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Modern life takes place onscreen. Life in industrialized countries is increasingly lived under constant video surveillance from cameras in buses and shopping malls, on highways and bridges, and next to ATM cash machines. More and more people look back, using devices ranging from traditional cameras to camcorders and Webcams. At the same time, work and leisure are centred on visual media from computers to Digital Video Disks. Human experience is now more visual and visualized than ever before from the satellite picture to medical images of the interior of the human body. In the era of the visual screen, your viewpoint is crucial. For most people in the United States, life is mediated through television and, to a lesser extent film. The average American eighteen year old sees only eight movies a year but watches four hours of television a day. These forms of visualization are now being challenged by interactive visual media like the Internet and virtual reality applications. Twenty-three million Americans were online in 1998, with many more joining in daily. In this swirl of imagery, seeing is much more than believing. It is not just a part of everyday life, it is everyday life.

Let's take a few examples from the constant swirl of the global village. The abduction of the toddler Jamie Bulger from a Liverpool shopping mall was impersonally captured by a video surveilleance camera, providing chilling evidence of the ease with which the crime was both committed and detected. At the same time, despite the theory that constant surveillance provides increased security, it in fact did nothing to help prevent the child's abduction and eventual murder. The bombing at the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games was captured for endless replay by a casual interface of visual technology involving an amateur camcorder and a German cable TV station interviewing American swimmer Janet Evans. Someone is nearly always watching and recording. Yet noone has been prosecuted to date for the crime. For the visualization of everyday life does not mean that we necessarily know what it is that we are seeing. When TWA Flight 800 crashed off Long Island, New York in July 1996 scores of people witnessed the event. Their accounts differed so widely that the FBI ended up crediting only the least sensational and unembellished accounts. In 1997, the FBI released a computer animation of the crash, utilizing materials ranging from radar to satellite imagery. Everything could be shown except the actual cause of the crash-that is, the reason why the fuel tank exploded. Without this answer, the animation was essentially pointless. Even more strikingly, the world watched in 1991 as the American armed forces replayed video footage from their 'smart' bombs as they homed in on their targets during the Gulf War. The film seemed to show what Paul Virilio has called the "automation of perception," machines that could "see" their way to their destinations (Virilio 1994: 59). But five years later it emerged that while the weapons certainly "saw" something, they were no more accurate than traditional munitions in actually hitting their intended marks. In September 1996, American cruise missiles struck Iraqianti-aircraft defences twice in two days, only for American planes to be fired at by the Iraqis several days later. Did the Gulf War never happen as Jean Baudrillard has provocatively asserted? What are we to believe if seeing is no longer believing?

The gap between the wealth of visual experience in postmodern culture and the ability to analyze that observation marks both the opportunity and the need for visual culture as a field of study. While the different visual media have usually been studied independently, there is now a need to interpret the postmodern globalization of the visual as everyday life. Critics in disciplines ranging as widely as art history, film, media studies and sociology have begun to describe this emerging field as visual culture. Visual culture is concerned with visual events in which information, meaning, or pleasure is sought by the consumer in an interface with visual technology. By visual technology, I mean any form of apparatus designed either to be looked at or to enhance natural vision, from oil painting to television and the Internet. Postmodernism has often been defined as the crisis of modernism. In this context, this implies that the postmodern is the crisis caused by modernism and modern culture confronting the failure of its own strategy of visualizing. In other words, it is the visual crisis of culture that creates postmodernity, not its textuality. While print culture is certainly not going to disappear, the fascination with the visual and its effects that marked modernism has engendered a postmodern culture that is most postmodern when it is visual. This proliferation of visuality has made film and television entertainment the United States' second largest export after aerospace, amounting to $3.7 billion to Europe alone in 1992 (Barber 1995: 90). Postmodernism is not, of course, simply a visual experience. In what Arjun Appadurai has called the "complex, overlapping, disjunctive order" of postmodernism, tidiness is not to be expected (Appadurai 1994 [1990]: 328). Nor can it be found in past epochs, whether one looks at the eighteenth-century coffee house public culture celebrated by Jurgen Habermas, or the nineteenth-century print capitalism of newspapers and publishing described by Benedict Anderson. In the same way that these authors highlighted a particular characteristic of a period as the means to analyse it, despite the vast range of alternatives, visual culture is a tactic with which to study the genealogy, definition and functions of postmodern everyday life from the point of view of the consumer, rather than the producer. The disjunctured and fragmented culture that we call postmodernism is best imagined and understood visually, just as the nineteenth century was classically represented in the newspaper and the novel.

That is not to suggest, however, that a simple dividing line can be drawn between the past (modern) and the present (postmodern). As Geoffrey Batchen has argued, "the threatened dissolution of boundaries and oppositions [the postmodern] is presumed to represent is not something peculiar to a particular technology or to postmodern discourse but is rather one of the fundamental conditions of modernity itself" (Batchen 1996: 28). Understood in this fashion, visual culture has a genealogy, that needs exploring and defining in the modern as well as postmodern period (Foucault 1998). For some critics, visual culture is simply "the history of images" handled with a semiotic notion of representation (Bryson, Holly and Moxey, 1994: xvi). This definition creates a body of material so vast that no one person or even department could ever cover the field. For others it is a means of creating a sociology of visual culture that will establish a "social theory of visuality" (Jenks 1995: 1). This approach seems open to the charge that the visual is given an artificial independence from the other senses that has little bearing on real experience. In this volume, visual culture is used in a far more active sense, concentrating on the determining role of visual culture in the wider culture to which it belongs. Such a history of visual culture would highlight those moments where the visual is contested, debated and transformed as a constantly challenging place of social interaction and definition in terms of class, gender, sexual and racialized identities. It is a resolutely interdisciplinary subject, in the sense given to the term by Roland Barthes: "In order to do interdisciplinary work, it is not enough to take a 'subject' (a

theme) and to arrange two or three sciences around it. Interdisciplinary study consists in creating a new object, which belongs to noone" (Barthes). As one critic in communications studies has recently argued, this work entails "greater levels of uncertainty, risk and arbitrariness" than have often been used until now (McNair 1995: xi). There would be little point in breaking down the old disciplinary barriers only to put new ones up in their place.

To some, visual culture may seem to claim too broad a scope to be of practical use. It is true that visual culture will not sit comfortably in already existing university structures. It is part of an emerging body of postdisciplinary academic endeavours from cultural studies, gay and lesbian studies, to African-American studies, and so on, whose focus crosses the borders of traditional academic disciplines at will. In this sense, visual culture is a tactic, not an academic discipline. It is a fluid interpretive structure, centred on understanding the response to visual media of both individuals and groups. Its definition comes from the questions it asks and issues it seeks to raise. Like the other approaches mentioned above, it hopes to reach beyond the traditional confines of the university to interact with peoples' everyday lives.

Visualizing

One of the most striking features of the new visual culture is the growing tendency to visualize things that are not in themselves visual. Allied to this intellectual move is the growing technological capacity to make visible things that our eyes could not see unaided, ranging from Roentgen's accidental disccovery of the X-ray in 1895 to the Hubble telescope's "pictures" of distant galaxies that are in fact transpositions of frequencies our eyes cannot detect. One of the first to call attention to these developments was the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, who called it the rise of the world picture. He argued that "a world picture...does not mean a picture of the world but the world conceived and grasped as a picture.... The world picture does not change from an earlier medieval one into a modern one, but rather the fact that the world becomes picture at all is what distinguishes the essence of the modern age" (Heidegger 1977: 130). Consider a driver on a typical North American highway. The progress of the vehicle is dependent on a series of visual judgements made by the driver concerning the relative speed of other vehicles, and any manoeuvres necessary to complete the journey. At the same time, he or she is bombarded with other information: traffic lights, road signs, turn signals, advertising hoardings, petrol prices, shop signs, local time and temperature and so on. Yet most people consider the process so routine that they play music to keep from getting bored. Even music videos, which saturate the visual field with distractions and come with a soundtrack, now have to be embellished by textual pop-ups. This remarkable ability to absorb and interpret visual information is the basis of industrial society and is becoming even more important in the information age. It is not a natural human attribute but a relatively new learned skill. For the medieval philosopher, St Thomas Aquinas, sight was not to be trusted to make perceptual judgements by itself: "Thus sight would prove fallible were one to attempt to judge by sight what a coloured thing was or where it was" (Aquinas 1951: 275). According to one recent estimate, the retina contains 100 million nerve cells capable of about 10 billion processing operations per second. The hyper-stimulus of modern visual culture from the nineteenth century to the present has been dedicated to trying to saturate the visual field, a process that continually fails as we learn to see and connect faster and faster.

In other words, visual culture does not depend on pictures themselves but the modern tendency to picture or visualize existence. This visualizing makes the modern period radically different from the ancient and medieval world. While such visualizing has been common throughout the modern period, it has now become all but compulsory. This history might be said to begin with the visualizing of the economy in the eighteenth century by François Quesnay, who said of his "economic picture" of society that it "brings before your eyes certain closely interwoven ideas which the intellect alone would have a great deal of difficulty in grasping, unravelling and reconciling by the method of discourse" (Buck-Morss 1995: 116). Quesnay in effect expresses the principle of visualizing in general--it does not replace discourse but makes it more comprehensible, quicker and more effective. Visualizing has had its most dramatic effects in medicine, where everything from the activity of the brain to the heartbeat is now transformed into a visual pattern by complex technology. Most recently the visualizing of computer environments has generated a new sense of excitement around the possibilities of the visual. Computers are not, however, inherently visual tools. The machines process data using a binary system of ones and zeros, while the software makes the results comprehensible to the human user. Early computer languages like ASCII and Pascal were resolutely textual, involving commands that were not intuitive but had to be learned. The operating system promoted by the Microsoft corporation, better known as MS-DOS, retained these technocratic features until challenged by Apple's point-and-click interface. This system, relying on icons and drop-down menus, has become standard with Microsoft's conversion to the Windows environment. With the development of the Internet, the Java computer code now allows the untutored home computer user access to graphics that were once the preserve of elite institutions like the MIT Media Lab. As computer memory has fallen in price and with the arrival of programs like Realplayer and Shockwave, often available free over the Net, personal computers can play realtime video with full-color graphics. It is important to remember that these changes were as much consumer as technology driven. There is no inherent reason that computers should use a predominantly visual interface, except that people now prefer it this way.

Visual culture is new precisely because of its focus on the visual as a place where meanings are created and contested. Western culture has consistently privileged the spoken word as the highest form of intellectual practice and seen visual representations as second-rate illustrations of ideas. The emergence of visual culture develops what W.J.T. Mitchell has called "picture theory," the sense that some aspects of Western philosophy and science have come to adopt a pictorial, rather than textual, view of the world. If this is so, it marks a significant challenge to the notion of the world as a written text that dominated so much intellectual discussion in the wake of such linguistics-based movements as structuralism and poststructuralism. In Mitchell's view, picture theory stems from "the realization that spectatorship (the look, the gaze, the glance, the practices of observation, surveillance, and visual pleasure) may be as deep a problem as various forms of reading (decipherment, decoding, interpretation, etc) and that 'visual experience' or 'visual literacy' might not be fully explicable in the model of textuality" (Mitchell 1994: 16). While those already working on visual media might find such remarks rather patronizing, they are a measure of the extent to which even literary studies have been forced to conclude that the world-as-a-text has been replaced by the world-as-a-picture. Such world-pictures cannot be purely visual, but by the same token, the visual disrupts and challenges any attempt to define culture in purely linguistic terms.

One of the principal tasks of visual culture is to understand how these complex pictures come together. They are not created from one medium or in one place as the overly precise divisions of academia would have it. Visual culture directs our attention away from structured, formal viewing settings like the cinema and art gallery to the centrality of visual experience in everyday life. At present, different notions of viewing and spectatorship are current both within and between all the various visual subdisciplines. It does of course make sense to differentiate. Our attitudes vary according to whether we are going to see a movie, watch television, or attend an art exhibition. However, most of our visual experience takes place aside from these formally structured moments of looking. A painting may be noticed on a book jacket or in an advert, television is consumed as a part of domestic life rather than as the sole activity of the viewer, and films are as likely to be seen on video, in an aeroplane or on cable as in a traditional cinema. Just as cultural studies has sought to understand the ways in which people create meaning from the consumption of mass culture, so does visual culture prioritize the everyday experience of the visual from the snapshot to the VCR and even the blockbuster art exhibition. If cultural studies is to have a future as an intellectual strategy, it will have to take the visual turn that everyday life has already gone through.

The first move towards visual culture studies is a recognition that the visual image is not stable but changes its relationship to exterior reality at particular moments of modernity. As philosopher Jean-François Lyotard has argued: "Modernity, wherever it appears, does not occur without a shattering of belief, without a discovery of the lack of reality in reality--a discovery linked to the invention of other realities" (Lyotard 1993: 9). As one mode of representing reality loses ground another takes its place without the first disappearing. In the first section of this book, I show that the formal logic of the ancien régime image (1650-1820) first gave way to a dialectical logic of the image in the modern period (1820-1975). This dialectical image has in turn been challenged by the paradoxical or virtual image in the last twenty years (Virilio 1994: 63). The traditional image obeyed its own rules that were independent of exterior reality. The perspective system, for example, depends upon the viewer examining the image from one point only, using just one eye. Noone actually does this but the image is internally coherent and thus credible. As perspective's claim to be reality lost ground, film and photography created a new, direct relationship to reality, such that we accept the "actuality" of what we see in the image. A photograph necessarily shows us something that was at a certain point actually before the camera's lens. This image is dialectical because it sets up a relationship between the viewer in the present and the past moment of space or time that it represents.

However, it was not dialectical in the Hegelian sense of the term-which would be to say that the thesis of the formal image was first countered by the antithesis of photography and then resolved into a synthesis. Perspective images sought to make the world comprehensible to the powerful figure who stood at the single point from which it was drawn. Photographs offered a far more democratic visual map of the world. Now the filmed or photographic image no longer indexes reality because everyone knows they can be undetectably manipulated by computers. As the example of the "smart" bombs shows, the paradoxical virtual image "emerges when the real-time image dominates the thing represented, real time subsequently prevailing over real space, virtuality dominating actuality and turning the concept of reality on its head" (Virilio 1994: 63). These virtualities of postmodern image seem to constantly elude our grasp, creating a crisis of the visual that is more than simply a local problem. On the contrary,

==postmodernism marks the era in which visual images and the visualizing of things which are not necessarily visual has accelerated dramatically, so that the global circulation of images has become an end in itself, taking place at dramatic speed across the Internet.==

The notion of the world-picture is no longer adequate to analyse this changed and changing situation. The extraordinary proliferation of images cannot cohere into one single picture for the contemplation of the intellectual. ==Visual culture in this sense is the crisis of information and visual overload in everyday life. It seeks to find ways to work within this new (virtual) reality==. To adapt Michel de Certeau's description of everyday life, visual culture is a tactic, for "the place of the tactic belongs to the other" (de Certeau 1984: xix). A tactic is carried out in full view of the enemy, the society of control in which we live (de Certeau 1984: 37). Although some may find the military overtones of tactics offputting, it can also be argued that in the ongoing culture wars, tactics are necessary to avoid defeat. Just as earlier inquiries into everyday life sought to prioritize the ways in which consumers created different meanings for themselves from mass culture, so will visual culture explore the ambivalences, interstices and places of resistance in postmodern everyday life from the consumer's point of view.

Visual power, visual pleasure

Most theorists of the postmodern agree that one of its distinctive features is the dominance of the image. With the rise of virtual reality and the Internet in the West, combined with the global popularity of television, videotape and film, this trend seems set to continue. The peculiar dimension to such theory is, however, that it automatically assumes that a culture dominated by the visual must be second-rate. This almost reflex action seems to betray a wider doubt about popular culture itself. Such criticism has a long history, for there has always been a hostility to visual culture in Western thought, originating in the philosophy of Plato. Plato believed that the objects encountered in everyday life, including people, are simply bad copies of the perfect ideal of those objects. He compared this reproduction as being like the shadows cast by a fire on a cave wall--you can see who or what cast the shadow but the image is inevitably distorted from the original's appearance. In other words, everything we see in the "real" world is already a copy. For an artist to make a representation of what is seen would be to make a copy of a copy, increasing the chance of distortion. Furthermore, the ideal state Plato imagined required tough, disciplined individuals, but the arts appeal to our emotions and desires. So there was no place for the visual arts in his Republic: "Painting and imitation are far from the truth when they produce their works;...moreover, imitation keeps company with the worst part in us that is far from prudence and is not comrade or friend for any healthy or true purpose" (Plato 1991: 286). This hostility to the image has had a lasting influence on Western thought to the present day. Some images have been deemed too dangerous to exist, leading iconoclasts to seek their destruction or removal from public view. In such campaigns, distinctions between high art and popular culture have carried little weight with the incensed righteous.The fifteenth-century monk Savonarola had burnt in Florence, in the words of a contemporary, "numbers of profane paintings and sculptures, many of them the work of great masters, with books, lutes and collections of love songs" (Freedberg 1989: 348), just as Senator Jesse Helms and his colleagues in the United States Senate have been as eager to limit pornography on the Internet as to cut money from the National Endowment for the Arts to punish it for sponsoring the work of photographer Robert Mapplethorpe. The contemporary hostility to the visual in some contemporary criticism thus has deep

roots.

All such criticism shares an assumption that a visually dominated culture must be impoverished or even schizophrenic. Although television, for example, has won a place in the academic establishment, there is still a strong suspicion of visual pleasure in intellectual circles. Television is often described in David Morley's phrase as "radio with pictures," as if the pictures were mere decoration. This concentration on the textual dimension to television may be appropriate for news and other "talking head" formats but has nothing to say about television's distinctive formats such as soap opera, game shows, nature programs, and sports coverage. It is noticeable that a remote control always comes with a "mute" button but never a device to eliminate the picture. Programs can easily be followed with the sound off, a common domestic device to enable television to be part of the household activity, rather than its center. We watch television, not listen to it.

This simple fact causes many intellectuals to lose patience. Intellectuals like sociologist Pierre Bourdieu have joined forces with campaigning groups like Britain's White Dot and an array of university professors to lament that television has dumbed down Western society. Particular outrage is poured on universities for turning away from the study of what have become known as the Great Books towards television and other visual media. Such criticism is seemingly unaware of the hostile response towards novels themselves in the Enlightenment that accused literary forms of the same corrupting influence on morals and intellect with which television is now reproached. Even Michel de Certeau spoke of "a cancerous growth of vision" (de Certeau 1984: xxi). Fredric Jameson gives vent to his hostility at greater length:

> The visual is essentially pornographic, which is to say it has its end in rapt, mindless fascination; thinking about its attributes becomes an adjunct to that, if it is unwilling to betray its object; while the most austere films necessarily draw their energy from the attempt to repress their own excess (rather than from the more thankless effort to discipline the viewer). Pornographic films are thus only the potentiation of films in general, which ask us to stare at the world as though it were a naked body....The mysterious thing reading [becomes] some superstitious and adult power, which the lowlier arts imagine uncomprehendingly, as animals might dream of the strangeness of human thinking (Jameson 1990: 1-2).

The oddity of this position is that it renders America's leading Marxist critic a diehard defender of the bourgeois subject, as classically expressed through the novel. Such narrative archetypes as the coming-of-age story, the Bildungsroman, and the twentieth-century staple of the novel about writing a novel, all express the centrality of literature to the formation of the bourgeois, individual subject. Viewing visual images is, by contrast, very often a collective experience, as it is in a cinema. Computer technology now allows a visitor to a website to be present at the same time as perhaps hundreds or thousands of others and, in the case of chat rooms or bulletin boards, to interact with them. Further, the inherent multiplicity of possible viewpoints available to interpret any visual image make it a potentially far more democratic medium than the written text. In Jameson's view, those who have the temerity to enjoy visual pleasure, rather than the discipline of reading, are pornographers at best, most likely animals. The physicality of the visual marks it as a debased activity for Jameson, whereas reading is somehow divorced from the

physical processes of perception. His position is derived from the film theory of Christian Metz and other film theorists of the 1970s, who saw the cinema as an apparatus for the dissemination of ideology, in which the spectator was reduced to a wholly passive consumer. However, Jameson goes beyond such intellectual theorizing by presenting cinema audiences as lowlier beings, more comparable to animals than serious intellectuals like himself. The no doubt unintentional echoes of racist thought in this depiction are distasteful but necessarily implied by his colonial need to master the visual by writing. Indeed, the generalized antipathy of intellectuals to popular visual representations may be a displaced hostility to those who participate in and enjoy mass culture. In the eighteenth century, this hostility was directed at theatre. It is now focused on film, television and increasingly the Internet. In each case, the source of hostility is the mass, popular audience, not the medium in itself. From this perspective, the medium is not the message.

On the other hand, cultural studies--which seeks to privilege popular culture-- has an awkward gap around the visual, leading to the bizarre situation that any viewer of Star Trek can be defined as "oppositional," while any viewer of art is the dupe of the "dominant classes." To borrow Meaghan Morris' term, it is just as banal to dismiss everyone who ever looks at art as it is to celebrate every consumer of mass culture. In a methodological short cut, "art" has become the oppressive Other for cultural studies which allows popular culture to define itself as popular. The empirical basis for this casual division of culture into two is often derived from Pierre Bourdieu's sociological study of the uses of culture, undertaken in 1963 and 1967-68. By analyzing the responses of a 1200 person sample, Bourdieu argued that social class determined how an individual might respond to cultural production. Rather than taste being a highly individual attribute, Bourdieu saw it as a by-product of education and access, generating a "cultural capital" that reinforced and enhanced the economic distinctions of class. His study was an important rejoinder to those who believed that appreciation of "high" culture was simply a mark of intellectual quality that served to distinguish between the intellectual elite and the masses. Art was one of the clearest divisions in Bourdieu's survey. Museum going was almost exclusively the province of the middle and upper class (in the European sense of these class distinctions) while the working classes were almost unanimous in disdaining both the value of art in general and modern art in particular. Yet the questions posed to the respondents seemed to seek such answers, making it easier to give generally negative responses to art. People were asked to choose between five statements, three of which provided generally negative responses to art and two specific cases of approval. You could not answer that you liked art in general (Bourdieu 516-17). Bourdieu's findings simply confirm the prejudices implanted into his questions, that "they" would not like "our" elite culture and must be studied as a discrete phenomenon, the popular.

Furthermore, it is reasonable to question whether a survey based on the stuffy and traditional French museums of the 1960s should continue to determine our attitude to the far more outgoing and approachable museum culture of the 1990s. Bourdieu's survey was carried out before the advent of the "blockbuster" museum exhibition and before the shift in grant and donor attention to diversifying museum audiences. While it cannot be denied that there is still a long way to go, the situation is not as clear cut as it might have seemed thirty years ago. When a million people visit a Monet exhibition in Chicago and five million visit New York's Metropolitan Museum annually, art and museums are in some sense a part of mass culture, not its opposite. Nor does Bourdieu's account carry historical weight. The

annual Parisian exhibition of painting and sculpture known as the Salon attracted audiences of one million spectators in the mid-nineteenth century and was as popular an event as can be imagined. If we extend the definitions of art beyond the formal realm of the art gallery and museum to include such practices as carnival, quilting, photography and computer-generated media, it quickly becomes obvious that the neat division between "progressive popular culture" and "repressive high art" does not hold. The role played by culture of all varieties is too complex and too important to be reduced to such slogans. This intellectual history creates a difficult legacy for visual culture studies. Visual culture seeks to blend the historical perspective of art history and film studies with the case-specific, intellectually engaged approach characteristic of cultural studies. As this very integration is precisely what many scholars in these fields have sought to prevent by defining their fields as opposites, visual culture has to proceed by defining both the genealogy of the visual that it seeks to use and its interpretation of the loaded term "culture."

Visuality

Rather than divide visual culture into opposed halves, I shall instead examine how visuality has come to play such a central role in modern life. In so doing, I shall seek to create what Michel Foucault termed a genealogy of visual culture, marking out a broad trajectory for the emergence of contemporary visuality, without pretending to exhaust the richness of the field. That is to say, the task at hand is not a futile quest for the "origins" of modern visuality in past time but a strategic reinterpretation of the history of modern visual media understood collectively, rather than fragmented into disciplinary units such as film, television, art and video. In place of the traditional goal of encyclopedic knowledge, visual culture has to accept its provisional and changing status, given the constantly shifting array of contemporary visual media and their uses.

The constituent parts of visual culture are, then, not defined by medium so much as by the interaction between viewer and viewed, which may be termed the visual event. When I engage with visual apparatuses, media and technology, I experience a visual event. By visual event, I mean an interaction of the visual sign, the technology that enables and sustains that sign, and the viewer. In calling attention to this multiple interaction, I am seeking to advance interpretive strategies beyond the now familiar use of semiotic terminology. …. [discussion of semiotics and structuralism omitted….] For in concentrating solely on liguistic meaning, such readings deny the very element that makes visual imagery of all kinds distinct from texts, that is to say, its sensual immediacy. This is not at all the same thing as simplicity but there is an undeniable impact on first sight that a written text cannot replicate. It is the feeling created by the opening sight of the spaceship filling the screen in 2001: A Space Odyssey, by seeing the Berlin Wall come down on live television, or by encountering the shimmering blues and greens of Cézanne's landscapes. It is that edge, that buzz that separates the remarkable from the humdrum. It is this surplus of experience that moves the different components of the visual sign or semiotic circuit into a relation with each other. Such moments of intense and surprising visual power evoke, in David Freedberg's phrase, "admiration, awe, terror and desire" (Freedberg 1989: 433). This dimension to visual culture is at the heart of all visual events.

Let us give this feeling a name: the sublime. The sublime is the pleasurable experience in representation

of that which would be painful or terrifying in reality, leading to a realization of the limits of the human and of the powers of nature. The sublime was first theorized in antiquity by Longinus who famously described how "our soul is uplifted by the true sublime; it takes a proud flight and is filled with joy and vaunting, as though it has itself produced what it had heard" (Bukatman 1995: 266). The classical statue known as Laocoon is typical of the sublime work of art. It shows the Trojan warrior and his children fighting a serpent that will soon kill them. Their futile struggle has evoked the sublime for generations of viewers. The sublime was given renewed importance by Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant who called it "a satisfaction mixed with horror." Kant contrasted the sublime with the beautiful, seeing the former as a more complex and profound emotion leading a person with a taste for the sublime to "detest all chains, from the gilded variety worn at court to the irons weighing down the galley slave." This preference for the ethical over the simply aesthetic has led Lyotard to revive the sublime as a key term for postmodern criticism. He sees it as "a combination of pleasure and pain: pleasure in reason exceeding all presentation, pain in the imagination or sensibility proving inadequate to the concept" (Lyotard 1993: 15). The task of the sublime is then to "present the unpresentable," an appropriate role for the relentless visualizing of the postmodern era. Furthermore, because the sublime is generated by an attempt to present ideas that have no correlative in the natural world--for example, peace, equality, freedom-"the experience of the sublime feeling demands a sensitivity to Ideas that is not natural but acquired through culture" (Lyotard 1993: 71). Unlike the beautiful which can be experienced in nature or culture, the sublime is the creature of culture and is therefore central to visual culture. Of course, the representation of natural subjects can be sublime, as in the classic example of a shipwreck or storm at sea. However, the direct experience of a shipwreck cannot be sublime because one would presumably experience only pain and the (sublime) dimension of pleasure would be missing.

However, there is no question of a blanket endorsement of Lyotard's reworking of Kant. On the one hand, Kant dismissed all African art and religion as "trifling," as far removed from the sublime as he could imagine. To less prejudiced eyes, African sculptures like the nail-laden minkisi power figures (see chapter five) are remarkable instances of the combination of pleasure and pain that creates the sublime, as well as being motivated by the desire to show the unseeable. This naive Eurocentrism is not directly commented on by Lyotard but is echoed in his endorsement of a very traditional chronology of the avant-garde, in which the Impressionists give way to Cézanne who was demolished by the Cubists, in turn challenged by Marcel Duchamp. Any student who has taken an introductory art history class will recognize this pattern, which privileges the rise of abstraction as the preeminent story of modern art. Yet by now, and even when Lyotard was writing in 1982, it is clear that abstraction has ceased to be useful in destroying the contemporary sense of reality. Indeed, it has become a trivial part of that reality, signified most notably by the predilection of corporate buyers and sponsors for abstract art. When the great works of abstraction sit comfortably in the corporate boardroom, can it really continue to be a means to challenge what Lyotard rightly calls the "victory of capitalist technoscience"? When Philip Morris, the multinational tobacco company, enjoys sponsoring modern art retrospectives, like those of Picasso and Robert Rauschenberg in New York, under the slogan "The Spirit of Innovation"--suggesting of course that the true innovator defies convention and smokes--then the history of modernism has come to be repeated as farce.

The (post)modern destruction of reality is accomplished in everyday life, not in the studios of the avant-

garde. Just as the Situationists collected examples of the bizarre happenings that pass as normality from the newspapers, so can we now see the collapse of reality in everyday life from the mass visual media. In the early 1980s, postmodern photographers like Sherrie Levine and Richard Prince sought to question the authenticity of photography by appropriating photographs taken by other people. This dismissal of photography's claim to represent the truth is now a staple of popular culture. The cover story on the Weekly World News for February 25, 1997 was a follow-up to their 1992 "story" of the discovery of the skeletons of Adam and Eve in Denver, Colorado. Further analysis of the photograph now showed the skeleton of a baby girl, disclosing that the first couple had a hitherto unknown daughter. The subhead reads: "Puzzled Bible experts ask: Did Cain and Abel have a little sister?" The technique of enlarging photographs to reveal significant details is routinely used in surveillance and spy operations and was a standard device in films like Bladerunner and Rising Sun, enabling the heroes to make key breakthroughs in their cases. The Weekly World News parody offers an amusing counterpart to such beliefs in the power of photography to reveal hidden truths. At the same time, it contributes to a climate of suspicion in which O.J.Simpson's lawyer can plausibly dismiss a photograph showing his client wearing the rare Bruno Magli shoes worn by the killer as fakes, only to be outdone when thirty more pictures were discovered. One photograph alone no longer shows the truth. …[omission of discussion of soap opera/comic books]

At this point, many readers will be tempted to use the "common sense" retort. That is to say, common sense tells us that there is no need to overintellectualize the moment of looking. It is entirely obvious who looks, who is looked at and why. However, some reflection might lead us to conclude that looking is not as straightforward an activity as might be supposed. Why, for example, can the United States Supreme Court provide no better definition of obscenity than "I know it when I see it"? The Court has distinguished between the "indecent" which is permissible and the "obscene" which is not. However, while everyone understands the concept of pornography, it is hard to get any substantial number of people to agree what becomes obscene and therefore should be banned. When the city of Cincinnati prosecuted its own museum for exhibiting the photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe, the prosecution felt the obscenity of his work was such that it only needed to be shown to a jury for a conviction to follow. After listening to a number of museum curators and art historians, the jury disagreed. Similarly, in striking down the Communications Decency Act (1996), which sought to ban "indecent" material on the Internet, the United States Third Circuit Court of Appeals found the Act's definition of indecency hopelessly vague. The Act held to be indecent anything that: "in context, depicts or describes, in terms patently offensive as measured by contemporary community standards, sexual or excretory activities or organs." Chief Judge Dolores K. Sloviter saw the possibility that such general terms could be used to prosecute the contemporary equivalents of James Joyce's novel Ulysses, banned for obscenity on publication and now universally regarded as a classic. Neither truth nor obscenity are plain to see any longer. Milos Forman made his film The People vs Larry Flint as a celebration of the First Amendment, but many feminists saw it instead as glorifying the degradation of women in Hustler. This crisis of truth, reality and visualizing in everyday life is the ground on which visual culture studies seeks to act.

Culture

For many critics, the real problem with visual culture lies not in its emphasis on the importance of

visuality but in its use of a cultural framework to explain the history of the visual. A 1996 survey published in the art journal October seemed to demonstrate a widespread nervousness amongst art historians that the cultural turn would lead to the relativizing of all critical judgement. Speaking from the eminence of Yale University, art historian Thomas Crow saw visual culture as being to art history what New Age mysticism is to philosophy. He thundered: "To surrender [the] discipline to a misguidedly populist impulse would universally be regarded as the abrogation of a fundamental responsibility" (October 1996: 35). Crow takes it to be self-evident that his condescending reference to the "mass-market bookstore"-- his only argument as to why a democratic approach to visual media would be "misguided"-- will produce a sympathetic shudder of horror in his readers. Much of the rest of the survey was devoted to demolishing what Carol Armstrong called the "predilection for the disembodied image" that is oddly attributed to visual culture (October 1996: 27). It may seem surprising that formalist art historians would be so concerned at these supposed practices, but, as Tom Conley pointed out, they are using a "fraudulent" scare tactic designed to distract from the pleasure of realizing that visual culture "cannot find a disciplinary place" (October 1996: 32) and therefore challenges the cozy familiarity of traditional university power structures.

The rush to condemn culture as a frame of reference for visual studies relies on it being possible to distinguish between the products of culture and those of art. However, any examination of the term, quickly shows that this is a false opposition. Art is culture both in the sense of high culture and in the anthropological sense of human artifact. There is no outside to culture. Rather than dispose of the term, we need to ask what it means to explain certain kinds of historical change in a cultural framework How does visual culture relate to other uses of the term culture? Using culture as a term of reference is both problematic and inescapable. Culture brings with it difficult legacies of race and racism that cannot simply be evaded by arguing that in the (post)modern period we no longer act as our intellectual predecessors did, while continuing to use their terminology. Nor can an assertion of the of the importance of art--whether as painting, avant-garde film or video--escape the cultural framework.

For, as Raymond Williams famously observed, culture is "one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language." The term acquired two meanings in the nineteenth century that continue to shape popular and academic understandings of the cultural. In 1869, the English scholar Matthew Arnold published an influential book entitled Culture and Anarchy, which posed the two terms as opposites in conflict. Arnold was later influentially to define culture as the product of elites: "the best that has been thought and known." For many scholars and general consumers of literature and the arts, this sense of culture as high culture remains the most important meaning of the term. It was adopted by art critic Clement Greenberg in his famous essay "Avant-garde and Kitsch" (1939), which defended the avant-garde project of modernist high art against the mass-produced vulgarities of kitsch. However, culture was also used in a different sense as being the entire social network of a particular society. It is in this sense that we speak of someone being from a particular culture. For the Victorian anthropologist E. B. Tylor and many subsequent anthropologists, the key question was not to determine what were the best intellectual products of a particular time and place but to understand how human society came to construct an artificial, non-natural and hence cultural way of life. Tylor introduced the notion in his book Primitive Culture (1871): "Culture or Civilization, taken in its widest ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities

and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Young 1995: 45). Anthropology thus subsumed not just the visual arts and crafts but all human activity as its field of enterprise.

Clearly, cultural studies and visual culture owe their sense of culture as an interpretive framework far more to Tylor than to Arnold. This legacy is not without its problems. Tylor was a firm believer in race science, arguing that "a race may keep its special characters for over thirty centuries, or a hundred generations" (Young 1995: 140). Thus while evolution of different races was possible in theory, Tylor here asserted that there had been no important change throughout recorded human history, setting the different races at very different levels of attainment. In other words, different human societies manifested different stages of human evolution, allowing the anthropologist to read the story backwards. The anthropological sense of culture came to rely on a contrast between the modern present time of the (white, Western) anthropologist and the pre-modern past of his or her (non-white, non-western) subject. This linear model of evolution was made intelligible by being visualized, a process anthropologist Johannes Fabian has called visualism: "The ability to visualize a culture or society almost becomes synonymous with understanding it" (Fabian 1983: 106). This visualism is strikingly similar to the postmodern desire to visualize knowledge and forces us to examine whether visual culture can escape this racialized inheritance.

In finding a way out of the culture labyrith, visual culture develops the idea of culture as expressed by Stuart Hall: "Cultural practice then becomes a realm where one engages with and elaborates a politics." Politics does not refer to party politics but to a sense that culture is where people define their identity and that it changes in accord with the needs of individuals and communities to express that identity. In the global diaspora of the postmodern world, transcultural approaches will be a key tool. Both the anthropological and artistic models of culture rest on being able to make a distinction between the culture of one ethnicity, nation, or people and another. While it has been important to deploy what Gayatri Spivak called a "strategic essentialism" in order to validate the study of non-white and non-Western visual culture in its own right, it is now important to do the hard work of moving beyond such essentialism towards an understanding of the plural realities that coexist and are in conflict with each other both in the present and in the past. The wrong way to do this is already much in evidence, as an insistence on a return to the High Modernist tradition. Visual culture, by contrast, must describe what Martin J. Powers has called "a fractal network, permeated with patterns from all over the globe." There are several implications to recasting visual culture as fractal, rather than linear. Firstly, it precludes any possibility that one overarching narrative can contain all the possibilities of the new global/local system for fractals may always be extended. Second, a fractal network has key points of interface and interaction that are of more than ordinary complexity and importance. For example, the detail of a Mandelbrot pattern can be observed more and more closely until it suddenly opens into another "layer" of the pattern. Thus the "culture" section of this volume looks at a number of specific instances of the intersection of race, class and gender in visual media in order to elucidate their complex operations. While Modernism might have cast these patterns into a disciplinary grid, the network is now a far more satisfactory model for the dissemination of visual culture. Powers does not simply argue for an all-inclusive worldwide web of the visual image, but emphasizes the power differentials across the network. At present, it must be recognised that visual culture remains a discourse of the West about the West but in that framework "the issue", as David Morley reminds us, "is how to think of modernity, not so much

as specifically or necessarily European...but only contingently so" (Morley 1996: 350) [see chapters four to six]. Seen in the long span of history, Euramericans, to use the Japanese term, have dominated modernity for a relatively brief period of time that may well now be drawing to a close.

Western culture has sought to naturalize these histories of power. Perhaps the most glaring instance of such condescencion in recent times was the 1984 exhibition "Primitivism in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern" at New York's Museum of Modern Art. Here works by leading European modernists such as Picasso and Giacometti were exhibited alongside works of art from African and Oceanian cultures as if the only function of these objects was to be appropriated as a formal influence by Western artists. The pieces displayed were alotted no value or meaning in themselves except as sources for the superior modernist artists the exhibition wished its audience to focus upon. A decade later curator William Rubin sees nothing wrong in this strategy: "Modernism is a modern Western tradition, not an African or Polynesian one. What should be wrong with MoMA showing tribal art within the context of its interests?" (Grimes 1996: 39) The problem lies in the assumption that the "West" is a hermetically sealed cultural entity, whose border patrols may allow in other cultures as sources for Western ideas but never as equal and interactive entities. In forming approaches to visual culture, a key task is to find means of writing and narration that allow for the transcultural permeability of cultures and the instability of identity. For despite the recent focus on identity as a means of resolving cultural and political dilemmas, it is increasingly clear that identity is as much a problem as it is a solution for those between cultures-which, in the global diaspora of the present moment, means all of us. The Peruvian-born artist Kukuli Verlade Barrioneuvo has given this dilemma eloquent expression:

> I am a Westernized individual. I do not say I am a Western individual, because I did not create this culture-- I am a product of colonization....We have to face that reality. To face it is to acknowledge my mixed race, to acknowledge that I am not Indian, and that I am not white. That does not mean I have an ambiguity, but that I have a new identity: the identity of a colonized individual. I feel hurt when I see what colonization has made of the people I come from--the mixed race. I am not an Indian person, I have both heritages (Miller 1995: 95).

This experience of both heritages combining to form a new third form is what I shall call transculture, following Fernando Ortiz. The culture in visual culture will seek to be this constantly changing dynamic of transculture, rather than the static edifice of culture (See chapter four).

Everyday life

The transcultural experience of the visual in everyday life is, then, the territory of visual culture. How can we determine what should be called "everyday life"? Henri Lefebvre argued in his influential Introduction to Everyday Life that it is a key site of the interaction between the everyday and the modern: "two connected, correlated phenomena that are neither absolutes nor entities: everyday life and modernity, the one crowning and concealing the other, revealing it and veiling it" (Lefebvre 1971: 24). Visual experience in this sense is an event resulting from the intersection of the everyday and the modern that takes place across the "wandering lines" marked by consumers traversing the grids of

modernism (de Certeau 1984: xviii). In his analysis of The Practice of Everyday Life, Michel de Certeau celebrated patterns of "[d]welling, moving about, speaking, reading, shopping and cooking" that seemed to offer a range of tactics to the consumer beyond the reach of the surveillance of modern society (de Certeau 1984: 40).

The consumer is the key agent in postmodern capitalist society. Capital began as money, the means of exchange between goods, and was accumulated through trade. It achieved independence in the early stages of capitalist culture as finance capital, generating interest on investments and loans. In Marxist analysis, capitalism creates profit by exploiting the difference between the revenue generated by hired labour and the amount it costs to hire that labour. This "surplus value" was the basis for Marxist economics and politics for a century after the publication of Capital in 1867. Yet it is now clear that capital continues to generate profits far in excess of any surplus value that can be extracted from individual workers. Capital has commodified all aspects of everyday life, including the human body and even the process of looking in itself. In 1967 the Situationist critic Guy Debord named what he called the "society of the spectacle", that is to say, a culture entirely in sway to a spectacular consumer culture "whose function is to make history forgotten within culture" (Debord 1977: 191). In the society of the spectacle, individuals are dazzled by the spectacle into a passive existence within mass consumer culture, aspiring only to acquire yet more products. The rise of an image dominated culture is due to the fact that "[t]he spectacle is capital to such a degree of accumulation that it becomes an image" (Debord 1977: 32). The connection between labour and capital is lost in the dazzle of the spectacle. In the spectacular society we are sold the sizzle rather than the steak, the image rather than the object. Jonathan L. Beller has termed this development the "attention theory of value" (Beller 1994: 5). Media seek to attract our attention and in so doing create a profit. Thus the modern film costs a spectacular amount of money in order to catch our jaded attention and thus turn a profit on its investment. However, given that over three-quarters of Hollywood movies fail, it is a high-risk enterprise that only the most wealthy corporations can afford to underwrite. Cinema is in fact archetypal of the capitalist enterprise in Beller's analysis: "Assembly line production, which entails the cutting and editing of matter/capital is a proto-cinematic process, while the circulation of commodities was a form of proto-cinema-images, abstracted from the human world and flowing just out of reach" (Beller 1996: 215). Yet as consumer capitalism continued to accelerate, it soon became clear that Debord's society of the spectacle was itself the product of the postwar consumer boom, rather than a newly stable form of modern society. French philosopher Jean Baudrillard announced the end of the society of the spectacle in 1983. Instead, he declared the age of the "simulacrum", that is to say, a copy with no original. The simulacrum was the final stage of the history of the image, moving from a state in which "it masks the absence of a basic reality" to a new epoch in which "it bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum" (Baudrillard 1984: 256). Baudrillard's famous example was the theme park Disneyland which he saw as existing "to conceal the fact that it is the 'real' country, all of 'real' America, which is Disneyland" (Baudrillard 1984: 262). Behind this simulacrum lay "the murderous capacity of images, murderers of the real." Baudrillard's nostalgia for a past in which a "basic reality" could actually be experienced is analogous to the American critic Fredric Jameson's Marxist critique of what he sees as the image culture of "late capitalism" (Jameson 1991). For the pattern of modernity described by Lefebvre and de Certeau can no longer be used as the backdrop to everyday life. Far from being unknown, patterns of consumption are mapped with remarkable precision by ATMs, credit cards, and check-out scanners, while urban

movement is recorded by police and other security scanners. There is a generalized sense of crisis in everyday life, without any clear solutions being available.

In his analysis of the global culture of postmodernism, Arjun Appadurai has highlighted several new components of contemporary life that move us beyond de Certeau's celebration of local resistance. Firstly, Appadurai notes a consistent tension between the local and the global, the one influencing the other and vice versa that he terms the interaction between homogenization and heterogenization (Appadurai 1990: 6). As a result, it no longer makes sense to locate cultural activity solely within national or geographic boundaries, as in the terms Western culture, French film, or African music. To take the last example, much African music is now distributed and produced in Paris rather than on the continent itself. That is not to say that it is no longer African and has become French but that the geographical location of cultural practice is not the key to its definition. The local, subcultural approach of so much cultural studies work has been overtaken by the complexities of the global cultural economy. Appadurai proposes that this economy is dominated by

> A new role for the imagination in social life. To grasp this new role, we need to bring together: the old idea of images, especially mechanically produced images…; the idea of the imagined community (in Anderson's sense); and the French idea of the imaginary, as a constructed landscape of collective aspirations….The image, the imagined and the imaginary-these are all terms which direct us to something critical and new in global cultural processes: the imagination as a social practice" (Appadurai 1990: 5).

At stake is a relationship between the globalization of culture, the new forms of modernity and the mass migrations and diasporas that mark the present moment as being distinct from the past.

For many, the difficulty of imaging and imagining this constantly changing situation is experienced as a crisis. Describing the collapse of everyday life in Cameroon that has unfolded since 1990, Achille Mbembe points to the breakdown in the modern apparatus of circulation, such as traffic regulations, skyscapers, electric lighting and automobiles. In this moment, "the physicality of the crisis reduces people to a precarious position that affects the very way in which they define themselves." The sudden failure of the capitalist mode of circulation does not lead simply to poverty but to a situation in which "Cameroonian society's long-standing capacity to 'imagine' itself in a certain manner-to mentally author, and from this, institute itself-has been contradicted and now seems thrown into question" (Mbembe 1995). Of course, such dilemmas are not limited to Central Africa but could equally apply to parts of Russia, Italy and American cities like Washington D.C. In order for these new formsof social practice to be comprehensible, they will have to be imagined and imaged-visualized-in ways that go beyond the "imagined community" of the nation-state or the daily life imagined by individuals in de Certeau's analysis. Appadurai asserts that: "The work of the imagination…is neither purely emancipatory nor entirely disciplined but is a space of contestation in which individuals and groups seek to annex the global into their own practices of the modern….Ordinary people have begun to deploy their imaginations in the practice of their everyday lives" (Appadurai 1997: 4-5). In this new situation, cultural studies will have to abandon its traditional preference for identifying and celebrating the sites of resistance in everyday life, while dismissing other aspects of the quotidian as banal or even reactionary.

New patterns of the imagination are being created in highly unpredictable fashion. Who, for example, might have anticipated that the death of a flamboyant princess would have mobilized the global popular imagination as it did in September 1997 (see chapter seven)? As Irit Rogoff observes, individuals create unexpected visual narratives in everyday life from "the scrap of an image [which] connects with a sequence of a film and with the corner of a bill board or the window display of a shop we have passed by" (Rogoff 1998). Such everyday visual experience, from the Internet to the Met, is still beyond the reach of the spin doctors, pollsters and other demons of the contemporary imagination.

In this moment, it is becoming clear that a new pixelated mode of global visuality is being formed that is distinct from the cinematic assembly-line image and from the simulacrum of 1980s postmodern culture. In the nineteenth century, photography transformed the human memory into a visual archive. By the early twentieth century, Georges Duhamel complained that: "I can no longer think what I want to think, the moving images are substituted for my own thoughts." Confronted with the question of whether photography was art, Marcel Duchamp said that he hoped photography would "make people despise painting until something else will make photography unbearable." The pixelated image has made photography unbearable, both literally as Princess Diana's relationship to the paparazzi attests, but also metaphorically. In the work of contemporary photographers like Cindy Sherman, David Wojnarowicz and Christian Boltanski, photography is unbearable in the sense that it is sublime.

The pixelated image is perhaps too contested and contradictory a medium to be sublime. As a means of image creation, the pixelated screen is created of both electronic signals and empty space. A pixel, a term derived from the phrase "picture element," composes the electronic image of the television or computer monitor. Pixels are not just points of light but are also memory units, with the number of pixels possible depending on computer memory or signal bandwidth. Even the most sophisticated screen has a certain emptiness to it, even if that space is invisible in high bandwidth media like television, but which can be clearly seen in the low-resolution media favored by many contemporary film and video makers, not to mention the computer screens that most people use. Unlike photography and film which attested to the necessary presence of some exterior reality, the pixelated image reminds us of its necessary artificiality and absence. It is here and not here at once. It is interactive but along lines clearly set by the global corporations that manufacture the necessary computer and television equipment. The global freedoms of the Internet are themselves only possible because of the Cold War need to create an indestructible communications network. Life in the pixel zone is necessarily ambivalent.

For providers-those who used to be called artists, film and video makers, television programmers and so on-what is at stake is the difficult task entitled "Capturing Eyeballs" by the futuristic Wired magazine (October 1997). This task is of such weight to the new forms of the capitalist economy that it has transformed leisure into a new form of work. This process has already been fully realized in the United States' film industry. On any given Friday night at the two peak seasons of summer and the Christmas holiday season, as many as a dozen major new films may open in American cinemas. By Saturday night, their fates will be determined by the first two days receipts. Subsequent screen bookings, length of theater release and speed of descent to the film hell of airplane and video programming are all set in motion. For the consumer, this means that going to a film represents a strategic choice as to what will be available in the subsequent weeks and beyond. Serious fans of Woody Allen or Star Trek movies may

choose to catch what they suspect to be an inferior version of the genre just to ensure that there will be another, hopefully better, one. The highly engaged fans of Titanic rewrote the rules for screen bookings by continuing to see the film over and over again. As a result, media ranging from the tabloid TV show Entertainment Tonight to the austere New York Times all carry details of box-office receipts that would formerly have been published only in Variety. This visual engagement has extended not just to individual programming in film, television and the Internet but to what kinds of visual media will continue to be available. We are all engaged in the business of looking. Where our eyes alight determines what it is possible to see. You may choose to use Netscape as your Internet browser, only to find that certain sites are inaccessible without Microsoft Explorer. That choice will help determine the future of the Internet. Entire formats, like Digital Video Disk and WebTV, will succeed or fail according to their ability to attract new users. In this complex interface of reality and virtuality, there is nothing everyday about everyday life any more. Visual culture used to be seen as a distraction from the serious business of text and history. It is now the locus of cultural and historical change.