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**“UND IN DIESER POSITION ... GING’S DANN LOS” –
ACKNOWLEDGING CINEMATIC MINDFULNESS IN TWO FILMS
BY ROSA VON PRAUNHEIM**

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In the beginning of her book *Epistemology of the Closet*, the late Eve Sedgwick states the simple fact that “people are different from one another.” She continues: “It is astonishing how few respectable conceptual tools for dealing with this self-evident fact” are available in our present day and age (Sedgwick 22). I quote Sedgwick in this instance because I argue that it is crucial to consistently remind ourselves that categories such as gender, race, class, sexual orientation, nationality, and even physical characteristics such as height, weight, and hair color are indeed the predominant and often unrefined jump-starters that construct our perception(s) of one another. This may seem like an overstated and repeated assessment that has been recycled through everything from talk shows to scholarly works, but I insist that we linger here for a moment. Even in the second decade of the twenty-first century we find ourselves in a deconstructive dilemma: wanting for alternative modes of characterization and thinking but ultimately constructing both with already established and thus inadequate signification techniques. In other words, when issues of sexual orientation, ethnicity, and so on force one to confront yet another imposed semiotic web, we still turn to the old categories available in order to find a way out. This is not a deliberate mistake since the very impulse to find a way out of established signifiers presupposes them and thus validates their existence in the first place. However, I argue that as long as we are consciously aware of this, the “new” signification techniques and theories that follow will better and much more efficiently reflect alternate perspectives.

In order to illustrate this, in this paper I turn to cinema and focus on two works by German director Rosa von Praunheim: his 1971 film *Nicht der Homosexuelle ist pervers, sondern die Situation, in der er lebt* as well as the movie, *Ich bin meine eigene Frau*, which von Praunheim filmed a

little over two decades later in 1992. I argue that both works demonstrate what I term as “cinematic mindfulness”: a moment, or a series of moments (depending upon the length of a particular frame or sequence) that rupture(s) and subsequently redefine(s) cinematic nuances that have been strictly attributed to one or more types of narratives. By exhibiting cinematic mindfulness, I argue that Rosa von Praunheim’s celluloid environment, in particular *Ich bin meine eigene Frau*, breaks the absolute contingency of two specific semantic webs known as the documentary film and the fictional (movie) narrative, thus offering an alternative use of elements that have been divided and specifically categorized up until now. Before I turn to a series of theoretical elements that define the documentary and fictional narratives, I would like to engage in a brief discussion that situates von Praunheim’s films culturally and historically.

Early on in the introduction to his book *Army of Lovers*, Rosa von Praunheim notes that in 1970, “when Martin Dannecker and [he] made the film *It’s Not The Homosexual That’s Perverse But The Situation In Which He Lives*,” they were not at all aware of the American gay liberation movement. Something must have been in the air, for during the Stonewall riots, one “tiny queen called Bambi” even attacked the police with “dog-shit.” According to von Praunheim, it was here that for the first time in history, “gay people fought back collectively against the police ... [they] actively defend[ed] themselves, display[ed] self-awareness, courage and strength, and not just the passive attitude of self-pity and fear which they had previously been forced into” (7).

Von Praunheim expresses his frustration by noting that he and his friends often asked themselves as to why everyone would immediately flee as soon as there was the smallest hint of danger. “Why weren’t we able to run and give help when someone let out an agonized scream, with a knife in his ribs or his bones broken?” (von Praunheim 7). He goes on to describe the horrendous and often extremely violent deeds that would be enacted upon gays and that would force him and his friends to creep “fearfully from tree to tree” in Berlin parks around midnight: always afraid of the extremely violent “bands of queer-bashers” who were known to chase them, “hunt [them] down, beat [them] up, [and] even castrat[ed them] with knives and le[ft them] bleeding in public toilets” (7). And, according to Praunheim, their only action was to run away as quickly as possible, “guilty and afraid,” but not because that was what they felt would be the correct thing to do – instead, von Praunheim

underscores that “we,” that is, homosexuals, were all so frightened from childhood on, “so full of guilt and self-hatred,” that “we lost the ability to react in a free way” (9). He goes on to compare the plight of homosexuals in Nazi concentration camps, remarking that “even the Jews looked down on gays,” which, in turn, made it extremely difficult, if not impossible to develop a sense of solidarity with one another because every individual cared only about himself (7).

However, von Praunheim’s criticism does not stop there. In fact, the director is clear in communicating that he is (or at least was) vehemently against the tired and submissive acceptance that *any* tyrannized group displays. He openly states that it is dangerous and downright detrimental for an oppressed group to act cautiously and to strive to implement changes that would ultimately adapt it to the system it is fighting against (von Praunheim 14).

Enter *Nicht der Homosexuelle ist pervers, sondern die Situation, in der er lebt*. Dubbed by Rosa himself as a Schwulenfilm (“Faggot Film”), it premiered only two years after Paragraph 175 of the penal code, which criminalized homosexuality, had been lifted. The first screening was planned through the national German network ARD, but it “pulled out at the last moment, citing contradictory reasons” (Kuzniar 93). Shortly thereafter, on January 31, 1972, the local Cologne WDR station premiered it, which was followed by a 1972 screening at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Just as von Praunheim wanted, the film provoked a heated discussion that “formed the basis for a half-hour documentary, which showed the audience receiv[ing] the film as anti-gay” (93). Once again one couldn’t escape a binary division as there were two clear sides of public opinion: the film either failed to bring to light public aggression against gays or it did not assertively promote homosexuality.

The general press went on to condemn *Nicht der Homosexuelle* for its perversity, while gays felt attacked by the multiple voice-overs and negative stereotypes. It wasn’t until 1977, after two weeks of sold-out screenings at New York’s Film Forum, that the public began to realize that the work may reflect a yet unexplored possibility, namely an insider critique.

It is exactly this move by von Praunheim, the fact that he acts both as an agent provocateur and “observant documentarian” according to Alice Kuzniar that sets the arena for cinematic mindfulness. Unlike Kuzniar’s

observations, however, both the film itself and the reaction it elicits are important, for these are two elements whose contingency upon one another bears fertile ground for an exit out of the established semantic webs.

Keeping this in mind, I will now briefly consider Vivian Sobchak's exposition on film as a language of the senses that is dependent on the actions of both the creator and spectator¹. Her discussion and perception of film is crucial, for it provides a helpful beginning for how to observe, for example, von Praunheim's engagement with the audience as a provocateur and documentarian.

In part three entitled "What My Fingers Knew: The Cinesthetic Subject, or Vision in the Flesh" in Vivian Sobchack's work *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*, she discusses the experience of watching a film as being a synaesthetic process that thoroughly engages our five senses: "We see and comprehend and feel films with our entire bodily being, informed by the full history and carnal knowledge of our acculturated sensorium" (Sobchack 63). Expanding on this notion, I emphasize that cinema, as we continue to envision and analyze it, holds a certain promise of revelation at the same time as it stimulates the [un]conscious formation of our own voyeuristic desires. On the one hand, a frame, guided by the individual behind the camera, highlights and brings our attention to a certain character, location, issue, or characteristic, and thus may be said to isolate a spectator's field of vision. A double signification process ensues: On the one hand, the spectator is exposed to a product of *another* individual's view and perception before that same member of the audience filters the already subjective compilation a second time. On the other hand, here is where cinema proves to be a well-suited tool in triggering disruptions within determined categories: the dependence may be re-appropriated because it is precisely the transition from perception to representation that holds the potential for the interruption of already established signifiers. However, just like in the case of public reception of *Nicht der Homosexuelle*, patient reflection, time, and most importantly, a dialogue within the binary that is already there, are necessary for this rupture not just to take place, but to be perceived and recognized.

Before I turn to Rosa von Praunheim's two films, I would now like to directly address the documentary and fictional [movie] narratives, and the implicit dialogues that each one of them has sparked. In his

Introduction to Documentary published in 2010, Bill Nichols defines what he perceives as the three common characteristics of documentary film:

1. Documentary films speak about actual situations or events and honor known facts; they do not introduce new, unverifiable ones. They speak directly about the historical world rather than allegorically [...]
2. Documentaries are about real people who do not play or perform roles. Instead, they “play” or present themselves [...]
3. To the extent a documentary tells a story, the story is a plausible representation of what happened rather than an imaginative interpretation of what might have happened. (Nichols, *Intro to Documentary* 7-10)

In regards to these three features, Nichols further elaborates by stating that fictional narratives are fundamentally allegories. Moreover, they construct a world to stand in for another, “historical” realm where the “images in documentary films stem from the historical world directly” (7). They capture individuals and events that “we [all] share” instead of depicting characters and actions invented to tell a narrative. Finally, Nichols underlines the notion that documentaries “respect known facts and provide verifiable evidence” (7). In short, Nichols primarily emphasizes that documentaries speak about certain “real” events involving “real” people (social actors) who reveal themselves in such a way that conveys “a plausible proposal about, or perspective on, the lives, situations, and events portrayed” (14). Most importantly, according to Nichols, “the distinct point of view of the filmmaker shapes this story into a way of seeing the historical world directly rather than [shaping it] into a fictional category” (14).

Interestingly enough, almost two decades before Nichols wrote the aforementioned work, he argued in his book, *Representing Reality* that the status of the documentary is a unique kind of fiction. In fact, he explicitly writes that documentaries are narratives complete with “plots, characters, situations, and events. They offer introductory lacks, challenges, or dilemmas ... [and] do all this with reference to a ‘reality’ that is a construct, the product of signifying systems, like the documentary film itself” (Nichols, *Representing Reality* 107, my emphasis). Therefore, just like in a fictional narrative, a documentary

presents us with a range of fragmentary and “highly mediated” knowledge, a realm we creatively reconstruct for our own diverse purposes.

My goal in highlighting these two almost entirely contrasting perspectives is not to merely point out a change in theoretical thinking – instead, I argue that the reason behind it is due to the fact that elements of what we perceive to be fictional and non-fictional narratives do not live up to their full potential if they are categorized in this dichotomy. In fact, the reason why Nichols’ two sets of very valid interpretations, for which he makes plausible arguments, dance between one another is proof of the fact that what constitutes a cinematic narrative requires further nuanced analysis than the main division “fiction vs. documentary.” While his later work can be viewed as almost a counter-argument to *Representing Reality*, the foreclosing definitions of the documentary may be challenged as well. I argue that non-fiction narratives, by picking out a certain issue, a specific group of people, etc., also let one smaller world stand in for another. If we accept that what is depicted on screen is actually what has happened instead of an imaginative interpretation of what might have happened – a documentary on “something” remains a storied construct, for it isolates a particular event and a unit of individuals for the time the camera is running. In addition, the notion of “verifiable” evidence assumes that there is an all-encompassing authority in place that, once again, employs a binary method in order to decide right from wrong, true from not true, and so on. I am not suggesting that these are negative traits or that documentary is synonymous with fiction. Instead, I am following the lead of the uncertainties as well as the overlaps of this established binary in cinema in order to argue that consistent categorization, even with all of its branched-out nuances, still remains insufficient. This insufficiency cannot be simply made up by a third cinematic category – once again, this would actually counteract the initial desire to rid oneself of binaries. Instead, I argue that it is in Rosa von Praunheim’s cinematic mindfulness that we may observe the beginning of something new: works that actively deconstruct, overlap, and de-temporalize elements that have been sorted under specific classifications. In order to illustrate this more clearly, I will now turn to specific scenes in von Praunheim’s two films.

Praised as the first gay activist film worldwide, *Nicht der Homosexuelle ist pervers, sondern die Situation, in der er lebt* tells the

story of 19-year-old Daniel, a young individual from the provinces who comes to the big city of Berlin and commences to move from one gay subculture to the next. His relationships never last long and with every adventure, slowly turn into a type of “baroque descent into hell,” complete with flashy late-sixties outfits and a dangerous uncertainty of what may happen next. Daniel’s story is commented upon by three different voiceovers who either attempt to directly express what is happening, perform a sociological analysis, or downright attack his behavior as “typically gay” and “perverse” (*Nicht der Homosexuelle*, this and all subsequent quotations: my translation). In fact, right as the film begins, we see Daniel befriend and soon thereafter fall in love with Clemens, and the two live together in what appears to be a self-made environment meant to be hidden from the outside world. The heavy, drawn curtains, densely colored wallpaper and rooms whose scale barely and awkwardly fits the furniture and its two inhabitants all contribute to a feeling of “criminal secrecy” that may be attributed not just to Daniel and Clemens, but also to us, the spectators. It is in this type of a set-up that the aforementioned insider critique begins: “Gays attempt to copy the bourgeois marriage ... they do not want to be gay, instead, they want to live like the average citizen. The ideal partner must be clean, honest, natural, and as endearing and as playful as a German shepherd” (*Nicht der Homosexuelle*). Here von Praunheim is cleverly lashing out at a number of societal components: on the one hand, when stating that “gays attempt to copy” something that, up until then, has belonged to the heterosexual milieu, they are not just blatantly displaying that they are ashamed of who they are and that imitation is what will get them to be accepted, but that they’re desperately attempting to fit into a pre-existing and quite imposed semantic and collective structure. In addition, the fact that the “ideal partner” is required to have a set of qualities that impose another pre-determined and essentialized perspective is, I argue, von Praunheim’s vehement attempt to proclaim that while one is concerned with the liberation of minorities, there are also majorities waiting to be liberated (I am purposely using the pronoun “we” in this instance because I believe von Praunheim’s criticism may be transferred to all other sexual orientations and backgrounds).

In one of the subsequent scenes where Daniel has already left Clemens and now lives with the very rich and older fashion designer, Ernst Kuchling, the same voiceover proclaims the following: “Education and

culture are embraced by gays in order to escape from the everyday ... [they are] societal instruments in order to get closer to one another. They see their partner only as a sexual object because they have been rejected and/or disappointed ... [In fact], by having a young man, you buy yourself a piece of your lost youth" (*Nicht der Homosexuelle*). In this instance von Praunheim is more direct in his disparagement in the sense that he uses signifiers such as "instruments," "object," and "buy," all of which invoke an alarming commodification of individuals and the relationships one builds with them. Along the same lines, the viewer is consistently and, as the film develops, increasingly more exposed to a criticism that, since the beginning of the film, has had the potential of being appropriated to all individuals, but is now more obvious in its acoustic assertions: "There are barely any happy gays ... Gays have taken all the possible sexual liberties of which the petty bourgeois can only dream. Gays are, *like everyone*, raised on constraints and forbiddances" (*Nicht der Homosexuelle*, my emphasis). Von Praunheim subsequently grounds the latter observation in examples that, once again, involve commodities and *-isms* that thrive on monetary exchanges: "Gays love to work in the service and entertainment business because it is there that they are recognized as gays and not as people ... The less they have human relationships with one another, the more they must replace it with *something* ... the bourgeois does it with furniture [while] the gay does it with fashion ... exhibitionism and fetishism [ensue]" (*Nicht der Homosexuelle*, my emphasis). In other words, Daniel's quest to find ever-increasing excitement provides him with a type of reflective capacity that, in turn, restores an agency of which he (or, once again, we) are in control.

Throughout *Nicht der Homosexuelle*, Rosa von Praunheim is consistently attentive to the various judgmental voices that echo in Daniel's oppressed milieu. However, it is important to underscore once more that von Praunheim is not simply lobbying for the liberation of homosexuals – instead, he is mirroring back emotionally greedy and consumptive behaviors displayed by all members of society. Von Praunheim's cinematic mindfulness is continuous and thus reliable – the director shows how the aforementioned types of behavior are in the process of absorbing yet another set of individuals into a structure that, in and of itself, needs help and modification.

In *Ich bin meine eigene Frau*, von Praunheim tells us the story of Charlotte von Mahlsdorf (born Lothar Berfelde), a transvestite who was born in 1928 in Berlin-Mahlsdorf, Germany, and who died recently in 2002. The opening sequence of the film informs the viewer that s/he is about to be told Charlotte's "life story," and shortly thereafter Charlotte herself appears as a social actor in front of the camera, telling us about the collection of everyday items she has acquired over the years – "something that [she] took a liking to on her own" (*Ich bin meine eigene Frau*, this and all subsequent quotations: my translation). As Charlotte's voiceover continues to speak, we see the young German actor, Jens Taschner playing young Charlotte in her early teen years while the older Charlotte we saw minutes before is describing to the viewer what is happening in a voiceover. Taschner goes on to enact several scenes that include Utz Krause as Charlotte's Nazi father and Evelyn Cron as Aunt Luise, herself a member of the "third sex" (Kuzniar 104) who emphatically exclaims to Taschner-Charlotte: "Nature played a trick on us. You should have been a girl, and I a guy" (*Ich bin meine eigene Frau*). The blatant coexistence of the documentary element of a "real person who does not perform a role" in the older Charlotte, and the reenactment, and thus in then-real-time fictional narrative performed by Taschner, is not merely a "dichotomy between naturalness and artifice, credibility and unbelievability, authenticity and theatricality in the person of this transvestite" as Alice Kuzniar points out (104). It is something much more substantial than that: a real, pun intended, existence of another environment that has not yet been fully articulated, and because of that, has fallen prey to bi-tributions such as those listed above.

One of the subsequent scenes shows Charlotte's father, Utz Krause, yelling at his wife behind closed bedroom doors at night. Taschner-Charlotte knocks on the door repeatedly, only to be chased away by Krause, who threatens the boy and comes after him screaming: "I told you that you're not to spy around here!" Taschner-Charlotte manages to go into his room, lock the door, and remain hiding under the covers until the next morning. Once the day breaks, current-Charlotte enters the frame and sits down on the bed next to Taschner-Charlotte. She compliments the boy by saying: "Yes, just like you have played that out now, that is really how it happened. That's how I have experienced everything myself." A short dialogue ensues between the two of them. Taschner asks Charlotte whether "everyone in [her] family was a Nazi,"

and the latter responds with, “No, only my father was a National Socialist. He was absolutely militaristic, choleric, and brutal. One can almost say: a maniac” (*Ich bin meine eigene Frau*). The movie continues to switch between current-Charlotte’s life being acted out by Taschner with the former consistently remarking on the scenes in a voiceover, or by having conversations with the young actor where she tells him about herself and her views on life. Once again, von Praunheim’s mindfulness in this filmic environment is now permitting actor and social actor to mediate between one another in such a way where the former inquires about Charlotte’s life in order to know how and what he has to (en)act, and the latter assisting him along the way while simultaneously acting as her real self in front of the camera.

Approximately twelve minutes into the movie, another set of what we may perceive as fictional and documentary elements unexpectedly collide. The spectator sees current-Charlotte state the following: “For me there were two role models that represented the absolute good [in a person], [and] those were my mother and my great-uncle ... the epitome of evil was my father.” While she is uttering these statements in a voiceover, we see a close up, eye-level frame of Krause dressed in full costume as a National Socialist officer. He is standing in what appears to be a dimly-lit bedroom, and he is taking off his hat. Immediately after this shot, as Charlotte is bringing her last statement to an end, we see Krause sitting across from current-Charlotte, listening. The camera tracks backward and now we see both of them sitting on a bench in a room full of costumes hanging on racks. Krause is horrified by that which Charlotte tells him, and in utter disbelief asks her whether she and her father had any other “Berührungspunkte” apart from his violence. In an even and calm tone, Charlotte replies with a “No.”

Jens Taschner continues to portray young Charlotte up until the end of the Second World War, when she recounts how she wanted to save a castle that was planned to be demolished. In this scene, the actor Ichgola Androgyn, who portrays a Charlotte that is 20-40 yrs. of age, enters the frame pushing a wheelbarrow. S/he stops in right in front of current-Charlotte and the camera films both of them in a long shot that includes the castle in the background. Androgyn, already in costume and ready to act, asks Charlotte how s/he should play her going forward in the movie: “Were you already [a] woman or did you want to be [a] woman?” Charlotte answers: “I feel like a feminine being in a masculine body. I

am a transvestite, not a transsexual. I am, so to say, my own woman/wife.”

At this point, about half-way through the film, von Praunheim engages increasingly more with political and sociological issues that plagued gays, lesbians, transvestites, and transsexuals in a divided Germany. He films Charlotte (both Androgyn and von Mahlsdorf) as she comments on how she was cut off by many of her West German friends once the wall was built and resorted to meeting men by writing notes on the walls of public bathrooms. Soon thereafter Charlotte von Mahlsdorf, up until now the social actor, takes over playing herself after Taschner and Androgyn, and we see her leading a tour through her “Gründermuseum” in Berlin-Mahlsdorf. Following the tour, Charlotte answers a visitor’s question as to whether she receives support from the government for this endeavor: “No, on the contrary. The criminal state of the GDR left no stone unturned in order to take this museum away from me. The worst year was 1974.” The subsequent scenes are re-enactments of Stasi members visiting the museum (where von Mahlsdorf lives) in the middle of the night, threatening her and inspecting every room and each item she has on display. Since von Mahlsdorf plays herself at this point, what we perceive as fiction is superimposed on what we may term as the running documentary since everything, from the clothes to the street signs, is recognizable as the early 1990s when von Praunheim made the film. However, at this and at other points in the movie Charlotte plays herself in 1974 by *remaining her unchanged documentary self* in 1992. Another example of this would be in the part that directly follows the aforementioned. Von Mahlsdorf hosts a “Kaffeeklatsch” in the basement of her home (that is set up as an entertainment room) where a number of her gay and lesbian friends share experiences from when they met Charlotte and how difficult it was for them to live during the years of the GDR: “We were a category that was not supported in the [midst of] Socialism.” Lotte gave them the space to meet and talk and to form a “Kulturzentrum.” What ensues is what Nichols would term as an observational documentary moment in which the entire group is looking at old slides from the 1970s and reminiscing. Charlotte at one point declares: “One was always afraid of the Stasi.” The subsequent frame injects a quick dose of an in-the-moment “fictional narrative” that depicts a past, real event as two men dressed in dark coats and hats peek through the basement window while the group is looking at the slideshow. After

the get-together, von Mahlsdorf is taking out the trash and is approached by the same two individuals who declare to her: “You often have visitors from the West.” Charlotte von Mahlsdorf, the social actor who is still dressed the same way she was during the “Kaffeklatsch” is now reenacting an encounter with the Stasi.

The last scene I would like to discuss involves the movie *Coming Out* that von Praunheim includes in *Ich bin meine eigene Frau* towards the conclusion of the narrative. Shortly after the harassment by the “Stasi” officials, we see a dressed up Charlotte exiting a cab in front of the “Grosser Ost-Berliner Kino International” whose marquee includes the title, *Coming Out*. After looking at posters announcing the movie that are in a display case outside of the theater, Charlotte’s voiceover informs the viewer that “back then, at the premiere, [she] was running a little late.” However, as she is saying this, von Mahlsdorf enters the theater and runs upstairs into the projector room that is already playing the exact scene of *Coming Out* in which Charlotte appears as a barmaid. Charlotte continues to watch herself in the staged “premiere” of this movie, wearing the same outfit, jewelry, and wig she wears during the barmaid scene. Throughout this take, von Praunheim switches between Charlotte peeking through the window of the projector room and the actual scene of *Coming Out* in which she appears. To complicate matters even more, in the next moment a person peeks his head through the partially open door of the projector room, and tells Charlotte: “Die Mauer ist offen!” Let us keep in mind that von Praunheim’s camera, capturing all of this is running in 1991/2. The Charlotte that we *hear* is the voiceover of Charlotte the social actor of those same years, and the Charlotte that we *see* is once again, Charlotte 1991/2, playing Charlotte 1989 at the premiere of *Coming Out* while dressed up as the “fictional” character of the barmaid in the movie that was most likely filmed around 1988. Following all this is a shot of von Mahlsdorf on the first floor of the movie theater – she is walking towards the camera while holding a bouquet of flowers in her hands (in a post-premiere manner) and is accompanied by Heiner Carow, director of *Coming Out*, on her right, and Dirk Kummer, an actor in the movie and one of von Mahlsdorf’s colleagues, on her left. Charlotte proclaims: “November 9, 1989 was not only the premiere of the movie *Coming Out*, it was also the day of the ‘coming out’ of the entire GDR ...” Both Carow and Kummer take turns in offering their perspectives and memories of that evening.

Because the film-sequences I have described and the theories I have mentioned are once again a conscious and thus subjective isolation on my part, I reiterate the importance of mindfulness that we as observers must continuously employ in order to focus less on the established categories and more on the individual elements within them. As I have mentioned before, works such as Rosa von Praunheim's *Nicht der Homosexuelle ist pervers, sondern die Situation, in der er lebt* as well as, *Ich bin meine eigene Frau* construct a celluloid environment that breaks absolute contingencies and thus offers an alternative use of what we perceive as, for example, "fictional" or "documentary" film elements. Their effectiveness increases once we focus on the interaction between them, which in turn significantly disarms the categorical signposts and increases our own analytic mindfulness.

END NOTES

1. Sobchack here is drawing primarily on George Berkeley's work *The New Theory of Vision Vindicated and Explained*, published in 1733. In it, Berkeley proves that our senses are completely unrelated to one another, yet one has to combine them into one cohesive "language" in order to form a perception of something. Furthermore, all four senses must be simultaneously contextualized in relation to one another in order to be fully successful. The significance of this discovery is in the notion that perception was, then for the first time, understood to be a private and individualized experience, occurring and resulting differently for each person depending on how s/he utilizes the language that results out of the simultaneous use of the senses available to her/him.
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