

The Joy of Videographic Constraint

**Or, (How I learned to Love) Parameter-based
Audiovisual Essaying**

My “original research...”

complex practices of allusionism

**Studying audiovisual
intertextuality *audiovisually***

working sensuously, temporally, graphically, as well as cognitively and verbally can help to generate very powerful and persuasive moment by moment understanding of audiovisual interrelationships.

**Kinds of
intertextual
comparative
instances:**

- Remakes
- Unmotivated and/or unconscious similarities
- Motivated and/or conscious similarities (allusionism)

[Intertextuality] serves as the general term to explain the process by which sources are used by filmmakers and the **intricacies** of the **chains of associations which produce the energy and force** of the most successful works.

HELEN GRACE, Review of Mikhail Lampolski, *The Memory of Tiresias: Intertextuality and Film, Screening the Past*, 1999.

Catherine Grant, 'El embrujo de La mujer sin cabeza' ['The Haunting of The Headless Woman'], *Tecmerin: Revista de Ensayos Audiovisuales*, 2, Julio 2019: – Español: <https://tecmerin.uc3m.es/revista-2-1/> ; English: <https://tecmerin.uc3m.es/en/journal-2-1/>.



The Haunting of THE HEADLESS WOMAN by CARNIVAL OF SOULS, or Spectral Incognizance Revisited
(Unfinished draft as of June 2011)

from Catherine Grant



La mujer sin cabeza/The Headless Woman

19:03



vimeo

The Haunting of THE HEADLESS WOMAN by CARNIVAL OF SOULS, or
Spectral Incognizance Revisited (Unfinished draft as of June 2011)



Tecmerin. Journal of Audiovisual Essays

The character of Verónica, played by María Onetto in Lucrecia Martel's film *La mujer sin cabeza* (2008, Argentina/France/Italy/Spain, known in Spain as *La mujer rubia*), is an iconic, if somewhat opaque protagonist. She can't help but recall, for a cinephile viewer at least, a number of other striking, and often doomed, cinematic blondes who travel in cars, including Madeleine/Judy (Kim Novak) in Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* [1958]; Marion Crane (Janet Leigh) in Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960); Nan Adams (Inger Stevens) in "The Hitch-Hiker," episode sixteen of the American television anthology series *The Twilight Zone* (1960, CBS. Episode directed by Alvin Ganzer); and perhaps even Cléo (Corrine Marchand) in Agnès Varda's *Cléo de 5 à 7* (1962).

But Vero has an even more uncannily similar cinematic sister, her queer kin par excellence: Mary Henry, protagonist of Herk Harvey's 1962 cult independent horror film *Carnival of Souls*. Mary, played by the equally, if not more, iconic Candace Hilligoss, is a church organist haunted by ghosts. In many ways, I argue, this character and other aspects of Harvey's film haunt *La mujer sin cabeza*. But this is no secret haunting; it is part of a deliberate act of homage, both to B-movie horror in general as well as specifically to *Carnival of Souls*, as acknowledged, if not elaborated on in any detail, by Martel herself in an interview with Scott Foundas in 2008.[1]

Catherine Grant, 'El embrujo de La mujer sin cabeza' ['The Haunting of The Headless Woman'], *Tecmerin: Revista de Ensayos Audiovisuales*, 2, Julio 2019: – Español: <https://tecmerin.uc3m.es/revista-2-1/> ; English: <https://tecmerin.uc3m.es/en/journal-2-1/>.

Tecmerin. Journal of Audiovisual Essays

My video essay focuses on this conscious but profound act of intertextuality by exploring in detail the plane of meanings potentially lent to *La mujer sin cabeza* by its careful and highly subtle practices of allusion to the 1962 film, ones not solely based on similarity but also on *divergence* and *variation*. As always in my research on the recognition of cinematic interconnectedness, within the specific fields of transtextuality that Gérard Genette called “hypertextuality” and “intertextuality,”[2] I adhere to the following quotation from the writing of Mikhail Iampolski: “The intertext constitutes meaning as the work involved in seeking it.”[3]

The kind of labour, or quest, is particularly rewarding, I have argued,[4] when undertaken through audiovisual mediation, that is, worked through in the same basic form as that of the original films. Working sensuously, temporally, graphically, as well as cognitively and verbally can help to generate a very powerful and persuasive moment by moment understanding of the political and affective subtleties of Martel’s filmmaking. This kind of unfolding research can thus add to and complement, in compelling ways, the wide array of written studies of the Argentine filmmaker’s oeuvre, including those which have focused on the related questions surrounding the representation of a “machinery of denial” in *La mujer sin cabeza*. [5]

Catherine Grant, ‘El embrujo de La mujer sin cabeza’ [‘The Haunting of The Headless Woman’], *Tecmerin: Revista de Ensayos Audiovisuales*, 2, Julio 2019: – Español: <https://tecmerin.uc3m.es/revista-2-1/> ; English: <https://tecmerin.uc3m.es/en/journal-2-1/>.



Cryptogram

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<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cryptogram-example.jpg>

Cryptogram

10,321 views • 22 Jan 2016

37

12

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WikiAudio

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Sergei / Sir Gay

2017

HD • Short • American • 35m • Directed by [Mark Rappaport](#)

3.9 ★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆

As a teenager, Eisenstein signed his drawings with 'Sir Gay'. Roguish essayist Rappaport sees clear signs of his sexual preferences throughout the Russian's fil... [READ MORE](#) ▾

▶ [Play Trailer](#)

[Click here](#) to take a look at our newly redesigned movie page.



But Martel's protagonist **isn't** dead.



Play

01:18





That *Carnival of Souls*, and
its mode of **spectral incognizance**,



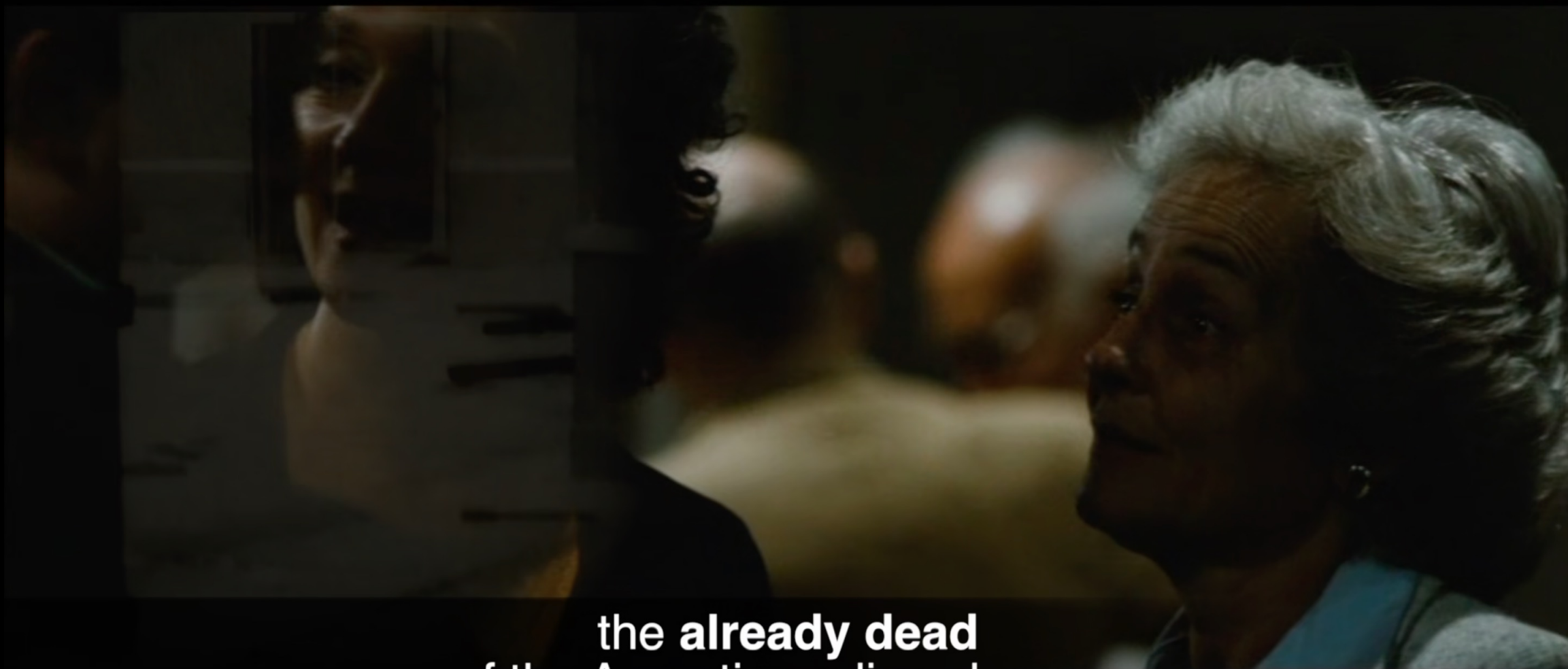
02:35





But its **mirrorings** and **evocations** of the earlier film
are mostly **inverse** or **obverse**.





the already dead
of the Argentine ruling classes.

"GESTALTUNG...temporal and spatial ... forming and arranging"

Klee's *Gestalt* and Existential Composition

One of my concerns in this article has been to identify the perceptual conditions that distinguish art *as* art. We must now recognize that conceptual and practical processes are powers of existential composition. Such powers may elude exhaustive analysis, but works of art hold within themselves their own objective forces; it is the *compositional* character of works of art which disclose the temporal and spatial indices of their own form-language whereby the observer receives their objecthood. This is achieved through a work's coming to a cohesion and centrality as a created thing - a *gestalt*. The *gestalt* concept is something which Heidegger employed as a means of articulating the relation of what he called a "self-disclosing world" and a "self-secluding earth": the gestalt taken as that form, shape, or figure which is fixed in the conflict between world and earth; a necessary conflict, as he saw it, in order that truth might be fashioned. But here, and from an artistic perspective, I take the gestalt to mean a *formational* figure, in contrast to something fully formed. That is to say, a formational gestalt takes place in the creative tensions of art making.

We might say that for Klee the notion of gestalt is a counter-foil to a purely analytical modelling of form. Within his theoretical teaching program, the so-called *Weimar Preliminary Course* of 1924/25, Klee is concerned with the nature and function of the gestalt. His study of the gestalt treats of "the ways that *lead* to form", and thus emphasises the paths to form rather than the form itself. The word *gestaltung* - a forming or arranging - suggests as much. Klee says that the Theory of Form, *Formlehre*, does not give due emphasis to the necessary principles and approaches to form. And any *Theory of Formation* remains too unfamiliar. He writes, "*Gestaltung* in its broader sense clearly contains the idea of an underlying mobility, and is therefore preferable." Klee argues that gestalt, over against form, is something more alive. "*Gestalt* is in a manner of speaking a form with an undercurrent of living functions. A function made of functions," he says. These functions are purely intellectual, and a need for expression undergirds them. And every functional expression must be properly grounded. Thus Klee argues there will be a binding relation between the beginning, middle and end of a created thing.^[37]

Contemporary AESTHETICS

Poiesis and Art-Making: A Way of Letting-Be

Derek H. Whitehead

Abstract

This article is both philosophical and practical in its intent. It endeavours to bring into focus an idea with an Ancient Greek lineage, *poiesis*, and determine whether it may revitalise our thinking about the 'making' of art. The art-making considered in this paper will concentrate exclusively on Western art and its historical and contemporary manifestations. I suggest that *poiesis* - that which "pro-duces or leads (a thing) into being" - may enable practitioners in the varying art forms, and aestheticians who reflect upon them, to come to a deeper sense of how artworks work: that they realize themselves inter-dependently of the formative conditions of their inception. One question I raise, among others, is: What is the relation between *poiesis* and the sensory embodiments of art making? Here I evoke the notion of the *poietic act*, something which has the potential to reinvigorate the artist's creative energies in and for our times. At a philosophical level I argue that *poiesis* may be seen as a liberating force which seeks to engage the multiple conditions of contemporary aesthetic reflection, and at a practical level I argue that the *poietic act* may be seen in those undercurrents of artistic activity that impel us toward a space of 'unitary multiplicity,' wherein the artist, the artwork, and the receiver of such a work are brought forward in all the features of their self-presentation.

Derek H. Whitehead, in *Contemporary Aesthetics*, 1, 2003:

<https://contempaesthetics.org/newvolume/pages/article.php?articleID=216>

Contemporary AESTHETICS

Poiesis and Art-Making: A Way of Letting-Be

Derek H. Whitehead

What I am offering is not some formulaic response or solution to any supposed problem in postmodern or contemporary aesthetic theory. I simply want to show that *poiesis* is not something abstracted from human thought or artistic activity. Nor is *poiesis*, in this context, intended to account for the complex expressions of contemporary art forms such as performance art, interactive art, and demonstrable 'happenings' of one kind or another. Not every art-form is *poietic* or disposed to articulate the *poietic*. Yet in one sense every art form is performative: it has its own essential being before any pronouncement, its own mode of address and articulation. It is open to further investigation whether *poietic* traces are to be found in those conditions which favour the many and divergent forms of contemporary art practice which we know today. Though *poiesis* may have conceptual and empirical implications for such practice, insofar as it is consciously evoked by the artist, I intuit their possibilities here rather than argue for any verifying status in their regard.

Derek H. Whitehead, in *Contemporary Aesthetics*, 1, 2003:

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Contemporary AESTHETICS

Poiesis and Art-Making: A Way of Letting-Be

Derek H. Whitehead

I submit that poiesis is something very much 'in process' contemporaneously, that it remains an 'undercurrent' striving toward the light of day. As such it is likely to surface in rather surprising forms, not least in 'found objects,' 'ready-mades,' 'assemblages,' or 'installations' where the artist's intuitive faculty - in the selection and compositional arrangement of freely chosen elements - appears uppermost. Here I attempt to highlight the presence of a *poietic* dynamic in the activities of contemporary art practice from the perspectives of painting, poetry, and music.

The conceptual possibility that an artwork takes on the decision of self-expression, which is somehow parallel to the artist's creative will and intentionality, suggests that there is some inter-connectedness between an artist's conscious guidance of form and what we might describe as a work's own self-imposed alliances or self-exploratory formations. We see something of this in the compositional process. An artist, writer or musician is at some pains to give a work 'its head,' so to speak; for a work has a life of its own, as the abstract expressionist painter Jackson Pollock once said, and the attempt is to try and let it 'come through.'

Derek H. Whitehead, in *Contemporary Aesthetics*, 1, 2003:

<https://contempaesthetics.org/newvolume/pages/article.php?articleID=216>

DISPOSITIF

**Cristina Álvarez
López and Adrian
Martin, 'The
Audiovisual Essay
as Art-Practice',
NECSUS, Spring
2015**

For Grant, 'essay' means 'experiment' – as in the laboratory-like assembly of film/media samples, music, and text in various formats (graphic as well as spoken). Her experiments frequently take a very contemporary artistic form: the *dispositif*, a game-structure in which parameters are set and then patiently carried out, with the results to be studied and sometimes tinkered with and taken further, perhaps in a future audiovisual piece. Therefore, for example, Grant will set herself the task of collecting all the cuts or lap-dissolves in a given film, and then juxtaposing that with a musical track and/or a textual commentary. For her, the results of such audiovisual experiments have the proven potential to generate new knowledge in our screen studies field – with the proviso that the real challenge today is less to translate this knowledge back into the conventionally 'acceptable' verbal or literary metalanguage of description and theory than to value our discoveries in the very terms of, and on the same level as, the aesthetic and sensory properties of rhythm, colour, texture, affect, and so on.

ROTATION OR INVERSION AS DEFAMILIARISING TECHNIQUES/CONSTRAINTS

According to Shklovsky, only displaced objects truly reach us. Art is the knowledge of how to displace things:

In order to transform an object into a fact of art, it is necessary to detach it from the domain of life, to wrest it out from the web of familiar associations, to turn over the object as one would turn a log in the fire.¹⁹

ANNIE VAN DEN OEVER (2010). OSTRANNENIE.: ON "STRANGENESS" AND THE MOVING IMAGE: THE HISTORY, RECEPTION, AND RELEVANCE OF A CONCEPT. (ED.) AMSTERDAM: UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM.

JUXTAPOSITION OR REWIND AS DEFAMILIARISING TECHNIQUES/CONSTRAINTS

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**VIDENIE (SEEING) IS THE
GOAL OF OSTRANENIE...**

**MAKING MATTERS, AND
NOT WHAT HAS BEEN MADE**

...Not an object-analysis but: “An Array of tasks to be done”

**JURGEN
BRAUNGARDT,
'Heidegger made
simple',
[http://braungardt
.trialectics.com/p
hilosophy/philos
ophers/heidegge
r-made-simple](http://braungardt.trialectics.com/philosophy/philosophers/heidegger-made-simple)**

From the point of view of a philosopher who engages in Daseins-analysis, the world is no longer a mere object of knowledge, but an array of tasks to be done. It is easy to think of the world and the things that make it up as something that can be known. But Heidegger says we are not first of all “knowers.” We are, instead, primarily engaged in the world, and faced with tasks. This creates a primary social dimension to our existence that philosophers often ignore. Kant or Wittgenstein, for example, describe the world as the totality of objects and states of affairs – but that isn’t obvious to Heidegger, who fundamentally questions the split between theory and practice. The world first appears to us as “equipment,” not as an object of knowledge. For him, the world is knowing how, not knowing what, as in the example of using a hammer in a workshop. The appearance of “things” – even something as basic as a hammer – requires first of all not an object-analysis, but a use-analysis. But when we ask how to use a tool, we also open up the whole context of its use, and we are no longer focused on objects, or tools, by themselves. In this approach, the first intrinsic problem appears in the following way: Bringing a reflective attitude to the task itself can interrupt the very process of doing it. ⁶

DEFAMILIARISATION AND DESIGN

-Epigraph

1

FACING FILM

Johannes Binotto 2017
<https://vimeo.com/231289717>

DEFAMILIARISATION AND DESIGN

-Epigraph

1



Catherine Grant 2021
<https://vimeo.com/590551892>

DEFAMILIARISATION AND DESIGN

-Pechakucha

2

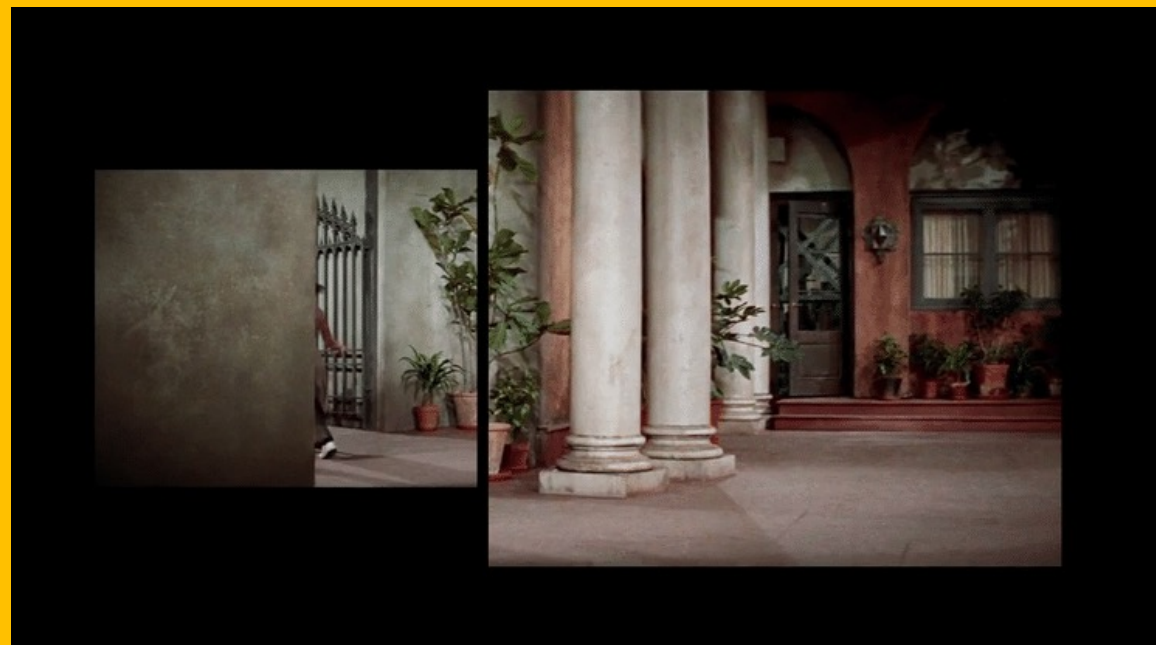
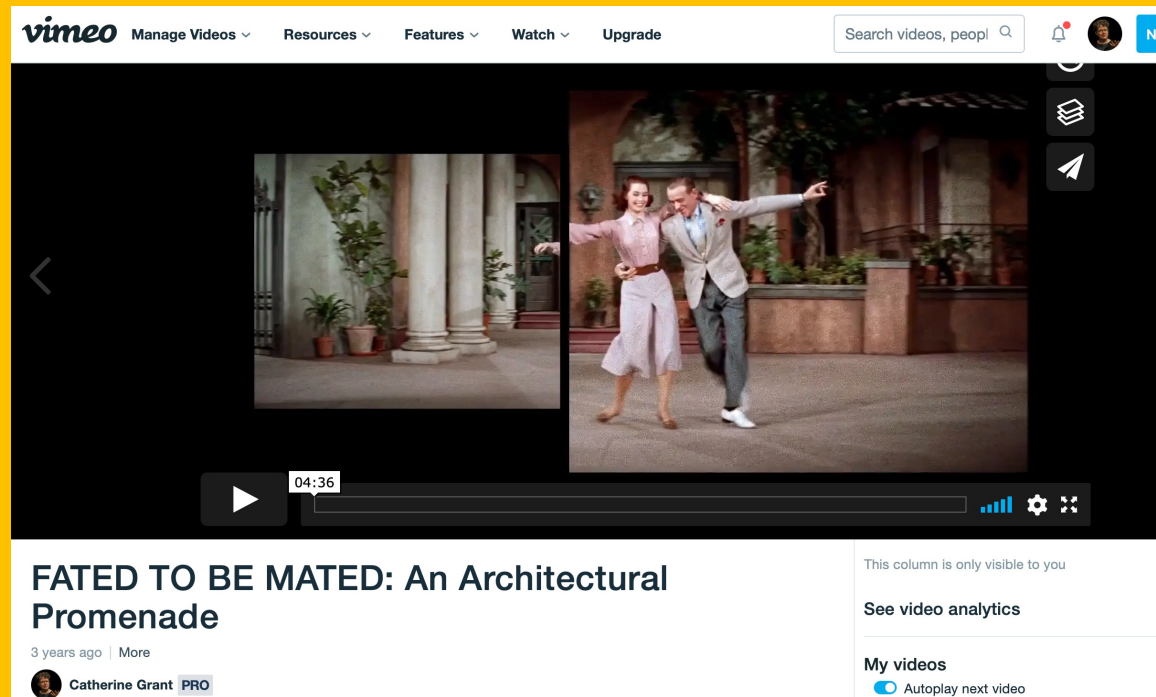
UNA PECHAKUCHA FANTASTICA

Catherine Grant 2021
<https://vimeo.com/410218539>

DEFAMILIARISATION AND DESIGN

-Multiscreen

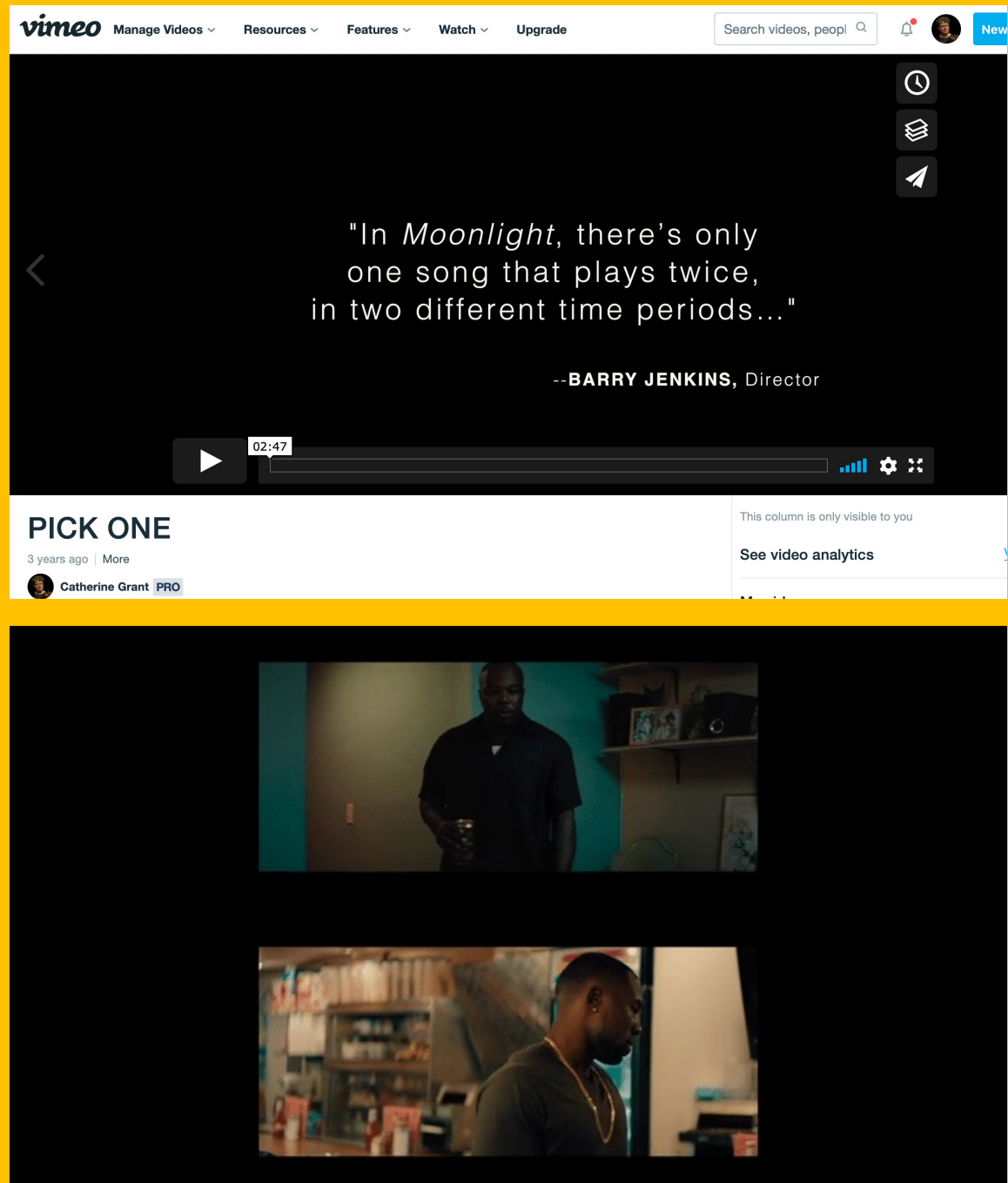
3



DEFAMILIARISATION AND DESIGN

-Multiscreen

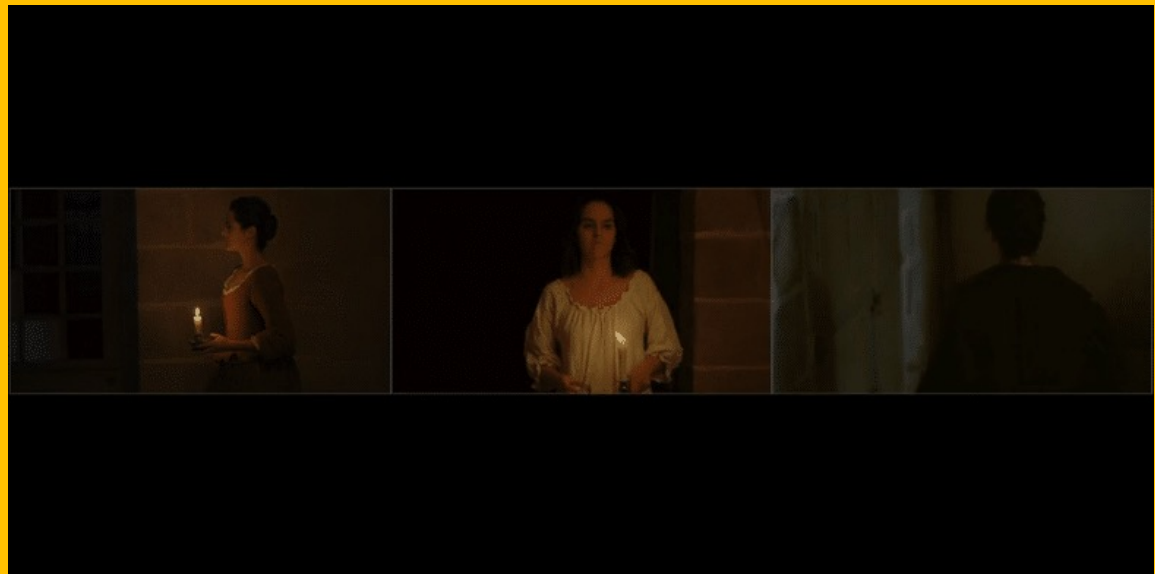
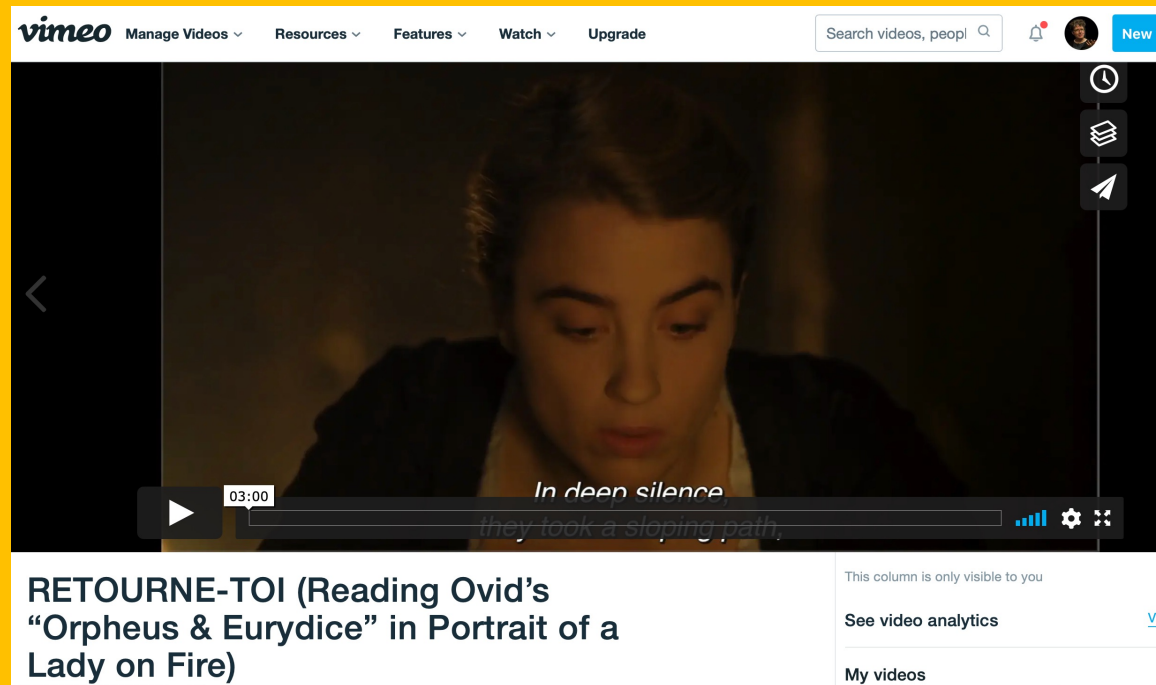
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DEFAMILIARISATION AND DESIGN

-Multiscreen

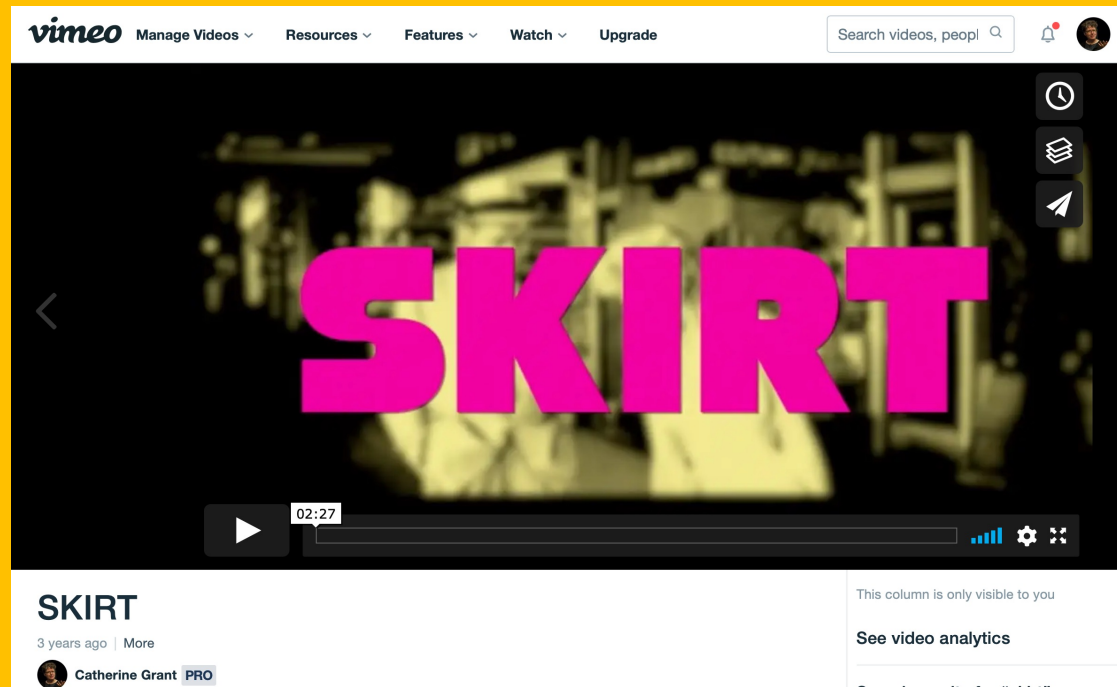
3



DEFAMILIARISATION AND DESIGN

-Slow motion/
“forced
marriage”
combo

4



Scholarship in Sound & Image: A Pedagogical Essay

<http://videographicessay.org/works/videographic-essay/scholarship-in-sound--image>

‘Scholarship in Sound & Image: A Pedagogical Essay’ by Christian Keathley and Jason Mittell

Our approach during the first week was based on a couple of core principles. The first is that **one learns by doing**. Even though most of our participants had no video editing experience, we had everyone start making short videos on the very first day. Luckily, our colleague Ethan Murphy excels at teaching the tools of video production. Each morning, we gave a new assignment, after which Ethan gave the participants a tutorial in the core features of Adobe Premiere they would need to complete that assignment. Subsequent learning was accomplished via practice, peer advice, and consultation from the workshop leaders. Our mantra in the first week was **‘Make First, Think Later’**—a distinct challenge for a group of academics!

Our second principle was that **formal parameters lead to content discoveries**. Instead of asking participants to make a video that served a particular content goal (such as criticism, analysis, comparison, etc.), we created exercises with strict formal requirements, but open to whatever content people were interested in. We have found that producing work according to often arbitrary formal parameters will reveal something about your object that would be hard to discover through more typical analytical means. Such discoveries and revelations were a constant byproduct of these formal exercises, leading to deep conversations about the films that participants were working with.

PARAMETERS

- Middlebury Workshop

Scholarship in Sound & Image: A Pedagogical Essay

<http://videographicessay.org/works/videographic-essay/scholarship-in-sound--image>

‘Scholarship in Sound & Image: A Pedagogical Essay’ by Christian Keathley and Jason Mittell

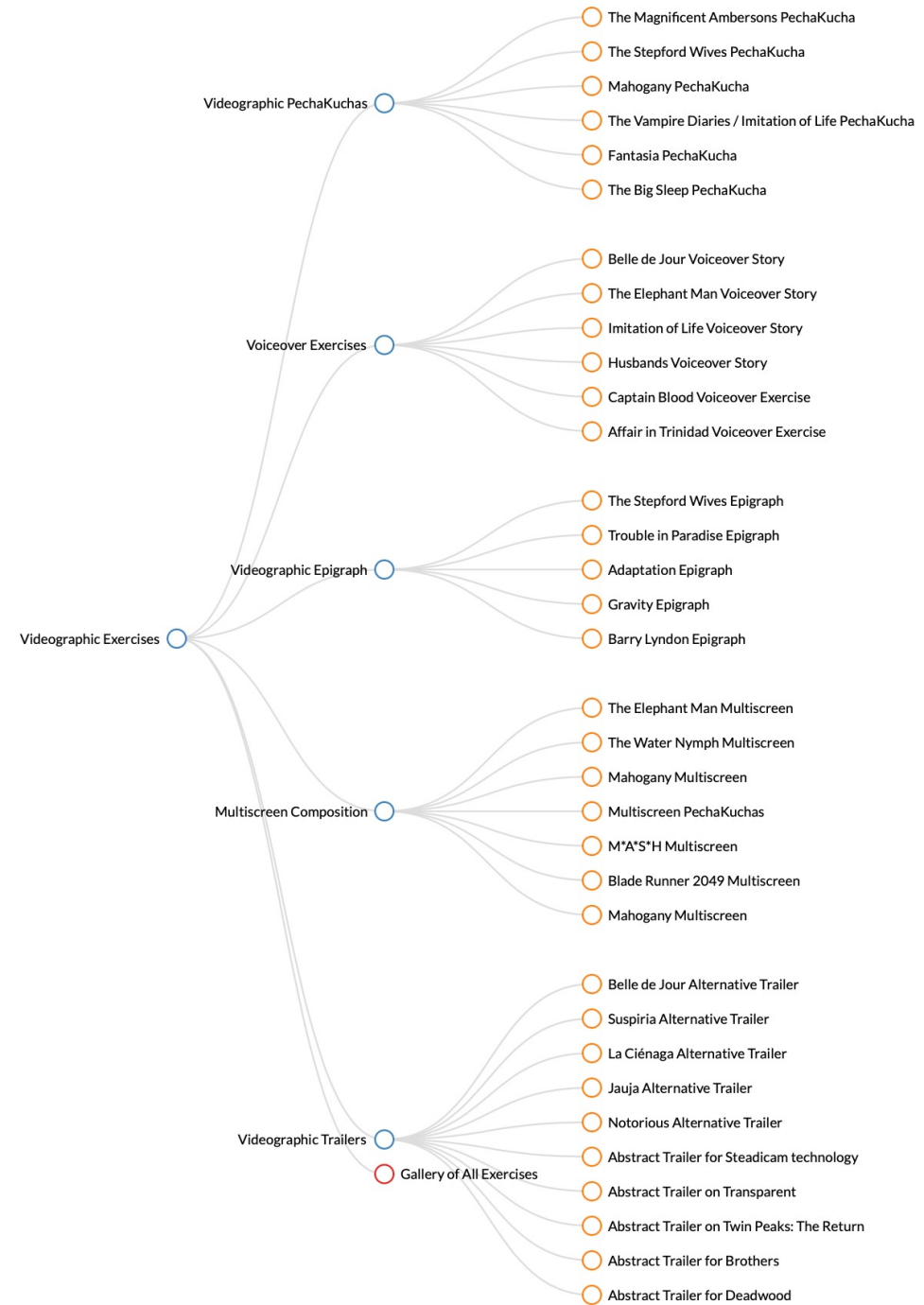
PARAMETERS

- Middlebury Workshop

To facilitate this process, each participant was asked to select a single film or other media object to serve as their source text for a set of five exercises to be produced in the workshop's first week. We found that feature films worked best; an entire season of a TV show was too expansive for the scale of the assignments we were giving. One participant in the first workshop chose an entire season of a webseries, but that totalled only 80 minutes in full, shorter than an average feature film. While the ultimate goal of videographic work may be to produce scholarly knowledge about a particular media object of study, that goal must first be set aside in favor of a careful examination of the object as **an archive of moving images and sounds**. We maintain that, if criticism is to be offered in a multimedia form, you must first learn something about how to effectively use moving images and sound to express yourself, and through certain exercises your media object of study will reveal aspects of itself. Thus, in these preliminary exercises, the goal was not to produce a videographic essay—that is, not to produce scholarship, though sometimes that did happen. Rather, the goal was to have the participants play with their media object as a way to explore how manipulating its components could create a variety of effects.

PARAMETERS

- Middlebury Workshop



PARAMETERS

Using one audiovisual media object you know quite well, make a video, choosing to work within one set of the following parameters:

1. **EPIGRAPH** – choose a continuous sequence from your object and alter it in some way. Add an epigraph either before, during or after replaying the altered sequence. Length of finished video should be between 1-3 minutes;
2. **PECHA KUCHA** - find ten, six-second video clips from your object and line them all up however you like. Pair the clips with one minute of continuous audio. Begin and end with three seconds of black screen;
3. **MULTISCREEN** – make a short multiscreen comparison of at least two sequences from your object; or divide the frame of one sequence into two frames. Length of finished video should be between 1-3 minutes;
4. **SLOW MO'** / with optional "Forced marriage" - find a sequence in your media object and slow it down *meaningfully / analytically* to at least 5 times its original length. Change the sound if you wish. Length of finished video should be between 1-3 minutes.

Export the file, or screen it from your video editing program.