

WAITING, WANDERING, AND WONDERING. “POST-CINEMATIC” SPACES IN THE MULTIPLE PRESENT

Robin Curtis

To navigate implies identifying and orienting oneself withing the relationship between self and the other and the relative locations of each in time and space. While road maps, signs, previously trodden pathways, as well as points of transition between discrete spatial entities such as those offered by bridges or border crossings all traditionally have been understood to stand at our disposal as visible markers to accomplish the task of navigation, electronic and digital media, apps as well as apparatuses, have increasingly come to embellish, modify, and question the manner in which the contours of space are outlined. They have thereby altered the act of passage, expanding and highlighting the interactions at work in such movements. More broadly conceived, the process of navigation thus suggests the interaction, imbrication, and flow of all objects within a given set of parameters, such as a certain cultural, urban, or even a media ecology.

Expanding Marshall McLuhan's hypothesis from *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man* (1964), Elaine Scarry argued in a technological and medially inclusive fashion in 1994, that: "If our artifacts do not act on us, there is no point in having made them. We make material artifacts in order to interiorize them. We make things so that they will in turn remake us, revising the interior of embodied consciousness."¹ With Scarry's long-term view of this matter in mind, one that allows for a complex intermingling of past, present, and future media and texts in our desires and projections, I would like to consider some contemporary encounters with media, mediatized environments, and other complex, multilayered aesthetic interactions. Specifically, I am interested in exploring how the overlapping of texts, media, technologies, and cues—and thus also the affordances of each—highlights the ways in which our past experiences can significantly shape and intermingle with present ones, highlighting the presence of networks of possibilities within each of those texts, media, technologies, cues, and affordances.

DISSOLVING ORIENTATION

Recently a number of media scholars have argued that our contemporary sense of space (and time) is increasingly represented through aesthetic strategies defined by "post-continuity."² Within this aesthetic paradigm, exemplified for instance by Michael Bay's explosive blockbusters (including the *Bad Boys* and *Transformers* franchises), narrative cohesion is not entirely disrupted. However, the cohesion of time and space certainly is. This latter cohesion was once considered a hallmark of continuity editing's "human" perspective on the world, guided by a particular conception of the manner in which attention operates.³ A decisive shift has taken place that has done away with an overarching need for a cohesive spatio-temporal narrative thread to guide one's movement through cinematic space. According to Steven Shaviro's account of this shift:

In classical continuity styles, space is a fixed and rigid container, which remains the same no matter what goes on in the narrative; and time flows linearly, and at a uniform rate, even when the film's chronology is scrambled by flashbacks. But in post-continuity films, this is not necessarily the case. We enter into the spacetime of modern physics; or better, into the "space of flows," and the time of microintervals and speed-of-light transformations, that are characteristic of globalized, high-tech financial capital.⁴

But clearly, as the box office receipts for Bay's blockbusters attest, we continue to assimilate these shifts in some fashion, despite the change to the "space of flows" cited by Shaviro, which is implied by this recent evolution away from editing strategies based on a classical continuity that privilege psychological and spatial coherence. Indeed, these new strategies have quickly become the template for spatial and temporal navigation, now as familiar as continuity editing was in the past.

But if, as Vivian Sobchack has argued, "cinematic and electronic screens differently solicit and shape our presence to the world, our representation in it, and our sensibilities and responsibilities about it,"⁵ what effect does our increasing exposure to the digitally facilitated post-cinematic, post-continuity strategies of negotiation in time and space have on our movement through other environments, mediated or (ostensibly) unmediated?

Reminding us of the pertinence of Heidegger's point that "the essence of technology is nothing technological,"⁶ Sobchack emphasizes the need for an examination of the complex parameters at play beyond the merely "technological" aspects of any phenomenon. Indeed the assumption and examination of a reciprocal relationship between technology and the human body is an absolutely central aspect of Vivian Sobchack's project. With Heidegger's postulation in mind, she highlights precisely this readily neglected reciprocity, which occurs due to the contextual qualities of technologies in use and thus counters the inclination to understand technology as a static force exerting unilateral influence on a human body. She describes technology as:

historically informed not only by its materiality but also by its political, economic, and social context, and thus it both co-constitutes and expresses not merely technological value but always also cultural values. Correlatively, technology is never merely used, never simply instrumental. It is always also incorporated and lived by the human beings who create and engage it within a structure of meanings and metaphors in which subject-object relations are not only cooperative and co-constitutive but are also dynamic and reversible.⁷

Sobchack has taken care throughout her body of work to offer thorough examinations of very specific examples of media texts and situations and their particular affordances. A key part of her project is underscoring that there are reciprocal processes⁸ at work in those technologies of representation simultaneously serving as technologies of perception (such as photography, film, television, videotapes, DVDs, cell phones, and computers):

a qualitatively new techno-logic begins to alter our perceptual orientation in and toward the world, ourselves, and others. Furthermore, as this new techno-logic becomes culturally pervasive and normative, it can come to inform and affect profoundly the socio-logic, psycho-logic, axio-logic, and even the bio-logic by which we daily live our lives.⁹

Examinations of the rise of hybrid space and spatial experience typically see the proliferation of mobile technologies and digital media as the source of that rise. The 1990s are generally identified as the decisive decade of shift, during which the borders between

physical, material space, and the space of information became blurred.

Concerned primarily with the manner in which social relationships and avenues of communication function and have evolved, key contributions to this field, such as sociologist Manuel Castells' expansive study of the monumental changes in social space in recent decades,¹⁰ often have shown less interest in the specific effects of aesthetic experience upon the way in which we as individuals navigate through space—actively and passively, decisively or thoughtfully, consciously or on impulse—than in more everyday informational phenomena. It was Castells who articulated the distinction between what he termed the “space of material places and locations,” (anchored in local memory and tradition) and the increasingly significant “space of flows” (the space of information, communication, and capital, which is ahistorical, location-free, and continuous). In accounts such as Castells', digitization has allowed for the augmentation of human perceptual channels via increasingly smaller and/or larger apparatuses that enable access to proliferating dynamic data through various channels and that confound the distinction between absence and presence.

But is it really a simple matter to distinguish between physical, virtual, or what Lev Manovich has called “augmented”¹¹ space—solely on the basis of the insertion of a technology which acts as an interface for experience and mediates between a real environment, augmented reality, augmented virtuality, and a virtual environment? Manovich defines augmented space as “the physical space overlaid with dynamically changing information. This information is likely to be in multimedia form and is often localized for each user.”¹² Crucially he then wonders: “Do these layers [defined by form as well as spatial and informational layers] add up to a single phenomenological gestalt or are they processed as separate layers?”¹³ Another important question is whether one can easily differentiate between the operations of intertextuality, intermediality, and the effects of hybrid space?

The following text focuses on the relationship between space and time, our physical situation, and our movement through space and time as generated through such complex layering: How can the spatial effects of such a navigation be isolated from a notion of time postulating a layered, hybrid, or multiple present, which is rendered by the various kinds of templates and experiential layers at play at any given moment? What role does

recollection or projection play in the experience of the multiple present? Whereas we are clearly becoming rapidly accustomed to the integration and indeed imbrication of digital media into everyday routines—to the extent that we barely register their presence or influence—do contemporary forms of aesthetic experience train and shape experience in the material, unmediated world through a similar practice of layering? I argue that they do—by virtue of choice and trajectory. A feature which guided my selection of the phenomena in question is the particular aesthetic sensibility of immersion or immersive experience that has become a particularly potent trope of our time (albeit one with extremely unstable meaning). The media discussed here, immersive theater, an augmented reality game, and 4-D cinema, invite one to inhabit a fictional/digital/augmented space. In doing so, they highlight a number of inconsistencies and productive paradoxes implied by that inhabitation and navigation. I consider the paradoxes of location and situation made available by these phenomena productive, in that they make the density of affordances at work in these phenomena palpable, and they thus force us to consider Lev Manovich's question regarding the nature of augmented space more attentively: Namely, do such paradoxes add up to a single phenomenological gestalt, or are they processed as separate layers? Through an immersive engagement with these individual phenomena (albeit sporadic, oscillating between absorption and critical reflection, engagement and amused consternation) we are offered the opportunity to turn our attention away from a hermeneutically driven interaction in favor of an observation of the "separate layers" at work.

KALEIDOSCOPIC (IMMERSIVE) THEATER

Upon entering at the ground floor door to the six-story building, which had long served as a warehouse in New York's Chelsea district, (and after being obliged to turn over your cell phone, bag, coat, and ticket to attendants) you find yourself in a series of hallways shaped by black-painted pressboard walls—much like a traditional funhouse such as those still in operation at the Prater in Vienna. Although these hallways suggest the jagged-edged trajectories of a maze (or alternately the interiors of a Daniel Libeskind building or Gregor Schneider's *Haus Ur*), there are still no choices to be made yet. They lead to a single destination (thus operating according to the principles of a uni- rather than

multicursal maze):¹⁴ the “Hotel McKittrick,” which is, according to your ticket, the name given to this ensemble of rooms. It is from there that the multicursal pathways of this experience open themselves to you.

In the immersive theater experience *Sleep No More*, which has been running continually since 2011 at this location in New York, you are confronted first and foremost by the vastness of the space available and second by the task of negotiating this space consisting of over 100,000 square feet, covering six floors, and divided into more than 100 rooms.¹⁵ These have been meticulously set-decorated with a mixture of props, period furniture, and fixed detritus to suggest a combination of the precise attention to detail of an art installation (or the equally peculiar contemporary *Wunderkammer* that is the “Museum of Jurassic Technology” in Los Angeles) and the look of a video game (eerily reminiscent of the scenography of early interactive adventure games such as *The Seventh Guest* or the later horror game series *Silent Hill*).

And yet much of what has been written thus far about this wildly popular immersive theater experience succumbs to focusing on the structuring power of the dramatic text that ostensibly provides the basis for the *Sleep No More* experience, namely Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. W.B. Worthen’s examination of the significance of character in *Sleep No More* is a compelling and detailed analysis of the encounter with the space. I consider this as a *pars pro toto* example of large body of recent theater scholarship addressing this work.¹⁶ By choosing to summarize *Sleep No More* as “a meditation on *Macbeth* and a response to the function of Shakespeare in contemporary performance culture,”¹⁷ Worthen situates the experience squarely within a single frame of reference, to which other experiences might perhaps be peripherally and secondarily added. However, just as Games Studies has struggled to position itself in relation to the demands of ludology and narratology in developing a fitting methodological strategy for revealing the specifics of the gaming experience,¹⁸ any account of immersive theater necessarily struggles with the pluralities of space and time made available via this aesthetic form. Why must you seek out the threads that link the wanderings and wonderings of your allotted stay in the *Sleep No More* environment to *Macbeth*, or its human performers? Why would you not wander and wonder, as *World of Warcraft* players have often been wont to do as they pass through expansive digital landscapes, chatting online with the fellow travelers/gamers in digital space (although you

are obliged by the “rules of the game” to remain silent in *Sleep No More*? Why not simply check out the space itself, without undertaking any tasks or actions at all?

Despite the obvious relevance here of the multimedial implications accompanying Hans-Thies Lehmann’s influential *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006)—which highlights the mid to late twentieth-century shift in theater away from a textual to media-tized image and sound culture and the apparent automatism of “immersion” through the removal of the fourth wall in a theatrical setting—the kaleidoscopic specifics of the particular experience of make-believe¹⁹ made available through *Sleep No More* can be easily excised from any written account of the experience via the insertion of an overarching narrative (*Macbeth*).²⁰ Upon arrival in the space of the performance, you might indeed choose to trot after the performers through the space as best you can, along with the rest of the crowd, while using the links to the narrative of Shakespeare’s drama like Ariadne’s ball of thread.²¹ Such reliance on the *Macbeth* narrative, however, threatens to either rule your experience or, *ex post facto*, your account of that experience, of the navigation, the encounters, the juxtapositions, and the choices you make during your roughly three-hour inhabitation of the space afforded by virtue of the roughly \$100 ticket you have purchased. The reliance on such a narrative thread carries an economic advantage: you can thus be assured of having seen a performance of *Macbeth* (a middlebrow to perhaps highbrow activity) and not just visited an expensive funhouse (a lowbrow activity).

However, you might prefer not to follow but instead to wait, wander, wonder, and appreciate the silent eeriness of the many, many heavily decorated rooms that you encounter (empty of any human presence other than your own), while asking yourself what are the peculiarities of the experience of space on offer here. Upon arrival, for instance, you are greeted with the actorly lasciviousness of a young woman dressed for a night out in the 1930s (as are all the performers) and are then led from the “Manderley Bar” (the name of Maxim de Winter’s estate in Hitchcock’s *Rebecca*) of the “Hotel McKittrick” (familiar from Hitchcock’s *Vertigo*), in which you are obliged to gather with other participants before being led toward and then released into the spaces that are part of the show. The general ambiance of the “Manderley Bar” is reminiscent of an amalgamation of David Lynch’s films, due to the sense of temporal dislocation that is

effected by the collection of signifiers at work in the bar (an experience also typically evoked by Lynch's oeuvre). What effect do all these signifiers (even if fictional) of multiple situations in time, space, and diegesis have upon the experience of space that is to come, when presented to the theatergoer upon entry to the *Sleep No More* venue?

I would argue the effect goes beyond a simple case of having other forms of intertextual reference superimposed onto the *Macbeth* narrative. Instead, we experience *Sleep No More* as an ergodic²² encounter with a cybertext, which questions our ability to easily distinguish between the visual epistemes of presence discussed by Sobchack. Moreover, the merging of different sound references (audible are excerpts of Bernard Herrmann's scores from Hitchcock films, suggesting that we may actually be dealing with audiovisual epistemes) with an array of other verbal and visual fictional deictic markers places us functionally within the frame of reference of contemporary digital media experience, even though *Sleep No More* employs no electronic screens. We simply carry the neural pathways already formed by post-continuity with us.

DEIXIS IN THE 4-D CINEMA

In the autumn of 2016 a single 4-D cinema opened in Canada, in the Cineplex Odeon complex in downtown Toronto. At present these cinemas are quite rare, with only four in the US and eight in the UK.²³ In addition to the accoutrements of a regular 3-D cinema, these cinemas feature seat movement, fog, scents, rain, wind, bubbles, ticklers, snow, lightning, and directed blasts of air, all of which are timed to suggest a particular placement of the viewer within the diegesis of the fictional film on the screen. However, this is not as simple an undertaking as it might sound, since it involves and seeks to engage with both the signification processes of an individual film and the location of the material body of the viewer in time and space.

In his 1934 study entitled *Theories of Language*,²⁴ psychologist Karl Bühler first identified the significance of deictic markers in speech, which anchor utterances to the situation of the human body in a specific situation in time and space through the use of words that show or demonstrate (and are therefore dependent on usage in a particular spatio-temporal situation for their meaning). In terms of deictic utterances, Bühler coined the term "origo"

as the point of origin; it is the “I-here-now,” or “tactile body image” which enables the spatio-temporal situation of the material human body and thus makes such utterances possible. The question central to this research was how the materiality of the human body makes itself felt within the symbolic system of language, or indeed in other semiotic systems? In the 1980s, two film scholars working on the elaboration of film semiotics, Francesco Casetti and Christian Metz, each considered the way in which a similar kind of encounter with spatio-temporal situations was performed by narrative film, albeit with only minimal interest in the viewer’s body (and a great deal more attention to the filmic text).²⁵

Narrative films do indeed often bid us—not only through sound effects but also through narrative devices—to question our “safe” situation as viewers in the time and space of the cinema and locate it instead within the diegesis of the film, oftentimes a frightening proposition. What becomes clear through the specific navigations made by the viewer as directed by 4-D cinema is that we, as film viewers in standard 2-D cinemas, are particularly adept at navigating a wide range of transpositions that allow an empathetic form of mimicry to take place in relation to all manner of characters, inanimate objects, atmospheres, and situations.²⁶ This we do while watching a film without particularly taking note of it—practically all the time.

However, in a completely disconcerting way, 4-D cinema directs us to leap from one specific cinematic space to another, from falling rain on one side of a shot-counter-shot construction to the snapping of rats’ tails against our legs on the other side. This utterly disturbs our individual navigation of empathetic investment by attempting to situate us concretely within the space of each individual shot. In fact, our own capacities for alignment and mimicry far transcend the series of placements on offer in the 4-D cinema, which are fixed via the specific transpositions of place made plastic through the series of effects used. In other words, only when we watch a film in a 4-D cinema, does it become clear that we—as imaginatively mobile viewers fanaticizing a vast array of shifting allegiances—far outstrip the orchestrations of the 4-D apparatus that seeks to situate us momentarily and discretely, here, and then here, and then here, within the film’s diegesis. Furthermore, by the effects of the 4-D cinema we sometimes feel emphatically reminded that we are situated in the space of the cinema itself.

In each of these first two examples, in the immersive theater and the 4-D cinema, the forms of aesthetic experience made available are—despite the expansive qualities of the presentations on offer—temporally and spatially contained and framed. The viewer is allotted a certain amount of time (and no more) within the room or rooms in question and is held (voluntarily, of course) within the confines of that particular theatrical space. A third example moves beyond such containment, however, in that it passes all decisions regarding the time and space of its appearance to its user, who is in control of the on/off switch of the app.

AUGMENTED REALITY MAPS THE CITY

The manner in which props for imagination are coopted by or integrated with deictic processes in a multilayered present²⁷—via the interaction of imagination and perception—becomes immanently clear when one plays *Pokémon Go*, a location-based augmented reality game for smartphone. By combining the GPS function of a smartphone that localizes the user on a map of her particular surroundings with the phone camera's ability to offer a representation of that location in real time, this augmented reality game invites the user to engage with an array of fantasy creatures in the “space of material places and locations,” to return to Castells' paradigm. By quite literally superimposing the Pokémon creatures that you collect and play with onto the image of the street or building made visible through your cell phone's camera lens, *Pokémon Go* layers its own props onto your physical space. It thus also adds additional layers of tasks to the everyday act of navigating city streets. In the weeks and months following its July 2016 release, the game reached a remarkable degree of saturation, with players of all ages engaging visibly (and sociably) with the augmented reality game in public.²⁸

Kendall Walton's *Mimesis as Make Believe* (1993) offers an important contemporary intervention into the philosophical discussion of aesthetic experience and the widespread implications of make-believe.²⁹ His central thesis is that aesthetic experience (or rather fiction, as he terms it) creates a prop, such as a film, a novel, a painting, or a sculpture etc., that we use in “games” of make-believe played while engaging with these props, which in turn affect us physiologically. For Walton, a prop is the entirety of the aesthetic object rather than a particular feature of that object. Walton seeks to describe the form of “participation” that

adults are willing to engage in when occupied with aesthetic experiences in general, even if the particular form of engagement is not as obviously mediated by a technological apparatus as is the case with augmented reality games. In a contemporaneous review of Walton's book, the neo-formalist film scholar Noel Carroll located the usefulness of such fictions in facilitating our "gaining a sense of playing new roles and of learning about ourselves and our responses when we confront imagined situations."³⁰ However, he also wondered why it is that such props sometimes don't function. In other words, why is it that we are often not moved by fictions (for example, by horror movies that fail to scare)? To my mind, this critique is analogous to the interpretive framework often imposed upon *Sleep No More*, creating the expectation that it constitutes either a skilled or failed performance of *Macbeth*. It is important to consider the enormously complex function of props, which should not only be seen as tools that serve in the operation of predetermined genres or narratives, or as signposts on the way to a feeling of "horror" or "anxiety." Instead, props such as the interaction with Pokémon on the streets of our cities (or the décor and players of *Sleep No More* and the entirety of the stimulants of the 4-D cinema) also do a variety of things simultaneously. Walton himself highlighted the social nature of make-believe and the manner in which props take on their meaning in a social setting:

Props generate fictional truths independently of what anyone does or does not imagine. But they do not do so entirely on their own, apart from any (actual or potential) imaginers. Props function only in a social, or at least human, setting.³¹

With this in mind, it is important to not overlook the creative and social implications of *Pokémon Go* as a prop for collective make-believe.

What is striking to me about the *Pokémon Go* experience is the manner in which the augmentation of props, such as the Pokémon themselves, via the mediated image (and the screen of the cell phone) showing the streetscape in which you yourself stand, effects and highlights a curious kind of erasure, even as it encourages participation in a collective game of make-believe. *Pokémon Go* enables an encounter with, an oscillation between, and thus an awareness of Castells' "space of material places and locations," which relies on memory and local knowledge and

tradition, and of his so-called space of flows (the space of information, communication, and capital, which is thus ahistorical, location-free, continuous). Typically we follow habitual paths through a familiar city, but *Pokémon Go* sometimes leads us in idiosyncratic and unexpected directions, off our own beaten paths (something that Google Maps or Apple Maps does not typically require us to consider doing), and thus we are encouraged to potentially encounter new spaces by following unfamiliar pathways through the city (even to the extent that the game might compel us to cross to the other side of the road before we normally would). Through playing *Pokémon Go* we can equally easily be induced to cease looking at the faces of others, their dress, and at the storefronts or streets as we pass, as we are so engrossed by the capture of the Pokémon on our screens, which ultimately belong in every way to the space of flows.

WAITING, WANDERING, AND WONDERING

Both analog and digital media function in cooperation with the texts, interfaces, or images that they make tangible to us as embodied users; these complex medial assemblages are in turn processed and thus form overlapping impressions within our perceptual systems. The complex “props” for aesthetic experience made available via the media discussed here (the immersive theater experience of *Sleep No More*, the experience of the 4-D cinema, or the gameplay of *Pokémon Go*) highlight the density of our investment in our experience of time and space: *Sleep No More*, 4-D cinema, and *Pokémon Go* each provoke a mingling of the “space of material places and locations,” attuned to local memory and tradition, and the “space of flows,” a space of information, communication, and capital, thus also a space that is ahistorical, location-free, and continuous. In each of these experiences, this mingling takes place to a different extent and more or less effectively at various moments in time during the experience.

Goal-oriented motion presumes that a clearly formed narrative or teleology is always in place that guides our present-moment experience and decision-making, suggesting that we are simply following a straightforward path. Waiting and wandering, on the other hand, disrupt more goal-oriented trajectories. The contrast between ludological and narratological perspectives on experience—as examined within the context of Games Studies—

is a reminder of the fact that for many forms of experience (not only aesthetic experience) it is not always helpful to presume that we are guided by a relentless goal-orientation or an interpretive framework. Motion (and motivation) are marked by hesitations and detours as well as “aimless” wanderings.³²

Indeed, an increasing respect for these less goal-oriented trajectories is at the heart of what has become known as the slow scholarship movement. Slow scholarship embraces waiting, wandering, and wondering by rejecting the contemporary and increasingly neoliberal academic world’s conceptualization of thought and scientific discovery in terms of a straightforward narrative, a kind of predictable mode of “rapid-transit system” that envisions a starting point and a destination in clearly foreseeable and calculable terms. But discovery is not always foreseeable and can seldom be described in terms of a trajectory through a previously mapped out space. Instead, discovery is characterized by, and here I concur most emphatically with Sobchack, increased attention to the specifics of a passage through the unknown.

The three case studies discussed here each provide very different forms of orientation to the user or viewer. The particular example of immersive theater offered by the vast performance space of *Sleep No More* is both contained and framed by the notion of the theatrical performance, which generally has the particular temporal constraints defined by what constitutes “an evening out,” and thus, as in this case, is designed to last up to three hours, to permit a visit to the bar before and/or after the encounter with the performance space. The 4-D cinema similarly contains and frames the experience by virtue of the temporal and spatial constraints of a cinema, with a single screening lasting from roughly ninety to one-hundred-and-eighty minutes and the space of the cinema defined by its own entrance and exit. However the affordances of *Pokémon Go* differ significantly from the first two, in that the user moves at will through the space of the city, engaging similarly with the device and/or the city. And yet the possibilities are not endless, since our ability to engage meaningfully with the game is increasingly curtailed the further we move from the center of a big city, as the density of PokéStops and the opportunities for encounters with Pokémon characters decreases exponentially. In short, our specific trajectories through space profoundly affect the concrete affordances of this particular game, which does not engage equally everywhere, although it is always available.

The degree to which we engage with media and the manner in which we situate ourselves within overlapping spaces has everything to do with the training afforded by our past engagements with media, which in turn helps to determine the affordances of the media we engage with at any present moment. These past engagements themselves resurface in us to work like Ariadne's ball of thread guiding us not to seek an overarching narrative but rather to traverse idiosyncratic pathways in our encounters with the particular audio-visual episteme of presence made available through contemporary media. The passages and forms of presence I have been describing here are clearly occupied with something other than interpretation as a perspective on the interactions with other objects put into play, pointing to a broader question. Media ecology typically concerns itself with information networks and other large-scale structures, the macro perspectives that by virtue of their scale in relation to our perceptual systems reassuringly seem to escape anthropocentrism and human interpretive intentions. But the densities of the overlapping and competing informational systems that are part and parcel of the objects I have examined indicate that noninterpretive micro perspectives on media can also offer insights into small-scale "spaces of flows" such as these.

The very interminglings afforded us by virtue of various forms of engagement with objects in the world, such as the many described here, point to the need for a better understanding of such encounters on the "micro" level, within what has been termed the nonhuman turn. One of the most prominent proponents of an object-oriented ontology, Jane Bennett, calls for just such an analysis: "It makes sense to try to do justice both to systems and things—to acknowledge the stubborn reality of individuation *and* the essentially distributive quality of their affectivity."³³ She herself offers a written text, or a "text-body" as she calls it, as an example of an object in the world that gestures toward something more, as "a function of a *distributive network* of bodies: words on the page, words in the reader's imagination, sounds of words, sounds and smells in the reading room, and so on, and so on—all these bodies co-acting are what do the job."³⁴ To what end do we engage with such bodies as these? What future interminglings are suggested to us by way of these engagements? To this Bennett answers that "texts"—to which I would add, not only augmented reality games but also 4-D cinemas and immersive theater events—"are bodies that

can light up, by rendering human perception more acute, those bodies whose favored vehicle of affectivity is less wordy: plants, animals, blades of grass, household objects, trash.”³⁵ In other words, these aesthetic engagements make contemporary philosophical perspectives on the world palpable, such as nonhuman or object-orientation, which recognize the potential equality of objects amongst one another. These are matters of vital importance for our future.

NOTES

1. Elaine Scarry, “The Merging of Bodies and Artifacts in the Social Contract,” in *Culture on the Brink: Ideologies of Technology*, eds. Gretchen Bender and Timothy Druckrey (Seattle: Bay, 1994), 97.
2. See Steven Shaviro, *Post Cinematic Affect* (Winchester: Zero, 2010); and Shane Denson, “Crazy Cameras, Discorrelated Images, and the Post-Perceptual Mediation of Post-Cinematic Affect,” in *Post-Cinema: Theorizing 21st-Century Film*, eds. Shane Denson and Julia Leyda (Falmer: Reframe Books, 2016), 193–234.
3. From Hugo Münsterberg to Christian Metz, that is from the 1910s to the 1960s, classical film theory was long occupied with revealing the psychological logic of classical forms of film narration. See particularly Hugo Münsterberg, *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study and Other Writings* (New York: Routledge, 2002) and Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).
4. Steven Shaviro, “Post-Continuity: An Introduction,” in *Post-Cinema* (see note 2), 60.
5. This very early text by Vivian Sobchack first appeared in a hugely influential volume *Materialities of Communication* edited by the German scholars Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and K. Ludwig Pfeiffer, which was simultaneously published in English and German in 1988 by Stanford University Press in the US and Suhrkamp Verlag (as *Materialität der Kommunikation*) in Germany. The volume is a collection of writings by almost all figures from various interdisciplinary branches of German media theory and *Bildwissenschaft* who would become influential in the following two decades. Sobchack’s text has since been reprinted multiple times, including in the author’s own book: “The Scene of the Screen: Envisioning Photographic, Cinematic, and Electronic ‘Presence,’” in *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 136.
6. Ibid., 137. For the original citation, see “The Question Concerning Technology,” in *Martin Heidegger Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper, 1977), 317.
7. Ibid., 137.
8. Ibid., 137.
9. Ibid., 137.
10. See Manuel Castells’ three-part study *The Information Age* (1996–98) and in particular the first volume *The Rise of the Network Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).
11. Lev Manovich, “The Poetics of Augmented Space,” *Visual Communication*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2006), 219–240.
12. Ibid., 220.
13. Ibid., 219–220.
14. In his book *Cybertext*, Espen Aarseth revisits the notion of the labyrinth and points to the usefulness of Penelope Reed Doob’s research from the 1990s, which identified the two distinct models of the labyrinth that may be found in classical and medieval culture, one of which has since been forgotten. While the multicursal labyrinth has dominated more modern conceptualizations of the searching pathway, the unicursal mode was a significant part of earlier physical and metaphorical notions of what a labyrinth is and does. Aarseth argues, this other notion can be very helpful in the conceptualization of the reading and experiencing processes enabled through cybertexts. See Espen Aarseth, *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1997).