

PATAPHYSICAL¹ REROUTING

An Operational Manual for LAB D.O.A.
(The Laboratory for the Development of Oppositional Art)²

An Experiment in Mediatized Theory

Matthew Causey

Note: I have been exploring the use of video in the practice of theory in a form that can be called *Teletheory*³ or *Mediatized Theory*. The videotapes I have edited are structured so that the language of the paper is read against graphic overlays and rupturing fragments of audio bites and visual montage. The following article/script is an attempt to display in journal form the various texts of audio, video and language that make up the project. My interest is to be able to theorize visually, sonically, and performatively outside the domain of the typographic text.

Fade up on:

Title Card: PATAPHYSICAL REROUTING

Title Card: 1, for to end yet again

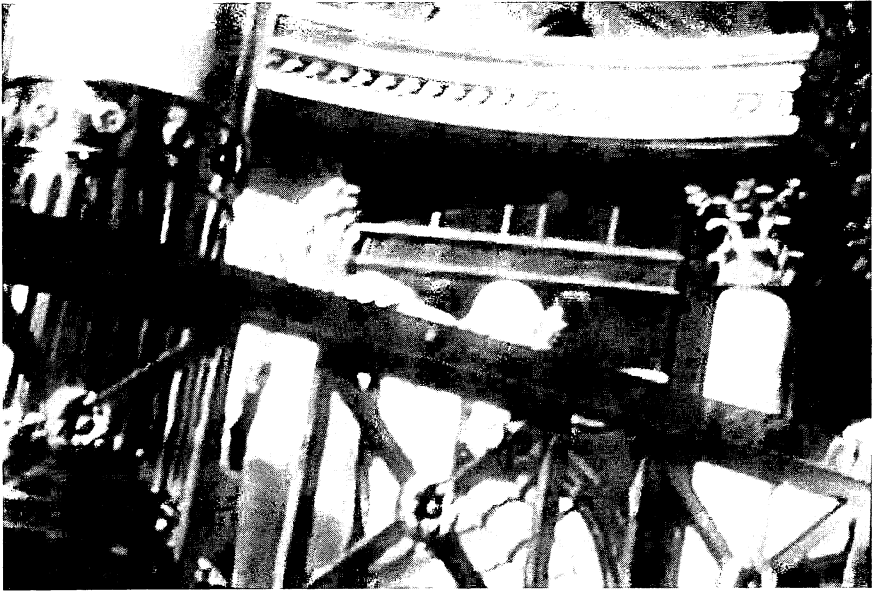
Music: "St. Saviour's Road" by Swell Maps.⁴

CUT TO:

1. Talking Head of the THEORIST

The Theorist is revealed in a solarized, black and white close-up wearing headphones and sunglasses. He speaks directly to the camera.

Matthew Causey, is Visiting Assistant Professor at Georgia Institute of Technology in the Department of Literature, Communication and Culture. A theatre and video artist, his writings and reviews have appeared in *Essays in Theatre*, *Postmodern Culture*, and *Theatre Journal* and he is currently developing a manuscript, "Post-Organic Performance," on the issues of mediated and virtual performance.



CUT TO:

THEORIST

There are two major phenomena which have required the theatre to end yet again; to once again reinvent itself. The first concerns . . .

*Title Card: **THE CULTURAL LOGIC OF LATE CAPITALISM: A WORLD WIDE HYPER-COMMODIFICATION** as the Theorist continues to speak in a voice over.*

CUT TO:

2. EXT. LAS VEGAS - - DAY

A series of hand-held shots of the fountain in front of Caesar's Palace are played. The images strobe as the camera spins about the space flashing shots of a statue of Caesar, cascading water, marquees, and traffic, under the intense glare of the Nevada Sun.

THEORIST (Voice Over)

. . . the cultural logic of late capitalism [Jameson]; a world-wide hyper-commodification, which envelopes and implicates all activity in its strategy and establishes an extension of the cultural and the economic into all societal spheres.

*Title Card superimposed over shots of Vegas: **THE MOMENT OF HYPER-COMMODIFICATION PROBLEMATIZES THE NOTION OF CRITICAL DISTANCE AND VOIDS THE THEATRE OF ITS POWER TO EVALUATE.***

THEORIST (Voice Over)

The moment of hyper-commodification problematizes the notion of critical distance and voids the theatre of its power to evaluate. In this model of late capitalism, radical critiques which have the capacity to reach a large audience are promoted rather than censored and through such distribution venues as book and ticket sales these critiques assist rather than deter the opposition . . .

*Title Card superimposed over shots of Vegas: **LEAVING THE NOTION OF AN AVANT-GARDE CHALLENGED AND PARADOXICAL.***



**THE
PROPULSION OF
SIMULATION STRATEGY
THROUGHOUT OUR
GLOBAL SPACE**



**SHORT-CIRCUITS THE
CONNECTION BETWEEN
THE REAL AND THE
IMAGINARY BY
SUBSTITUTING SIGNS
OF THE REAL FOR THE
REAL ITSELF**

THEORIST (Voice Over)

. . . leaving the notion of an avant-garde challenged and paradoxical.
The second phenomenon is . . .

*Title Card superimposed over shots of Vegas: **THE PROPULSION OF SIMULATION STRATEGY THROUGHOUT OUR GLOBAL SPACE.***

THEORIST (Voice Over)

. . . the propulsion of simulation strategy throughout our global space,
which, as Baudrillard has noted, . . .

*Title Card superimposed over shots of Vegas: **SHORT-CIRCUITS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE REAL AND IMAGINARY BY SUBSTITUTING SIGNS OF THE REAL FOR THE REAL ITSELF.***

THEORIST (Voice Over)

. . . short-circuits the connection between the real and the imaginary
by substituting signs of the real for the real itself [Desert Storm]. A
point can be made that the image has always attempted to substitute
the sign for the real, but with the expansive proliferation of the
television and media the opportunity to disguise the "real" through
simulation has never been so great or so influential.

CUT TO:

3. EXT. LAS VEGAS—DAY

The Theorist, with a camcorder on his shoulder, videos himself in a reflective wall of a city building while occasionally panning over to a reflected image of the statue of Caesar.

THEORIST (Voice Over)

The paired phenomena throw into question both the capacity for
transgressive or resistant performance and even more fundamental, the
wisdom of being involved in the hegemonic and stultifying practice of
image-making.

CUT TO:

*Title Card: **2, plato was right?***



CUT TO:

4. Talking Head of the THEORIST

THEORIST

Eric Havelock in *Preface to Plato* (1963) and Downing and Bazargan in *image and ideology* (1991) reconfigure the commonly held notions of Plato's so-called anti-theatrical prejudice and his theoretical banishment of the poets from his ideal state.

CUT TO:

5. Clip from the film VERTIGO (Alfred Hitchcock)⁵

In a museum, a woman (Kim Novack) sits in front of a large painting of a woman. A man (James Stewart) enters the room and looks at the woman observing the painting. He walks toward her glancing at the artworks along the wall. He stops and from across the room he watches her absorption with the painting. He notices a bouquet next to the woman which is identical to the bouquet in the painting. The camera closes in on the woman's hair, a spiral bun, and pans up to the painting to reveal the same hair style. The man gazes in wonder.

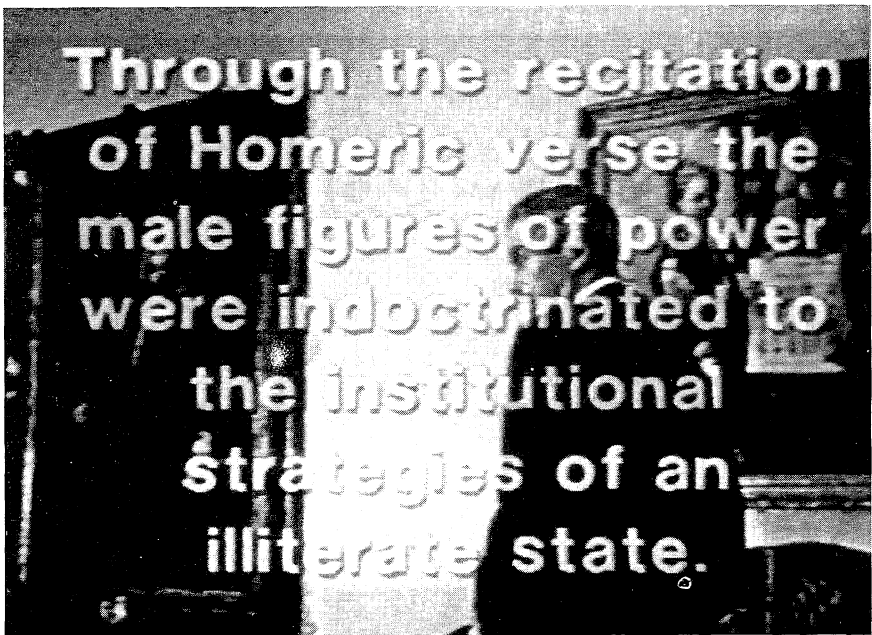
THEORIST (Voice Over)

What once could have been read, and in many cases still is, as "just plain wrong" and a primitive fear of mimesis is now looked on as a radical critique of the ancient oral traditions of information distribution and pedagogical techniques.

Title Card superimposed over the scene from VERTIGO: THROUGH THE RECITATION OF HOMERIC VERSE THE MALE FIGURES OF POWER WERE INDOCTRINATED, BY THE REPETITION OF IMAGES, TO THE INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIES OF AN ILLITERATE STATE.

THEORIST (Voice Over)

Through the recitation of Homeric verse the male figures of power were indoctrinated, by the repetition of the images, to the institutional strategies of an illiterate state. Havelock theorizes that Plato's revolutionary declaration was towards a capacity for abstraction, towards a transcendence of imagery, "towards a notion for signifying



the autonomous self or soul."⁶ Plato's theory models the process of image indoctrination as a closure for the individual's ability to rethink/critique those images. If one's lexicon is shaped by imagistic memorization the capacity for critical, creative thinking is detoured.

Title Card superimposed over the scene from VERTIGO: THE TERMINISTIC SCREEN THAT THE INDIVIDUAL IS TIED TO ALLOWS ONLY FOR THE REGENERATION OF THE ESTABLISHED IDEOLOGY OF THE FORMER IMAGES.

THEORIST (Voice Over)

The terministic screen that the individual is tied to allows only for the regeneration of the established ideology of the former images.

CUT TO:

6. Time Lapse shots of Television Broadcasts

Music: "Graveyard Shift" by Swell Maps.⁷

Appropriated from the film *Koyaanisqatsi*,⁸ multiple broadcasts of commercial television are shown at an intense velocity. Hours of commercials, newscasts, sports, dramas, religious programming, are shown in a matter of seconds.

THEORIST (Voice Over)

After 25 centuries we are still in need of banishing the poets, in our case, the image-makers: not only the obvious suspects of television/advertising/cinema, but also the plastic and performing arts. The global community has been taught to think, and continually taught not to think, not to abstract, not to critique and to assume the ideology of authority by the onslaught of the production of images. The coercion of the production of image is not only a strategy of institutional powers but inherent in any work that "solves" the issues it presents and denies the resolution of a dialectic within the spectator. I am not suggesting a dismissal of commercial television (although it couldn't hurt) and cinema (it's too much fun) but I do call for the development of techniques, even if only within the closed world of "new" art/performance, to disrupt the image-making hegemony and brutal simulations of the media.

CUT TO:

7. Series of Title Cards with Voice Over of the Theorist*Music: "Radioactivity" by Kraftwerk.⁹***THEORIST (Voice Over)**

1. Through ideology images constitute the subject/perceiver who constitutes the image through ideology . . . (repeat).
2. The ideology of an image is rarely apparent.
3. Ideology is the channel through which the image and the subject converse.
4. Conflicting ideologies (between subject/object, object/object, subject/subject) create a dialectic.
5. The dialectic necessitates the master/slave paradigm.
6. One ideology becomes subservient to the other.
7. Sometimes rupturing an image upturns its ideology.
8. Orbital ruptures deter the new ideology from taking hold. (For how long? With what result?)

CUT TO:

8. Talking Head of the Theorist**THEORIST**

Is there an escape route, a theatre beyond the domination of image manufacturing, outside of a theatre which shapes this type of experience:

CUT TO:

9. Scrolling Title Cards with Voice Over

THEORIST (Voice Over)

performance	vs.	spectator
knowing projection	vs.	decoding perceiver
charismatic other	vs.	indoctrinated learner
power/presence/authority	vs.	disempowered/absence
master	vs.	slave

CUT TO:

10. Talking Head of the Theorist**THEORIST**

Performance artists such as Vito Acconci in *Following Piece* (1969) have attempted to break with hegemonic image manufacturing. But within a performance work that sustains the spectator/performance model by what means and for how long can we defer an ideology taking hold of the images/signs presented?

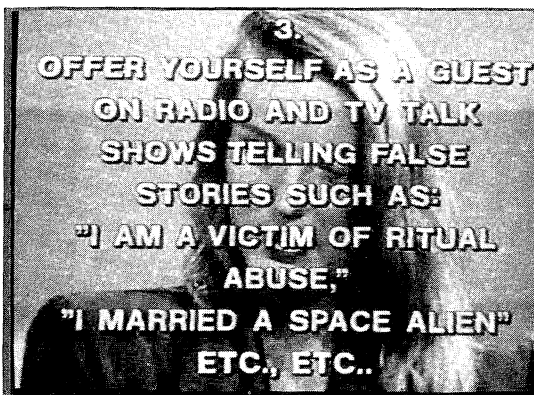
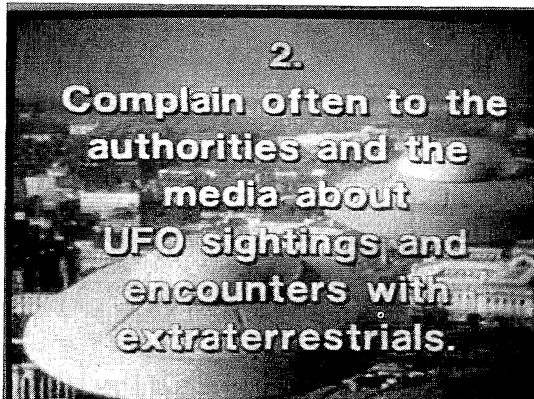
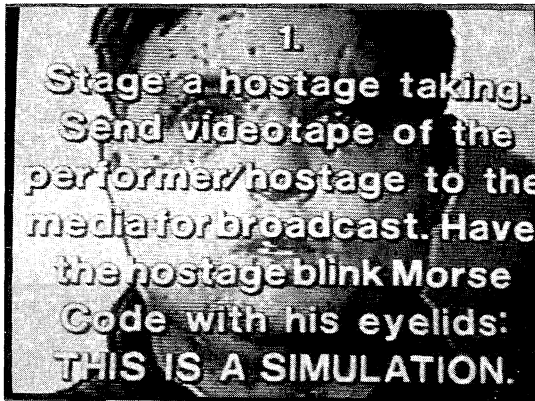
CUT TO:

11. Photographs of various Minimalist and Formalist Sculptures**THEORIST (Voice Over)**

I am not attempting a resuscitation of anti-theatrical prejudice (ala Michael Fried in his famous Minimalism vs. Formalism debate in "Art and Objecthood"¹⁰) by calling for an abolition of "theatrical" object production and image-making performance (given the temporal/spatial formation of theatre the production of the theatrical image is an inevitability). The issue is to understand the generative and collusionary process of image production and the conspiracy of presence and authority toward the disempowering of the spectator by the charismatic other.¹¹ This model is omnipresent in the postmodern condition of multi-national capital and media controlled (i.e. simulated) information.

CUT TO:

12. Title Card: 3 WAYS OUT (WHICH MAY OR MAY NOT REPRESENT A MOVEMENT 'OUT OF' OR 'AWAY FROM')



THEORIST (Voice Over)

I will suggest three ways out. As this paper attempts, it may be useful to invoke (as implied by Baudrillard, Pefanis and Mann¹²) Jarry's "science of imaginary solutions."

Title Card: AGAINST A HYPER-REALIST SYSTEM, THE ONLY STRATEGY IS PATAPHYSICAL, A KIND OF 'SCIENCE OF IMAGINARY SOLUTIONS,' THAT IS TO SAY, A SCIENCE-FICTION OF RETURNING THE SYSTEM AGAINST ITSELF TO THE EXTREME LIMIT OF SIMULATION, A REVERSIBLE SIMULATION IN A HYPERLOGIC OF DESTRUCTION AND DEATH.

THEORIST (Voice Over)

Against a hyper-realist system, the only strategy is pataphysical, a kind of "science of imaginary solutions," that is to say, "a science-fiction of returning the system against itself to the extreme limit of simulation, a reversible simulation in a hyperlogic of destruction and death."¹³

CUT TO:

13. Title Card: SUGGESTED PERFORMANCE WORKS FOR THE LABORATORY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF OPPOSITIONAL ART (at the extreme limit of simulation)

*Music: "The Stairs are Like an Avalanche" by Swell Maps.¹⁴
Voice Over of the Theorist is over-amplified and distorted.*

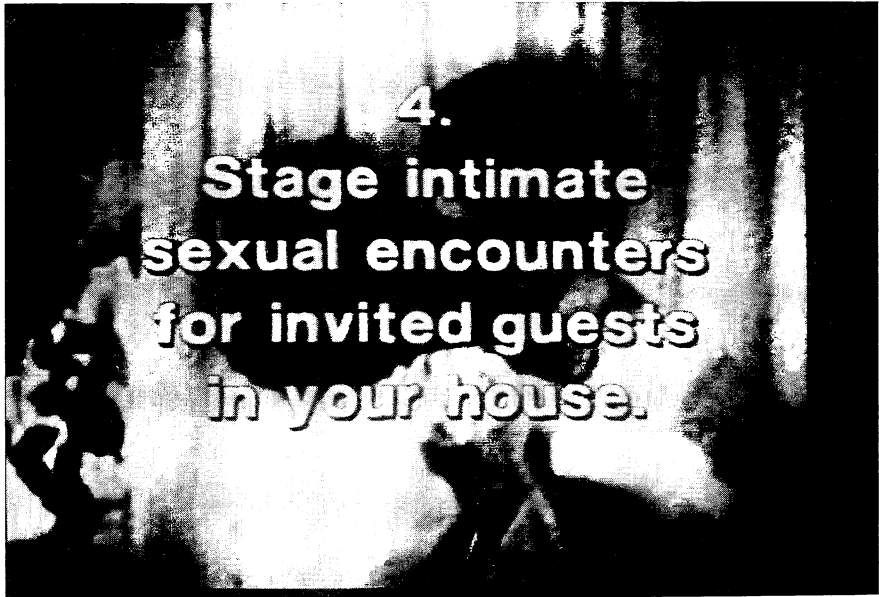
Title Card superimposed over shot of an American pilot/hostage from the Gulf War:

1. STAGE A HOSTAGE TAKING. SEND VIDEOTAPE OF THE PERFORMER/HOSTAGE TO THE MEDIA FOR BROADCAST. HAVE THE HOSTAGE BLINK MORSE CODE: THIS IS A SIMULATION.

Title Card superimposed over shot of flying saucers hovering over Washington DC:

2. COMPLAIN OFTEN TO THE AUTHORITIES AND THE MEDIA ABOUT UFO SIGHTINGS AND ENCOUNTERS WITH EXTRATERRESTRIALS.

Title Card superimposed over shot of a woman with a mutilated face being interviewed by Sally Jessy Raphael:



3. OFFER YOURSELF AS A GUEST ON RADIO AND TV TALK SHOWS TELLING FALSE STORIES SUCH AS, "I AM A VICTIM OF RITUAL ABUSE," "I MARRIED A SPACE ALIEN," "I HAD A SEX CHANGE."

Title Card superimposed over a shot of naked couple kissing:

4. STAGE INTIMATE SEXUAL ENCOUNTERS FOR INVITED GUESTS IN YOUR HOUSE.

Title Card superimposed over shot of George Bush giving a speech:

5. RUN FOR PUBLIC OFFICE.

Title Card :

6. PLACE ADVERTISEMENTS ON TELEVISION AND RADIO FOR PHONY PRODUCTS.

Title Card superimposed over shots of a bride and groom at the Chapel of Love in Las Vegas, Nevada:

7. OPEN A WEDDING CHAPEL/FUNERAL HOME IN LAS VEGAS AND OFFER LIVE RECREATIONS OF FAMOUS WEDDINGS AND WAKES. OFFER ACTUAL WEDDINGS/FUNERALS PRESIDED OVER BY STAR IMPERSONATORS: ELVIS, MARILYN, HOMER SIMPSON.

Title Card superimposed over sculpture by Jeff Koons:

8. STAGE ART SHOWS USING OTHER PEOPLE'S ART. DON'T TELL THE ARTISTS AND ATTEMPT TO SELL THE WORK.

Title Card superimposed over a tele-preacher and his choir:

9. START A CHURCH (THE TEMPLE OF THE CYCLOPS BABY) AND MAKE OUTRAGEOUS CLAIMS FOR HEALINGS AND REDEMPTIVE POWERS. CHARGE FEES TO SEE THE BABY IN THE BACK ROOM.

Title Card:

10. ATTEND HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL. DO YOUR BEST. TAKE A JOB ON WALL STREET. HAVE A WIFE OR HUSBAND AND TWO KIDS.

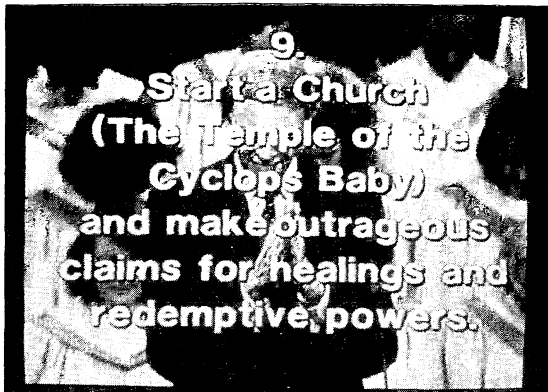
Title Card superimposed over an issue of THE DRAMA REVIEW:

11. WHEN WRITING THEORY OPENLY PLAGIARIZE AND ATTEMPT TO BE PUBLISHED IN THE JOURNALS FROM WHICH YOU STOLE.

7.
OPEN A WEDDING
CHAPEL/FUNERAL HOME
IN LAS VEGAS AND
OFFER LIVE
RECREATIONS OF
FAMOUS WEDDINGS
AND WAKES.

OFFER ACTUAL
WEDDINGS/FUNERALS
PRESIDED OVER
BY STAR
IMPERSONATORS:
ELVIS
MARILYN
HOMER SIMPSON.

8.
Stage art shows
using other people's
art.
Don't tell the artists
and attempt to sell
the work.



10.
Attend Harvard
Business School.
Do your best.
Take a job on Wall St.
Have a wife or husband
and two kids.



11.

**When writing theory
openly plagiarize
and attempt to be
published in the
journals from which
you stole.**

AVANT-GARDE

=

**AESTHETIC
ACTIVISM**

CUT TO:

14. Talking Head of the Theorist

THEORIST

A *PATAPHYSICAL REROUTING* takes account of the morphology outlined by Baudrillard that marks the closures of . . .

15. Scrolling Titles: linear discourse, classical era of the sign, era of production, representation

THEORIST (Voice Over)

"linear discourse," the "classical era of the sign," the "era of production" and that of representation. If, as Julian Pefanis delineates . . .

Title Card: the sign is liberated from any archaic obligation to designate anything at all.

THEORIST (Voice Over)

". . . the sign is liberated from any archaic obligation to designate anything at all"¹⁵ then any and all truth referents are voided. And in the absence of truth referents...

Title Card: anything (and everything) is "just gaming."

THEORIST (Voice Over)

. . . anything (and everything) is "just gaming."

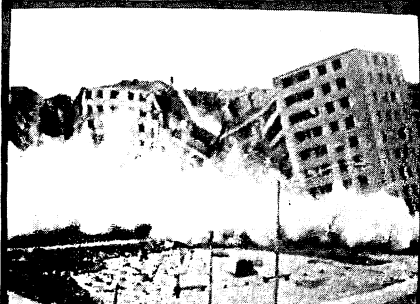
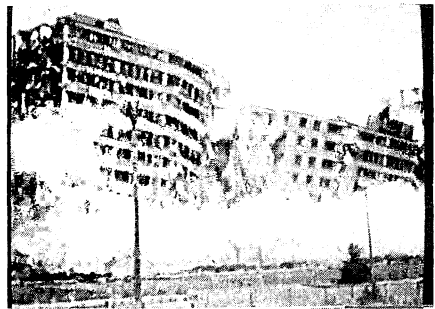
16. Talking Head of the Theorist

THEORIST

PATAPHYSICAL REROUTINGS "return the system against itself: in a hyperlogic of destruction and death." The theory, the practice, being promulgated here is a para-oppositional discourse. As noted by Mann, Poggioli in *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*¹⁶ defines the avant-garde...

Title Card: Avant-Garde = Aesthetic Activism

AVANT-GARDE = ART VS. THE INSTITUTION OF ART



THEORIST (Voice Over)

. . .as aesthetic activism; Bürger is his *Theory of the Avant-Garde*¹⁷
positions the discourse as a configuration of . . .

Title Card: Avant-Garde = Art vs. The Institution of Art

THEORIST (Voice Over)

. . . art which attacks the institution of art.

CUT TO:

17. Series of shots of buildings, construction equipment and bridge collapsing

*Music: "Flying" by the Beatles.*¹⁸

THEORIST (Voice Over)

From within the death of the avant-garde we can only carry the traces of the attitudes of aesthetic activism and an institutional assault; they work as a genetic imprint that operates from the level of DNA but cannot rise to the skin. They shape but are invisible. A Pataphysical Rerouting, an oppositional art will manipulate the operating manual of simulation. But it is not a mirror. It does not have a referent. It is oppositional art whose opposition is itself.

CUT TO:

Title Card: The Second Way Out

18. Talking Head of Theorist

THEORIST (Voice Over)

Another technique of deferring conspiracy with authority through the production of image is the implementation of . . .

Title Card: A Refusal to Commitment

THEORIST (Voice Over)

". . . a refusal of commitment"¹⁹ within a given performance work [The Wooster Group].

**THE
THIRD WAY
OUT**

**A CEASELESS
RUPTURING/
NEGATION OF
THE PRODUCTION
OF IMAGE-
MAKING.**

CUT TO:

19. Photographs from various productions of the Wooster Group

THEORIST (Voice Over)

The refusal of commitment encourages the interrogation of ideology, of simulation conspiracies, and oppressive metanarratives to be confronted within the spectator and not simply represented by the performance. This stepping aside allows the signifying performance to free-float away from authorial intervention asking the spectator to read as opposed to watch the performance.

CUT TO:

Title Card: The Third Way Out.

Title Card: A Ceaseless Rupturing/Negation of the Production of Image-Making.

CUT TO:

THEORIST (Voice Over)

The third methodology for avoiding the "theatrical" is a ceaseless rupturing/negation of the production of image-making. Richard Foreman's *Ontological-Hysterical Theatre* has been developing a technique along these lines for several decades.

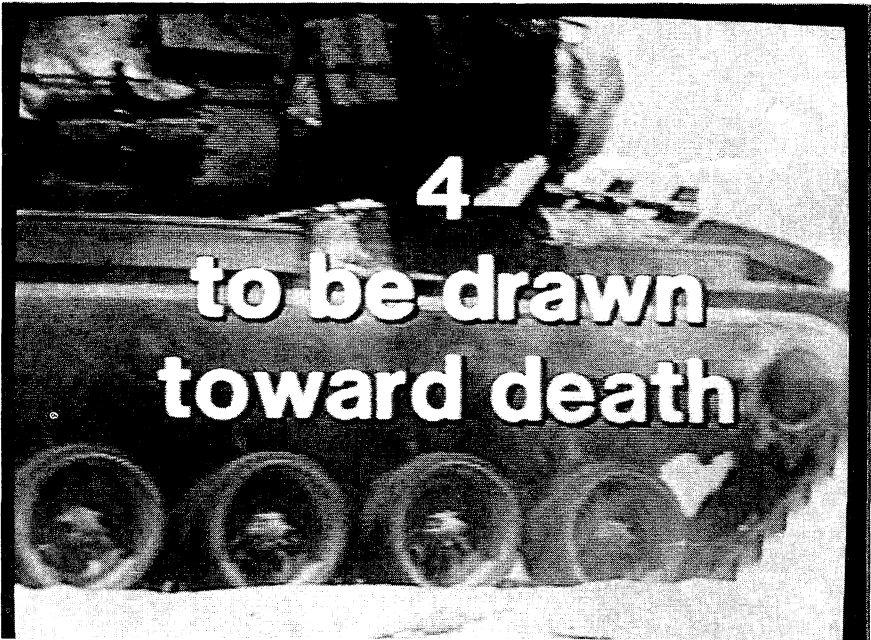
CUT TO:

20. Title Card and Theorist Voice Over of the following quote from Richard Foreman

THEORIST (Voice Over)

"I wanted a theatre that did the opposite of 'flow' - a theatre that was true to my own mental experiences, that is the world as being pieces of things, awkwardly present for a moment and then either represented by consciousness or dropped in favor of some other momentary presentation."²⁰

CUT TO:



21. Various photographs of productions from the Ontological-Hysteric Theatre

THEORIST (Voice Over)

As Kate Davy and Foreman himself have noted, the influence of Gertrude Stein on the Ontological-Hysteric Theatre is apparent. Foreman's theatre plays among the cyclical movement of a "continuous present," with "things in and of themselves beginning again and again." What is interesting in Foreman's theatre is not the drama of consciousness (as the director and others have claimed) or his questionable claim of theatre "true to my own mental experiences" but the drama of the production of image, its immediate demise through discourse and the persistence of a (re)appearing ideology.

CUT TO:

22. CNN video from the Gulf War. Tanks rolling in the desert. Rockets being fired from battleships. The Wounded being cared for in Israel. Bombs being loaded onto war planes. Targets exploding as seen from mechanized video cameras positioned on missiles.

Title Card superimposed over shots from the Gulf War: 4, to be drawn towards death

Music: "Ride of the Valkyries" from Die Walküre by Richard Wagner.²¹

THEORIST (Voice Over)

Those who question the concreteness and troubling consequences of the model of simulation need only reflect on "Desert Storm:" a mediatic simulation par excellence. As the "100 Hour War" concluded there was an unprecedented 98% approval rating from the American people to the exercise. A close reading of how the Gulf War was packaged for the world spectator seems to reveal that the institutional strategists of the world apply simulation techniques with great dexterity. The producers of this "perfect descriptive machine, which profid[ed] all the signs of the real and short-circuit[ed] all its vicissitudes,"²² were well versed in the strategic power of diffusing

1.
Every action/image
must be presented in
its third order
representation,
preferably deterred by
mediatic intervention.

2.
Every action/image
encoded with the real
must be deterred.

3.
No simulated
action/image can be
ruptured by the real.

the real by installing its operational double. The orchestration of this war simulation followed several rules; rules of a game that the theatre/performance artist can appropriate. These rules are:

Title Card superimposed over computerized target display aboard a fighter jet:

THEORIST (Voice Over)

1. EVERY ACTION/IMAGE MUST BE PRESENTED IN ITS THIRD ORDER REPRESENTATION PREFERABLY DETERRED BY A MEDIATIC INTERVENTION.

An example of Rule #1 was brilliantly realized in the installation of video cameras onto armed missiles. The distributed video images depicted unerring accuracy (i.e. the missile that descended a drainage pipe to reach its target) while deferring any rupture of the simulated real by the real itself (in this case death and mutilation).

Title Card superimposed over shots of Baghdad at night under bombardment:

THEORIST (Voice Over)

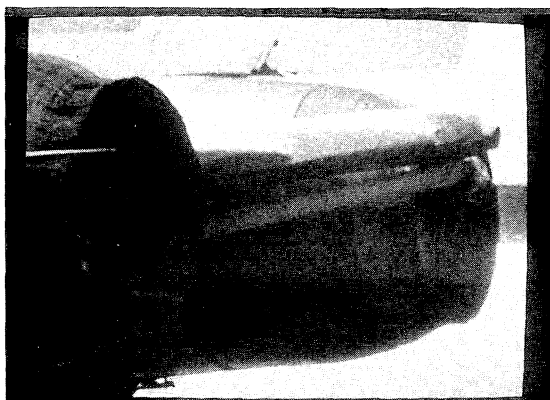
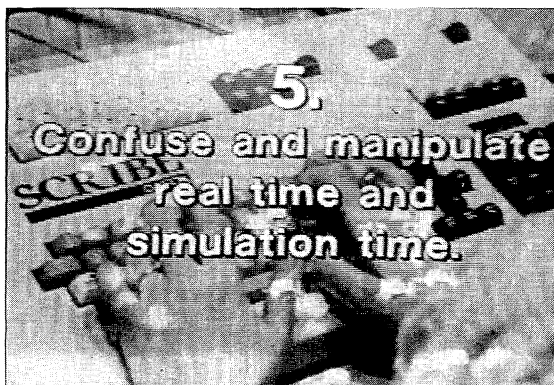
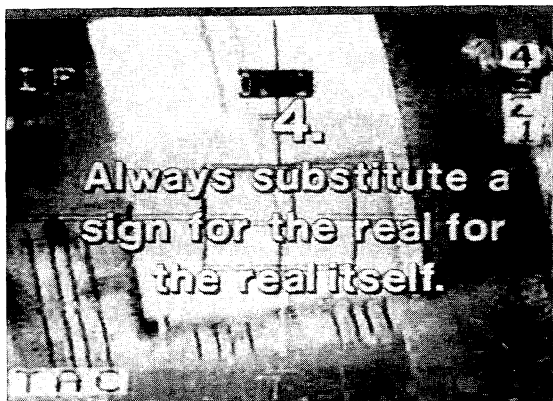
2. EVERY ACTION/IMAGE ENCODED WITH THE REAL MUST BE DETERRED.

First order representations, such as the direct results of a bomb on a human figure have to be censored or manipulated into a "less real" and thereby "more real" image for the spectator. The disenfranchisement of the media from the real war assured the strategist an ability to stage their simulation without fear of directorial interference and the freedom to fulfill their goal of the substitution of the real for signs of the real, (Rule #4).

Two Title Cards superimposed over shots of Scud Missile attacks and Patriot Anti-Missiles:

THEORIST (Voice Over)

3. NO SIMULATED ACTION/IMAGE CAN BE RUPTURED BY THE REAL.



4. ALWAYS SUBSTITUTE A SIGN FOR THE REAL FOR THE REAL ITSELF.

What transpired during the Gulf War was quite startling. The combatants, as well as the audience, became warriors within the simulation. Sign and images were loaded into the "war planes" of the media by the Pentagon officials and dropped from the pay-load doors onto the global spectator. Saddam Hussein watched the war unfold on CNN from his luxurious bunker. The war hero/video technician had to infiltrate the leader's lair via the cathode ray tube supplying him with misinformation and terrorist tactics of mind control. Who's controlling whom? The simulation, by profiteering from the disappearance of the real controls all within its occurrence.

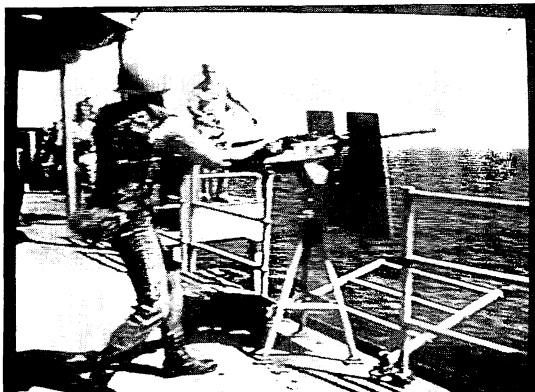
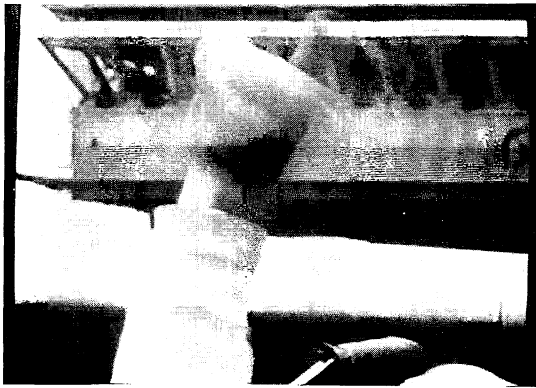
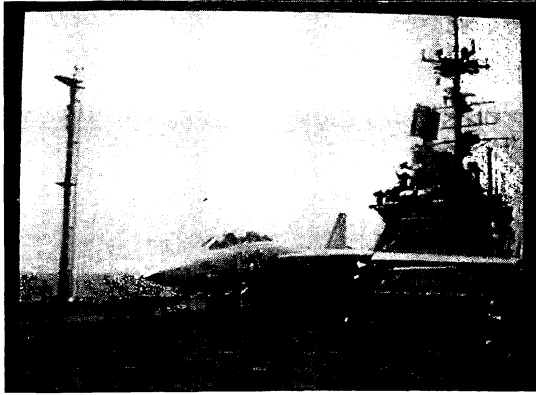
Title Card superimposed over shots of CNN's headquarters as the video technicians and directors track the war:

THEORIST (Voice Over)

5. CONFUSE AND MANIPULATE REAL TIME AND SIMULATED TIME

The production of the simulated war occurred in the real time of the actual event, so that inquiries into the status of prior(ity) were deflected. A sign which is generated simultaneously with, or which even proceeds, its referent further complicates the already problematized relation of signifier to signified, while opening up the files of origination and the issues of representation. The distance (temporally) from the object to its representation is at its greatest in a work of plastic art and at its least in its generation in the mind. As the sign and its referent approach each other's moment of generation they begin to resemble each other to such an extent that there can be no critical distance.

CUT TO:



23. Talking Head of the Theorist

THEORIST

The "closing in" between the sign and referent displace any phenomenon that is used to bridge the gap between them, phenomenon such as memory and critique as suggested by Jameson.

CUT TO:

24. Clip from the film **PSYCHO** (Alfred Hitchcock)²³

*Music: Prelude from Tristan und Isolde by Wagner.*²⁴

A woman (Janet Leigh) is driving at night in the rain. Headlights from approaching traffic glare in her eyes. She sees a road sign for a motel. The Bates Motel. She drives into the parking lot.

THEORIST (Voice Over)

There is no need for a channel (ideology) through which to exchange information if there is no separation. When there is no distance to bridge there can be no critique. This is the wickedness of the medium of video. This is why most postmodern performance artists can't let it go. Like a tarot card's signification, when placed upside-down, is inverted, so can video be transposed from a instrument of simulation and invisible ideological promulgation to a machine that runs the forced separation of object and representation, image and ideology.

But why not give room to the warnings that surround this exercise? The following is a quote from Anthony Kubiak's *Stages of Terror*.

CUT TO:



**”...perfect descriptive
machine, which
provided all the signs
of the real and
short-circuited all
of its vicissitudes...”**
—Baudrillard

25. Close up on a page of text from "Stages of Terror" by Anthony Kubiak

THEORIST (Voice Over)

"'We are not free,' writes Artaud, 'and the sky can still fall on our heads.' . . . Floundering in the differential breach, we may not be free, but we must some how try to maintain the distinctions. For when difference collapses, life will indeed become simulation, and the possibility—will cease, and the sky will indeed crash upon our heads."²⁵

CUT TO:

26. Talking Head of the Theorist

The Theorist is now a 10 year old boy who lip-syncs the voice over and mugs to the camera. Title Cards reiterating the text are superimposed over the Theorist.

THEORIST

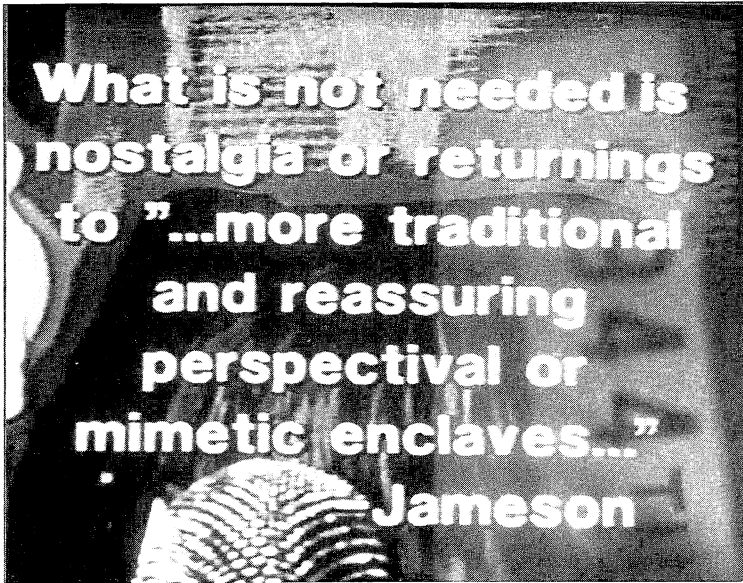
Life *has* become simulation (partially), the avant-garde *is* really dead (it always is/but always in the process of reconfiguration), differentiation *has* been problematized and these heartwarming and mawkish pleas are but the latest, undoubtedly not the last, voice of reason emanating from modernity. What is not needed is nostalgia or returning to "more traditional and reassuring perspectival or mimetic enclave(s),"²⁶ but a jaundiced gaze at the depleted performance act questioning whether the capacity to critique or the ability to "map" still reside within its structure.

CUT TO:

27. Title Card: FIN

MUSIC: "It's a Good Day" by Peggy Lee.²⁷

Fade to Black.



Notes

1. Alfred Jarry, as Robert Shattuck in *The Banquet Years: The Origins of the Avant-Garde in France, 1885 to World War I* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955) has noted, attempted to "achieve a new level of existence through literary mimesis, fusing his life and his art . . . to express his experience in the form of a science . . . Jarry simply created a new discipline: 'Pataphysics" (239). Jarry wrote in 1896 in *Gestes et opinions du docteur Faustroll 'pataphysicien* (Paris: Fasquelle, 1955) that pataphysics was the "science of imaginary solutions, which symbolically attributes the properties of objects, described by their virtuality, to their lineaments" (quoted in Shattuck 242). It is in this spirit of an attack on reason through the strategies of rationality, "a returning of the system against itself" (Baudrillard, *L'échange symbolique et la mort*, Éditions Gallimano, 1976: 12), and the development of an invisible and transgressive performance, that my tape/paper takes as its inspiration.

2. I have borrowed the term, "Laboratory for the Development of Oppositional Art," from Paul Mann's *The Theory-Death of the Avant-Garde* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1991) to serve as signifier for the contemporary performance work I will discuss.

3. See Gregory Ulmer's *Teleteory: Grammatology in the Age of Video* (New York: Routledge, 1989) for a discussion of video's effect on academic discourse; an attempt at "understanding an era in which the technology of culture is shifting from print to video" (vii).

4. Swell Maps, "collision time revisited" (Mute Records 7 71421-2, 1989) track 11.

5. *Vertigo*, dir. Alfred Hitchcock, screenplay by Alec Coppel and Samuel Taylor. With Kim Novak and James Stewart (Universal Pictures, 1958).

6. *image and ideology in modern/postmodern discourse*, ed. Susan Bazargan and David B. Downing (New York: State U of New York P, 1991) 9.

7. Swell Maps, track 12.

8. *Koyaanisqatsi: life out of balance*, dir. Godfrey Reggio (Pacific Arts Video, 1983).

9. Kraftwerk, *Radioactivity* (Capitol Records, CDP 7 46474 2. 1975) track 2.

10. Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum* 5, no. 10. June 1967. Reprinted in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1968).

11. Philip Auslander in *Presence and Resistance: Postmodernism and Cultural Politics in Contemporary American Performance* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1992) positions Canadian artist Vera Frenkel as a prime developer of the practice and theory of postmodern performance's attempt at dismantling the "charismatic Other and the power relations implied by that identification" (43).

12. Baudrillard in *L'échange symbolique et la mort* (Éditions Gallimand, 1976) Julian Pefanis in *Heterology and the Postmodern* (Durham: Duke UP, 1991) and Paul Mann in *The Theory-Death of the Avant-Garde* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1991) draw upon Jarry's theory of Pataphysics to address the postmodern condition.

13. Jean Baudrillard, *L'échange symbolique et la mort* (Éditions Gallimand, 1976) 12.

14. Swell Maps, track 17.

15. Julian Pefanis, *Heterology and the Postmodern* (Durham: Duke UP, 1991) 80.

16. Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1968).

17. Peter Bürger, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw, (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1984).

18. The Beatles, *Magical Mystery Tour* (Capitol Records, CDP7 48062 2, 1967) track 3.

19. The concept of a "refusal of commitment" is addressed by David Savran in *Breaking the Rules* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1988). Elizabeth LeCompte, director of the Wooster Group, is quoted in that book as saying, ". . . what people are calling responsible art is work that illustrates a theme toward which you already have a clear-cut 'moral' attitude. But that's not the

way we work" (206). Savran notes that the performance work of the Wooster Group ". . . offers no ideological haven from which the action may be watched with impunity" (31).

20. Richard Foreman, *Richard Foreman, Plays and Manifestos*, ed. Kate Davy (New York: New York UP, 1976) ix.

21. Richard Wagner, *Great Orchestral Music*, cond. Eugene Ormandy, Philadelphia Orchestra (CBS Odyssey, MBK 38914, 1989) track 1.

22. Jean Baudrillard, *Select Writings*, ed. Mark Poster (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1988) 167.

23. *Psycho*, dir. Alfred Hitchcock, screenplay by Joseph Stefano. With Janet Leigh and Anthony Perkins (Universal Pictures, 1960).

24. Richard Wagner, track 3.

25. Anthony Kubiak, *Stages of Terror* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1991) 163.

26. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke UP, 1991) 54.

27. Peggy Lee, *Peggy Lee: All Time Greatest Hits* (Curb Records, D2 77379, 1990) track 1.