

NIGHT TRAIN ...

At every moment, time splits into two...

one part falls behind and sediments over the layers of the past, while,

one part escapes into the future...

every sound you hear, each crack of the railway, ceases to exist as soon as you hear it. Every image – whatever becomes visible in the dark with each electric spark,

ceases to exist as soon as you see it.

you are on this night train, watching the darkness passing by.

you are watching sparks of the electric engine illuminating the dark.

you are watching the liquid crystal screen in front of your eye, recording the sparks of the electric engine illuminating the darkness.

you are recording every sound your video camera hears.

you are recording everything that is illuminated by the electric sparks.

everything that you record ceases to exist.

every image, every sound, constantly falls back into the past.

yet, every moment, every image flickering on the liquid crystal screen calls for the next one, escapes into the future.

at every instant, time breaks into two.

what we call present is that irreparable split between what has already passed and what is not yet.

kairos; that instant, that moment, that irreparable break between the past and the future – tentative, indefinite, ambiguous, formless,

yet constant, permanent, irrevocable.

you are on this night train,

watching and recording the darkness passing by, wondering why they don't make road movies anymore.

road movies are never about places. they are always about the time that takes place in-between places.

THE INVENTION OF (A NEW) MOVEMENT

Paul Virilio starts his book *The Vision Machine* by reporting a conversation between the famous sculptor Auguste Rodin and British writer Paul Gsell:

... Paul Gsell remarked, apropos Rodin's 'The Age of Bronze' and 'St. John the Baptist,' 'I am still left wondering how those great lumps of bronze or stone actually seem to move, how obviously immobile figures appear to act and even to be making pretty strenuous efforts...'

Rodin retorts, 'Have you ever looked closely at instantaneous photographs of men in motion? ... Well then, what have you noticed?'

'That they never seem to be making headway. Generally, they seem to be standing still on one leg, or hopping.'

'Exactly! Take my "St. John," for example. I've shown him with both feet on the ground, whereas an instantaneous photograph taken of a model performing the same movement would most likely show the back foot already raised and moving forward. Or else the reverse – the front foot would not yet be on the ground if the back leg in the photograph were in the same position as in my statue. That is precisely why the model in the photograph would have the bizarre look of a man suddenly *struck with paralysis*. Which confirms what I was just saying about movement in art. People in photographs suddenly seem frozen in mid-air, despite being caught in full swing: this is because every part of their body is reproduced at exactly the same twentieth or fortieth of a second, so there is no gradual unfolding of a gesture, as there is in art.'

Gsell objects, 'So, when art interprets movement and finds itself completely at loggerheads with photography, which is an *unimpeachable mechanical witness*, art obviously distorts the truth.'

'No' Rodin replies, 'It is art that tells the truth and photography that lies. For, in reality time does not stand still, and if the artist manages to give the impression that a gesture is being executed over several seconds, their work is certainly much less conventional than the scientific image in which time is abruptly suspended....'¹

The conversation Virilio conveys, points to Gilles Deleuze's assertion regarding the ontological transformation introduced by mechanically reproduced moving images. In a previous regime of perception, such as the one reflected in classical painting, the mode of analysis relies on the privileged moments in the movement. These privileged moments reveal the event, and make it perceivable and recognizable. In return, the totality of the movement can be represented by referring to the "privileged moments," and the articulation of such moments reconstructs the

1. Paul Virilio, *The Vision Machine* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 1–2. Please also see Auguste Rodin, *L'Art: Entretiens réunis par Paul Gsell* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1911).

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event altogether, whereas cinema presents us with the constitutive logic of the hegemonic mode of analysis in modern times. It creates “sections of time and space”; each and every movement can be divided into random segments of equal distance from each other, and a representation of the flow of the original movement can be reconstructed from successive segments. The closer the distance between each random sample, the more precise the representation of the flow becomes, since the gap in between each segment has to be filled in by our imagination and by our memory – neither of which one can really trust. As such, cinema provided modernity with an ontological model. It is ironic that this new mode of perception has been presumed to be more scientifically objective and truthful than its predecessor, painting, throughout modern times. Half of the time you watch a film in the cinema, you actually look at a black screen. What makes the images move is only a perceptual defect – your memory of each previous frame combining its trace with every succeeding one. Or perhaps it is that intuitive, unconscious knowledge we have, as Rodin mentions, that movement is perpetual, and that time never stops, not even for a moment; that every still image wants to move, every single image wants to connect to another one. As soon as the mechanical reproduction of still images became possible, cinema – the moving images – was already potentially present.

Shortly after the invention of daguerreotypes in 1839, Eadweard Muybridge succeeded in photographing individual movements in rapid succession, using up to 30 cameras in a series. He founded a research center and photographed the movements of human bodies performing various sorts of activities. While Muybridge’s manifested goal was to register the movement of the body in various activities, his scientific work reflected the temporality of his era in other ways as well. Temporal, by the way, has two meanings; on the one hand it means relating to time, and on the other, it means relating to worldly things, as opposed to spiritual, transcendental, and metaphysical. The various human activities Muybridge’s cameras registered differentiated rather strictly according to the gender of the body.

Muybridge’s male bodies were athletic, sporty; they were throwing things, carrying weight, hammering, wrestling, sword fighting, etc.; whereas Muybridge’s female bodies were walking in lace, climbing stairs, carrying water, bathing, washing each other, rope-skipping, flirting with fans, hopping around, dancing, and serving men. Their half-nakedness contrasted with that of the men since their clothes neither covered the body completely nor helped to reveal the gestures and postures they performed. Replete with implicit eroticism and voyeurism, Muybridge’s popular scientific representations were determined by the male gaze of his times.²

Etienne-Jules Marey was among the many contemporaries of Muybridge who shared the concern of recording the movement of things, but he never received as much credit in the popular imagination for making possible the passage from photography to cinema. Marey was a doctor and a highly accomplished inventor. He became obsessed with flying in his early childhood, and his professional occupation with medical science followed his interest in anatomical observations of birds and insects for deciphering the mysteries of the flying body.³ He was critical of Muybridge’s work, which he closely followed. And his criticism was not related to the voyeuristic and erotic quality of Muybridge’s images, but rather, reflected scientific dissatisfaction. Although he found Muybridge’s work satisfactory for registering

various positions and gestures of the body within the continuity of movement, he thought the work not precise enough for registering movement in reference to time. He developed various sophisticated techniques and gadgets for registering the temporal dimension of movement with precision, and called these techniques “chronography” and the images he shot “chronographiques,” with reference to the visual tracing of the time he succeeded in recording.

Marey could not resolve the mystery of flying, but he made precise graphical representations of time by registering the movement of bodies. Perhaps because of being closer to making the passage from photography to cinema, his works essentially produced time-maps of moving bodies. From now on, not a single moment would be privileged against any other, and time itself would become homogenous in all instances. As a linear progression of successive homogenous moments, time not only became measurable, but it also became a measure itself against which everything could be calculated – especially productive power itself, human labor, as “hours of work.” “Disenchantment of the world” that Weber attributed to modernity, started with the disenchantment of the moment.

Henri Bergson’s notion of “durée” (which can be translated as “duration” in English) was a reaction against such homogenization and linearization of time. Bergson was teaching philosophy at the Collège de France, where Marey was advancing his techniques of chronography. He recognized Marey’s innovations as a technological form carrying an ontological transformation, which would eventually give us the hegemonic mode of representation under industrial capitalism, and the tyranny of the clock.⁴

With durée, Bergson revisited an understanding of time that only referenced the event itself. Durée was the time of the event, and as such, it was neither homogenous, nor could it be measured by or against anything external. It was the time that was experienced through the event to which it referred. While asserting heterogeneity, the notion of durée also imposed a plane of existence; every event has its duration, and on the outside, every event is surrounded by other events, and thus becomes enveloped by its duration.

EDISONIST CAPITALISM

That the only explanation for the industrial mode of capitalism having been named after Henry Ford as “Fordism,” and not after his friend Thomas Edison, was the fascination of early Marxist criticism with the mass production of material commodities rather than the mass production of images and immaterial goods. In fact, by the time Henry Ford had refined the industrial mass production of material goods, Thomas Edison had already established the techno-scientific logic of the same capitalist production model, turned “innovation” into “capital,” and made possible the transition between “creativity” and “industrial production.” The biggest invention Edison made, for which he is rarely credited, was a new logic of invention.

The legal concept of “copyright” was a product of the Gutenberg Revolution. The book was the first mass produced commodity in history; the Gutenberg printing press thus introduced an entirely new set of production relations. Under the economic circumstances brought about by

2. Eadweard Muybridge, *The Human Figure in Motion: An Electro-Photographic Investigation of Consecutive Phases of Muscular Action* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1907).
3. Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue and the Origins of Modernity* (New York: Basic Books, 1990); Mary Ann Doane, “Temporality, Storage, Legibility: Freud, Marey, and the Cinema,” *Critical Inquiry* 22, no. 2 (winter 1996): 313–343.
4. Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor*, 110–111.

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the printing press, copyright was introduced to protect publishers and writers from each other, because authors earned their livelihoods by writing, and publishers by printing and selling what authors wrote. When a publisher agreed to publish a book, it was an investment for himself as well as for the author. If the published book did not sell well, it would be an economic failure for both. But if the book was well received after the first printing (meaning after the publisher's initial investment in it) and the author chose to republish it with someone else, or someone else started publishing it without the consent of the author, or the publisher himself made new prints and did not pay the author his share, then these situations would lead to economic conflicts among the parties involved in this new production regime. Therefore copyright was introduced in order to prevent economic conflict and abuse; the rights to one's creative work, the text, remained with the author, who licensed it to the publisher to print for a specified period of period or quantity. This is still, more or less, the working model in the publishing industry and the reason why authors own their work.

In contrast, Edison, as an inventor, was no more an individual than a corporation that produced "intellectual property," holding it as "capital" and investing in industrial production of many sorts. After inventing the phonograph, Edison, an astute businessman, established a company to produce and sell records for his phonographs. But more than that, he actually invented another model for the mass production of immaterial commodities – the modern entertainment industry itself. Unlike Gutenberg, he was the sole owner and producer of the products of his invention, and since he had no competition, he was able to dictate the economic terms of business.

Following the success of his phonographs, Edison set up Menlo Park, a patents factory, where he hired creative minds to work on the technological inventions he appropriated. One of these creative minds was Nikola Tesla, the real creator of the age of electricity. When he moved to the US from Europe, Tesla was hired by Edison with the promise of eventually becoming a co-owner in Edison's company. In 1885, after having worked for Edison for years, and having developed and fixed the most important innovations of Menlo Park, Tesla realized that with his salary of \$18 per week, he would have to continue working for Edison for fifty-three more years before he would earn the amount he had initially been promised. He decided to talk to Edison about the situation, and asked for a raise to \$25 per week. Edison's reply was; "Tesla, you don't understand our American humor," and he refused Tesla's request for a salary raise. Tesla then left Menlo Park, leaving all his inventions there to Edison.⁵

Tesla did not care much about the commercial aspects of his work. He did not claim patent rights for many of the things he invented, including those Edison had already appropriated. Tesla was enthusiastic about working with electricity, and his creativity was driven by his fascination with this true power of life. He liked showing his work to his friends and amusing them with electric sparks and flashing lights. Some of his ideas found support from businessmen and local politicians, and some of his projects failed grossly. He started a partnership with Westinghouse to provide electricity in all the major US cities. To do this, Tesla designed the alternating current (AC) infrastructure that allowed the electric current to be transferred across distances without considerable loss of power – the power system we

still use today. After Westinghouse Electric Corporation successfully gained the contracts, recognizing the fact that paying his royalties would push the company out of business, Tesla gave away his patent rights to the company. He lived alone in New York City in a hotel room facing Central Park, and enjoyed feeding pigeons in the park regularly. Eventually he befriended a white dove that followed him home to his room. Tesla believed that the white dove carried his deceased mother's soul, and took care of the bird and kept her as his only company until the day she flew away and did not come back. After the dove left, he stopped working and did not invent anything further up to the time of his death. He said that his creativity had left him when the dove flew away.⁶

Although Edison did not invent the film camera and projector, he, nevertheless, patented those already developed technologies. As with Menlo Park, he established a movie studio called "Black Maria," where directors and filmmakers produced the films he owned. Edison also owned projectors and cameras, and licensed and rented them out for other productions, public screenings, and Nickelodeons. He did not invent the camera, but did invent the film industry, and, at least for a considerable period, solely owned it.

Edison's and Tesla's paths eventually crossed again when Tesla and Westinghouse bid for the electricity infrastructure for cities across the US. They had to compete with Edison's design, which was based on direct current (DC), which experienced considerable loss while being transferred across distances and, therefore, required multiple power stations in proximity to residential areas, meaning more investment for the cities and more profit for Edison. For someone who had basically invented and owned the culture and entertainment industry, it was not a great challenge to invent one more means of getting ahead in the competition against Westinghouse: by manipulating public opinion. Edison initiated a campaign of warning the public against the dangers of alternating current. And, just in time, a perfect opportunity revealed itself in the form of an elephant.

Topsy was a "bad" elephant. While working at a theme park in Coney Island, she killed three men, including one of her caretakers, who had attempted to feed her a burning cigarette. She was tried, found guilty, and received the capital punishment for murder. The resulting dilemma was: how do you hang an elephant? Edison's idea was to electrocute Topsy using the alternating current designed by Tesla and Westinghouse. In this way, he could impress the public with the danger posed by Tesla's design: "If it can kill an elephant in seconds, think about what it can do to you!" In 1905, in front of a festive audience of a few thousand people, Topsy received 6000 watts of alternating current from electrodes attached to her feet; she died instantly. Her death was filmed by Edison, and shown across the country with the title "Electrocution of an Elephant."⁷

As soon as cinema was invented, images became property. Beyond providing modernity with an ontological model that replaced a mode of perception that relied on privileged moments with one that relied on segmenting, sampling, and mapping, cinema provided industrial capitalism with an operational model and simultaneously provided modern governments with a useful tool for shaping public opinion. With cinema, images were rendered as property, sadness as capital, and people as public.

5. John Joseph O'Neill, *Prodigal Genius: The Life of Nikola Tesla* (New York: Cosimo, 1944), 369.

6. *Ibid.*, 283, 286.

7. Michael Daly, *Topsy: The Startling Story of the Crooked-tailed Elephant, P.T. Barnum, and the American Wizard, Thomas Edison* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2013).

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Edisonist capitalism was haunted from the start by the “ghost” of “St. Tesla,” the mad creator whose creative labor it had expropriated. By the 1970s, the development of electronics resulted in a new breakthrough in cultural production – the development of electronic reproduction technologies – whereby the photocopy, tape recorder, and video recorder all became publicly available. These accessible reproduction technologies challenged the “Edisonist regimes” of intellectual property. Books, texts, films, music, and sounds could now be reproduced not only by industrial production plants, but also by individuals in their everyday settings. Previously, the rationale for copyright had been to protect the “creator” and the “publisher” against unfair competition, despite the fact that through the Edisonist capitalist system, copyright had ceased to protect the creative individual from the publisher and, instead, was used to facilitate his/her exploitation. At this point, the culture industry – the producers of standardized cultural goods – was challenged by people who defied the notion of intellectual property and reappropriated many cultural products – photocopies, mix tapes, mash-up videos, and so forth. Copyright no longer marked the territories of intellectual property for the corporate culture industry, but became the dividing line between the culture industry and the creative individual.

Still, the final laugh of the “ghost” of Tesla had yet to be heard. The development of analog electronic reproduction technologies in the 1970s presented a significant challenge to the culture industry by creating an alternative cultural sphere, defying the existing norms of intellectual property. But they did not profoundly threaten the existing production and management models of the culture industry since electronic/analog reproduction technologies at the consumer level could not match the representational quality of industrially/mass-produced cultural commodities; each duplication with photocopies, mix-tapes, and video recordings introduced another layer of quality loss to the original commodity/representation. This was the logical limitation of analog technologies, as the logic of representation and duplication relied on creating a resemblance of the original object through available electromagnetic means. Every Xerox copy was a shady imitation of the original book or photograph, every recorded cassette tape an inferior copy of the original LP, and every videotape a barely watchable copy of a film.

The digital reproduction technologies of the 1980s and 1990s revolutionized cultural production much more profoundly than the emergence of the electronic reproduction devices of the previous decades. Digital reproduction enabled precision, rendering the conceptual distinction between original and the copy obsolete. The immaterial cultural product (text, image, moving image, sound, or all of them together) could be reproduced endlessly without any loss of quality. The diminishing of the hierarchical relation between the original and the copy changed the ontological status of the cultural commodity. However, the endless reproducibility and easy availability of cultural products through such means as computers also resulted in changes to the property relations. Naturally, the concept of copyright received a new significance. Public debates, legal battles, misinformation, and intimidation campaigns perpetrated by the corporate culture industry from the mid-1990s on must be considered in this context: the end of “Edisonism”, or the survival of “intellectual property” as the essential form of capital.

The fierce struggles around intellectual property create a dust cloud that obscures the transformation of the properties⁹ of creative products. To the degree that they can be endlessly

reproduced, no film, photograph, song, or book is ever entirely finished as a creative work. Every image, sound, or text is subject to being reedited, remixed, retouched, or recreated. Every work of art now represents readily available raw material with the potential to be transformed into something else. The impossibility of preventing cultural capital from being turned into commons, freely accessible to all of society, signals a new form of culture industry and the inevitability of the end of "Edisonism." While images, sounds, texts, and information are becoming commons, the culture industry no longer seeks to sell cultural products, but rather aesthetic objects, "things" that refer to lifestyles and social experiences. The cultural product of the post-Edisonist industry is not the song, the photograph, the movie, or the book. Rather, it is the cell phone that you listen to, take pictures or movies with, and read things on, or the tablet that you swipe through your social life.

The next time your computer crashes, don't get upset. After all, it wasn't made for calculating your pennies and dimes on spreadsheets, or to shop and pay your taxes online. Say a little prayer to St. Tesla, the patron saint of hackers, illusionists, mad scientists, the precariat of the electronic sweatshops, the gifted and exploited. Say, "Oh dear Nikola, the white dove never returned, but we are almost ready to take back the lightning."

KAIRÔS: THE INSTANT

A few years ago, I found myself at the concert of a Palestinian hip-hop band, DAM, in Cairo. Not knowing much about current pop culture, I found the crowd as fascinating as the band. Some watched almost the whole concert through their cell phone cameras. With my camera at hand, I recorded them while they were recording the concert. Television has made us believe that, "if it's not live on TV, it's not happening." Computers, cell phones, and the Internet encourage us to believe that if it's not on Flickr, being tweeted or digged, put on Facebook, blogged about, or Googled, it's not happening. That instance, that time of the event, not only has to be captured in order to be experienced, but also has to be exhibited to all.

The new proliferation of images has created a crisis in their restricted economy (their status as "property") under Edisonist capitalism. In 2005, Bono, the lead singer of the Irish rock band U2, was caught yelling at an audience member who was recording on her cell phone their performance in Madison Square Garden. He told her, "Put the fucking phone down. You're in a concert, alright? Let's be in the moment!"⁹ At another concert, he attempted to take a cell phone away from an audience member he had invited onto the stage. A year later, Bono and U2 produced the first live-action 3-D video recording, called "U2 360," using more than thirty-two cameras in their show to capture that live-ness of the "moment" and sell it. Over the years, as he has gotten older and older, and, perhaps, in the face of bad publicity, Bono has grown somehow more cell phone-friendly. At a Dublin concert, he talked into the cell phone of an audience member. At another show, he was caught asking the crowd to wave their phones in the air, just as audiences in the 1980s did with their cigarette lighters. Finally, in 2007, U2 appeared in a Blackberry advertisement.

Since the early 2000s, a group of young artists have met every Sunday at a temporary location in New York City. The gathering, called Share, is an open jam session; among the participants

8. "Property" has a dual meaning after all. While one meaning of the term refers to "possession, belonging," another meaning refers to the "attributes, qualities, characters" of things. Aras Ozgun, "Common Word: A Response to Michael Hardt and Gigi Roggero" *Rethinking Marxism* 22, no. 3 (September 2010).
9. Sbcooler, "U2 Live - Bono Angry: Madison Square Garden." Accessed February 16, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bzJUZE6q0Tg>.

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there are DJs and electronic musicians, as well as a new type of artists who call themselves live video performers. Over the years, Share, as a self-organized event/gathering, has become a global network. Now there is a Share organization in almost every major city around the world, and all of them are loosely connected via a rhizomatic network.¹⁰ During Share sessions, DJs spin their tracks, electronic musicians improvise their beats, and VJs provide accompanying electronic visuals on the fly. They compose, manipulate, and mix electronic images in the moment through their computers. They are the avant-gardes of a new artistic practice, which they call “live video performance.”

This new practice redefines the relationship between images and time. Its raw material is the crystallized form of a new kind of imagery that is ontologically even more distant from cinema and photography. As André Bazin has pointed out, the photographic and cinematographic images exist as ghostly shadows of the past —as ontologically referring to the past, and as traces of past events.¹¹ In contrast, the kind of image that constitutes the raw material of live video performance refers only to the present moment, to that very instant after which nothing remains.

While the production process of this new artistic practice (and the rhizomatic network of Share that envelopes it) refines our relationship with this new form of images that now surrounds us, this process presents to us an antithesis to Edisonist production regimes, and mobilizes another set of relations of production. The images produced in Share are collectively produced in a particular moment, but what becomes visible on the screens are not the final – or “finalized” – products. The artists involved do not even consider and treat these ever-transforming images as their artistic products. Their artworks, in their view, are the sophisticated algorithms they develop to compose the images on the screen in real-time, which they call “patches.” Just like those photographers in the age before the advent of digital technology who did not like to share the chemical formula of their developers, a VJ probably would not explain to you the patch s/he uses to compose the live imagery, but s/he would probably not mind sharing her images with you.

I mentioned that as soon as man gained the ability to mechanically reproduce images, he made those images his property. Digital reproduction technologies reverse this property regime and turn images into a commons. From cell phones to surveillance cameras and electronic missile guidance systems, electronic images deliver Dziga Vertov’s dream of capturing life as it is. Electronic images are everywhere; they have no originals, no master copies – each copy is merely a piece of data. What matters is its resolution at most. Images no longer represent the outside reality, but connect us to things, events, and each other, and become things and events in and of themselves. Unlike cinema, the electronic image does not fix the moment; it appears differently on every screen, remains constantly in the process of being composed, and becomes incorporated into different visions, while passing from one screen to another.

More than a century after Edison’s death, we have regained what Edison’s cinema took from us – images are once again nobody’s property. Life, as it is, has become one and the same with “life as recorded.” Perception is given back to things, and redeemed from the human eye.

The task that remains is to give the moment its privilege back and redeem it from banality: a pedagogy of images towards reclaiming the moment, affirming the Kairòs, that irreparable instant of the event, the indefinite moment in which the present breaks from the past towards a future...

In *Time for Revolution*, Antonio Negri defines Kairòs as:

In the classical conception of time, Kairòs is the instant, that is to say, the quality of the time of the instant, the moment of rupture and opening of temporality. It is the present, but a singular and open present. Singular in the decision it expresses with regard to the void it opens upon. Kairòs is the modality of time through which being opens itself, attracted by the void at the limit of time, and it thus decides to fill that void.¹²

Negri notes that, in ancient Greek, Kairòs was symbolized by the image of an arrow being released from its bow. In the twenty-first century, it is actualized by the flickering pixels on the liquid crystal screen.

10. Share, accessed 10.10.2015, <http://share.dj>.

11. André Bazin, *What is Cinema?* vol. 1, 2nd ed. (Oakland: University of California Press, 2004).

12. Antonio Negri, *Time for Revolution* (New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2003), 156.