

A Parallax View

The Violent Synchrony of Multiple-Camera Montage

ON DECEMBER 8, 1967, THE COVER of *Time* announced Hollywood's "New Cinema" with images of Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967). America's answer to François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard, the film, according to the magazine, epitomized contemporary assaults on traditional cinema by drawing together "Violence . . . Sex . . . Art." Coupling nudity and impotence with protracted and bloody deaths, *Bonnie and Clyde* privileged ambiguity, chance, and incoherence, not unlike "abstract painting, atonal music, and the experimental novel" ("Hollywood" 67). It comes as no surprise, then, to discover the aforementioned cover features a collage by Robert Rauschenberg rather than a conventional production still or publicity poster.

In fact, in 1968, Rauschenberg produced a series of six lithographs titled *Reels (B+C)* that variously repeat and juxtapose images from *Bonnie and Clyde*. As with much of his collage work during this period, *Reels (B+C)* appropriates photographs from popular sources that index the era's preoccupations with, among other things, violence. One thinks, for instance, of Rauschenberg's 1970 screenprint *Signs*, which brings stills from the Zapruder film together with images of Vietnam, youth protests, the Kennedy brothers, and Martin Luther King Jr.'s dead body. Despite the apparent unity of their content, however, the form of these works frustrates determinate interpretations of their significance. Subject to recursive changes in focus, beholders must navigate incompatible contexts

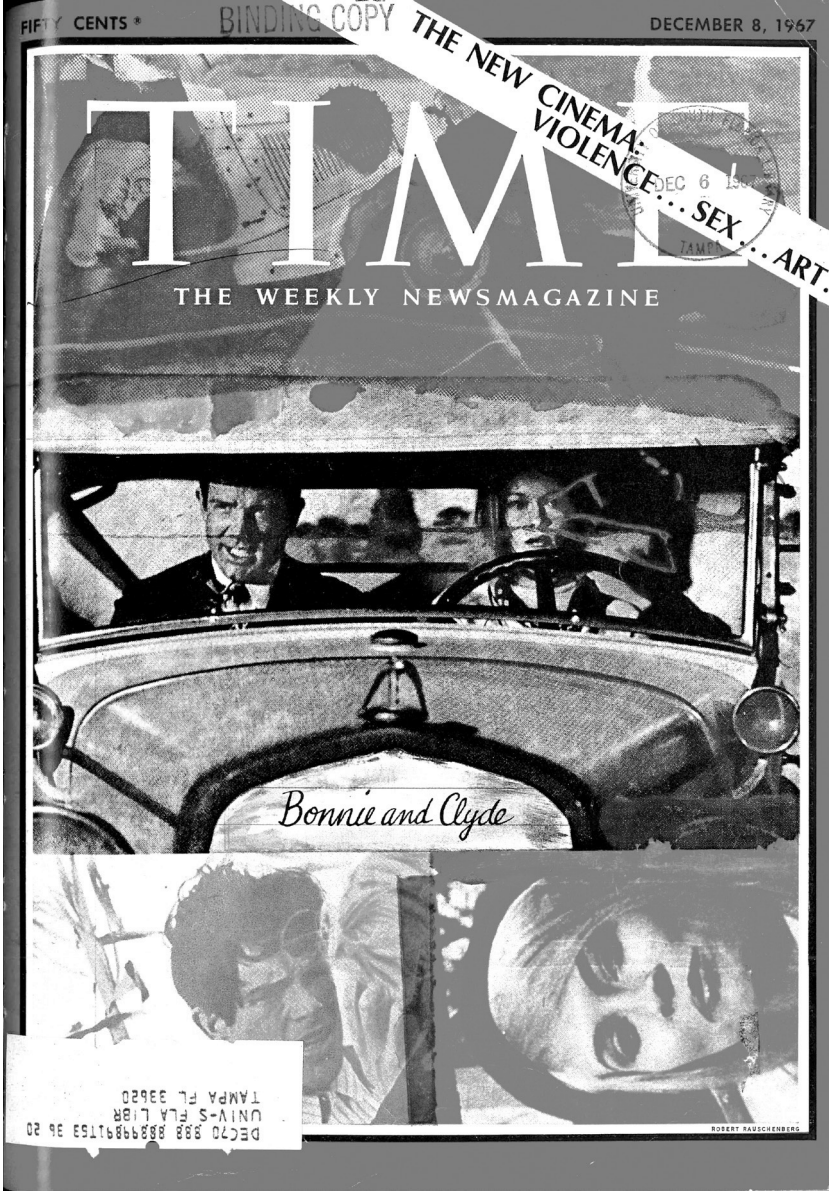


Figure 1.1. Robert Rauschenberg's *Bonnie and Clyde* (*Time*, 1967).

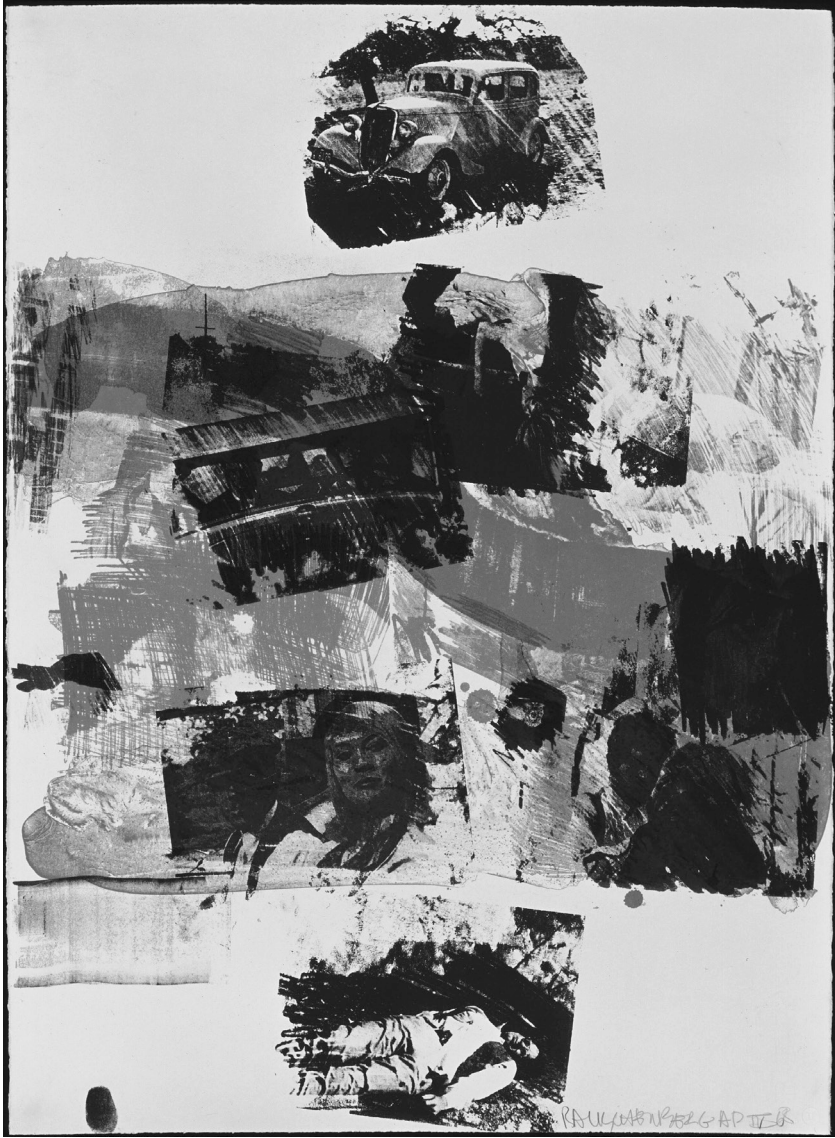


Figure 1.2. *Still (Reels [B+C])* (Robert Rauschenberg, 1968) © Robert Rauschenberg Foundation and Gemini G.E.L.

and scales while weighing individual elements against the compositions to which they contribute and from which they distract.

Take the *Time* cover, which situates four images across three horizontal panels, the lowest of which is split into two. Moving from center to periphery, the viewer regards each still separately before conceiving the whole. Yet even this synthesis is troubled by a host of internal incongruities. Foremost among these are the panels that produce separate channels even as Rauschenberg's irregular color flows across their makeshift boundaries. In fact, the painterliness of the color is itself at odds with *Bonnie and Clyde's* mechanical reproduction, pitting cinematic realism against fantastically garish hues. Disorienting, too, are the moves from medium shot to close-up to long shot that accompany each image, not to mention the rotation of Bonnie's (Faye Dunaway's) visage and the flipped negative that *Time's* title partially obscures. In general, one might say, the cover's components are joined but, at the same time, separate. Challenging beholders to forge connections among its images, the collage nonetheless defers completing this task.



If I belabor Rauschenberg's take on *Bonnie and Clyde*, then it is because the painter's collage resembles, however inadvertently, the film's violent contribution to New Hollywood.¹ Using multiple-camera montage, Penn's film interweaves footage shot by multiple, synchronized cameras to generate images of varying distances, angles, and speeds. For *Bonnie and Clyde's* death scene, Penn tethered four cameras to shoot from roughly the same perspective then repeated that setup from multiple vantage points (Crowdus and Porton 9–10). The cameras, though they shot simultaneously, recorded the scene at rates of 24, 48, 72, and 96 frames per second, respectively, producing footage from standard speed to just one-quarter of it (D. Cook, "Ballistic Balletics" 140–41). Edited in postproduction along with traditional, single-camera footage, the resulting sequence leaps from close-up to long shot, high to low angle, and standard speed to slow motion, giving the spectator a dizzying survey of machine-gun fire's effects on Bonnie's and Clyde's bodies.

Indeed, the sheer number of views produced by the sequence emphasizes their incongruities. Like Rauschenberg's collages, Penn's montage derives from divergent scales and contexts. Rapid-fire close-ups of Bonnie, Clyde (Warren Beatty), and the bushes that conceal their opponents give way to wider, multicamera shots that capture bodily spasms and, later, to long, high-angle framings that reveal the pair's relative positions in space. Though single-camera eyeline matches between the protagonists initially provide some continuity between cuts, the couple's anxious and isolated



Figures 1.3 and 1.4. Close-ups give way to wider views of Clyde and Bonnie (*Bonnie and Clyde*, 1967).

looks out of frame prefigure the montage's ensuing perceptual chaos. At one point, the film repeats Clyde's fall to the ground from three angles and at two different speeds. Placed in succession, these shots—like the couple's inexplicably migrating wounds—allow spectators to distinguish among the incompatible takes that actually compose the sequence.

Despite these incongruities, however, the montage also strives to synthesize its conflicting components. After a split-second start, the



Figure 1.5. Long-shot framings reveal the couple's position at the end of the sequence (*Bonnie and Clyde*, 1967).

editing slows to a somewhat more accommodating pace. Spectators have time to consider the assaults that toss and tear Bonnie and Clyde, something the film's repetitions and use of slow motion likewise facilitate. In fact, the scene's increasingly extended duration, distance, and speed often work against the indeterminate readings that Rauschenberg's work holds open. As the film concludes, two of the longest shots underscore this sense of determinacy. In the first, Clyde's once uncontrollable body rolls 360 degrees in quarter-time before reaching a halt. In the second, Bonnie's arm languidly drops to her side as the machine-gun fire ceases. Together, both shots seem to restore details multiple-camera montage had lost. Smoothing over the gaps privileged by Rauschenberg's collages, the pair permit spectators to "see more" of life's imperceptible movement toward death.

From this point of view, Penn's film departs from the experimental forms to which *Time* initially compares it. "What matters most about *Bonnie and Clyde* is," the magazine urges, ". . . its yoking of disparate elements into a coherent artistic whole—the creation of unity from incongruity" ("Hollywood" 67). Accordingly, the film uses slow motion to disclose movements that affirm and stabilize vision as much as unsettle everyday appearances. It also turns simultaneity toward synthesis through multiple-camera montage, promising omnipresence in space by way of temporally synchronized devices. In this, one finds the influence of a

comparatively unexperimental contemporary form: “Oddly enough,” *Time* writes, “younger moviemens credit *television* with a major role in paving the way for acceptance of the new in films” (“Hollywood” 67, emphasis added).² Though surprising to *Time*, television’s influence seems quite predictable when one considers how it, like multiple-camera montage, guarantees disclosure and synthesis by way of slow motion and multiple cameras.

Though certainly less frequent on television than in cinema, slow motion gives viewers the chance to analyze once unobservable details. Best known for its contributions to “instant replay” during televised sports, slow motion originated with the broadcast of Lee Harvey Oswald’s murder on NBC in 1963. Originally transmitted live, Oswald’s shooting was repeatedly replayed in slow motion in the hours following the event. The result helped assure viewers of “what really happened” by supplying them with what may have been missed during the initial broadcast. Transposed to an Army-Navy football game just five weeks later, this experience of authentic disclosure was compounded by sports programming’s effortless moves from taped instant replays to immediate and simultaneous transmissions.

Television’s use of multiple cameras also contributed to the medium’s authenticity and liveness. Emerging during the “golden age” of New York-based variety and anthology series, multiple-camera setups permitted television directors to jump to different angles, characters, and sets without disrupting the “real time” of live transmissions. Even when television moved to Hollywood-produced programs on film in the early 1960s, many shows continued to use multiple cameras for recordings with so-called live audiences. In these instances, cuts from camera to camera fragmented space yet unified time, disguising the ruptures they generated by privileging the simultaneity of broadcast. Moves between cameras thus resembled television’s distribution of content across programming blocks, which “abrupt[ly] leap[t] from news about Vietnam to *Gomer Pyle* to toothpaste ads,” according to *Time*, yet constituted the medium’s “flow” in the work of Raymond Williams (“Hollywood” 67; R. Williams 78–118). For some, like director Richard Lester, “TV [was] best at . . . sudden shifts of reality. . . . [It], not *Last Year at Marienbad*, made the audience notice them for the first time” (“Hollywood” 67). Still, for others, the medium diminished distinctions among fragments in favor of unified sequences. “It is evident,” writes Williams, “that what is now called ‘an evening’s viewing’ is in some ways planned . . . *as a whole*, . . . which in this sense, override[s] particular program units” (93).

In what follows, I pursue these tensions between fragment and whole, incongruity and unity, through *Bonnie and Clyde*’s use of multiple-camera

montage. Read as a figure for authenticity in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the device joined perception to representation and desire to fantasy, to corroborate *and* challenge demonstrative violence for a number of media and practices. As with broadcast television, military reconnaissance, and even the period's film theories, multiple-camera montage reconciled discordant demands and sensations to depictions of omnipresence. At the same time, however, the technology did more than unify incompatible elements. It also registered parallaxes between part and whole, simultaneity and synthesis, and definitive and indeterminate disclosures. Seizing these parallaxes, I trace their consequences for authenticity on and off screen. Indeed, because it articulates *and* disarticulates visual mastery, multiple-camera montage at once situates vision in violence and opens the pair to less brutal arrangements.

Unity from Incongruity

[*Bonnie and Clyde*] is . . . pitilessly cruel, filled with sympathy, nauseating, funny, heartbreaking, and astonishingly beautiful.

—Roger Ebert, “Bonnie and Clyde”

I begin my account of multiple-camera montage with *Bonnie and Clyde*'s reception, which betrays conflicts regarding unity and incongruity, not unlike the technology and contemporary approaches to it. In that reception, one finds critics collide over the film's inconsistencies when it comes to narrative sense and spectatorial sensation. Regarding the first, reviewers accuse *Bonnie and Clyde* of mixing historical fact with Hollywood fiction, since these are, commentators warn, properly incompatible spheres of meaning. The film offers a “purposeless mingling of fact and claptrap,” according to *Time*, while Bosley Crowther at the *New York Times* dedicates the last of three excoriating reviews to *Bonnie and Clyde*'s biographical inaccuracies (“Cinema”). Warren Beatty's “light-hearted, show-offish” portrayal of Clyde is, he writes,

mannered playacting of a hick that bears no more resemblance to Barrow than it does to Jesse James. And the sweet prettified indication of Bonnie that Faye Dunaway conveys is a totally romantic exoneration of that ugly and vicious little dame. . . . This is an indication of the kind of cheating with the bare and ugly truth that Mr. Penn, his writers, and Mr. Beatty have done in this garish, grotesque film that makes the crimes of Clyde and Bonnie quite hilarious. (“Run”)

Though he denounces the film for its inauthenticity, Crowther's quest for genuineness indicates graver concerns about *Bonnie and Clyde*'s blend of comedy and cruelty. In his second review of the film, Crowther writes that Penn's "ridiculous camp-tinctured travesties . . . might be passed off as candidly commercial, . . . if the film weren't reddened with blotches of violence of the most grisly sort" ("Screen"). Put simply: When spectators perceive less brutality, representational inaccuracy matters less.

For this reason, complaints about the narrative's inaccuracy generally accompany concerns for its brutally discordant sensations. *Bonnie and Clyde* "incongruously couples comedy with crime," notes *Variety*, while for the *Chicago Tribune*, its "frivolous approach presents the couple's criminal career as a kind of musical romp" (Kaufman; Terry, "Bonnie and Clyde"). Here, as during the Code era, critics worry that levity trivializes, perhaps even authorizes, the violent acts of protagonists. Worse, it offers viewers little guidance in how to respond to images of bloodshed. "Blending . . . farce with brutal killings is as pointless," writes Crowther, "as it is lacking in taste. It makes no valid commentary upon the already travestied truth" ("Screen"). The result is especially worrisome, he intimates, because so many people believe the film holds "some sort of meaningful statement for the times in which we live" ("Run"). This includes Crowther's readers. "Arthur Penn has not made an educational or historical filmstrip," writes one; yet "the film makes an intelligent comment . . . about America's heritage of crime and its penchant for violence, so evident today" (O'Mealy).

For many, in fact, the film's inconsistencies are what make it authentic. "In *Bonnie and Clyde*," reads another letter to Crowther, ". . . Penn has managed to create an unusual documentary—sweet, savage, absurd. In short, real" ("Mailbag: Bonnie, Clyde"). Adds Pauline Kael: *Bonnie and Clyde* may keep the "audience in a kind of eager, nervous imbalance," but spectators are only amused, until they "catch the first bullet right in the face" ("Bonnie and Clyde"). The film is genuine, in other words, because it unites fact with fiction and pleasure with pain. Together, these generate synthetic significance rather than senselessness or sadism. "Hard times were an impetus to violence and crime," notes Charles Champlin of the film's Depression-era setting, "and, as the cities attest, they are even now" ("Bonnie & Clyde"). Drawing sense from sensation both inside *and* outside the film, *Bonnie and Clyde* discloses the era's professed proclivity for violence. It fashions unity from incongruity.

Scholars, too, discover as much when it comes to multiple-camera montage, which, many claim, transcends everyday appearance, despite or even because of its divergent aesthetics and the conflicted responses

they provoke. Such is Stephen Prince's argument in repeated assessments of the technology, which he argues, ties *Bonnie and Clyde* to Akira Kurosawa's experiments with multiple cameras and slow motion as well as Sam Peckinpah's work from the late 1960s and 1970s ("Aestheticizing Violence"; "Hemorrhaging"; "Aesthetic of Slow-Motion"; "Introduction"). Beginning with *Seven Samurai* (1954), Kurosawa regularly employed three to five cameras to extend his coverage of complicated fight scenes. A decade and a half later, Peckinpah extended this design, using six separate cameras, running at 24, 30, 60, 90, and 120 frames per second, to film the climactic battle of *The Wild Bunch* (1969). The slow motion produced by five of these cameras also owed to Kurosawa, whose interest in protracted footage of violence and death emerges as early as *Sanshiro Sugata* (1943), according to Prince.

In fact, Prince's investigation of multiple-camera montage focuses on slow motion more than any other technique. Its power, he argues, lies in decelerated motion's conflict with standard-speed footage, which incongruously joins aesthetic beauty to physical brutality. "By alternating the tempo between slow and apparently accelerated [motion]," *Bonnie and Clyde* "vividly brings out the alternately balletic and spastic qualities of [its final] scene," Prince notes ("Hemorrhaging" 135, 137). Slow motion makes time elastic, he argues. It extends the duration in which viewers may inspect brutal events, even as standard-speed images and sounds join reduced speeds to supply the dynamism and sensuous physicality they presumably lack. Once united, this collision of elements generates a "synthesized collage of activity" that, writes Prince, forcefully reveals imperceptible details of bodily losses of volition ("Aesthetic of Slow-Motion" 192). Though initially discordant, in other words, slow motion gives viewers access to the intimate consequences of corporeal violence, particularly when momentary reductions of speed are stitched into the significance of larger sequences.

In this, Prince's analysis of multiple-camera montage resembles historical accounts of slow motion, which look to avant-garde and art cinemas—the technique's traditional homes—to defamiliarize and potentially redeem everyday realities. "Slow motion not only reveals familiar aspects of movement," argues Walter Benjamin in 1936, "but [also] discloses quite unknown aspects within them. . . . It is another nature which speaks to the camera as compared to the eye. 'Other' above all in the sense that a space informed by human consciousness gives way to a space informed by the unconscious" ("Work of Art" 117). Prince conjures a similarly unconscious optics for the late 1960s when he insists that Hollywood's slow-motion inserts divulge more than external, bodily damage. "It is not just the moment of violent death which is extended

[by decelerated movement],” he writes, “but the mysteries inherent in that twilight zone between consciousness and autonomic impulse” (“Aesthetic of Slow-Motion” 185). Indeed, to the extent that it captures the body’s invisible instincts, Prince’s conception of slow motion surpasses Benjamin’s account of what the device can make visible.

The closest analogue, in this sense, may be Linda Williams’s account of the “money shot,” modern, hard-core pornography’s requisite display of a man’s ejaculating penis. Promising spectators visual evidence of sexual ecstasy, the money shot appears to arrive at “the mechanical ‘truth’ of bodily pleasure caught in involuntary spasm, the ultimate and uncontrollable—ultimate *because* uncontrollable—confession of sexual pleasure in the climax of orgasm” (*Hard Core* 101). Though clearly fictional compared to the money shot’s documentation of male orgasm, the slow-motion deaths in *Bonnie and Clyde* purport to expose imperceptible experiences no less than their pornographic counterparts. One seeks irrepressible pleasure, the other unrepresentable pain, yet both strive for what Prince calls death’s—or, in the case of orgasm, *la petite mort*’s—“metaphysical mysteries” (“Aesthetic of Slow-Motion” 189). In this “frenzy of the visible,” as Williams calls it, following French film historian Jean-Louis Comolli, one senses the late 1960s and early 1970s preoccupation with intense subjective experiences that promise something more authentic than perceptible, external realities (*Hard Core* 36; Comolli 122). As with *Deep Throat* (Gerard Damiano, 1972), *Bonnie and Clyde* extends this intensity to spectators, who may not encounter “real” violence as they do actual orgasms yet nonetheless experience fervid feelings of desire and disgust when confronted with on-screen brutality.

Of course, as Williams is quick to suggest, the money shot’s authentic revelation of sexual pleasure requires that men disengage from the very act that presumably imparts it. The shot’s bodily truth is compromised further, moreover, because pornography uses male ejaculation to stand in for and substantiate comparatively invisible and unverifiable female orgasms. The money shot’s spectacular visibility “extends,” she writes, “only to a knowledge of the hydraulics of male ejaculation, which, though certainly of interest, is a poor substitute for the knowledge of female wonders that the genre as a whole still seeks” (*Hard Core* 94). The death throes of *Bonnie and Clyde* may only pretend to divulge brutally painful extinctions, but as in pornography, the “metaphysical mysteries” slow motion supplies hide splits between inside and outside or visible and invisible upon which these disclosures rely. From this point of view, slow motion’s synthetic union of opposites appears just that—*synthetic*, a rather inauthentic fusion of what the film otherwise designates as separate.

In his analysis of Peckinpah, Prince underscores just this artificiality. “It is notable,” he writes, “that critics have discussed Peckinpah’s work as if its use of bloody squibs and slow motion was more realistic than previous generations of Hollywood gunfights. It certainly is bloodier,” he continues, “but Peckinpah’s is far from a realist’s aesthetic” (“Aesthetic of Slow-Motion” 196). Recalling Comolli’s warning that cinema’s “accumulation of technical processes” does not make film content “more real” but rather, and quite simply, “more visible,” Prince, like Kael before him, finds the incongruities of *The Wild Bunch* or *Bonnie and Clyde* demand “continuing perceptual reorientation,” not unlike Rauschenberg’s collages (Comolli 132, 137; “Aesthetic of Slow-Motion” 191). In this sense, the aesthetics of Peckinpah or Penn inhibit self-possessed, even composed, attitudes toward violence. To the extent that slow motion lays claim to the truth of corporeal brutality, however, their work in multiple-camera montage also undermines these inhibitions. Rather than suggest the indeterminacy of reality and human perception, as it does in avant-garde or art cinema, slow motion in *The Wild Bunch* or *Bonnie and Clyde* tends to mimic the comparatively definitive depictions of violence one finds in television news.

See More Now

Despite its massive heterogeneity, there does seem to us a single, coherent language of television to which all its different practices can be referred.

—Stuart Hall, “Television and Culture”

Multiple cameras are not unique to television or to post-Code Hollywood filmmaking, though their appearance in both media follows a general hiatus in classical cinema of the mid-1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. Earlier, during the industry’s conversion to sound, multiple cameras allowed editors to cut within scenes without compromising a film’s dialogue or diegetic sound effects. Before postsynchronization became widespread in the early 1930s, that is, cinema modeled itself on the live radio broadcasts from which it borrowed technology and personnel. Sound and image were captured at the same time to preserve the illusion of audiovisual synchronization. This was particularly true for the Vitaphone system, which recorded sound directly onto autonomous, nonfilmic discs. To preserve more than one view of an actor’s performance meant employing multiple, synchronous cameras, which could be situated at varying angles and distances to the action.

Jack Robin's (Al Jolson's) numbers in the Vitaphone feature *The Jazz Singer* (Alan Crosland, 1927) provide an early example. While singing "Toot Toot Tootsie" before a small, diegetic crowd, Jack begins to hand whistle the song's chorus. Initially depicted in medium long shot, this performative detail motivates the film's cut to a close-up, which, to maintain audiovisual continuity, Crosland shot at the same time as the wider framing. Also filmed simultaneously was the full shot to which *The Jazz Singer* leaps when Jack begins to dance. Preserving, once again, the performer's uninterrupted vocal recording, this cut underscores his most visually significant movements.

Developed by cinematographer Ed Du Par for shooting programs of Vitaphone shorts, this multiple-camera technique rests somewhat uncomfortably in *The Jazz Singer*, a largely single-camera, nonvocal feature. The result, argues Charles Wolfe, is a strikingly incongruous film, a "hybrid text," that is both silent and "talkie," feature and short, fiction and documentary (67). Rapidly replacing cinema's live vaudeville and musical prologues between 1927 and 1929, Vitaphone shorts anthologized the images and sounds of popular entertainments with fully synchronized recordings. Vitaphone features, meanwhile, offered spectators extended linear narratives accompanied by independently recorded and postsynchronized scores and loosely diegetic sound effects. In most ways, they resembled silent films, except that their once live musical accompaniments now emanated from discs. With *The Jazz Singer*, the two forms met in a fictionalized plot punctuated by vocal performances that, to varying degrees, interrupted the feature's overwhelmingly "silent" unfolding with synchronized sound and near documentary recordings of comparatively "live" musical numbers.

The simultaneity of the film's camerawork only compounds these disruptions, which imply an immediacy, a presence, the larger narrative lacks. When *The Jazz Singer* jumps from long shot to close-up, its aim, argues Wolfe, is not to subjectify space. Rather, its multiple cameras preserve audiovisual continuity across cuts to emphasize the living corporeal embodiment of the sound's source. As a result, these images attenuate the loss of the live performer that Vitaphone shorts actually introduced. They seek "to make an absent figure at once audible and visible," Wolfe writes, "to demonstrate—despite a technological divorcement of camera-projector and microphone-speaker—an original unity and causal relation between body and sound at the moment the sound was produced" (65). Corroborating this cohesive presence is Jolson's own persona—"authenticated by his singular voice"—which, along with the conspicuous frontality and direct address of his performances,

ensures his “factual” self outpaces his status as the fictional Jack Robin (Wolfe 69).

This is not to suggest that *The Jazz Singer*'s narrative does not, in some sense, decrease the gaps between it and the vocalized passages. The plotting of the fictional feature certainly helps suture the ruptures that its documentary “shorts” introduce. Moreover, as Wolfe suggests, the musical numbers themselves exhibit a kind of latent fictiveness, particularly when, as in the “Toot Toot Tootsie” sequence, the film employs a diegetic audience and rudimentary shot / reverse shot structures to supply a modicum of continuity. More interesting for my purposes, however, are the unifying efforts that characterize the synchronized segments themselves. As much as these numbers introduce an incongruous immediacy, even “liveness,” into their comparatively “canned” narrative frame, their simultaneous recording of sound and image generates a sense of authentic presence that not only synthesizes past and present performances but also permits one to have the best possible account when multiple vantages combine without compromising the film's auditory stability.

Multiple-camera setups returned to prominence in early 1950s television, where they created new fantasies of immediacy and authenticity by corroborating the medium's liveness through somewhat unexpected means. On one hand, multiple cameras lent television a conventionally cinematic appearance, granting live anthology series such as *The Philco Television Playhouse* (NBC, 1948–1955) the basics of continuity editing. The result, which disarticulated space to preserve the broadcast's real time, allowed television to accomplish “with enviable ease” what “cinema,” according to Charles Barr, “might have to do rather laboriously” (59). On the other hand, of course, it was precisely this ease that circumvented postproduction labor and distinguished multiple-camera broadcasts from Hollywood montage. When live television cut between dislocated spaces, it did so “here and now,” unlike cinema, which must wait for film development and editorial reordering. Even Vitaphone shorts, which relied upon multiple, synchronous recordings at the level of production, *re-presented* the past when it came to exhibition. Television, meanwhile, purported to *present* the present at the very moment the apparatus recorded and transmitted it. As a result, production and reception became virtually simultaneous.

Though distinct from Vitaphone's “liveness,” this simultaneity was no less contradictory, since television, too, disguised disruption to assure its omnipresence. At first glance, multiple cameras seemed to protect live television against the threat of broken transmissions; if one camera stopped working, another simply took its place. In reality, however, these setups offered no respite from the broadcast clock and its prohibition against retakes. They weakened the director's compositional control and

introduced opportunities for error during exchanges between cameras. From this point of view, multiple cameras retained, rather than restrained, the dangers of live transmission. Missed cues or forgotten lines only strengthened television's claims to instantaneous broadcast and simultaneous reception. Mary Ann Doane makes a similar point in her account of the medium's liveness, which, she submits, gathers its urgency from the temporality of catastrophe ("Information"). Implying technological failure and unexpected death, catastrophe names the violently inassimilable moments that accompany events such as earthquakes or plane crashes. These moments, Doane argues, supply television with its claims to immediacy, yet in covering them, the medium necessarily extends their durations, compromising the very presence it otherwise seeks.

Live transmissions are, in this sense, always too late, rendering visible a "now" that is set in the past and inescapably imperceptible. The coverage of President Kennedy's assassination offers a formative—perhaps *the* formative—example in this regard. For four days following the event, networks used live broadcast to "anchor" filmed field reports, interviews with witnesses, and hurriedly compiled documentaries. Indeed, they had to, according to Thomas Doherty and Barbie Zelizer, since, as Doherty suggests, the state of broadcast journalism in 1963 "militated against the coverage of live and fast-breaking events in multiple locations" for a number of reasons:

TV cameras required two hours of equipment warm-up to become "hot" enough for operation. Video signals were transmitted cross-country via "hard wire" coaxial cable or microwave relay. "Spot coverage" of unfolding news in the field demanded speed and mobility and since television cameras had to be tethered to enormous wires and electrical systems, 16 mm film crews still dominated location coverage, with the consequent delay in transportation, processing, and editing of footage.

Still, by mixing live with canned reports, network coverage spatialized the catastrophe across heterogeneous locations and a variety of sources and media. The result, which suggested immediate access to authentic realities, also managed, even delimited, the discontinuity and indeterminacy of such heterogeneity, not to mention the assassination itself. In this sense, television embraced "breaking news" to exploit then deny the incongruities and impediments that simultaneity, in fact, "contained."

In the world of television fiction, multiple cameras served liveness similarly, fracturing "here" to make more "now" visible. To wit, moving

between cameras propagated the present by editing in “real time.” It also transposed exigencies at the site of production to the immediacy of at-home reception. In this way, I argue, multiple cameras not only recouped “lost” time but also unified ruptured space. They intensified efforts to overcome distance that characterize “tele-vision” (literally, *seeing from afar*) both in practice and in name. With television, writes Samuel Weber, viewers “see things from places—and hence, from perspectives and points of view (*and it is not trivial that these are often more than one*)—where his or her body is not (and often never can be) situated” (116, emphasis added). This may be true of cinema, too, but television aims to guarantee the “now” of both *here* and *there*. It “splits” vision, Weber contends, to surmount the divorce between viewer and viewed. Multiple cameras compounded this action for viewers of “golden-age” drama. Dividing perception across diverse views, they transformed “seeing more” into “seeing more now.”

As television increasingly abandoned live broadcast in the late 1950s and 1960s, many series persisted in their use of multiple cameras. Programs such as *I Love Lucy* (CBS, 1951–1957) and, later, *The Dick Van Dyke Show* (CBS, 1961–1966) shot on film and with three cameras before a “live” studio audience. As in the golden age, these performances were largely continuous and, except in emergency circumstances, filmed without retakes. Editing, meanwhile, “was a largely mechanical process,” according to Barr, and followed “the pattern of cuts between cameras that would have been done on air . . . had it been transmitted live” (62). Ostensibly, the system was motivated by considerations such as error and the quality of future rebroadcasts. Film and videotape abated the threat of technological failure that accompanied live transmission. Still, this reason alone does not explain the persistence of multiple cameras, single takes, and in-studio audiences on the part of some programs. Rather, these techniques seem to emerge as supplements to television’s “new” lack of immanent catastrophe. To the extent, moreover, that shooting on film did not diminish the quality of simultaneous transmission, as did earlier off-air recording, it provided networks with comparatively “live-like” images for rebroadcast on future dates and in multiple time zones.

From this point of view, the loss of broadcast to film and, later, videotape did not blunt so much as sharpen fantasies of televisual simultaneity. Live or not, multiple cameras animated and answered demands to “see more now” by synchronously recording various views of a given performance. Along with studio audiences, whose laughter substantiated the place of production, multiple cameras infused reception with the multifarious presence that simultaneity demands and disguises. In this way, post-golden age television unexpectedly resembled one of the chief



Figure 1.6. Three-camera technique in *I Love Lucy*, CBS, 1951–1957 (*American Cinematographer*, 1952).

repositories of liveness after the late 1950s: sports coverage, which, in the case of football, often employed twenty or more cameras inside a single broadcast (Morse 48). Indeed, unlike dramatic programming, simultaneous reception was a hallmark of televisual sports. And yet, its sheer number of vantages suggested that live transmission was inadequate to capturing and delivering immediate presence. Integrating discontinuous views that, according to Margaret Morse, resembled neither the crowd's nor the players' perspectives, sports coverage constructed an impossible spectatorial position that turned incongruous fragments toward synthetic omnipresence (51). Betraying this fact, even as they supported it, were play-by-play commentaries and instant replays. As with in-studio audiences, sportscasters imbued broadcasts with on-the-spot presence, particularly since, by definition, they had to play catch up to events as they unfolded. At the same time, however, these commentators—not unlike the images they narrated—managed the game's intrinsic violence and uncertainty with determinate views about what “actually” happened. Instant replays went further, meanwhile, by foregoing liveness to return to the past. They disclosed what, in the present, instantaneous reception could not authenticate.

Thus throughout the 1960s, both live and canned television contributed to fantasies of authenticity by exploiting and denying differences between here and there, then and now, which define simultaneity.

Multiple cameras, I submit, codified this structure not only when they predominated television's golden age but also—and especially—when the medium appeared to be losing its liveness for the first time. Conjuring immediate reception for previously recorded, even single-camera, productions, multiple-camera setups helped television reclaim authenticity and differentiate itself from cinema. Still, because simultaneity no longer belonged to live productions alone, cinema could potentially reap the genuineness that “seeing more now” engendered. Accordingly, one finds Hollywood appropriating multiple-camera techniques it had originated some forty years earlier, particularly in fiction and nonfiction works that depicted catastrophe and graphic, corporeal violence. Though the results differed from television in significant and revelatory ways, they signal the extent to which “seeing more” violence reflected and refracted desires and anxieties as wide-ranging pursuits for authenticity across multiple media.

A Parallax View

The philosophical twist to be added (to parallax) . . . is that the observed difference is not simply “subjective,” due to the fact that the same object which exists “out there” is seen from two different stations, or points of view. It is rather that . . . subject and object are inherently “mediated,” so that an “epistemological” shift in the subject's point of view always reflects an “ontological” shift in the object itself.

—Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View*

Bonnie and Clyde opens with a series of thirty-two sepia-tinted photographs that, interspersed with credits, emerge from a black background one by one. Although accompanied by the sound of an imperceptible shutter, these images do not capture the present. Instead, they represent the past. Save for the last two, they are records of the Great Depression, the era in which *Bonnie and Clyde* is set. Evoking works by Dorothea Lange or Walker Evans, the photographs index a now-mythic documentary impulse with images of austere women, uncertain children, ramshackle homes, and disheveled men. Later, when generic portraits give way to snapshots of the “real” Barrow gang and, finally, to Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway, this mix of fact and fiction grows, along with the film's indications of violence. In one picture, two men hold rifles in front of a car; in another, three squat with guns raised at the camera. Together, they recall photographs, published in 1933 by police in Joplin, Missouri, which secured the legend of a gun-toting Clyde and cigar-smoking Bonnie



Figures 1.7 and 1.8. Photographs recall Depression-era works by Dorothea Lange or Walker Evans (*Bonnie and Clyde*, 1967).

for the Hollywood stars who conclude this synthetic yet patchworked history of mediated brutality.

Still, if *Bonnie and Clyde* is a film about the imbroglios of reality and representation, violence and entertainment, then it is so with respect

to the present as much as the past. More allegory than chronicle for its creators, *Bonnie and Clyde* was conceived and received as an account of and about the late 1960s. It matters, therefore, that the film begins with photography but concludes with television by way of multiple cameras. The most prominent purveyor of violence for the late 1960s and early 1970s, television was also the era's predominant source of simultaneity and thus "immediate" reception. Arthur Penn himself began his career during the electronic medium's golden age, directing numerous episodes of live and multicamera anthology series such as *The Gulf Playhouse*, also known as *First Person* (NBC, 1952–1953), and, later, *The Philco Television Playhouse*. Indeed, both of his early cinematic endeavors—*The Left-Handed Gun* (1958) and *The Miracle Worker* (1962)—first appeared as teleplays on the small screen.³ Taking his experience with multiple cameras to Hollywood long after television had begun to shoot on film, Penn unleashed assurances of simultaneity the industry had not regularly deployed since the conversion to sound in the late 1920s. The result, which yoked Vitaphone's union of past and presence to television's purported immediacy, promised spectators of *Bonnie and Clyde* relatively direct and omnipresent access to the deaths of its protagonists.

To begin, *Bonnie and Clyde* exploits multiple-camera montage for the heterogeneity it later denies. With 38 shots in 48 seconds, spectators struggle to accommodate the film's death scene, which includes abrupt shifts in location, distance, speed, and angle among single- and multiple-camera footage. Most jarring, I have suggested, are the single-camera close-ups that introduce the sequence. Flashing rapidly from a tight shot of Bonnie, who turns away from the spectator with anxiety, the film cuts to a reverse angle of Clyde, who crouches as if preternaturally aware of the danger. The mood of this exchange contrasts sharply with preceding scenes that, however hackneyed, feature the pair consummating their relationship or, more convincingly, sharing a pear. As if to recall these moments, the next three shots—in equally rapid succession—present an extreme close-up of Bonnie, who briefly smiles, followed by Clyde's tender worry, and then her own gentle resignation. These changes in tone, along with the utter speed of the images, heighten the spectator's disorientation as well as the scene's indeterminate threat.

Thus, without pretense to liveness, *Bonnie and Clyde* evokes the immanent catastrophe that television cultivates through single takes and in-studio audiences. Though not cut in real time, multiple-camera montage retains this danger in the following sequence, where errors in shooting would have required laborious changes of wardrobe and makeup, props, and special effects to launch additional takes. The film's content also contributes to this urgency, since it depicts a sudden eruption of violence,