The View from the Window

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ABSTRACT This article presents a brief analysis of the discrepancies and difficulties in evaluating transmitted images as though they were directly witnessed. It attempts to look closely at the result of representation in the act of witnessing and the divisions inherent in electronic media as a tool for viewing. Primary works by Marshall McLuhan, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jean Baudrillard are considered in order to investigate the relationship between the subject and the viewer in the event of media transmission. How does the introduction of a camera influence the body of the viewer? How does it further alienate the subject (or does it at all)? What, in short, happens when we create an image in order to ‘accurately represent’ something?

KEYWORDS Toronto School; Media/Mass media; Media theory; Media effects; Cultural studies; CCTV

RÉSUMÉ Cet article présente une brève analyse des difficultés soulevées par l'évaluation d'images médiatisées comme s'il était possible de voir directement ce qu'elles représentaient. Il examine l'effet du témoignage direct sur la représentation et l'écart du témoin par rapport à la scène ou à l'action médiatisée. L'article considère des travaux pionniers de la part de Marshall McLuhan, Maurice Merleau-Ponty et Jean Baudrillard afin d'étudier la relation entre le spectateur et le sujet lors de transmissions médiatiques. Comment la présence d'une caméra influence-t-elle le corps du spectateur? Comment celle-ci aliène-t-elle davantage le sujet (ou y a-t-il aliénation de prime abord)? En bref, que se passe-t-il quand on crée une image afin de « représenter fidèlement » quelque chose?

MOTS CLÉS École de Toronto; Médias/médias de masse; Théorie des médias; Effets des médias; Études culturelles; Vidéosurveillance

Positioning

Electronic media is a position. Or, more accurately, electronic media is the creator and occupier of the position. The world experienced through an electronic apparatus such as television is different from the world simply viewed through a window. If we are looking out of a window onto a street below us, we are able to establish depth, colour, and our distance from the physical objects we are observing. The presence of the window does little to interrupt our understanding of physical space that would have emerged very early on in life. By contrast, the scene as observed on a television screen...
takes on different properties than a direct line of sight in the natural world. If we were
to set up a stationary camera in the same position as that of the window and watch the
image sent back to us from the camera, the image properties change significantly.

This position is both physical and metaphysical. On one hand, let us assume that
we are familiar with where the camera has been placed as well as the angle that the
camera is set at and can recall a personal physical experience that is comparable to
where the camera is. We then sit down in front of a television screen in another room
in another building a good distance away from the camera and watch the image as re-
lated to us by the camera. Though we are familiar with the image related and can even
imagine ourselves in the same position as the camera capturing the image for us, there
is a displacement that cannot be avoided in this scenario. The temptation, normally,
would be to simply imagine ourselves as though we are standing at that window—to
pretend that the camera does not really exist and that we are in fact there. We come
to grips with the image by attempting to place ourselves in it. The image depicted is
comprehended by ignoring the fact that it is an image. Our position is adjusted in
order to help us get past the fact that we are in a different place from the image dis-
played before us.

The position is established through both the production and the recognition of a
signal. The camera is still in the window and we are still in another location. The event
that forces us to recognize the image as a reality that is happening somewhere else is
the capturing of the image of that street by the camera and its subsequent transmission
of that information to us in another physical space. That signal is both the expansion
of a particular determination of agency and a consequent dissociation with an imme-
diate physical reality on the part of the recipient.

Electricity

Marshall McLuhan (2001), in the early arguments of Understanding Media, begins with
a discussion about electricity. He points out that the fundamental social result of the
introduction of electricity is “decentralization” (p. 39). That this decentralization func-
tions across temporal and physical barriers and comprises the essential relationship we
have with reality is but one of the fundamental results of the presence of electronic
media (McLuhan, 2001). Returning to our window, though the street would appear
roughly the same if we were viewing it personally or re-translating the image on the
screen transmitted to us by the camera, the experience of the scene is different from
one instance to the other. We are keenly aware that the image displayed by the camera
is nowhere near us. The perspective belongs to the machine we have placed in the win-
dow to capture the image for us. We do, however, experience the image on the screen
as though it were immediate. In so doing we are split between two places at the same
time. The properties of electronic communication require a recognition of immediacy
that cannot be reconciled with the location in which the signal is experienced.

In short, the point that McLuhan (2001) was trying to make regarding the pro-
duction of electronic signals—or the development of electronic media—was that the
body itself breaches its own physical limits due to the introduction of the signal. This
“decentralization” is not so much one of the mental production of understanding and
communicative ability of the organism as much as it is about that initial recognition
of the outside world—that unprocessed recognition that would be best assigned to the acuity or the immediacy of the central nervous system. Our view from the window, whether mediated by the camera or not, captures the same basic information: the number of cars on the street, the number of people walking down that street, the names of the shops, the number of doors, et cetera.

The rupture that McLuhan was talking about would be the inability to anchor the experience of the camera’s view from the window without our other senses. We do not know what the room smells like, what the other elements in the periphery of the window (the inside of the room, the door walked through to get to the room with the window, etc.) look or feel like. There is a spontaneity necessary to the sudden image that puts the subject off-balance and requires an adjustment to come to terms with. It is this push toward that adjustment that requires an elevation of certain senses and a total disconnect with others for the image to be comprehended that is at the root of McLuhan’s idea of decentralization. In other words, this decentralization of the body is due to the extension of that apparatus that allows the body to navigate the world beyond it. It is not necessarily that the mind is unable to reconcile the place of the body with the introduction of electronic media. The difficulty is in the division between the immediate and the present (the image from the camera and the window view itself). This decentralization ultimately results in a sort of extension of the sensory apparatus to areas outside of the normal physical limits of those senses. The end result is that the body is now incidental to the comprehensive capabilities of the mind.

(Dis)Placement
It is not so much that the camera in the window has shifted the body; more so that the image requires an ignorance of the body to be understood as immediate. We know that the image displayed on the screen is intended to be taken as currently happening. The experience of looking though a window is one that necessarily happens with the body positioned behind the window frame, taking in the view in front of it. As we would treat an image displaying a static view as comparable to the experience of the view in direct contact, the mechanism that brings us the view from the window fades into the background of the overall perception of the event. We are watching the view from the window. We are not watching the data captured by a camera placed in the window. This limitation that is established via physical space, however, is the locus of the electronic signal. The presence of media is something that has to affect the landscape and the physical area in which it occurs. Again, the result would be the reorganization of the mind with the physical area that normally comprises the life space of the individual.

This presence, this connection to the thought processes of other people via artificial or manufactured means, is the production of a connection with the rest of the world that has no physical or temporal root but one that operates in a more immediate way on the brain than the products of the printing press or smoke signals. If McLuhan is right, that the central nervous system is extended outside of itself via the introduction of electronic apparatuses, the relationship we have with these apparatuses is not comparable to the typical dynamic of mind–text–external world. The stability of the physical frame has been altered. The relationship between the body and the rest of
the world, its understanding of division with the impulses coming from outside and
the reactions generated inside of the frame, is complicated at a fundamental level.²

The suggestion that media is a position, or the occupier of a position, is predicated
on the idea that the message is ultimately the element that creates space with respect
to communication. The new information results in an adjustment on the part of the
recipient—a making room that shifts ratios of understanding. The comprehension
of that message is the element that defines the parameters of that space, but the spark
that instigates that process is invariably the external input. If we are looking directly
out of the window, the elements that define the contours of the space are tangible. If
we are viewing the image transmitted by the camera placed at the window, the quali-
ties of that image are necessarily flattened— all televised images are two-dimensional.
The televised image is informed by our memory of similar images, and this is the prop-
erty that links the outside world with our physical bodies via electronic media—
the requisite personalization of an image or presentation to make that experience
comprehensible.

This personalization relies on the application of previous knowledge to the un-
known or the unfamiliar. The camera at the window presents us with an image that
must be decoded. The image, as a representation of reality, must be infused with pre-
vious experiences of reality. This is how we make sense of the world around us. We
use the image as an indication of a reality. The reality itself takes shape when we recall
comparable items depicted by the image from our previous experiences. The image
makes sense as a composite of recognizable elements brought forward from our mem-
ory. The properties of the image must be weighed against our previous understandings
of the world around us— this area has a long strip of concrete running between objects
that look like domiciles; it must, therefore, be a road. That the ultimate function of
comprehension is a marriage between memory and the weighing of memory against
similarity is an obvious precursor to the very idea of communication. For a message
to be comprehended at all, there must be some common ground identified. In this
light, it is hardly surprising that the normal way students are introduced to a new lan-
guage is the listing of common and unproblematic phrases— telling time, introducing
yourself, et cetera. The production of a line of comparison is the basic element in a
process of comprehension. The way in which we experience the new is through the
recollection of and comparison with the familiar. This argument falls in line with
Baudrillard's (2005) conception of “Integral Reality.”

The order of (virtual) things

In Simulations, Baudrillard (1983) wrote: “Abstraction today is no longer that of the
map, the double, the mirror or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory,
a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin
or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it” (p. 2).
It would be easy to misinterpret this point. At root, what Baudrillard is talking about
is the primacy of the text. With respect to the map, the suggestion that it now precedes
the territory has more to do with the availability of the map than it does with any no-
tion of accuracy or reliability. The primary question raised here is what the first point
of contact would be for the introductory experience.
For example, if I am planning to travel somewhere I have never been to previously, I will normally consult a source ahead of the actual trip to familiarize myself with points of interest, tactical concerns—roads, hotel locations, travel between the airport and the hotel, et cetera—and determine my movements accordingly. Obviously this research does not give me a pre-emptive experience of the actual terrain. What does happen, however, is that I now have experience of a text that represents the area I am planning to explore, and each experience of that area once I have arrived will be coloured by my initial research. It is not so much that the destination does not exist, but that I have generated previous knowledge of that destination as a result of the research. The destination now functions as a fully formed copy of the research I have conducted. There is no way to get out from under the information I have gathered about the area I am travelling to once I arrive and am physically in the area itself.

Of course, that only covers the most recent event in the chain of duplication. The construction of the maps I would have consulted, the advice on which hotel to visit or which restaurants were worth eating at, or the correct amount to pay for a taxi from one place to the next is the result of previous evaluations. Those determinations would have been made on the basis that people had travelled to the city I am travelling to beforehand and were likely to travel there again. As such, the travel writer collecting the advice I read is working off the information on the area provided either by locals who have been in that city longer than the writer or by previous travellers. The information gathered to advise the traveller is the production of information as a companion to information already gathered. If “[t]he territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it,” the torrent of information that results from the creation of the map puts the map on the same ontological ground as the territory as a result of its existence. In other words, the existence of the travel writing on the area I plan to visit results in a mutual dependency of both the writing and the place with respect to my experience of the city I am travelling to; the city now must conform to the information I have gathered from the travel books and maps I have consulted, and the stability of these texts depends on their alignment with my experience of the city. It is not so much that the territory cannot exist without the map as much as that the existence of the two at once requires an endless reflection on one as the verification of the other—and an endless loop of reference that renders the idea of an “original” irrelevant.

Baudrillard (1983) also pointed out that “[t]o dissimulate is to feign not to have what one has. To simulate is to feign to have what one hasn’t. One implies a presence, the other an absence” (p. 5). In this instance, in the instance of televised surveillance, the camera is the production of simulation. The production of the image is the expressed attempt to capture what we cannot have immediately. There is an interest in that physical space, in what may happen in that location, but the idea of putting a human pair of eyes there to capture the events taking place is simply impractical. This, in a nutshell, is the technological purpose behind the adoption of CCTV in every instance: the desire to produce an interminable and (ostensibly) intractable record, a record that defies the limits of the human attention span or muddy questions having to do with prejudice and perception.
Due to whatever practical reasons, we have decided to put the camera in that window rather than standing there ourselves. This creates a dynamic of representation functioning as pseudo-experience. The way in which we experience that representation as a pseudo-experience is via the recognition of the signal as a duplication. The image is understood to be a record of a real-world event but, as it is captured by a camera, is still understood to be a duplication of that real-world event. That duplication, or simulation as Baudrillard would have it, relies on the introduction of external information as a component of the immanent experience of that duplication/simulation. Put another way, the image on the screen is experienced as the view out of the window because we are able to simulate the missing properties from that image into an experience.

In the 1980s, Jean Baudrillard (1983) suggested that the culture of mediation, the endless cycle of representation in the contemporary landscape, altered our understanding of authenticity. In short, the saturation of representation, of duplication, had placed the primacy of the copy in front of the original. The map suddenly preceded the terrain. The typical reaction to this claim is disbelief, and this is primarily due to our unwillingness to admit that we really only half-experience anything. The suggestion that the duplicate has overrun the original due to sheer pervasiveness is something that offends anyone, for fairly obvious reasons. We interpret the world around us primarily as an unmediated object. We see things in the room we are currently standing in and assume that our appreciation of “chair,” “couch,” “television set,” or “table” is the result of a logical correlation between a physical presence and its relationship to us. What gets glossed over, what must be glossed over, is the process of recognition and reasoning that informs these instinctive reactions. In fact, if not for this phenomenological shorthand, we would spend far too much time evaluating any new object or situation. The biological need for this is apparent when you consider that defining the object “bear,” “lion,” or “cliff” anew each time they were encountered would have resulted in a drastically smaller human population at the outset of the species and significantly reduced odds on its long-term survival.

Despite understandable rejections of the claims outlined in Baudrillard’s Simulations (1983), the argument that the duplication comes before the real in the order of authenticity follows this logical progression. The idea of the copy, of the reproduction, is merely a contemporary extension of this recognition of the necessity of completion in the absence of the original. The saturation of media in contemporary life requires that a significant amount of the life world must be accepted on its own merits rather than evaluated and compared against whatever semblance of an original referent may still exist. Actually, such a comparison would be impossible, as the “original” in any given situation is a referent for any comparable object across the span of human history. Each new novel, car, music recording, or architectural construction carries with it the obvious signifiers that exist within the moments of its creation in an endless sequence of contributions and recognitions.

For the novel, signifiers include everything from James Joyce’s contribution to literature (and whether the text in question follows any of the tropes set down in that opus) to the development of the printing press, the death of Latin as the primary language of writing in the West to the current condition of the written word with respect
to paper-based volumes, the Internet, audio books, and so on. For the car, signifiers
comprise the development of the production line as a method of manufacture, the ex-
pansion of the human element into the wilderness via the production of roads (start-
ing with the Romans, obviously), campaigns regarding drunk driving, and the
development of air bags, seat belts, et cetera. For music recordings, signifiers include
the development of recording apparatuses and the evolution of mass-consumption
music across LPs, eight-tracks, cassettes, CDs, and MP3; the Payola scandals in the
United States; the comingling of different tribal music forms across the globe and the
roots of all and none of this in the classics, and so on. Architectural construction would
lead us down a similar path, including the history of cathedral construction as a mech-
anism toward the larger and more ambitious industrial projects over the past three
centuries (the Sears Tower, the Eiffel Tower, and the Burj Khalifa, to name a few) as
well as the more phenomenological connections, such as the World Trade Center and
Auschwitz. Obviously, the identification of any of the categories I have just named
does not immediately call to mind the examples I have just named. The point is that
each of those examples are connected to those categories and a host of others. The
system of duplication, of representation that permeates contemporary life ricochets
across time, space, culture, and matter in all conceivable directions and causes us to
hold onto the only semblance of stability we might be able to make out of this hurri-
cane—context.

Context, however, requires that we position the object under scrutiny somewhere
in the process of signification that makes sense. It is, in a basic way, a matter of elimi-
nating the significance of the object that is not relevant to the situation and focusing
on those connections that are. The condition of duplication is still there, the precession
of simulacra is still very much a part of the order of signification. Signification, however,
is now the recognition that the identification of the root text is now hopeless consid-
ering the cacophony of contributing information relevant to any specific text/object.
This removes the idea of the “real” from the process of representation. There is no
zero-level referent any longer. The logical progression of this assessment caused
Baudrillard (2005) to suggest a principle of “Integral Reality” (p. 17). In a nutshell, as
the precession of simulacra placed the copy in front of the authentic as the primary
referent, the authentic vanished. With the eradication of the “original,” with the de-
termination that all things, all reality is a copy of other copies, everything is subse-
quently real. It is not so much that the copy is now more relevant than the real as
much as that the only referent for anything is another element in the line of duplica-
tion. The sequences of texts that make up the contemporary landscape all have previ-
ous referents. Additionally, those original texts can only be reasonably understood by
calling on other referents that may sit anywhere in the sequence of the production of
texts. According to Baudrillard, everything is real.

Gaps and contractions
This causes a contraction. We know that the view from the window depicts objects a
certain distance away from the location of the perspective, whether the determinant
of that location is the physical position of our head or the physical position of the cam-
era. The image produced by the camera may be two-dimensional, but we have a nat-
ural response to fill in the gaps in the data. The production of understanding, the creation of depth in the visual entity, is the primary guarantor of textual continuity. Taken in line with McLuhan's argument that the fundamental understanding of connectivity and the relationship with the external world has been irrevocably altered due to the introduction of electronic media into contemporary life, Baudrillard's (1994) suggestions would further complicate this perspective on media by suggesting that the signal is ultimately capable of the creation of space—that the act of duplication is in fact capable of creating new entities rather than increasing reference onto old ones. Actually, to be more specific, the process of duplication is capable of the creation of space on the basis of a contraction.

The final element in the idea of “Integral Reality” is that everything is a referent of something else. The endless process of recognition between entities in terms of signification results in an endless series of comparisons and referents, and this is due to the collapse of the normal location in the process of signification reserved for the “real.” The inherent search for the real, for the root of a reference in any process of signification, requires that we expand the sequence of reference so long as a “real” is eventually found. The fact that this real is no longer available, that any search for a root element is hopeless, at once expands the futile attempt to discover authenticity while simultaneously collapsing the progress of the search within myriad expanding referents.

Though this sounds as if it is limiting, it is important to realize that the removal of the idea of the “real” from the process of textual analysis opens the field of interpretation by forcing inclusion, by forcing an acknowledgment of contribution on the part of what, at first glance, would appear to be unrelated entities. The expansion through collapse that Baudrillard's (2005) idea of “Integral Reality” proposes pushes the recognition of duplication outside of a typically linear textual context into an inclusive process of recognition that could only be referred to as postmodern.

Although it fits within this dynamic, the McLuhanite argument that the body is expanded outside of the corpus with the introduction of electronic media implies inclusion but not a contraction toward the body. The body's limits have been expanded. This would normally bring to mind a drawing-in of the world into the mind of the individual. It is important to note, however, that the final result of exposure to electronic media is an actual expansion. Though the brain is capable of experiencing events and entities that are outside of the normal delivery organs—fingertips, eyes, ears, et cetera—the instinct would be to interpret this as the drawing-in of the external world rather than the movement of the body out into it. This expansion, however, is just that.

The increasing sensitivity of the brain to events taking place outside of its traditional limits, however, makes the body appear more remote rather than more highly connected. Particularly in the case of television, or CCTV more specifically, the effect of the duplication of a distant event is the movement of the consciousness directly into the ephemeral world of the image. The momentary movement of the consciousness to the location of the image coupled with the assurance that the properties of this image are, in fact, unfiltered and directly representative of an unplanned event beyond the initial capabilities of the body creates a trauma of place. We comprehend the reality of the image by adjusting our understanding of the stability of the location
or the place of the body. There is a reduction in relevance to the notion of the physical form. The body is now present, but somehow no longer limited to the sense experience of the world around us. The medium, as a surrogate nerve ending, is now the message.

The medium exists as a modality of duplication. That the message is, in a basic sense, the reproduction of events, thoughts, or the formulation of those thoughts is a process of subconscious duplication. This duplication results in a deepening, a filling out of the symbolic landscape. How does this relationship with the medium create an expansion? We have the element of direct contact—that the ears and the eyes are now within immediate range of events entirely outside of the normal scope of the body is obvious and clearly the traditional interpretation. The problem with this interpretation is that it offers no account for a conception of time as relative to distance.

We comprehend the world around us as a series of objects. Merleau-Ponty (2008), in his brilliant work *Phenomenology of Perception*, provided (among a host of others) this note on perception:

To see is to enter a universe of beings which display themselves, and they would not do this if they could not be hidden behind each other or behind me. In other words: to look at an object is to inhabit it, and from this habitation to grasp all things in terms of the aspect which they present to it. (p. 79, emphasis, author's)

How does this translate to the idea of mediated imagery? Will the objects “display themselves” in the same way if the object is no longer within the physical limits of the observers’ sight? Does the suggestion that the object is mediated and, fundamentally, that the object captured by the camera is not supposed to convey some illustrative abstract representation but a real object in a real place change this argument? Following Merleau-Ponty’s (2008) logic, there is a qualification we must make here. The orientation made with images and the knowledge of the object that is beyond our perception is relative to an assumption about the stability of the object itself. It is necessary to recognize an object in a setting that is technically beyond our immediate or natural view. Following this line of thinking:

When, in a film, the camera is trained on an object and moves nearer to it to give a close-up view, we can remember that we are being shown the ashtray or the actor’s hand, we do not actually identify it. This is because the screen has no horizons. In normal vision, on the other hand, I direct my gaze upon a sector of the landscape, which comes to life and is disclosed, while the other objects recede into the periphery and become dormant while, however, not ceasing to be there. (p. 78, emphasis, author’s)

There are a few problems with this line of thinking, of course. I am not willing to concede that the object is disrupted by the focus of the camera any more than it is when made the focal point of a person’s attention in direct physical contact. The fact that the gaze is directed according to the flow of the camera shot does not result in the evaporation of the other objects displayed in the previous, wider angle. What Merleau-Ponty appears to be suggesting here is simply that the introduction of the filmed image erad-
icates the observer’s memory and results in a kind of emptying of the brain—that the film observer is inherently passive due to the movement of the shot.

More specifically, the idea that the camera has no horizons is a problematic one. From the basic construction of an artwork—specifically painting or drawing—the primary starting point is the vanishing point. Does this not constitute a horizon? Does the implanting of perspective not result in the creation of a horizon? Is there such a thing as perspective without a horizon? The immediate instinct is to say no. The question, then, is how Merleau-Ponty frames this idea of a horizon in order to reject its presence in film.

Bearing this in mind, it is important to note that Merleau-Ponty is not necessarily talking about the image in the abstract, but the screen. In that light, the question would be what exactly Merleau-Ponty’s problem with the idea of the screen is. If it is the screen he is primarily concerned with, he would not have the same problem with a painting or a photograph. The obvious friction here would centre on the fact that the image is movable. In other words, the flatness of the image, combined with the friction inherent in the fact that the image moves, is the reason for this supposed lack of horizons. Movement has a way of altering physical distances. The creation of a moving two-dimensional image requires the reiteration and readjustment of space. Unlike the use of a vanishing point in the creation of a static artistic image, the creation of multiple angles, the ability to rework the visual impression on an artistic whim is what I mean here by saying that the image is “movable.” The presence of multiple horizons would most likely be what Merleau-Ponty is reacting to when he suggests that the screen has no horizons.

How, you might ask, does this relate to the question at hand, then? How are Merleau-Ponty’s ideas relevant as we acknowledge that he is thinking about a different form of presentation than a camera placed in a window? Since we are talking about the recorded moving image in the abstract, the basis of the representation is that of the physical representation of the area captured. The knowledge of the physical reality of the area captured is fundamental to the use of the image. The camera’s image can only function if it has horizons. This suggestion that closing- or honing-in on certain details makes the meaning or the narrative function of this image irrelevant if it is true.

But there, we are getting a bit ahead of ourselves. The best approach would be to identify the two primary types of moving images. There is such a thing as the cinematic image, the image designed specifically to entertain. Multiple camera angles are selected in the interest of telling a story. Likewise, the focus changes, the image zooms closer or further away during the same shot. The image is manipulated in a variety of ways to direct emotional response to the narrative. In fact, it is important to note that the image is created as a prosthesis for a narrative that has already been constructed. The script, whether it be for a film or a television show, is the basis of the presentation. The development of that idea is the process of filming and the construction of the general text that will become the movie. With that in mind, the purposes of filming for entertainment produce duplication on more levels than that of the static camera and do it for very different reasons. In the end, the entertainment presentation is the duplication of easily recognizable representations in order to construct a coherent and universally applicable narrative.
The location of the narrative

All images work off the idea of recognizable visual talismans, of course, but the entertainment image involves the creation of a text as the result of a prepared perspective or point of view. The properties of the image are put forth as a method of telling a predetermined narrative. This is crucial in understanding the dramatic properties of visual storytelling—the unknown has no place here. The image must be constructed out of easily identifiable and familiar touchstones in order to make sense to the audience. This is even true in exotic presentations; science fiction and fantasy films invariably modify existing imagery as a means of telling their stories. There are varying degrees to which this can be said to work, of course, but the essential point to retain here is that the image in entertainment is developed according to a predetermined outcome. It will have an ending. It will also present data in a narrative format, and ambiguity destroys the aura that supports that narrative format.

The surveillance image, however, is about the claiming of space from a distance: not the conveying of an abstract idea through ostensibly recognizable signifiers, but the demonstration of the happenings of a real-world space. The stability and the essentially static nature of camera placement and perspective are essential to the purpose of the capturing of the image in its inception. The image exists as the anticipated happening of an unknown—not the revealing of an unspoken. This revealing is, in the end, a process of duplication. The unknown becoming known via a revealing is a violent act. The viewer must make sense of the image, of the information being revealed, in order to get past it—to be able to dismiss it. Normally, this is taken care of in the course of narrative flow, but with respect to the surveillance image, the requirement is to provide existing information that makes sense of the new information. The gathering of already comprehended information and its injection into the new stimulus to round out the impression given by our camera in the window is a process of duplication by necessity.

Obviously, the issue here is the professed use of the image in Merleau-Ponty's analysis. He would be writing about film rather than anything relating to our isolated example. In a nutshell, the criticisms he makes relative to the image are entirely focused on a text that has a definitive beginning and an end. More than that, his is a text that has a predetermined focus that is entirely the exposure of those in front of the lens and not the amusement of those in front of the monitor. In other words, the seminal elements of these two texts drastically limit the degree to which we can compare their properties.

In light of all of this, it is possible to reaffirm Merleau-Ponty's argument that there is no horizon with respect to the film image while rejecting that interpretation with respect to a static presentation such as a view from a window. As the two presentations use duplication in entirely different ways—film uses it as a method of generalizing a specific narrative whereas surveillance flattens to two dimensions what is supposedly happening free of influence in the three-dimensional world—the argument that the properties of the images share the same faults is indefensible.

As deterministic as this may sound, the initial purpose of the image frames the properties of the image as much as the data captured after the cameras start rolling.
The window image, in the abstract, is exactly what it appears to be: a text. All texts are created as vehicles for ideas. In some cases, the idea is essentially fully formed before the onset of creation, as it is in a film, a novel, or a television show. With respect to surveillance, the text is only formulated as far as the placement of the camera. The data subsequently captured is a component of that initial decision process, but the manner in which the objects are captured by the camera is not a component of a previously constructed narrative or a terminal line of events or thinking. The surveillance image, by definition, cannot have an end.

This is the point at which duplication becomes crucial. The knowledge that the image is captured as a desire to reproduce and capture events in the life world leads us directly to the McLuhanite assumption of connection to the external world via electronic media. Merleau-Ponty’s argument regarding horizons, or the way in which objects reveal themselves in direct sight, nearly ruptures this connection by alerting us to the fragility of this idea of connection. In other words, the necessity of a “horizon” or a determination of focus, of perspective, pinpoints this moment where the tactility of the image is ruptured and, though the connection to the presentation is still immediate, the comfort of extension is ruptured in this awareness of a lack of perspective. We are able to move ourselves further out into the world as a result of the electronic extension, but this altering of the shape of the corpus, of the vehicle that normally allows for that experience, results in an uncertainty about the reliability of that impression. As mentioned above, however, the element that anaesthetizes this trauma is the duplication of memory into experience. This push out of the corpus is possible only insofar as the new information imparted to the brain is comparable to some experience already internalized. We still have our camera in the window, and whether we have physically been to the window the camera is situated in or not is a minor problem. And whether or not we have direct experience of the window itself we are still able to cobble together previous views from windows, previous streets walked down, and comparable shop windows seen in three dimensions that will reduce the feeling of alienation likely to result from the synthetic witnessing of a reality via a two-dimensional image. Everything related by the image may be entirely foreign to us, but cannot remain so. We will make sense of it and we will do so by fattening up the minimal experience of that image with our own previous comparable experience.

Limitations

The fallout from this argument would be that the presence of duplication problematizes this event of direct contact with the external world that is normally beyond the physical limits of the body. In a nutshell, Baudrillard’s suggestion that the endless system of reproduction eliminates the idea of the specific “real” flies in the face of this idea of extension, of connection. If there is no longer the specific, if everything as a result of duplication is now essentially real, does this negate the idea of duplication? We have determined that Merleau-Ponty’s criticisms about the cinematic image were attributable mainly to that of the prepared text rather than the idea of the captured image in the abstract. Both the cinematic image and the surveillance image operate on an assumption of subconscious relative comprehension—that the objects portrayed on the screen do not have a specific memory connection for every viewer but call for-
ward previous experiences that inform the images processed by the viewer. Bearing in mind that the screen, specifically in the case of the camera positioned in the window, does in fact have a horizon, the linear properties of the image require comprehension that is attributable to real-world sight rather than to that of the fictional presentation.

This process requires that we grab the image in a way—that we come to interact with it in a familiar sense. Alienation from the image is not compatible with comprehension. Though Merleau-Ponty was on to something with respect to duplication and the malleability of the horizon, the gap inherent in the experiencing of something that is not in the traditional sense being experienced requires the implementation of a horizon of sorts. The camera will deliver to the viewer what it is capable of capturing in the real world. That reality exists, of course: We complete the circuit of experience (two-dimensional image converted into comprehended life-world event) on the basis that that experience has taken place. The image delivered by the camera carries with it a sense of urgency on the basis that the image is a happening that is real yet outside of the immediate faculties of the viewer. As such, we personalize in order to comprehend: We extend ourselves to the properties of the image in the interest of understanding through familiarity. The connection that McLuhan (2001) was addressing was, at a basic level, a reaction to the trauma of being between two immediacies—the body and the image.

As the result of the precession of simulacra to “Integral Reality,” the logical conclusion to reach here is that this extension of the physical form is a further encompassing of a series of copies or duplications. As Baudrillard (2005) theorized, the result of an all-pervasive system of duplication and signification would be a level of repetition that rendered everything real; the traversal of distances would appear to be irrelevant. The collapse of representation, the necessity of total inclusion in the idea of the “real” in order to make sense of the image or the object displayed in the image, makes the idea of immediacy or proximity redundant. As the image of the street displayed on the screen is comprehended, the reality of the image supersedes the understood reality taking place as projected by the image. In other words, we reconstruct the image as real as a result of identifying the familiarity of the objects. The image on the screen is as real as the event captured. Duplication is, in line with this thread, a condition of necessary collapse. The image is a representation of a happening in the real world. The comprehension of that duplication requires the input of previous experience coupled with the creation of a false proximity to the events depicted in that duplication. The position, then, incorporates both the viewer and the view from the window.

Notes
1. “Artificial” or “manufactured” are not necessarily the ideal terms. The point being made is that traditional modalities of human contact such as speech or touch or physical gesture are absent in electronic media. Indeed, electronic media is developed to replace these devices. The connection that is electronic media is a connection that is developed as a recognition of loss or inaccessibility.

2. There may be a point to make regarding the evolution of television presentations with respect to the experience of electronic media on the body. The lack of comfort associated with the application of the televised image to previous dramatic and documentary styles is tangible when we look at the evolution of the medium. From the single camera setup where actors or newscasters would simply break narrative to perform an advertisement for the audience to the current explosion of “reality” television,
the need for the pretence of presentation dwindles in the face of the overwhelming need to experience
the image and the presentation of something immediate. Television, specifically in the broadcast/infor-
tainment-oriented context here, has had to re-evaluate itself, to become more human in order to make
sense to the viewer. Naturally, every interaction we have with a televised image, even if it morphs into
the visually specific format of CCTV, recognizes this trauma of loss-of-sense (hearing) and attempts
to compensate for it.

3. To quote Baudrillard (1983) directly,

It is no longer a question of imitation, nor duplication, nor even parody. It is a
question of substituting the signs of the real for the real, that is to say of an op-
eration of deterring every real process via its operational double, a program-
matic, metastable, perfectly descriptive machine that offers all the signs of the
real and short-circuits all its vicissitudes. Never again will the real have the
chance to produce itself—such is the vital function of the model in a system of
death, or rather of anticipated resurrection, that no longer even gives the event
of death a chance. A hyperreal henceforth sheltered from the imaginary, and
from any distinction between the real and the imaginary, leaving room only for
the orbital recurrence of models and for the simulated generation of differences.
(pp. 5–6)

References
published 1964)