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## **theorizing an interactive documentary / phenomenologies of audiovisual navigation**

“voyage in-situ is the name of all intensities... what characterizes travel is not... the measurable quantity of movement, but the mode of spatialization, the manner of being in space, of being at space”<sup>1</sup>.

### *I. Interactivity as a methodology for the investigation of actuality*

The documentary film is an epistemological project – we watch in order to “know”. The kind of documentary “knowing” that I am interested in lies outside philosophical debates about the nature of knowledge as justified belief – although many documentaries, the ones Bill Nichols would refer to as participating in a “discourse of sobriety”, employ cinematic rhetoric for the specific purpose of justifying an argument or a claim in an effort to induce the audience’s belief in certain “truths” or facts they are trying to communicate. The time-based audiovisual medium that is film, video, and more recently, interactive media enjoys a specific relationship to “knowing” that is properly phenomenological, meaning that it can, in admittedly drastically different ways, reproduce the sensorial (at least the visual, auditory) imprint of actuality, a capacity inherited from the mechanism of the photographic apparatus – in fact constituting its technological purpose. Here Grierson’s use of the term *actuality* to reference recorded material in his controversial definition of the documentary (“the creative treatment of actuality”) proves particularly insightful. Actuality is not synonymous with reality, or “the world” – totalizing categories that displace us from the phenomenological surface of the recorded image – , it specifically refers to what is happening at a given time and place, the temporal and spatial framework of this given (what we have, what we can see/hear) directly indexed to the frame of the camera and the length of film/tape or amount of digital data stored. Actuality signifies a point of *uniqueness*, an ephemeral configuration of phenomena witnessed by a technological instrument. This sensual specificity constitutes an admittedly minimal, but concomitantly very precise sort of knowledge – one that exclusively characterizes audiovisual media as

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<sup>1</sup> Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *Milles Plateaux*, p.602

opposed to other forms of art or discourse. I will further argue that however this recorded actuality is consequently *treated*, to reprise Grierson's terminology, by the filmmaker(s) through chemical, digital or editing processes, it still retains the material trace, the corpus of this spatial/temporal encounter.

Dziga Vertov articulates in exemplary fashion the possibility of using the audiovisual medium as a "knowing" machine capable of transporting viewers into the midst of phenomena. Starting from the principle of creating a coherent work "without the help of a script", *Man with a Movie Camera* establishes montage as a methodology, an algorithm for "the decoding of life as it is" (Dziga Vertov, *Kino-Eye* p.49) rather than as narrative architecture. Rather than tying down the filmed event to a master logic, "kino-eye" montage juxtaposes in order to re-present actuality, to make it present for the audience in a visceral sense that probes beyond / beneath the propositional (which does not exclude the fact that *Man with a Movie Camera* as a text also functions as a representation of the role of technology in a utopian communist society). The semiotics of each shot are liberated from the necessity of referencing a common thread – temporary meanings can bubble out of one shot and slide into the next, engaging with the viewer in a mode of free play: a woman's hand on a blanket, a picture on a wall, trees on a city square, a young boy sleeping on a bench. In a way this type of editing reproduces in acute form our "idle" consciousness of the everyday, the way in which the surface of the worlds slips under our radar while we are preoccupied with tasks and projects only to reemerge in moments of pause as a peppering of "little meanings" (the "*petit sense*" that Sartre refers to in *Nausea*) that we try in vain to locate and pin down. The frustrated search for a stable connection between these bits of evidence (e-vidence – what is immediately visible) carves out an unknown depth of semiotic space behind the image, whetting our desire to look harder: what undiscovered threads link the picture to the tree? Before we can formulate the question, both shots are already gone, replaced by other phenomenological mysteries. Arguably it is down at this level of examination of the *texture* of the real that the epistemological project of the documentary is expressed in its most naked form.

The notion of an interactive documentary starts to emerge in this exercise of active, intent looking – in the gaze that is simultaneously absorption and effort to understand. The interacting audience is one that doubles its role, fully assuming the creative participation in the work that involved viewing entails. By taking on this task, however, the viewer/player does not function as an editor-auteur, splicing disparate fragments into a coherent whole. Instead she produces new sense by *navigating a path* through a space of semiotic

possibilities, which is no longer filmic space but a database, a flexible architecture of audiovisual “units”. These sequences, as in an ordinary documentary, are moments of actuality, “treated” and edited by the filmmaker. What distinguishes them is their capacity for recombinant handling, meaning that, depending on the algorithmic structure of the database containing these sequences, the viewer/player has the possibility of combining each sequence with a number of others, according to each unit’s built-in semantic valences or “tags”. Tagging – in its basic form attaching keywords to an audiovisual or textual object – constitutes a simple but powerful tool for the articulation of a database. The complexity and richness of the viewer/player’s interaction with the contents of the database are a function of the tagging system the filmmaker chooses to adopt. This includes considering not only which sequences are grouped into which categories or how these categories overlap, but also what kind of interface will be used to usher the viewer/player through these semantic gateways in a way that is both evident and invisible.

At this point in the design process it appears crucial to delve deeper into our earlier definition of the primary experience of a documentary audience: the searching gaze, the consciousness that lights upon the recorded surface of actuality and jumps around the image in order to scrutinize it for signs / clues of signification. In a non-interactive context, the viewer is, effortlessly on her part, presented with a series of such images or shots and her pleasure in an important sense derives from the fact that these are *offered* to her attention, and that her only task is one of enjoyment, even if it is epistemic enjoyment. The interface of an interactive documentary must also seek to maximize the user’s pleasure in viewing, while concomitantly diverting it along other epistemological pathways that emphasize the *exploration* of the multiplied possibilities of signification that can emerge from the free association and juxtaposition of audiovisual material. A balance must be achieved between the analytic pleasure of making semantic connections between sequences/recombinant units and the pleasure of consuming or taking in the image that characterizes the kind of aesthetic experience we derive from the (re) presencing of actuality – in other words, a seamless going between searching and gazing. In order to further specify the nature of the database interface and of the type of exploration involved in its navigation we turn to another example of documentary film/video, Jem Cohen’s *Lost Book Found*, Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of rhizome from *A Thousand Plateaus*, and Michel de Certeau’s notion of spatial or geographical storytelling from *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

## *II. The Experience of Navigation: steering in real and virtual space*

### *a. space as texture*

In *Lost Book Found* the narrator walks his camera through the grittier streets of New York in an effort to remember the contents of a book he once almost purchased from a man who made a living “fishing” for objects dropped by passerby in sidewalk grates. This book contains lists of references, names of the things that populate the city, variously grouped under enigmatic headings. In trying to reconstruct the fantastical indexical system at work in this lost book, the narrator embarks on his own project to “fish for” the overlooked contents of New York – spatio-temporal items, the unique, accidental configurations of material being – and classify them according to his own cryptic logic of poetic association. At times another narrator interrupts the first to rattle off lists of concepts or things over a succession of captured scenes, indexing each image, each phenomenological encounter with a particular sign / clue: for example, a slow motion shot of an old woman riffling through a heap of discounted underwear will have a voice-over label of “museum”. At other times the narrator will “recall” a category from the lost book such as “raining coins” and show us successive shots of senior citizens stopping in the street to stare up meditatively at the sky.

The film as whole turns into an examination of the narrator’s own desire to scrutinize, stretching out the distance between subject and object (the interval of desire) by showing us scenes whose contents are arranged in layers or stacks, such as plastic toys displayed on shelves / shop windows or the electric interior of a subway train car seen through the windows of the train’s black shape melting in the night of a tunnel. In all cases vision encounters obstructions and so does the viewer in her attempt to grasp the meaning at work in each audiovisual association – the gaze butterflies over the surface of actuality, searching and never finding, but occasionally picking up on certain signifying symptoms that disappear with a second glance, like all the shots of street surfaces (walls, telephone booths) inscribed with decaying messages that can only be half-read, not so much partially decoded as more achingly mystified. In this sense, Cohen’s camera functions as a veil as much as a lense, an intermediary zone between passage and liminal space: to reprise De Certeau’s turn of phrase on the poetics of trajectories, a “fence that is an ensemble of interstices through which one’s glances pass.” The space of the frame mimics the three

dimensional properties of real space, reproducing the pleasure we find in the vicissitudes of travel.

*Lost Book Found* directly evokes the experience of *navigation* that lies at the heart of any preoccupation to design for interactivity. The film functions as a compendium of the kind of micro-trajectories that the attentive or “detective” (to reference Cohen’s hand-held, belt-level cinematography) observer traces in traveling through the *spatial texture* of a place. In the narrator’s imagination, this place, the city, constitutes a monumental, un-chartered database organized according to a omniscient *tagging* system (the lost book) that indexes each existent referent to a particular sign. The baroque dream that a thorough search of worldly evidence will result in total epistemological fulfillment is originally a documentary impulse. It compels him to plunge into the hermeneutic game of searching and gazing, of relentlessly raking the database for objects of knowledge, steering a path through possible indexical channels according to minute intimations from this fluid environment. With visibility remaining a problem – the book, the map of the database that would allow him to look ahead, to know her way in advance is lost – viewing becomes a much more haptic exercise. The navigator feels her way around the contours of things, tracing signifying topologies with small gestures, instigating a hesitant succession of tiny contacts with the world. Here the clarity of scopic knowledge is abandoned in favor of a sort of blind proximity with the surface of life, an intimacy with the image that hugs the frustrating barrier that separates the (re) presentation of actuality from actuality itself. At this level of documentary minutiae, the camera worries about (another excerpt from the narrator’s voice-over) puzzling out the supremely mundane fact of one building’s contiguousness with one gutter, framing actuality in its most obvious (and therefore semiotically opaque) manifestations. The navigator of an interactive documentary sets out on her epistemological journey not so much in order to find the primer that can decode the book – the totality of meaning embedded in the body of the database – but to put herself through the twists and turns of the search for signification, to loose assiduously oneself in the hermetic quality of the code.

The practice of interactivity in this sense unfolds as a prolonged, deranged extension of the practice of viewing (looking towards Arthur Rimbaud, for whom writing poetry necessarily involved “a rational derangement of all the senses”). The step towards real-time interaction with audiovisual material responds to an exacerbated desire for sensorial immersion in the actual, or, more precisely, for actualization of the wish to see the virtual transfigured into the actual, to experience the disappearance of the ontological

barrier between referent and sign. Accordingly, it seems important for the interface of an interactive documentary, as the space that delimits the possibilities for navigation of the database, to be designed for immersion. Immersion implies a kind of corporealization of the media, a rapprochement between the sensual presence of the viewer/player/navigator and the projective presence of the audiovisual material. The latter must consequently be re-contextualized, detach itself from the metaphor of a “virtual window” that is the single screen.

To free the viewer from the barrier of the screen, interactivity should ideally be exercised within a real space filled with a variety of tactile stimuli (curvature, texture) that work to give the player a sense of actuality, of embeddedness in a spatio-temporal situation. Works based in a personal computer environment, dependent as they are on interactive devices such as the mouse, the consol, or even the Wii with its increased haptic feedback, invariably lack the capacity to fully presence the audiovisual material for the player – navigation in this context remains a metaphor rather than an actual practice as the gestures one needs to accomplish are summary and repetitive, distinctively failing in endowing the experience with aura or ritual i.e. meaning. Locked within the screen, the navigational interface itself cannot advance beyond a schematic reconstruction of the database, forcing the player to consider the game mechanics of a signifying process that – as we argued in our discussion of *Lost Book Found* – is more pleasurable the less transparent it is. In fact, returning to that text, one can interpret the narrator’s realization gleaned from his practice of navigating the city – “nobody made the world, it’s just the place where you’re born” – as the succinct expression of the kind of experience the interface of an interactive documentary should be able to produce. Cohen’s words evoke the Heideggerian intimation of having been “thrown” into a world, into a complex web of signifying trajectories for which there is no map – of having been inserted in the middle of an activity without an accompanying vision of its completion.

*b. space as story*

Now that we have discussed the immersive interface as a necessary initial condition for the *possibility* of a form of participatory (interactive) viewing/playing – navigation – ,we can further examine navigation in terms of the dynamic process by which the viewer/player encounters the different audiovisual objects of the database and starts to construct a unique itinerary out of a series of such interactions. De Certeau’s argument that

narrative is the product of spatial practice can specifically help us hone in on the role of diegetic creativity in the player's exploration of the data-space. In this case, diegesis does not refer to a story-line or a script, but is more closely aligned with a practice of enunciating "directions". For example, telling someone "if you go through this door on the left there is a hall at the end of which you will find such and such place" constitutes a very basic form of story-telling about someone's movement through space – the successive description or naming of different loci in relationship to different modalities of spatial interaction (going through, going down) creates a picture, an imaginary totality of coherent connections in the addressee's mind. Similarly, the linear activity of parsing together the audiovisual "units" (shots, sequences) that one sequentially encounters in an interactive space inevitably traces a narrative that, even fugitively, momentarily links each element into a greater whole.

The fluid, spectral quality of the interactive diegetic experience – coherent unities emerge only to quickly reabsorb themselves in the background of the database – is a byproduct of the type of semiotic space conjured by the loose articulation of this jointed structure. De Certeau mentions the *xoana* of Ancient Greece, statuettes that marked out the limits / boundaries of certain territories and that reputedly moved themselves, creating new temporary localities every time they did so. In the course of walking a database, tags function as virtual *xoana*, framing a hypothetical space around the assigned semiotic proximity of certain audiovisual units, which, depending on the particular trajectory improvised by the player/navigator as she follows certain tags rather than others, for a moment becomes actualized in the player's activity of juxtaposing similarly tagged images. These tags are effectively mobile boundaries parceling out data-space – De Certeau would use the specific term "bridge" – that allow audiovisual fragments to come together in spontaneous encounters. Consequently, in founding new spatial units (*regions*), every journey into the database also founds new zones of semiotic contiguity/structure – the "directions" that enunciate the link between tagged items – that can be construed as elementary stories: "a *region* is the space created by an interaction. It follows...that there are as many regions as there are interactions or intersections of programs...the determination of space is operational and, in a problematics of enunciation, related to an *interlocutory* process"<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p.126

In producing these micro-narratives that coalesce around each new founding of an ephemeral audiovisual space, navigation as interactive practice exponentially multiplies the potential for experiencing fresh meaning by producing quantities of audiovisual space. This allows the documentary, no longer just a (re) presentation of the actual, to be redefined according to the degree to which it allow the player to engage with a fully immersive simulation of actuality. The modality of interactive play mimics the player's sudden arrival into a particular space-time encounter or *situation* (the number of combinatory possibilities for audiovisual configurations constitutes a vast reservoir of potential situations ) by submitting her to the same factors of chance and contingency that lie at the core of everyday temporality. Like Jem Cohen and De Certeau, this ambulatory viewer – in the sense of someone who “has a look around”, who can focuses non-linearly on different points of attention, as opposed to the immobile consumer of two-dimensional screen space – gleans particles of meaning by taking a walk in the city, allowing herself to bear the imprint of an architecture populated by possible objects, and therefore open to happy accidents.

It seems to follow that the design of the interface should lend itself to the production of space and the happy semiotic accident. Again running with the idea that an alluring opacity is more pleasurable than a transparency without mystery, the whole scaffolding of the tagging system is best kept hidden from the full view of the player. The moment the player is allowed to consult a “map” or bird's eye view of her journey, the fortuitous pleasures of an improvised itinerary disappear. De Certeau's directions return appropriately to mind – why not use the voice as a sensual, embodied catalyst to the database voyage? A hypothetical example: the player hears a voice declaim an enigmatic message (not quite identifiable: a quote, bits of poetry?), which is actually a string of tags / keywords. She is then asked to immediately repeat part of the message into a small microphone - effectively making her subconsciously “choose” a tag and engender a new lineage of narrative space. Because the tags are unveiled by auditory and therefore ephemeral means, the viewer has no way to retrace her steps or plan a step ahead. The secret mechanism softly pushes her into a movement of perpetual encounter with a (recorded) actuality. To navigate the database is to become *locked in motion*, propelled by the momentum of an imperative to produce (more) time and space.

b. *space as geography*

What is the nature of the interactive space being created in the activity of navigation and how does it affect the one who journeys through it? To begin to answer this we must take a look at the signifying transactions that occur between interactions - the tiny interval that separates those audiovisual sequences the player has successively viewed. Taking a microscopic view at her itinerary we find maps, or rather mapping. Here Deleuze's notion of "rhizome" from *A Thousand Plateaus* provides us with a possible theoretical model for database design; parsing out the rhizome's modus operandi is a useful way of thinking about the semiotics of our tagging apparatus.

A rhizome is an open network with no end or point of origin, "starting in the middle of itself". What happens within the rhizome is a spontaneous and continuous generation of fresh meaning via the semantic alliances that heterogeneous elements placed in proximity with each other invariably tend to form. By interpolation, a rhizomatic (audiovisual) text, instead of following a reproductive structure of branching points like a linear narrative or "choose-your-adventure" type story, grows as its reader continues to trace spatial relationships between units ("finite automata") according to her own perceptions of how different audiovisual combinations echo, correspond to and cogently fit with one another. The player's semiotic criteria can be thematic, denotative – perhaps she is exploring the various declensions of a concept or an object across the database, tailing tags such as "red", "dancing", "archive" – or more obliquely, connotative – in which case she will choose to investigate the signs that populate the periphery of the image, "savory", "excruciating", "forgotten". The resulting work or perhaps more à propos, corpus, is "a multiplicity that necessarily changes its nature in the process of augmenting/expanding its connections"<sup>3</sup>.

The player builds the rhizome by becoming a cartographer. Engaging in creative, free-form mapping, she intuitively lets the meaning or idea picked up in one audiovisual element transfer, map itself onto another, but this idea (a tag) is always transformed, deformed, redrawn, by the difference of their respective contexts. An obvious example of this process is intellectual montage. In Jean Vigo's, *A Propos de Nice*, a shot of a haughty woman is followed by a shot of an ostrich: our interpretation of the woman's snootiness has been definitively recast (in this case, exacerbated) by the irruption of the bird. A more subtle effect is achieved, again, by a sequence of head shots at the end of *Lost Book Found*.

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<sup>3</sup> Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *Milles Plateaus*, p. 15

As the faces emerge from their dim backgrounds, their attitudes and expressions play off each other in inexplicable ways, individually contributing their signs to overwhelm us with a dark, shining melancholy.

The value of ‘mapping’ as a signifying practice, according to Deleuze, lies in the fact that “the map, as opposed to a decal, (*calque*), is entirely oriented towards a mode of experimentation in contact with the real, with the ways in which one can get hold of / get a grip on reality”<sup>4</sup>. It consequently seems appropriate to integrate this metaphor in designing the mechanics (machine-like agencing, *agencement machinique*) of an interactive documentary, an experimental genre that specifically deals with the treatment of actuality. The mapping force that drives the rhizome is the same momentum that sends the navigator of a data-space off on her journey; they conjoin in the consuming hunt for more, or more meaningful, connections between the different components of one’s environment, objects that we can link back to ourselves and that extend our presence beyond our own embodied confinement: “it is always rhizomatically that desire evolves and produces”<sup>5</sup>.

In negotiating the spaces of alternation/alterity, the unlikely topology of the rhizome-database the player is in effect finding a path through her own “psycho-geography”, moving through a landscape of moods produced by her particular choices of semantic associations. Psychogeography, a term bequeathed to us by the situationist movement of the 50s and 60s, refers to the sensible differences in *aura* that the pedestrian would subliminally register in his passage through the city’s disparate parts. Guy Debord and Asger Jorn compiled psychogeographic maps of Paris that modified the respective positions of the city’s neighborhoods according to their value as “unities of ambience” and the strength of the atmospheric connections between them. The navigator of these simultaneously interior and exterior trajectories – dubbed “drifter” – was “guided by those features of the street neglected by most pedestrians, like the sudden change of ambience within the space of a few meters and the path of least resistance which is automatically followed in aimless strolls...the determinants of drift, apparently, were alternations in emotional and ambient “intensity” and the drifter’s tendency to “drain” along relatively unresistant paths”<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> “*si la carte s’oppose au calque, c’est qu’elle est toute entière tournée vers une experimentation en prise sure le reel*”, *ibid*, p. 20

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*, p.22

<sup>6</sup> Simon Sadler, *The Situationist City*, p.90

If we apply the concept of psychogeographic drift to the space of a rhizomatic database, we can start to chart the navigator's *affective* experience. In her stream of consciousness wandering, the player happens upon certain poetic relations between different audiovisual units that constitute moments of "intensity", constellations of meaning distinguished by the concentration and complementary cohesiveness of their semiotic threads. Certain shots/sequences stand out as quiet climactic explosions, the particular phenomenological configuration of the image uncovering a submersed pattern that had been unconsciously traced by the navigator all along. As in the practice of situationist drift (*derive*), there is no build-in purpose or end to this journey – the navigator tracks down a semiotic scent as long as her (rhizomatic) desire endures.

### *III. Interactivity as Haunting: conjuring a punctum*

In *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes describes his experience of the *punctum*, the detail within the frozen configuration of the photograph that, unintentionally recorded by the photographer, accidentally included in the composition, jumps out *personally* for him. Invisible to all other eyes but his, the trace of this minute portion of life condenses for him into something unimpeachably real, testifying to the photograph's power to not only (re) present actuality, but to harness this representation to the lived actuality of the subject's interiority. Barthes' words bring us back to the searching gaze of the camera in *Lost Book Found*, the audiovisual stillness (since the audiovisual is always in motion, it might be more accurate to say persistence, inertia, momentum) that hides its own eye, the eye of the object staring back. This *anima* that haunts the frame, a mute refraction of our subjectivity is what is laid bare by the punctum: "the essence (of a wound), what cannot be transformed but only repeated under the instances of insistence (of the insistent gaze)...the effect is certain but unlocatable, it does not find its sign, its name; it is sharp and yet lands in a vague zone of myself."<sup>7</sup> It is arguable whether the *punctum* can exist in time-based media – is its specificity not in the fact that it exhibits an incongruous *thereness*, a refusal to be displaced from the frame? As space unfolds in cinematic time, points of attention are jostled, objects lose the dynamic tension achieved by the original arrangement of converging lines that rig the picture plane - the extruding detail, the unintelligible signal of

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<sup>7</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 49, 53

contingency that escaped from this prison of compositional coherence is shuffled in with the rest.

And yet, one feels that if a cinematic genre can accommodate the *punctum*, documentary, as the cinema most concerned with its indexical relationship to actuality, is the better situated to do so. Like in Agnes Varda's *les Glaneurs et la Glaneuse*, when the canvas of a painting representing women fleeing from a storm is shaken by a gust of wind as it is being carried outside, documentary is liable to be "punctuated" by happy accidents / phenomenological exclamation marks. Of course, montage, which is absent in still photography, robs the punctuation mark of the subversive, stubborn effect of its presence by purposefully showcasing it for the viewer – the *punctum* is formalized, assigned a diegetic position; in Varda's film, the imaginary storm animated by a real wind becomes a nifty (hermeneutic) symbol of cinema's power to spill into actuality. As symbol, its interpretation becomes available to all, defusing the *punctum*'s capacity to deliver its intimate, personal message. This peak remains far from the unbearable intensity experienced by Barthes in front of the photograph of his mother (The Photograph of the Winter Garden), when amongst countless other photographs bearing her image, he finally recognizes her *air*: "that exorbitant thing which induces from body to soul – *animula*...the air expresses the subject, insofar as that subject assigns itself no importance. In this veracious photograph, the being I love is not separated from itself: at last it coincides"<sup>8</sup>. Again Barthes refers us to the spectral subjectivity that haunts the inanimate surface of the frame and that is the particular gaze of an object ("the subject that assigns itself no importance"). The photograph of Barthes' mother keeps her *air*, which is that ownmost *thing* which belongs to her, present for us after the subject has disappeared. By a metonymic operation, subjectivity finds itself ghoulishly re-animated.

In the course of an interactive journey, is the player not likely to *accidentally* come across an image / an audiovisual configuration that she also recognizes as her ownmost thing? This *punctum* could really catch you by surprise as you casually turn it over at the corner of the next keyword / tag. The player whispers into the microphone of the interface – unknowingly, she has just uttered an incantation, summoned the *air* – and suddenly an image or a sound comes to life that is indubitably indexed to *her*. The ghostly subjectivity that looks back at her from the projecting screen is not her mother but herself, a self of feeling memory and visceral expectations. Like Barthes rifling through his own

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<sup>8</sup> *ibid*, p. 109

photographic archive in search of that one beloved photograph, the traveler of a database essays different combinatory possibilities, moving in a state of feverish waiting, patiently looking forward to the moment when she will be pierced by the *punctum*, the unintentional intrusion of a specific configuration of actuality, the moment of documentary evidence that bears witness to her own historical presence as a temporal, embodied being. In the privacy of an immersive, interactive space that contains only the player and the database – not unlike the booth from which Lynn Hershman confesses her stories in the sole presence of a camera (*First Person Plural*) – the subject is at liberty to enter into a dialogue with herself. The path that she follows is necessarily a mirroring path, a promenading of the multiple self along different facets (mirrored slivers) of actuality that intermittently refract her photographic trace, her aura. This unique *style* – the secret rhetoric of her meaning-making – that characterizes her turn of mind / the twist of herself is imprinted in the curves of her journey through a virtual space that marks the detours of her associative musings. Not an auteur, but a subject transformed into an object of itself – part actor, part inventor, capable, like Lynn Hershman, of performing herself in a fantastical mode, engaging in an extensive rearticulating of all her parts. Finally, emerging on the other side of the looking glass, bearing this phantom double.

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