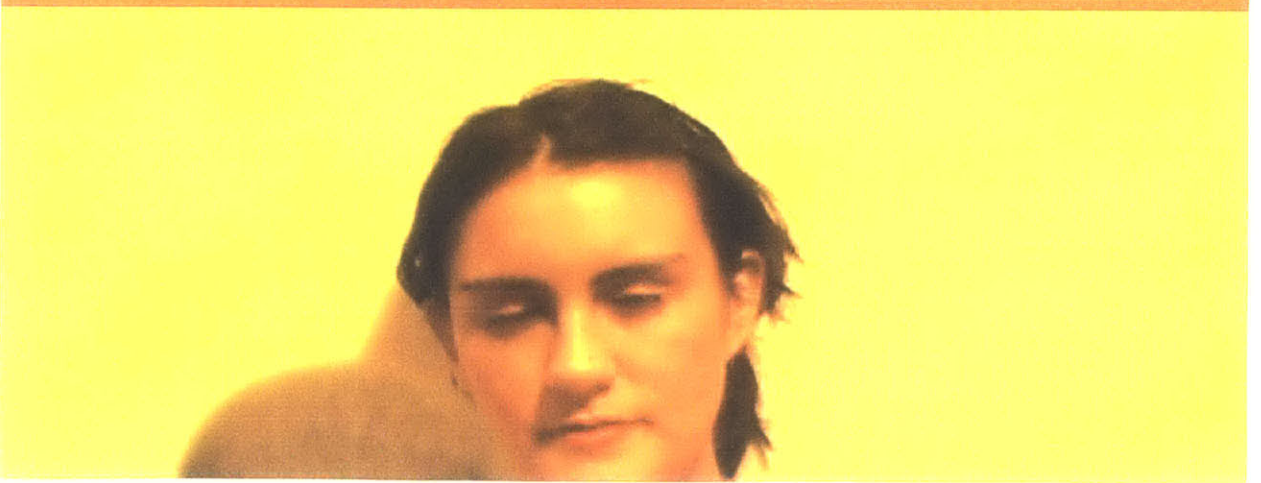


"VIDEO MIMICS THE REALNESS"





OF THE REAL."

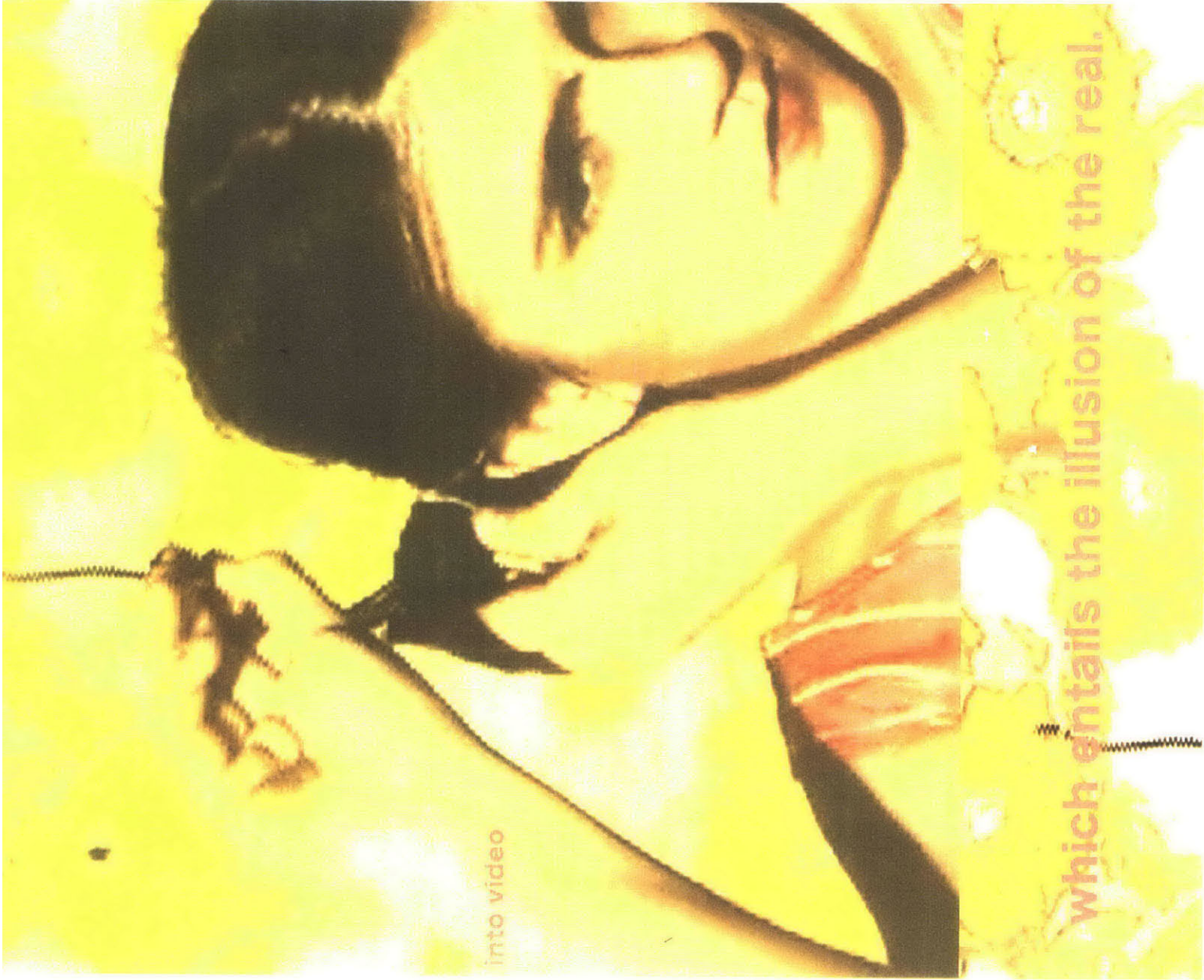


This was why he decided to put himself in the film.



He had to bring the real in him.





into video

which entails the illusion of the real.



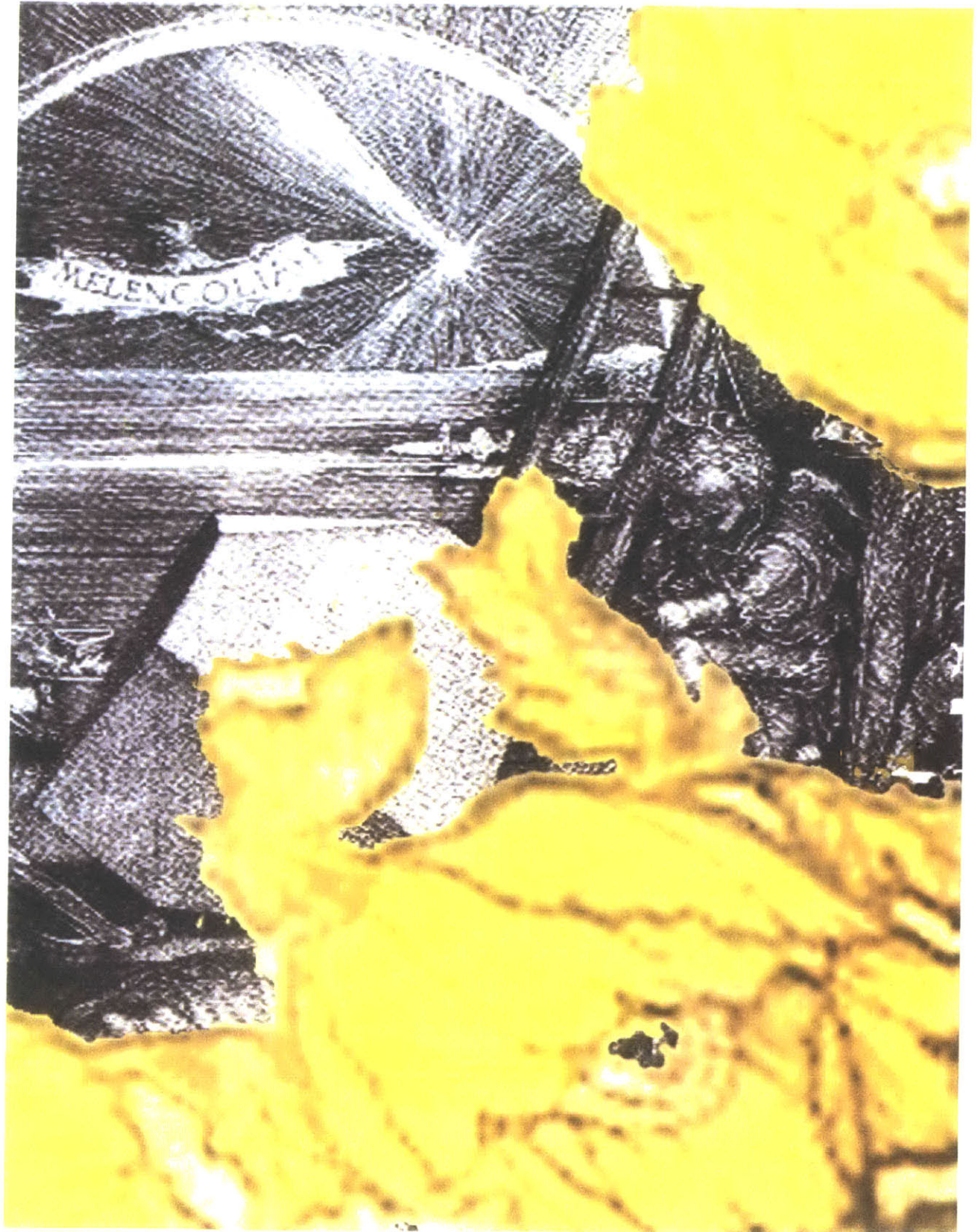
When

she asked about his life, he imagined that he traveled to Seoul - he grew up there - and video taped the Korean teenagers in high school. He gave this young man a microphone and left the room. He asked this winner of "Ring the Golden Bell," a hit television quiz show, to say everything that came to his mind, but only the things that came to his mind at each moment. It could be a sentence, a phrase, a word, a sound, a gesture, or nothing at all. Listening to this man's monologue afterwards on tape, he recognized the world the man recognized. He recognized the world that the man did not recognize. Everyday, this man woke up at seven in the morning and studied until twelve at night. He memorized the facts about the world. He knew all the historical dates by heart. The answer to the last (fiftieth) question that made the man ring the golden bell was Worm Hole. He memorized the solution to every mathematical problem in textbooks; he even memorized logic.



# Yet

there was more silence than speech in this man's monologue. The man agonized over these silent gaps that did not lead to the next subject from the one before. If he had asked this man specific questions, the man would have answered succinctly and properly. There would have been no excruciating silence, no embarrassment. This strange interview did not accompany questions, made of words that point to one thing at a time. Filled and fulfilled with knowledge and truth, and the false he knew for sure, he could not say a word when the whole picture was open to him. Like the tired angel in Durer's *Melancholia*, he, the subject, could not progress or move about, for the picture was literally filled with various unrelated objects that he knew, but did not understand. So all he could do was doodle around with his pencil without even looking at what he wrote. He fell into *acedia*. It did not matter if he meant the man, the angel, or he, your protagonist. He did not despise this man. Rather he felt that the man was him. He said, "This man's silence is the gap between each chapter in my story." Wasn't this the picture in his video? A video filled with seemingly unrelated images broken into chapters? If he was the subject being focused, the man was the corner of the picture next to him.

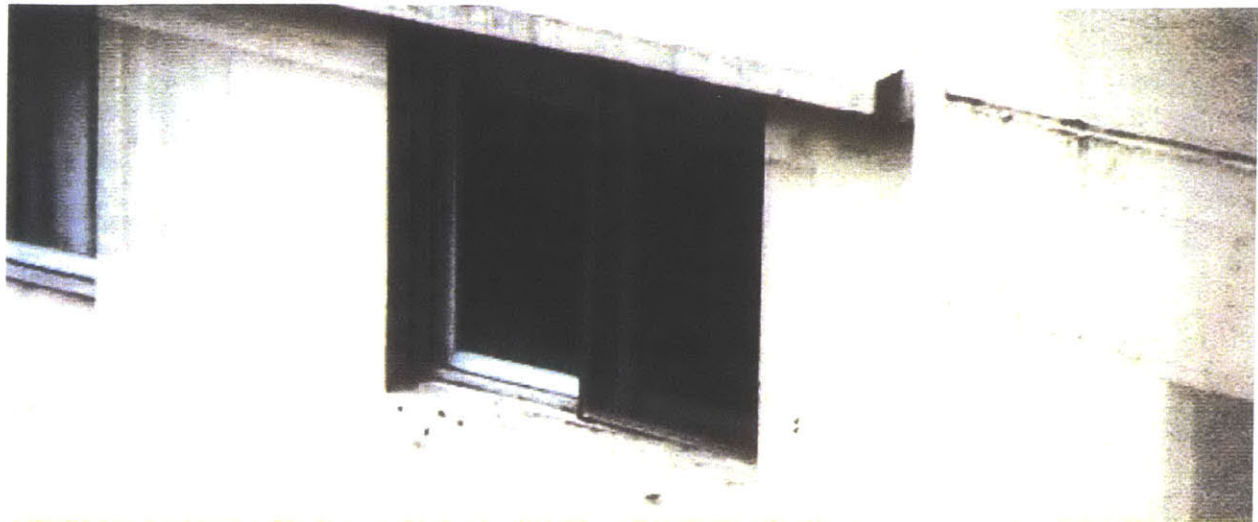




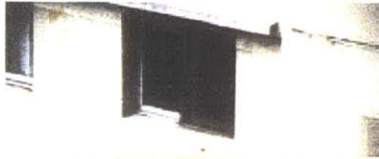








He tried to recall if there had been a moment when he thought he released himself from this Platonic cave. Once again, he remembered the moment from *La Jetée*, the same moment that I had noticed before. The woman was sleeping on her bed. She was frozen in time. The film showed several stills, and in the end, the woman moved. What would be considered banal in other films, a movement, became the strangest gesture this moment. I remember the shudders and sighs from the other viewers in the theatre. He did not know if he broke this unbearable laziness. This was what he had told her. It was 2002. He lived in Boston. He was not American. There was war. He made videos.



He tried to recall if there had been a moment when he thought he roused himself from this Platonic cave. Once again, he remembered the moment from La Jetée, the same moment that I had noticed before. The woman was sleeping on her bed. She was frozen in time. The film showed several shots, and in the end, the woman moved. What would be considered banal in other films, a movement, became the strangest gesture this moment. I remember the shudders and sighs from the other viewers in the theatre. He did not know if he broke this unbearable business. This was what he had told her. It was 2002. He lived in Boston. He was not American. There was war. He made videos.

## ***On La Jetée***

Aud states that  
two lives; ... all words, c  
in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century l  
be separated from the liv  
Edison's initial motif for  
voices, and the last word

The recorded voi  
(sometimes not even rec

## On *La Jetée*

Artaud states that an expression does not have the same value twice, does not live two lives; ... all words, once spoken, are dead.<sup>1</sup> The invention of the recording device in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by Thomas Edison draws attention to the human voice that can be separated from the live body even after the speaker's death, rightfully relating to Edison's initial motif for the invention: "for the purpose of preserving the sayings, the voices, and the last words of the dying member of the family."<sup>2</sup>

The recorded voice, from its invention, associated itself with death. This voice (sometimes not even recorded, but digitally created in mimesis of a human voice) is heard nowadays in radios, televisions, answering machines, hem devices, walkmans, laptops, and other various technological devices, haunting the listeners in the form of hallucination, lies, and propaganda; they re-channel the original context by means of recuperating their lost meanings. Orson Welles, in 1938, put the nation into a panic when he scripted and broadcasted *The War of the World*, a fake scenario of a war in America. In Cocteau's reinterpretation of a Greek mythic character, *Testament of Orpheus* (1950), Orpheus gathers the poetry of Cegeste, broadcast from the underworld. Cocteau must have known Apollinaire's calligramme, a "broadcast" of words in radiating form.

*La Jetée* starts with the narrator's first sentence, "This is a story of a man, marked by an image from his childhood." Who tells this story is unknown to the viewer in the beginning, and to the end. It is this voice that roams in and out throughout the film without showing its corporeality nor identity. Joe Milutis states in his essay, "Radiophonic Ontologies": "...even in the most wholesome productions of Golden Age radio, all of which, by "convention (especially the "thrillers"), have the interior thoughts of the character closest to the microphone "revealed" to the mass audience, so that, in the delirium of reception, the listener's thoughts are replaced by the protagonist's in a identification structure unique to radio."<sup>3</sup> As in the hypnotizing procedure, voice is the perceptual element that stays with the subject (or in this case, the viewer)'s consciousness, directing the subject's vision throughout *La Jetée*.

The Japanese *benshi*, "the narrator," tradition had been popular in early days of silent movie culture in Japan where *benshi* had positioned himself beside the screen not only to translate, but more to rearrange by interpreting the film according to *benshi*'s own will. In Japanese early cinema culture, *benshi*'s interpretation counted the most to the point where the theatre could not sell a ticket without the appearance of a *benshi*. It is not only humorous but also poignant to encounter an episode in which a *benshi*, despite its various incidents in a sequence, repeatedly recited "Here is Napoleon. Napoleon is Napoleon," throughout the entire sequence taking place in a royal court. Here was a cinema viewing where the visual became a mere prop for a poet's imaginary words.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> P 75. *The Theatre and Its Double*, Artaud

<sup>2</sup> P 17. *Experimental Sound and Radio*, Weiss

<sup>3</sup> P 59. *Experimental Sound and Radio*, Weiss

<sup>4</sup> *Benshi*'s words based on the visual, but did not necessarily explain the narrative, or if they did, certainly not truthfully. "There is another interesting story of a former circus narrator named Ueda Hoteiken, who, concerned that a scene with a kiss in it might provoke the ire of the censors, explained that in the West people kissed each other as a greeting similar to the Japanese custom of bowing."

Although it is not clear if Marker encountered this iconoclast tradition before the making of *La Jetée* (1962), he was certainly interested in this format. In “The Rest is Silent,” he states:

*...I had a similar experience in Mexico in the Fifties: English-speaking, subtitled version of a US movie was sort of cryptic for the ordinary peasant who didn't speak English, nor could read the subtitles. So every Saturday night the only member of the community reputed literate would stand and comment on the screening, more or less the benshi way. Their master of the Hollywood lingo being debatable, they “worked on their imaginary forces” not to lose face in front of the audience. More than often, the result was quite refreshing.<sup>5</sup>*

Marker heightens this effect with disembodiment of the narrator in *La Jetée*; visibility of the body is gone from the viewing presence, and only the voice of the invisible *benshi* hovers in the theatre.

In this voice-controlled realm, the audience is well convinced of *hysteron proteron* (il)logic of time travel. The protagonist of *La Jetée* is marked by the last image from the origin of the story. He is bred and born, not the other way. Once a voice is recorded in present tense and played, the recording from this once-a-present-past still exists as present simultaneously with the actual present; a time meets another time in a different time line. When the viewer confronts the last photograph, the first, as strange as it sounds, will [will-ed] remain as present, well suited for the loop structure of the film: “...of all the arts, it is precisely those based upon recording technologies, permitting a radical plasticity of time, that most vividly meet these paradoxical conditions of renewal and creativity, reversal and transmutation.”<sup>6</sup>

1962 was the age before the age of video non-linear editing. It was only 1987 that Bill Warner and his co founder of AVID, Eric Peters, embarked on their revolutionary project of a new editing system that can store the video footage in the hard-drive and reuse it as many times as the editor wants with various manipulation to the footage. Before this non-linear editing technology, another physical footage had to be copied in order for a singular footage to be used more than once, resulting in degrading of quality of the forthcoming generation of copies; a double meant a different entity, similar yet slightly deformed. With AVID, an empty bar of line, called a timeline, exists as a space before any footages lands on it. What looks like a blank schedule book, with a time-code beginning from 00 hour 00 min 00 sec 00 frame, is where an editor drags the necessary image in order to make a sequence out of the raw footages. The finished product of this timeline space visualizes the encoded frames in order, yet allows for the possibility of every given information of visual and aural movements to be rearranged and re-contextualized. The timeline, which can be easily seen as a space where time is spatialized linearly, is, however, temporalized, for every space is open to be occupied by other images from a different timeline. One sequence occupying a space in the timeline can be – a physical term is used in this virtual world of AVID – *cut* to the editor's will. It is a fragile visual space. Marker discusses the AVID video editing system, “I thought

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<sup>5</sup> P 16. *Silent Movie*, Marker

<sup>6</sup> P 48. *Experimental Sound and Radio*, Weiss



immediately of the computer: finally, they've done what I was aiming at with the rudimentary tools I had, since I tried to shape things my way. (This with the reflection that they could have speeded it up a bit – let's say ten years earlier...)"<sup>7</sup>

His premonition on AVID technology is certainly not a digression (well, it sort of is), if one considers the dialogue between his projects and the technological era he resided in. Marker's choice of structure and form in *La Jetée* partly resulted from the technological shifts, if not his premonitions of them. Planning an exhibition on silent films at the Wexner Center for the Arts in 1995, Marker mentions, "...and people started to dream in black and white. Everybody has heard that sentence: "Do you dream in colors?" and why, pray thee, should I dream the world otherwise than I see it, if cinema hadn't been there to substitute a new way to look at dreams?"<sup>8</sup> Here Marker gives another formal element, besides the use of narrator's voice, which arguably shapes *La Jetée* as an iconoclast film.

*...[black and white film is] simply a refusal of nature's original system of seduction...the choice of black and white is nothing less than a haughty denial of our biological heritage, a way to assert man's inner resources against nature's consoling paraphernalia...but if Gudin goes as far as saying (I summarize) "color is sex," does that imply that black and white is sexless or rather that this sudden apparition of a world completely deprived of our usual (and basic) systems of references draws us to the necessity of finding these systems within ourselves – just as music forces us to invent an inner space where painting provides the outer space too easily?*<sup>9</sup>

The narrator's voice, which is in contestation with the linear temporality, is punctuated by the black-and-white still images of *La Jetée*. Whether it is color or black-and-white, photography, like language, is a symbolic-form that constantly fails to fulfill the loss of the photographer. Susan Sontag states in *On Photography*, "When we are nostalgic, we take pictures."<sup>10</sup> It is curious that from the very beginning of cinema history, color film technology has always been available. Even in 1907, Lumière Brothers' autochrome filtered three basic colors through potato starch. However, the film industry did not adopt color until *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). It might be a hyperbole to claim that every photograph and film before color had been mourning for the loss, rightfully in black. However, Chris Marker's particular choice to use black-and-white still images in 1962 – in the same year, Jerome Robbins' *West Side Story* was celebrated by Oscars for its exuberant movement, color, and synch-sound – accentuates the loss of memory by the protagonist, the loss of Paris after WWII, and the loss of the imaginary and the present by the roll of film.

*All photographs are memento mori. To take a photograph is to participate in another person's (or thing's) mortality, vulnerability, mutability. Precisely by*

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<sup>7</sup> P 10. *Silent Movie*, Another Likeness by Bill Horrigan,

<sup>8</sup> P 17. *Silent Movie*, Marker

<sup>9</sup> P 18. *Silent Movie*, Marker

<sup>10</sup> P 15. *On Photography*, Sontag

*slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time's relentless melt.*<sup>11</sup>

However, a so-called still image in *La Jetée* is not still. When, in Paris in 1895, Lumière Brothers's film of a train entering the station in deep focus was screened, the theatre turned into chaos since the public thought that the train would come out of the screen at them. The fascination and sensation of early films relied not on the mimesis of an object, which photography had been satisfying, but on its effective mimicry of movement of the object. Mesmerized by the movement on the screen, human eyes are incapable of detecting, not to speak of being aware of, the dead gap between each frame, nor the fact that there is no movement at all in a film – at least not the movement of the train image. Tony Conrad's 1966 film, *Flicker*, directly played on this illusion of movement by eradicating the images from the film reel and alternating solid black-and-white frames. What audience saw was a bright screen of light flickering twenty-four frames a second for thirty minutes. The eyes blinded by the light, just like the ones owned by the released prisoner from Plato's cave, leave the audience questioning the veracity of film culture, and vision in general. Marker, however, puts the image back into the film reel in *La Jetée*, yet here the image does not move between each frame. If Conrad showed the outside of the cave by projecting light, then Marker, after having been outside the cave, proposed *La Jetée*, a counter-shadow theatre and counter-cinema, not taking for granted the cinema, which overlooks the illusion of movement.

*[In Mexico...] In these pre-television days, radio itself was a rarity, and what I discovered was the altar-like status of some technical tools, the total discrepancy between a medium's avowed aims and its real function.*<sup>12</sup>

The subtlety of Marker's notion of movement and vision is accentuated by two significant moments in the film in terms of movement. The first is the only "normal" part of the film, where a so-called moving image appears. Midway through the film, the female figure is poised on a bed in high contrast. The film shows a series of these close-up photographs of her, seemingly in a half-asleep and half-awake state. At the last of this series, her eyes, gazing out to the camera, blink<sup>13</sup>. Every frame of the twenty-four frames per second in this block of several seconds is different in contrast with the rest of the film. What could be a most banal movement turns into a ghostly act: blinking. It is not a coincidence that the movement that Marker particularly chose is blinking, considering that this act is what constitutes the film. When a film rolls twenty-four frames a second, for 1/48 of a second, the shutter blocks the light from the lens to the unexposed film

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<sup>11</sup> P 15. *On Photography*, Sontag

<sup>12</sup> P 18. *Silent Movie*, Marker

<sup>13</sup> This moment strikes the viewer as uncanny because a movement, which is familiar to the conventional cinema viewing culture, has been done away with throughout the whole film up until this moment. In *Baroque Reason*, Christine Buci-Glucksmann writes: "...in order to see properly – to rediscover a 'stranger relationship' which can no longer be based on religion or tradition – it is necessary to interrupt through a *shock* the temporal alienation of seriality, of the ever-different and ever-the-same. [p76]

frame, letting the cameraman see through the lens; for the other 1/48 of a second, the shutter blocks off the light to cameraman's viewfinder, exposing the film to imprint the image outside the lens. Then the 2<sup>nd</sup> of the twenty-four frames scrolls in, to continue this cycle of blinking. In fact, any film is a compilation of frames, none of which the cameraman saw with his own eyes while shooting. In *La Jetée*, the irony of film is expanded to the irony of seeing through this uncanny moment of blinking; once the protagonist covers his eyes, he starts seeing "real children," "real birds," "real cats," and "real graves."<sup>14</sup>

The second moment is towards the end of the film in the protagonist's last visit to the Other World. As he runs toward the woman who waits in the jetty, the time-lapse between each still image gets shorter, and although the size and composition of the subject varies in these photo stills, the content in these photos remains unchanged: running. Through this effect, used in animation (stop-motion), the series of changing images put on a jerky movement of running. Accordingly, *Markers* presents us not of running, but of seeing running. Since our eyes cannot slow down or speed up the mechanism of perception, *La Jetée* had slowed down the world of vision to the point where the eyes perceive both the gaps and the movement at the same time. What is "real" in *La Jetée*, or what Bergson would have called, *durée*, can never be perceived by the blinking human eyes due to discrepancy between the *durée* and the *durée* lived by our consciousness.

*In the space of a second, red light – the light which has the longest wavelength, and of which consequently, the vibrations are the least frequent – accomplishes 400 billions successive vibrations. If we would form some idea of this number, we should have to separate the vibrations sufficiently to allow our consciousness to count them or at least to record explicitly their succession, and we should then have to enquire how many days or months or years this succession would occupy. How the smallest interval of empty time which we can detect equals, according to Exner, 0.002 seconds; and it is even doubtful whether we can perceive in succession several intervals as short as this.*<sup>15</sup>

Between 1937 and 1946 at Rodez asylum, Artaud was administered fifty one treatments of no other than a waveform, electroshock treatment, by Dr. Ferdiere. Artaud writes in "Electroshock," "...my whole inward electric body, the whole lie of this inward electric body which for a certain number of centuries has been the burden of human being, turned inside-out."<sup>16</sup> The other treatment applied to him was insulin injection. Ever since Dr. Manfred Sake's 1927 discovery became widely accepted by the medicine by 1933, the insulin injection had been applied to induce coma and convulsion to treat schizophrenia and other deliriums. The patients, treated with the injection, revived from the coma by receiving glucose fluid into the stomach through a tube via the nose.

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<sup>14</sup> However, while the narrators says "real children," what the film shows is a black and white still image of a child, which leads back to the loss of the real. The film's photography resembles that of a traveler's snapshots, never transcending the real.

<sup>15</sup> P 205. *Matter and Memory*, Bergson

<sup>16</sup> P 184. *Anthology*, Artaud

Incidentally, there are three time-machine devices in *La Jetée*: an injection, an eye-pad connected to electric wires, and a hammock.

The time traveling subject must hover off the ground, electrified, and, most importantly, anaesthetized to encounter the Other. The linkage to the treatment of the insane is rather apparent since madness associated itself with the threshold to the other world even from the Renaissance.

The madman's voyage [Ship of Fools]<sup>17</sup> is at once a rigorous division and absolute passage. In one sense, it simply develops, across a half-real, half imaginary geography, the madman's liminal position on the horizon of medieval concern – a position symbolized and made real at the same time... his exclusion must enclose him; he cannot and must not have another prison than the threshold itself, he is kept at the point of passage. He is put in the interior and exterior, and inversely. A highly symbolic position, which will doubtless remain his until our own day, if we are willing to admit that what was formerly a visible fortress of order has now become the castle of our conscience.<sup>18</sup>

The difference between these embarkations of madness from the rigid symbolic realm and the time travel experimentation in *La Jetée* is that the treatment in *La Jetée* is the converse procedure. Rather than healing and ostracizing madness, the doctors from the underworld implant madness in order to possibly “reach food, medicine, sources of energy” in the post apocalyptic world. Under destroyed Paris, a city that is feminized by Baudelaire, the healing of the wound must, again, come from the Other, feminized by the woman.

Time travel in *La Jetée* is a painful procedure that leads the subjects to “death for others – and for others yet, madness.<sup>19</sup>” However, when the protagonist loses his corporeal state of being underground, he enters into the imaginary. Interestingly, the first encounter is narrated as such:

*On the tenth day, images begin to ooze, like confessions.*

Confession, which naturally springs from inside, not outside, is in contrast with “barrier,” the word used when the protagonist exits the Other later in the film. The first image of the exiting moment is that of the protagonist, in the Other World, staring at the camera with the narrator's voice-over, “...he feels – ahead of them – a barrier.” The succeeding image shows the protagonist's point of view of his half-open eye-pad, being lifted by the doctor's hands to reveal the sight of the real world. Here, his eyesight (sense) and recuperated consciousness is called a barrier. An idealist's reasoning of the whole world being the expansion of his mind and senses is questioned by yet another

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<sup>17</sup> “Renaissance men developed a delightful, yet horrible ways of dealing with their mad denizens; they were put on a ship and entrusted to mariners because folly, water, and sea, as everyone then “knew,” had an affinity for each other. This “Ship of Fools” crisscrossed the sea and canals of Europe with their cosmic and pathetic cargo of souls.” – *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault.

<sup>18</sup> *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault

<sup>19</sup> *La Jetée*, Marker

sense, created through deadening the corporeal sense. However, this Other World is not an intrusion from the outside objects, but a confession.

If the immergence of imaginary is a confession, then, as foretold from the beginning of the film, the Other must have pre-existed within the protagonist, who is *marked by the image* from his childhood (the site of the imaginary). As he closes his eyes inward, the other sense starts seeing the Feminine. Hence, within one male identity, dichotomy is formed where the Other is represented by a female: *La Jetée* (The Pier) and *La J'étais* ( I used to be her).

This female in *La Jetée* exists in the “dateless world: *ce monde sans date*,” “without memories, without plans: *sans souvenirs, sans projets*.” Her encounter with the protagonist resembles that between a male and a female in Marguerite Duras’ *La Maladie de la mort*, where the male pays the female (a prostitute figure) to spend a period of time in bed. This book calls the reader by the second person, *you*, as if the writer is the female, and the reader, the male. The only set – the book assumes a theatre-play format – in the story, bed, ironically becomes the site where love proves to be impossible, and lover’s intent to be inexpressible. Duras tells of no dates, and no specific “period of time” of their encounter. It could have been a week, or close to eternity. Buci-Glucksmann’s notion of the feminine of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, that is a primal historical form, or an origin in which a ‘pre-history’ and a ‘post-history’<sup>20</sup> are dialectically articulated, can be found at *La Jetée*’s female figure.

*They walk. They look at the trunk of a redwood tree covered with this historical dates. She pronounces an English name he doesn't understand.” As in a dream, he shows her a point beyond the tree [the age rings of the tree], hears himself say, “This is where I come from...” and falls back, exhausted.*<sup>21</sup>

Had Marker fully appropriated Madeleine’s line (played by Kim Novak) from *Vertigo* (1958), the protagonist would have said, “ Somewhere in here I was born...and here I died, and it was only a moment for you...you took no notice.” Marker’s affinity to this Hitchcock film is evident seeing his homage to it in *Sans Soleil* (1982) or *Immemory* CD ROM project. The noticeable difference in *La Jetée* is that the gender is switched around. It is not Madeleine anymore who faints after pointing at the age rings. It is the male figure that cannot cope with this mysterious object [age ring of a tree], in which time is condensed in one surface plane. Marker’s protagonist is not an observer, nor an intruder as is *Vertigo*’s James Stewart, who puts the feminine to death, twice for that matter, from the top of a tower. The male body is both the detective full of curiosity and the suspect eventually leading him to anxiety due to his failure to comprehend the non-symbolic realm, the world of “marks<sup>22</sup>,” not letters. The protagonist acknowledges that he is not from this world by pointing beyond the tree, but he is unable to register the site of his death. If Madeleine’s site of death is the symbolic (the tower), the protagonist’s

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<sup>20</sup> P 94. *Baroque Reason*, Buci-Glucksmann

<sup>21</sup> *La Jetée*, Marker

<sup>22</sup> *La Jetée*, published by Zone Books, translates “signes” into “markings.” As the voice-over narrates, “Sometimes he finds her in front of their markings,” the film shows the still of the female standing in front of smudged, and hardly decipherable letters.

site of death in *La Jetée* is within the *feminine himself*, or simply a confession of the symbolic.

*The now is (in the present indicative) the impossibility of coexisting with itself: with itself, that is, with an other self, an other now, an other same, a double.*<sup>23</sup>

Marker's utopia exists in the "future", in which the heads of both genders appear at the same time as if they were quadruplet heads without bodies, or as if they shared one black invisible body. They all have a sixth sense on their foreheads, indicating their ability to see inwards without closing their two eyes. These creatures shut the protagonist out from their world at first, but when they later invite the protagonist in, the protagonist instead chooses to return to the past to re-encounter the Other. By showing their mutual rejections, Marker connotes that this utopia, a space of possible coexistence (of now with the other now, male with female, and the symbolic with the imaginary) is the space of the impossible coexistence. As would be conceived by Derrida's logic, the very signification and necessity of coexistence is constituted by the limit of the symbolic, the male, the corporeal, and the present. Had the limit not existed, there would be no irrepressible desire for the Other. From the premise, Paris has already been destroyed.

Whether Marker presents his viewer with a solution is beside the question. Marker himself says about his similar, yet slightly different film, *Sans Soleil*, "Logical consequence: total recall is memory anaesthetized. After so many stories of men who had lost their memory, here is the story of one who has lost forgetting... and who, through some peculiarity of his nature, instead of drawing pride from the fact and scorning mankind of the past and its shadows.... turned to it first with curiosity and then with compassion."<sup>24</sup> At the time of releasing his sci-fi, *La Jetée*, Marker simultaneously released another film, *Le Jolie mai*, a political documentary on the daydreaming of the Parisian, simultaneously living with the destruction done by the French government in Algeria in the 60's. Marker's film, unlike Breton's anatomical study of madness in *Nadja*, is rooted in the compassion in the world, whose predetermined limit seems to create the spiral-like cycle in history of wanting and then failing to understand. His fellow filmmaker, Alain Resnais calls this *undecidable*, Welles, *unsummonable*, Robbe-Grillet, *inexplicable*, and Duras, *impossible*, according to Deleuze.<sup>25</sup>

*La Jetée* paradoxically recuperates the referent without mimetically reproducing "life." It is without movement, actor's line, and sound synchronized with the actor's mouth. One visual source that is synchronized with the voice-over is when a paragraph of text is inserted, as if in a silent film, while the narrator redundantly reads the text.<sup>26</sup> As the narrator reads off the text, the text shatters away from its visual space on the screen.

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<sup>23</sup> P 55. *Margins of Philosophy*, Derrida

<sup>24</sup> Marker, "Sunless," *Semiotexte* vol. 4, no. 3 ("Oasis," 1984), p. 37

<sup>25</sup> P 182. *Cinema 2*, Deleuze

<sup>26</sup> "Ceci est l'histoire d'un homme marqué par une image d'enfance.

La scène qui le troubla par sa violence.

Et don't il ne devait comprendre que beaucoup plus tard la signification,

Eut lieu sur la grande jetée d'Orly,

Quelques années avant le début de la troisième guerre mondiale." – *La Jetée*, Marker

What the audience reads with their eyes is what they lose aurally. In this film, the re-realization of the inexplicable loss comes through in this kind of aporia. In order to use still images with film projections, multiple same frames must pass every second, and except for one scene (blinking), there is not a single frame that is not multiplied in *La Jetée*. Whether consciously or not, the film naturally forces the viewer to see each frame hundreds of times. Consequently, the film is seen multiple times in one viewing. Nevertheless, since the images are not arranged by means of contiguity – literally almost every cut is what Godard would have called a jump cut –, the end of film leaves the audience with a collection of images in disorder. Like the emblem from the Renaissance, the collection of these images, with its loop structure, invites seeing again at the end, the beginning.

*...our point is that depth of field creates a certain type of direct time-image that can be defined by memory, virtual regions of past, the aspects of each region. This would be less a function of reality than a function of remembering, of temporalization; not exactly a recollection but and invitation to recollect.<sup>27</sup>*

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<sup>27</sup> P 109. *Cinema 2*, Deleuze

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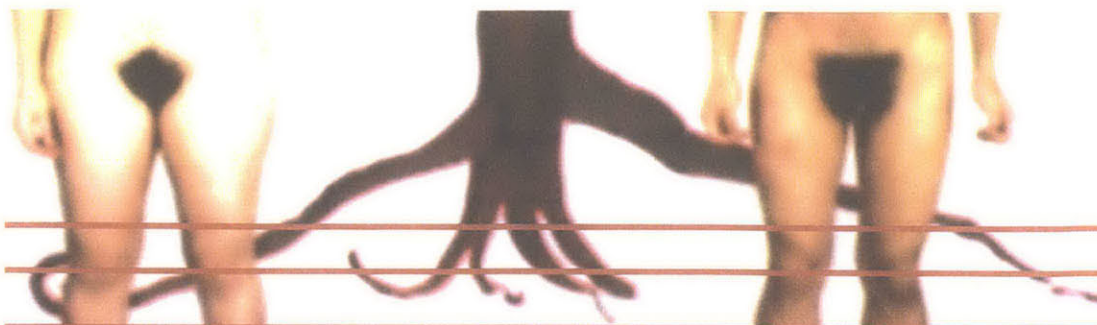
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THE END