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Death 24x a Second

Stillness and the Moving Image

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*Between past and future. For Zoe Wollen, born 2003, and in memory of her
great-grandmother Sylvia Mulvey, 1908–2000.*

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Chapter One

Passing Time

In 1995 the cinema celebrated its 100th birthday. Critics, theorists, historians and even the public at large suddenly focused their attention on the current 'state of the cinema'. Centenaries bestow a symbolic significance on the centenarian: transitions, upheavals, mutations become visible and debatable. Suddenly, the cinema seemed to age. Furthermore, in the opinion of professional archivists and conservationists, celluloid had proved to be an essentially short-lived material, with chemical decay an inherent part of its physical make-up. According to Paolo Cherchi Usai: 'Moving image preservation will be redefined as the science of gradual loss and the art of coping with the consequences, very much like a physician who has accepted the inevitability of death even while he fights for the patient's life.'¹ Aged 100, the cinema had also been inevitably affected by the natural mortality of the human figures whose existences it unnaturally preserved. More and more has cinema come to be a memorial to those who personified its modernity, its glamour, its triumph as both a popular form and an art form. The institutions of its maturity had, some time before the centenary, grown old as its stars, directors and production systems retired, died and declined. Chris Petit comments in his video *Negative Space* (1999): 'The cinema is becoming increasingly about what is past. It becomes a mausoleum as much as a palace of dreams.' As time passes, these ghosts crowd around the cinema as its own life lies in question and the years around the centenary saw the death of the last great Hollywood stars. In 2004 Marlon Brando followed in the wake of Katherine Hepburn, who

followed in the wake of Gregory Peck. To see the star on the screen in the retrospectives that follow his or her death is also to see the cinema's uncertain relation to life and death. Just as the cinema animates its still frames, so it brings back to life, in perfect fossil form, anyone it has ever recorded, from great star to fleeting extra.

Elegiac reflections on the cinema's ageing found substance in a more immediate, material and objective change as mechanical and chemical technology gave way, gradually, to the electronic and, more dramatically, to the digital. The year 1997 saw the first marketing of film on digital format.² The resonance of ageing, and of death, associated with the cinema's centenary coincided with the arrival of a technology that created a divide between the 'old' and the 'new' media. However significant the development of video had been for film, the fact that all forms of information and communication can now be translated into binary coding with a single system signals more precisely the end of an era. The specificity of cinema, the relation between its material base and its poetics, dissolves while other relations, intertextual and cross-media, begin to emerge. Furthermore, the digital, as an abstract information system, made a break with analogue imagery, finally sweeping away the relation with reality, which had, by and large, dominated the photographic tradition. The sense of the end of cinema was thus complicated aesthetically by a crisis of the photographic sign as index. Although a photograph may have other properties, the physical link between an object caught by a lens and the image left by rays of light on film is the material basis for its privileged relation to reality.

The technological drive towards photography and film had always been animated by the aspiration to preserve the fleeting instability of reality and the passing of time in a fixed image. The problem would always be how to hold on to images made by the concentration of light, how to inscribe their reality indexically and mechanically. Human imagination has always been enthralled by the magical aspect of this kind of mechanical reproduction. Cinema and photography belong to the long tradition of 'natural magic', as the Jesuit Athanasius Kircher called his experiments

with the camera obscura in the mid-seventeenth century. Kircher had mastered the optics necessary to concentrate rays of light, to project images from the world outside onto a screen inside a darkened room and reverse the inverted image with mirrors. He could show moving images of whatever happened outside, the landscape, sometimes casual passers-by, sometimes staged, complex set pieces. Needless to say, the images could not be fixed or preserved and the camera obscura's cumbersome technology could not be realized as a medium with actual market potential. In quite another tradition, the magic lantern, with its man-made illusions, captured the early entertainment market and was the main site for the research and development from which the cinema finally emerged. It was the chemical fixing of the optically focused image that enabled the invention of the photograph and 'natural magic' swept back into visual culture. (Ultimately the legacy of the camera obscura was realized in the cinema, but its images, like photography, unlike the camera obscura, could appear only as the result of a delay, a detour into the chemical process of development and printing. Furthermore, unlike the camera obscura's actual presentation of reality, of real movement and of the passing of real time, the cinema created an illusion of movement, as a series of stills appear animated at the correct number of frames per second.

Whatever their limitations, photographic machines register the image inscribed by light on photosensitive paper, leaving the trace of whatever comes in front of the lens, whether the most lavishly constructed of sets or the most natural of landscapes. While the photographic machine may reflect and inflect the image as human imagination constructs or desires, it still remains indifferent, a recording mechanism detached from the human eye. In the 1990s digital technology brought back the human element and man-made illusions. The story of mechanical, photographic, reproduction of reality came to an end. The conversion of recorded information into a numerical system broke the material connection between object and image that had defined the earlier history. No longer derived from the chemical reaction between light and photosensitive material, these images lost their 'natural magic' and the

painterly character of the illusions of the magic lantern, the tradition of human ingenuity, returned to visual culture. Lev Manovich describes this return:

The manual construction of images in digital cinema represents a return to nineteenth century pre-cinematic practices, when images were hand-painted and hand-animated. At the turn of the twentieth century, the cinema was to delegate these techniques to animation and define itself as a recording medium. As cinema enters the digital age, these techniques are again becoming commonplace in the film making process. Consequently, cinema can no longer be distinguished from animation. (It is no longer an indexical media technology but, rather, a sub-genre of painting.³)

This revolution in image culture and technology might well seem to put the seal of closure on the more amorphous sense of an end signalled by the cinema's centenary. As Lev Manovich puts it, 'Cinema is the art of the index; it is an attempt to make art out of a footprint.'⁴ However lacking in artistic aspiration the footprint may be, as an indexical sign it marks an actual moment in time as well as the shadowy presence of an event as potentially significant, for instance, as Friday's arrival on Crusoe's island.

The artist Jeff Wall has brought the 'manual' back into his photographic work, while, in a number of his pictures, also incorporating the aesthetic and emotional resonance of the index. In *A Sudden Gust of Wind (After Hokusai)* (1993), his re-creation of a Hokusai print, he combines a tribute to artists' longstanding pre-photographic aspiration to capture a precise moment in time with a technique drawn from the more 'painterly' potential of the digital. In both pictures, the wind has suddenly caught four passers-by on a little bridge. One turns to watch his hat blow sky high alongside an 'arabesque' of floating papers torn from the hands of another. In terms of photographic history, the scene depicts the kind of decisive moment at which a photographer's eye and a fleeting second of movement are brought together as, for instance, in Cartier-Bresson's famous photograph of a man caught

by the camera as he is reflected in mid-jump over a puddle. At first glance *A Sudden Gust of Wind* possesses this quality that the Hokusai original aspired to. But on further consideration the photograph seems to go, in a strange way, beyond the instant it represents. It seems to be too visually complex, and too theatrical in its gestures.

Rather than catching a decisive moment, *A Sudden Gust of Wind* pays tribute to the aesthetic concept of the indexically caught instant through a detour into non-indexical technology. The scene is staged, as though in a tableau, and its details further perfected through digital enhancement. Although this combination of camera and computer is common enough both in contemporary media in general and in Wall's work in particular, the picture dramatizes the dialogue between the two. Through the very introduction of staging and manipulation, a celebration of photography's unique inscription of time is turned into a reflection on photographic time, especially its apotheosis as frozen movement. As Wall brings simulation to the aesthetic of reality, he gives the picture a theoretical dimension reflecting a transitional moment in which both technologies coexist, in which the aesthetic of the digital still thinks with the idea of the index. At the same time, with this citation of Hokusai, Wall reaches back to a 'painterly', nineteenth-century, depiction of the 'decisive moment'.

The threat of extinction, of course, draws new attention to the index and its present pathos retrospectively affects the vast body of film and photographic material that has accumulated over the last century and a half. Now, as old films that were conceived and shot on celluloid are re-released in constantly increasing numbers on DVD, the two media, the old and the new, converge. The new technology offers an opportunity to look back to the 'before', to the 'then' of the indexical image, in the changing light of the 'after', the 'now'. (The aesthetics of the past meet the aesthetics of the present, bringing, almost incidentally, new life to the cinema and its history. But this new life (movies reissued and restored, new modes of consumption) also transforms the ways in which old films are consumed.) Once upon a time, most people could only

watch a movie in the cinema where it was projected at the correct pace for the illusion of movement and according to a given narrative sequence. Now, cinema's stillness, a projected film's best-kept secret, can be easily revealed at the simple touch of a button, carrying with it not only the suggestion of the still frame, but also of the stillness of photography. On one side, that of pre-cinema, stands the photograph. The image is still, but, like film, it is indexical. On the other side, that of post-cinema, stands the digital, unlike the cinema in its material composition but able to carry the mechanical, celluloid-based moving image into a multi-media future. But the post-cinematic medium has conjured up the pre-cinematic. Like the central panel of a triptych that has blurred at the edges, the cinema reaches both forwards and backwards. But at point of convergence between the old and the new, the easily accessible freeze frame brings the presence of death back to the ageing cinema. The still, inanimate, image is drained of movement, the commonly accepted sign of life.

Throughout the history of cinema, the stilled image has been contained within the creative preserve of the film-maker, always accessible on the editing table and always transferable into a freeze frame on the screen. It was video, arriving in the late 1970s and gaining ground during the 1980s, that first extended the power to manipulate the existing speed of cinema. Although the instability of the electronic image undercut the exhilaration that these experiments brought with them, the accumulated experience of the last video-dominated decades can be carried into the digital age. But the present context has further heightened the significance of this new interactive spectatorship. A dialectical relationship between the old and new media can be summoned into existence, creating an aesthetic of delay. In the first instance, the image itself is frozen or subjected to repetition or return. But as the new stillness is enhanced by the weight that the cinema's past has acquired with passing time, its significance goes beyond the image itself towards the problem of time, its passing, and how it is represented or preserved. At a time when new technologies seem to hurry ideas and their representations at full tilt towards the future, to stop and to

reflect on the cinema and its history also offers the opportunity to think about how time might be understood within wider, contested, patterns of history and mythology. Out of this pause, a delayed cinema gains a political dimension, potentially able to challenge patterns of time that are neatly ordered around the end of an era, its 'before' and its 'after'. The delayed cinema gains further significance as outside events hasten the disappearance of the past and strengthen the political appropriation of time.

Five years after the cinema's centenary, another date intervened. The millennium generated a flurry of speculation about temporal markers of a more historical and general kind. Other divisions between past and future, the nature of an era and its end eclipsed the story of the cinema's demise. Because of the arbitrary, purely mythological significance of the date, the year 2000 always seemed inadequate to sustain the hype that surrounded it. But in other ways the millennium concentrated into itself a widely perceived sense of change that had built up over the previous two decades, for instance the impact of the end of communism, the advance of globalization, the shift in communication technologies, the decline of industry in the developed world. From this perspective, a resonance of change, of breaks with the past, could be associated with the year 2000. The mythology, that is, happened to coincide with a period of accelerated political and economic upheaval and crisis. As Angela Carter had observed with characteristic wit some twenty years earlier, 'The *fin* is coming a little early this *siècle*.' It only took a subsequent gestation period of a year and nine months for apocalypse to catch up with the millennium. With the events of September 2001 in New York and Washington, DC, the indistinct sense of foreboding that belonged to the year 2000 found an emblematic embodiment. Politicians, journalists and cultural commentators of all kinds argued that the world had been irrevocably changed. The threads of continuity woven through twentieth-century history and modernity that had been loosened over its last decades by theories of postmodernism and 'the end of history' seemed definitively cut. The twentieth century receded even more rapidly into the past, out of synchrony

with the newly configured present. This linear concept of time attempts to divest itself of past residues, overtly wiping clean the slate of history even as earlier eras struggle to survive.

The question of how history acquires pattern and shape has political significance and the rush of new technology towards the future, its indifference to the past, may fall into step with the new conservatism. In this context, the cinema, rather than simply reaching the end of its era, can come to embody a new compulsion to look backwards, to pause and make a gesture to delay the combined forces of politics, economics and technology. The cinema's recent slide backward into history can, indeed, enable this backward look at the twentieth century. In opposition to a simple determinism inherent in the image of a void between the 'before' and the 'after' of an era that had suddenly ended, the cinema provides material for holding onto and reflecting on the last century's achievements as well as learning from its catastrophes. To turn to the past through the detour of cinema has a political purpose. Jean-Luc Godard's *Histoire(s) du Cinéma* (1998), his extraordinary reflection on the cinema's own history, entwined with its recording of the history of the twentieth century, is emblematic of such a move. He produced *Histoire(s)* during the transitional period of the 1980s and '90s, working with different technologies and aesthetics, reflecting on cinema as an art and as popular culture, as politics and as industry. But, most particularly, Godard draws attention to the stretch of celluloid imagery across the twentieth century, its presence as an inscription of history, even through its silences, distortions, repressions. The history of the *Histoire(s)* does not produce cinema as history pure and simple, but as raw material that can be the site of reflection and contestation.

Antoine de Becque sees Godard's work as a fitting end to a twentieth century that, he argues, began with *The Train Entering the Station* (Lumière Brothers 1895). 'If you haven't seen *Histoire(s)*, you've missed the century's exit', and he continues:

this is the ultimate lesson to be learnt from *Histoire(s)*: the imaginary museum is also an embodied museum, i.e., the cinema has made

flesh the history of the century. It could also take ideas, references, works, concepts so as to enable the century to think. It is an embodied body and a corpus: for the century, cinema has been and is still a tangible surface revealing history and the knowledge of where to seek its great representations.⁵

But de Becque's pattern of the century could be reformulated, placing *Histoire(s)* rather as a new beginning, prefiguring ways in which cinema will increasingly become a source of collective memory of the twentieth century for those who missed living through it.

Eric Hobsbawm describes the point at which personal memory disappears into history as the 'twilight zone'.⁶ On celluloid, personal and collective memories are prolonged and preserved, extending and expanding the 'twilight zone', merging individual memory with recorded history. The passing of time affects the cinema, and the presence of the past, even in a fiction film, may suddenly distract the spectator from its story line. Siegfried Kracauer, writing in the 1950s, reflects on the way that cinema materializes memory unexpectedly onto the screen:

As he laughs at [old films], however, he is bound to realise, shudderingly, that he has been spirited away into the lumber-room of his private self . . . In a flash the camera exposes the paraphernalia of our former existence, stripping them of the significance that originally transfigured them so they are changed from things in their own right into invisible conduits.⁷

He describes this sense of being revisited by the past as it is channelled through film into the present, precipitating the kind of involuntary memory that itself confuses time:

The thrill of these old films is that they bring us face to face with the inchoate, cocoon-like world from which we come – all the objects, or rather the sediments of objects, that were our companions in a pupa state . . . Numerous films . . . draw on the incomparable spell of those

near and far away days which mark the border region between the present and the past. Beyond it the realm of history begins.⁸

While the coincidence between the cinema's centenary and the arrival of digital technology created an opposition between the old and the new, the convergence of the two media translated their literal chronological relation into a more complex dialectic. Everyone knows that celluloid consists of a series of still frames that have been, by and large, inaccessible to the film spectator throughout its history. Digital technology enables a spectator to still a film in a way that evokes the ghostly presence of the individual celluloid frame. Technically this is an anachronism. It is only due to an imaginative association with film's archaic structure that the materiality of celluloid comes to mind. But the imaginative association can lead to intellectual and aesthetic reverie as the delay in the film's flow acts as a 'conduit', in Kracauer's phrase, that then flows into multiple possible channels from personal memory to textual analysis to historical research, opening up the past for a specifically cinematic excavation. But the delay, the association with the frame, may also act as a 'conduit' to the film's uncertain, unstable, materiality torn between the stillness of the celluloid strip and the illusion of its movement, leading to further reflection on the representation of time, particularly in relation to the index. Here again, the technology has rendered the presence of the index anachronistic, but its already ghostly presence can enhance reflection on the actual filmic image under consideration, its presence as an inscription of a moment of time. The dialectic between old and new produces innovative ways of thinking about the complex temporality of cinema and its significance for the present moment in history. As the flow of cinema is displaced by the process of delay, spectatorship is affected, reconfigured and transformed so that old films can be seen with new eyes and digital technology, rather than killing the cinema, brings it new life and new dimensions. The process of delay not only brings stillness into visibility but also alters the traditionally linear structure of narrative, fragmenting its continuities.

Changes in the technologies of seeing affect human perception. As so many theorists and film-makers argued in the 1920s, the cinema, with its mechanical eye, embodied ways in which modernity had transformed perception. Now, as the digital affects contemporary perception of the world, so it also affects popular experience of film and the mode of perception traditionally associated with it. In the first instance, computer-generated images create a 'technological uncanny', the sense of uncertainty and disorientation which has always accompanied a new technology that is not yet fully understood. As digital production has merged the human and other bodies seamlessly into special effects the 'technological uncanny' has given way to 'technological curiosity' and DVDs include 'add-ons' with background information, interviews and commentaries. These extra-diegetic elements have broken through the barrier that has traditionally protected the diegetic world of narrative film and its linear structure. Furthermore, as a DVD indexes a film into chapters, the heterogeneity of add-ons is taken a step further by non-linear access to its story. Of course, these new features also enhance understanding of the movies of the past, shifting them from pure entertainment into a quasi-museum-like status. While more and more people, beyond the specialized film buffs, fans and cinephiles of the past, are plunged into film history, the experience is far removed from that of the traditional cinema audience bound to watch a film in its given order at 24 frames a second. In this dialogue between old and new, past and present, (the opposition between film and new technologies begins to break down and the new modes of spectatorship illuminate aspects of cinema that, like the still frame, have been hidden from view.)

Once the consumption of movies is detached from the absolute isolation of absorbed viewing (in the dark, at 24 frames a second, in narrative order and without exterior intrusions), the cohesion of narrative comes under pressure from external discourses, that is, production context, anecdote, history. But digital spectatorship also affects the internal pattern of narrative: sequences can be easily skipped or repeated, overturning hierarchies of privilege, and setting up unexpected links that displace the

chain of meaning invested in cause and effect. This kind of interactive spectatorship brings with it pleasures reminiscent of the processes of textual analysis that open up understanding and unexpected emotion while also attacking the text's original cohesion. When broken down in this way, a movie's apparently horizontal structure mutates, so that symmetry or pattern can be detached from the narrative whole or a privileged moment can suddenly take on the heightened quality of a tableau. And then, some detail or previously unnoticed moment can become at least as significant as the chain of meaning invested in cause and effect. In the stilled image, moments of beauty or meaning can be found and then, as the image is reactivated, continue to affect the image once returned to movement.

In his introduction to *The Remembered Film*, Victor Burgin draws attention to the way that viewing processes once embraced by the avant-garde have shifted so that the Surrealists' habit of moving from cinema to cinema to create arbitrary sequences and juxtapositions is now transformed into the commonplace:

During the more recent history of cinema, less self-consciously resistant practices have emerged in the new demotic space that has opened up between the motion picture palace and consumer video technologies . . . Moreover, even the most routine and non-resistant practice of 'zapping' through films shown on television now offers the sedentary equivalent of Breton's and Vaché's ambulatory *dérive*. Their once avant-garde invention has, in Victor Shklovsky's expression, 'completed its journey from poetry to prose. The decomposition of narrative films, once subversive, is now normal.'⁹

He points out that this disruption of the linear recalls other kinds of mental processes. As well as the unconscious associative links in a dream's latent material, in daydreams and reveries, the mind travels across unexpected, apparently arbitrary chains of association that may or may not be ultimately comprehensible when recalled to the conscious mind. As he discusses the way in which memory can detach a film sequence from its larger narrative and

give it a stronger connection with a sequence from another film, he says:

The narratives have dropped away like those rockets that disintegrate in the atmosphere once they have placed their small payloads in orbit. Detached from their original settings, each scene is now the satellite of the other. Each echoes the other, increasingly merges with the other, and I experience a kind of fascinated incomprehension before the hybrid object they have become.¹⁰

Not only does Burgin give an illuminating insight into the way film moments can work in the psyche, he also draws attention to the way that film material can be literally detached from its original site to become part of the creative material of contemporary artists. References to film have been significant in his previous work, but his latest, *Listen to Britain*, evolves out of and around a sequence from Powell and Pressburger's *A Canterbury Tale*. If watching films digitally has contributed to a sense of narrative disintegration, digital editing systems have enabled film to be quoted and referred to with unprecedented ease. Once again, like the Surrealists' *dérive*, such references are not necessarily new but have found heightened visibility in the digital era. Furthermore, as the cinema ages it acquires greater cultural legitimacy and the divide between art and popular film has narrowed almost to invisibility.

In Burgin's account of the way that a film image or sequence can become part of a network of other images or ideas in a 'non-linear concatenation', the Freudian model of unconscious association is never far away. Anna Everett draws on Julia Kristeva's theory of intertextuality to discuss similar properties of digital culture, devising the term 'digitextuality':

Where digitextuality departs from Kristeva's notion of intertextuality is that the former moves us beyond 'a new signifying system' of quotations and transpositions to a meta-signifying system of discursive absorption whereby different signifying systems are translated and

often transformed into zeros and ones for infinite recombinant signifiers. In other words, new digital media technologies make meaning not only by building a new text through translation and absorption of other texts, but also by embedding the entirety of other texts (digital and analogue) seamlessly within the new. What this means is that earlier practices of collage, bricolage and other modernist and post-modernist hybrid representational strategies and literary gestures of intertextual referentiality have been expanded for the new demands and technological wizardry of the digital age.¹¹

Both Burgin and Everett locate the non-narrative strategies that have developed out of the digital within the traditions of the avant-garde, within an aesthetic of the synchronic or even the achronic. Similarly, the digital 'freeze frame' recalls the importance that reference to the single frame of film has had in the avant-garde tradition. But the implications are double-edged. While stillness indeed challenges film's appropriation by illusion, the digital freeze frame can only refer to the film's material, the frame, by associations that lie outside the specifics of the medium so central to modernist aesthetics.

Thinking about film within the framework of the digital is like watching a kaleidoscope pattern reconfigure very slowly. The same aesthetic attributes are there but the relations between them have shifted. (For instance, the oppositions between narrative and avant-garde film, between materialism and illusion, have become less distinct and the uncertain relation between movement and stillness, and between halted time and time in duration, is now more generally apparent.) Rather than stripping away a mask of illusion to reveal film's material, the relation between film's attributes can be reformulated more dialectically. This affects the opposition between 'film time', the inscription of an image onto the still frames of celluloid, and 'cinema time', the structure of significance and flow that constitutes the temporal aesthetic of any movie, fiction or documentary. Usually, the second conceals the first, but when the forward movement is halted the balance changes. The time of the film's original moment of registration can suddenly

burst through its narrative time. Even in a Hollywood movie, beyond the story is the reality of the image: the set, the stars, the extras take on the immediacy and presence of a document and the fascination of time fossilized overwhelms the fascination of narrative progression. (The now-ness of story time gives way to the then-ness of the time when the movie was made and its images take on social, cultural or historical significance, reaching out into its surrounding world.) At moments like these, images from film culture (documentary, fiction, avant-garde) mix on equal terms with those from films of record (public, such as newsreels, or private, such as home movies). As Everett points out, bits of 'film time' can be extended and remixed out of their original cinematic context. Again, this development is only a further advance in the long tradition of the compilation film.

Looking back, the life-span of film and photography as the predominant media of their era has been comparatively short, bounded by a defined beginning, the fixing of the indexical image, and end, the perfect imitation of the indexical image by digital technology. (The mechanical, even banal, presence of the photographic image as index takes on a new kind of resonance, touched perhaps by nostalgia, but no longer tied to old debates about the truth of photographic evidence. The index can now be valued in its relation to time and as a record of a fragment of inscribed reality that may be meaningless or indecipherable. As a trace of the past that persists into present, and one in which, in the case of the cinema, appears to animate the inanimate human body, the photographic index reaches out towards the uncanny as an effect of confusion between living and dead.) Human consciousness creates ordered time to organize the rhythms of everyday life according to the demands of society and economy, but also in recognition of the intractable nature of time itself. (For human and all organic life, time marks the movement along a path to death, that is, to the stillness that represents the transformation of the animate into the inanimate. In cinema, the blending of movement and stillness touches on this point of uncertainty so that, buried in the cinema's materiality, lies a reminder of the difficulty of understanding passing time

and, ultimately, of understanding death. As Raymond Bellour puts it:

If the stop on the image, or of the image, what one might also call the photographic 'take' on film, the pose or pause of the image asserts the power of stillness to enthrall, if this impression is so strong, it must be because it touches the stop of death . . . ¹²

He goes on to argue that the stop of death is also the moment of its suspension, the point at which the certainty of death is overwhelmed by enigma and uncertainty.

These attributes of cinema, although noted since its birth, were intensified by the transitional period of 1995 that brought with it the metaphor of the cinema's own death, further exaggerated by the new ease with which the cinema can be delayed. As stillness intrudes into movement, the image freezes into the 'stop of death', taking the aesthetics of cinema that leads back to pre-cinema, and to photographic and psychoanalytic theories. The blurred boundaries between the living and the not-living touch on unconscious anxieties that then circulate as fascination as well as fear in the cultures of the uncanny. This shudder, however consciously experienced, is a symptom of the unconscious difficulty that the human mind has in grasping death and its compensatory capacity to imagine an afterlife.



Chris Petit's tribute to the stars of *Journey to Italy* (1999).