THE ECLIPSE OF TIME

Victor Burgin, University of California, Santa Cruz

On February 15, 1961, the "path of totality" of a solar eclipse passed through North-Central Italy. Michelangelo Antonioni travelled to Florence to film the event. He later said: «In that darkness, in that icy cold, in that silence so different from other silences, in that almost complete motionlessness […]. I speculated whether even sentiments are arrested during an eclipse»[1]. Antonioni's film *L'eclisse* (*The Eclipse*) was released in 1962, a year after the appearance of *La notte* and two years after *L'avventura* – the films which together with *The Eclipse* form a *de facto* "trilogy". The story told in *The Eclipse* can be simply summarized: a young woman leaves an older man with whom she has been living. On a visit to the Rome Stock Exchange to see her mother, who is playing the stock market, she meets a young stock broker and drifts into an affair with him. The film follows the course of their relationship up to the point when they arrange to meet each other again: «At eight o'clock. Same place». These words from Piero (Alain Delon) are the last words spoken in the film. The camera follows Vittoria (Monica Vitti) as she leaves Piero's office and enters the street. The camera then returns to watch Piero as he sits at his desk, ignoring the telephones that have begun to ring. Here, the film's depiction of the story of Vittoria and Piero ends, but the film does not end here. It continues for a further seven minutes[2].

The seven minute sequence with which *The Eclipse* ends is a montage of shots filmed in the streets of the modern "EUR" (Esposizione Universale Roma) district on the South-Western periphery of Rome[3]. In broadly schematic terms the first part of *The Eclipse* is a chronologically linear narrative – without, for example, such devices as the "flashback". The closing sequence is a descriptive concatenation of shots of a place which succeed one other according to no narrative imperative[4]. In the first part of the film, Vittoria and Piero adopt as their meeting place an intersection at which a house is being built; a wooden fence surrounds the construction site, and just inside the fence is a pile of bricks and a barrel of water. The first time the couple linger there Vittoria throws a small piece of wood into the water in the barrel. When they next meet there, Piero discards an empty book of matches in the water. In the final seven minute sequence we see the wood and the match book cover still floating on the surface of the water. There is also a shot of the pile of bricks, and of the façade of the half-built house screened by reed matting. These shots attach the coda to the narrative that precedes it, but there are other shots that seem to have no such relation to the story. So, for example, in a comprehensive study of Antonioni's cinema, Seymour Chatman refers to the final sequence as «a kind of minidocumentary of EUR» and «a portrait of the suburb»[5]. It is only with repeated viewings that it becomes apparent that the camera never leaves the immediate environment of the intersection, and that each one of the fifty-seven shots that comprise the sequence contains a more or less legible clue to its belonging in that same magnetic space. A young Italian photographer told a friend of mine that she has a DVD copy of

the last seven minutes of *L'eclisse* that she carries with her wherever she travels. The author of a substantial study of *The Eclipse* says that if he were «compelled to choose between eliminating the coda or all of *The Eclipse* up to the point of the coda [he] would choose the latter»[6]. If this choice were exercised, what kind of object would remain? In the terms of conventional cinematic genre the coda may be classified neither as a fiction film nor a documentary. Evening descends during the course of the sequence, which ends with a close-up of a brilliant streetlight against the blackness of night, but although this imposes a temporal order on the shots one would not say that the sequence tells the story of nightfall. Again, if the sequence is indeed to be considered, in Seymour Chatman's terms, a «minidocumentary of EUR» then it is a singularly uninformative one – for example, we learn nothing of the origin of the district in Benito Mussolini's plan for an international exhibition to celebrate twenty years of fascism, nor do we learn much about the social composition of those who inhabit the EUR today. With no story to tell, the coda most resembles a random assemblage of photographs.

I am in a nondescript neighbourhood in a city unfamiliar to me. I came with the intention of making photographs, but now I am here I feel at a loss. Nothing seems especially interesting. Nevertheless I begin to photograph, hoping that some sense of purpose will emerge as I do so. But although I continue to take photographs, even as the light fades and darkness falls, nothing happens. This is the feeling I have during the last seven minutes of *The Eclipse*. I know I am looking at a film, but I have the impression of a series of photographs[7]. It is not that the shots appear to *be* photographs, it is rather that the world in the shots appears as if it were *being photographed*. Nevertheless time passes in these shots, and a photograph – it is generally agreed – excludes time. In his book of 1983 *L'Acte photographique* Philippe Dubois tells a personal anecdote. He was five years old, and running a race against other children under the eyes of an assembly of parents and other family members. He was far ahead of the others, and close to the finishing line, when he noticed his father pointing a camera at him «in order to fix the exploit for posterity». The young Dubois stopped dead in his tracks. While the other runners streamed by behind him he remained motionless, and never did complete the race. The incident provides him with the image of the course of time, in the form of the race, continuing to unfurl *behind his back* as he faced the camera. «To the eyes of photography», he comments, «time no longer flows»; the photographic act «guillotines duration» to establish a sort of «outside time»[8] (*hors-temps*). I similarly feel that time passes behind the back of the images that make up the coda of *The Eclipse*, even while I also have the impression that they contain time. I can resolve the apparent contradiction only if I allow that time is not a singular thing.

Commonsense tends to assume a duality of temporalities, and in doing so echoes two distinct philosophical traditions. In the first of these, originating in Classical antiquity but deriving mainly from Newton, time is an objective fact: uninfluenced by objects and events, time, together with space, is the "container" in which objects and events take place. A uniform and unidirectional flow, time is an absolute and invariable condition of the physical universe; it is quite simply part of the way things are. In an alternative tradition, deriving mainly from Kant, Newtonian mechanics describes not the way things are, but rather the way in which we may have knowledge of them: time – again like space – is an *a priori* form of our innate intuition of "things in themselves", which by themselves have neither spatial nor temporal properties. In introducing the human subject into the consideration of time, Kant opened the way to such modern philosophical and psychological formulations as those of Bergson and Freud. Everyday language routinely distinguishes between time as it is "in reality" and time as it appears to us. For example, we say that time "passes quickly" if we enjoy what we are doing, or "passes slowly" if we do not. Few would dispute that subjective time and "clock time" are different things. But the "clock time" of

modern life is a specifically historical version of Newtonian cosmology, it is the invention of industrial capitalism.

Time has a history. Early agrarian societies were governed by such things as the alternation of day and night, the succession of the seasons and the movement of the planets; periods of daylight were measured by the sundial. The first mechanical clocks appear at the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries in response to the needs of Church, State and commerce to govern and profit through the synchronisation of human affairs. In this period, the fundamental unit of mensural time was most intensively debated in relation to music, where early attempts to establish the pulse of time quite literally proposed the duration of a heart beat. The subsequent history of the concept of time is one of its progressive alienation from any condition of nature. Modern time, the time of modernity, is consolidated in the 19th century with the national, then international, synchronisation of clocks brought by the coming of the railway and the telegraph, and continues with the introduction into the work place of such things as the punch-card time clock, the assembly line and Taylorism. As the human body is forced to the temporally constant and predictable rhythm of machines, so the working day is detached from natural rhythms: first with the advent of electrical lighting, and more recently with mobile telephones and remotely networked computers. Clock time is money. When, in Antonioni's *The Eclipse*, a minute of silence is called for at the Rome Stock Exchange following the death of a colleague, Piero mutters to Vittoria in mild irritation: «…a minute, here, that costs millions»[9].

The clock time of capital flows behind the last seven minutes of *The Eclipse*. The time of the images in the coda is different from that in which the preceding narrative takes place, but this different time is not confined to the coda, it also interrupts the course of the narrative. Such an alternation of temporalities is not unique to Antonioni's cinema. I think, for example, of the films of Yasujiro Ozu. In the work of either of these directors a shot may run on beyond the time necessary to establish the dramatic sense of a scene, producing what in conventional terms would be considered a redundant image, "surplus" footage that would conventionally be consigned to the cutting room floor. Such images may emerge when the actors have exited the frame, and the anticipated transition to the next scene appears delayed as the camera lingers on the now vacant space. An analogous effect is achieved in Ozu's films by a cut away from the action to an "irrelevant" object or view. An example of this occurs in Ozu's film of 1949 *Late Spring*, at the close of a scene between Noriko (Setsuko Hara) and her father (Chishu Ryu). Father and daughter are staying at a traditional Japanese inn. They have laid down to sleep on the floor of their room, and in the darkness have exchanged some desultory observations about the day's events. After a short silence Noriko addresses a further remark to her father, but he does not reply. Turning her head towards him she sees that he has fallen asleep. She turns back and, gazing towards the ceiling, smiles fondly. There is a cut away to a vase, which the immobile camera frames for six seconds, and then a cut back to Noriko, whose expression now turns to one of sadness; a second cut to the vase, with the same framing, fills the last ten seconds of this scene before the cut to the next scene. Commenting on the cut away to the vase Gilles Deleuze writes: «This duration of the vase is precisely the representation of that which remains, across the succession of changing states»[10]. The final seven minute sequence of *The Eclipse* seems composed almost entirely of such "gratuitous" shots "out of time" that appear to owe more to what we conventionally think of as photography than to cinema (Fig. 1).

Only thirty-nine seconds into the beginning of *The Eclipse* Antonioni reminds us of the proscenium apparatus that frames the history of visual representations in the West. The fundamental stasis of painting and theatre is to be historically surpassed with the advent of photography and cinemaphotography, which although they will not free objects from the frame

will liberate the frame itself. In a 1960 interview, Antonioni describes his discomfort on arriving for the first day of filming his first full-length feature film (*Cronaca di un amore*, 1950) and finding the camera fixed to its stand: «I felt paralyzed […]. The next day, I called for a dolly, and I began to follow my characters […]»[11]. Antonioni describes his relation to the film camera here almost as if he were a "street photographer", and his remarks may recall the park scene in his film of 1966 *Blow-Up*, where the camera follows Thomas, the photographer, as Thomas follows and photographs the couple in the park.

Fig. 1 – *L'eclisse* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1962).

Speaking in 1958, Antonioni says:

One of my preoccupations when I am shooting is that of following a character until I feel the need to let him go […]. When everything has been said, when the scene appears to be finished, there is what comes afterwards. It seems to me important to show the character, back and front, just at that moment – a gesture or an attitude that illuminates all that has happened, and what results from it[12].

Again, Antonioni's use of cinema here is consonant with photography – in this case with the idea of the "decisive moment", which in turn is continuous with the history of Western representations. Between the 16th and 18th centuries, a body of doctrine was assembled in response to the problem of how best to depict a narrative in a painting. With only a single image at his or her disposal, it was agreed that the painter should isolate the *peripeteia* – that instant in the story when all hangs in the balance.

The difference between the shots in the coda and most of the narrative that precedes it broadly corresponds to Deleuze's distinction between the movement-image and the time-image. It might seem that this distinction applies only to film. It accords with common sense to assign the still image to photography theory and the moving image to film theory. But to equate movement with film and stasis with photography is to confuse the representation with its material support. A film may depict an immobile object even while the film strip itself is moving at twenty-four frames per second; a photograph may depict a moving object even though the photograph does not move[13]. Writing in 1971 the photographer and filmmaker Hollis Frampton envisaged an "infinite film" that would consist of a spectrum extending from the stasis of an image resulting from a succession of completely identical frames, to the chaos of an image produced by a succession of totally different frames[14]. An interest in movement for its own sake may be found in early 20th century avant-garde film and photography, and in painting under the impact of film and photography; but it is not movement as such that fascinates most people but purposive movement, movement with causes and consequences. What cinema audiences find most interesting about characters on the screen is not their movements (albeit these have their own, primarily erotic,

interest) but their acts. Activity however is not necessarily bound to movement. Peter Wollen illustrates this point with reference to a book of photographs by André Kertèsz entitled *On Reading*[15]. Wollen observes that although all the people in the photographs are motionless they are nevertheless doing something. He writes: «They are not simply static or frozen in place. They are all in the process of reading»; thus, «We can see that activity is not at all the same thing as movement»[16]. Chris Marker's film *La Jetée* is perhaps the most widely commented example of a work that disjoins action from movement and contradicts the idea of a fundamental opposition between film and photography[17]. Some of the images in the film are shot with a still camera, others are derived from film footage. *La Jetée* rejects any radical opposition between film and photography in favour of a choice between equally available options. It moreover demonstrates that a distinction between film and photography based on the difference between simultaneity and succession is founded on a misrecognition. Although a photographic exposure may be made "in the blink of an eye", the experience of looking at the resulting image belongs to the subjective register of *durée* rather than to the mechanical abstraction of the "instant" in which the image was recorded on film[18].

On the evidence of the calendar clock that appears in the first scene at the stock exchange, and the date of the newspaper seen in the final sequence, *The Eclipse* covers a period of about two months. The subjective impression while watching the film is that the action takes place in the space of a few days. The only thing certain is that the film itself runs for about two hours. A film has both a diagetic time and a running time, which is usually the time of its viewing; a photograph has only the time of its viewing. We expect to be told the running time of a film or video; we do not usually ask: "How long is the photograph?" – but the question is not entirely irrelevant. Photography renders a "moment" in terms of space and suspends it as if out of time. The material support of the spatial image however, whether silver print or digital, is itself subject to entropy, and will eventually decay. The photograph does not stop time, but rather suspends a moment between parentheses until the time when time returns. During this entropic time of the photograph the subjective time of the viewer intervenes. A friend told me that, after moving house, she found herself going through some photographs she had long ago put aside and forgotten. She described her shock on coming across an old photograph of her mother. She recalled that, as an adolescent, she had disliked this photograph because she felt it made her mother look old, and so she had hidden it away. She was now surprised to see the radiantly beautiful young woman in the image – a woman much younger than she herself now was. The undisclosed "winter garden" photograph of Roland Barthes' mother as a child prompted Barthes to write a book devoted to photographs that contain a wounding detail. We may turn to psychoanalysis for an explanation of the mechanisms by which a detail in a photograph may trigger an apparently incomprehensible affect in the viewer, but the precipitating cause is made possible by the inherent contingency of the photograph.

Left to its own devices the camera accords as much attention to a discarded sandwich wrapper as it does to the sublime landscape that the litter defaces. Just as a photograph recognises no hierarchy in the world within its frame, so the final seven minutes of *The Eclipse* bestows no hierarchal order on the shots that comprise it. Antonioni has referred to the final sequence of *The Eclipse* as «seven minutes where only the objects remain of the adventure»[19]. That it is not the vocation of objects to be actors in an adventure is precisely what the final sequence recognises. When, on the occasion of her second meeting with Piero at the corner by the building site, Vittoria pushes apart her floating piece of wood and Piero's match book cover, the surface of the water is a stage for her personal drama. But Vittoria's intentionality alone imposes allegorical meaning on the objects in the water barrel; with the eclipse of her desire the world of objects is revealed as indifferently contingent, and it the contingency of the world that reasserts itself in the final

sequence. As Wittgenstein expresses it: «In the world everything is as it is and happens as it does happen. *In* it there is no value»[20]. When a similar perception of things is presented in Jean-Paul Sartre's novel of 1938 *Nausea* it is explicitly tied to language and to time. The protagonist Roquentin finds that words lose their grip on the things they name: «I murmur: "It's a seat" […]. But the word remains on my lips: it refuses to go and rest upon the thing»[21]. With the loss of linguistic organisation, the contingency of being-in-itself (*en-soi*) breaks through in its unique temporal place: the present. Roquentin writes: «The true nature of the present revealed itself: it was that which exists, and all that was not present did not exist. The past did not exist. Not at all. […] Things are entirely what they appear to be – and behind them… there is nothing»[22].

In his comment on the cut away to the vase in Ozu's film, Deleuze writes that the shot is «the representation of that which remains, across the succession of changing states». Noriko sees the father she loves asleep, as if dead. Deleuze's otherwise abstract formulation is to be understood in relation to the dramatic context in which the shot of the vase takes place: the vase represents a contingent order of being *en-soi*, and a temporality which is indifferent to ephemeral human life. The sense of the final sequence in *The Eclipse* is similarly bound to its context, the preceding narrative that is its *pre-text*. There is however a significant difference between the two examples, a difference allowed by, although not guaranteed by, the difference between a sequence and an isolated shot: just as the type of "gratuitous" shot that makes up the coda also intervenes in the preceding narrative, so the temporality of human affairs enters the final sequence (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2 – *L'eclisse* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1962).

Most of the fifty-seven shots that make up the final sequence of *The Eclipse* are of unpopulated details of the urban environment: the shadow of a tree on tarmac, the façade of an apartment block, a bus turning a corner, and so on. Other shots have people in them: a dark haired woman stands at the pavement edge on an empty street; a grey-haired man also seems to wait for someone or something; some people descend from a bus and the camera follows a man who is reading a copy of the Italian national weekly *L'Espresso* as he walks away, the headlines read «THE ATOMIC RACE» and «THE PEACE IS WEAK»[23]. *The Eclipse* was released in the same year as the Cuban Missile Crisis. The front page of the periodical also has a reference to an article on Alain Resnais' film of 1961 *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* by the investigative journalist, novelist and critic Camilla Cederna. The headline reads "Camilla Cederna à Marienbad: …où des couloirs interminables…" (a line from the film). Camilla Cederna is the model for the character of the journalist Maria Feletti in Dario Fo's play *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, which was first produced in Milan in 1970. The play was a response to the events surrounding the suspicious death while in police custody of the anarchist Giuseppe Pinelli, after he was arrested in the aftermath of the 1969 Piazza Fontana bombing in Milan. The bombing of the bank was yet to come, but Camilla Cederna's reputation as an investigative reporter was already established, and the original Italian audience of Antonioni's

film would have been aware of it. The front page therefore introduces contemporary culture and national and international politics into a parade of contingencies indifferent to human temporalities. Nevertheless the punctual political anecdote is not contextualised or explained. The headline in shot twenty-seven of the coda takes its place in an ensemble that includes the close-up of the earlobe of an old man in shot forty-two, and the shadow of a tree in shot nine. The punctual, whether *punctum* or mere punctuation, remains discrete – no causality is suggested, no connections are made between the points: whether historical, moral or merely rhetorical. As a consequence, subjective association and reflection are facilitated.

The sequence runs its course and I am left in the wake of its time. I am left with much the kind of feeling I had after reading Marguerite Duras' story *Le Ravissment de Lol V. Stein* (1964), the feeling of an indeterminate space and time within which a story was unfolding that had nevertheless always-already taken place, and which would repeat indefinitely. It is perhaps significant that Duras' story revolves around a moment in a ballroom where Lol sees her lover dancing with another woman. The dancers turn as if out of time, but nevertheless in motion. Meaning has drained from the event, leaving only its contingency, and leaving Lol to perpetually turn their image in her mind in the space around the void. In her book of 2002 *The Emergence of Cinematic Time* Mary Anne Doane speaks of the difficulties early film photographers had in determining the duration of an event, in deciding how far meaning could extend into the surrounding «vast and uncontrollable, and ultimately meaningless, realm of the contingent»[24]. Antonioni abandons his protagonists to contingency seven minutes before his film runs out. One critic remarks that he seems literally to have lost interest in them. In her book of 1984 *L'Ennui et ses discours*, Michèle Huguet remarks: «The subject experiencing boredom is not suffering from an absence of desire, but from its indetermination, which in turn forces the subject to wander, in search of a point of fixation»[25] (Figs. 3-4).

Fig. 3 – *L'eclisse* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1962).

Fig. 4 – *L'eclisse* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1962).

On an evening in Rome, many years ago, I left my hotel and took a taxi to the opening of an art exhibition. After the opening I was driven to dinner in a restaurant, and after dinner to a bar where the party continued. From the bar, another drive across town took me to a gathering in a private house. There, in the early hours of the morning, with no idea of where I now was, I asked how I might best find my way home. I was led to a window. There, across the street, was my hotel. In the first sequence of *The Eclipse* Vittoria, in the early morning, opens the curtains in her lover's apartment upon the view of a large concrete water tower; we do not see the tower again until it appears in the background of a shot in the last sequence. In a moment of surprised recognition a path through space and a time folds back on its beginning. The figure traced by the camera around a closed path in the final sequence of the film is a mise-en-abyme of the closed path the entire film takes in its unreeling. These paths that circle in space might also be seen as

describing a circle in time. The narrative portion of *The Eclipse* begins with Vittoria opening the curtains upon the morning light, the coda ends with darkest night. But we might easily view the coda as a prelude to a repetition of the same, in which the same woman opens the same curtains onto the same morning. Time is not one thing, nor is it only linear. Speaking to students at Paris 8, St. Denis, in 1982, Deleuze distinguished between two kinds of film director: «A realist is interested in intermediaries […], he is interested in neither the beginning nor the end. But the others are only interested in the beginning and the end because it is the same thing. It is in the same movement that the world is born and is already ended»[26].

The invention of photography was consistent with the project of the industrial revolution to transfer complex and time consuming manual tasks to the automatic operation of a machine. As a consequence of its inception as a mechanical means of recording appearances, photography tends to be discussed mainly in positivist terms: the active phenomenon of perception is reduced to a passive optics of vision, and a naïve realism reduces the photographic image to an unmediated record of reality. The idea that the photograph is "outside" of time implies a similarly positivist picture of time, a reductive *spatialisation* of temporality to clock time. In clock time, as Henri Bergson writes: «Outside of me, in space, there is never more than a single position of the hand […] for nothing is left of the past positions»[27]. Roquentin, we may remember, concurs: «The past [does] not exist. Not at all». Clock time, however, is only one aspect of the phenomenon of temporality. Bergson continues: «Within myself a process of […] interpenetration of conscious states is going on, which constitutes duration (*durée*). It is because I endure in this way that I picture to myself what I call the past […] at the same time as I perceive the present»[28].

The photograph is not outside of time, but it may produce the effect of an eclipse of clock time. Left to its own automatic devices, the photograph withdraws from participation in clock time, which then "passes behind its back". To the extent that it withdraws, that which Bergson considers the *real* time of *durée* comes to the foreground – and also the contingency of the world. Such photographic practices as advertising and reportage deploy their rhetorical techniques against the inherent "contingency effect" of the photograph, placing the photograph in the service of consensual meanings – venal or moral – preconstituted in the increasingly unified clock time of global markets, the media and global history. It is again due to the tenacity of the positivist attitude that the issue of indexicality returns so consistently in discussions of photography. There may well be an ontological essence to the photograph, just as there may be an ontological essence to the phoneme. But what is essential in photography, as in language, resides not in its materiality but in its *use*. I am sitting in a café in Marco Polo airport, in Venice. In a corner opposite, a group of young people have immured themselves behind baggage, tables and chairs. One of them, his back to me, has held up a digital camera and is cycling through images of their holiday together. Shot succeeds shot, with intermittent close-ups and occasional pans and zooms. I think of the view from my hotel room where, each night as I opened the shutters, I would see images passing erratically and silently on a television screen in a room across the deserted square. The young man passes the camera around the circle of friends, who laugh and add their own commentary as they recall their time together. What sense does it make to say that these images are out of time? I have the fantasy that one of the group, let us call him or her "X", is secretly enamoured of "Y", but who is already attached to "Z". One of the images shows "X" and "Y" laughing together, a couple within the frame if not in reality. Perhaps "X" will find a way of keeping this image; perhaps it will then be put away and forgotten, only to be found again by chance some forty years from now. Perhaps "X" will then look with bemused wonder upon the melancholy miracle of this image "out of time". I can only guess what material form the photographic image will take forty years from now. It is a further tribute to positivism that the photographic image is so often identified with its

material support, a support that today has become volatile and mutable. Because of this new-found mutability, however, it is perhaps now easier to conceive of the photographic image as, precisely, an *image*. As Georges Didi-Huberman reminds us: «The image can be, at one and the same time, material and psychical, external and internal, spatial and linguistic (*langagière*), morphological and formless, plastic and discontinuous…»[29].

In the spirit of positivism we might say that the young people in Marco Polo airport used photographs to "document" their holiday – we might equally say that they used them to advertise it. What is apparent is that they used photographs to tell the story of their time together. Paul Ricoeur has argued that «time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode»[30]. In the only article Clement Greenberg wrote about photography he judged that the specificity of photography resides in its ability to tell a story[31]. This seems a contradictory idea from a critic who insisted that an artistic practice can only progress through the attention it gives to that which marks it as individual, that which differentiates it from other art practices. Surely the ability to tell a story is properly specific to literature. When asked why she did not tell the story in her novel *Love* more simply, Tony Morrison replied that her aim was to «reproduce the way we perceive life». Greenberg suggests that the inevitable role of the photographic image is to tell a story. Morrison implies that the role of her stories is to evoke an image. We can bridge the apparent incommensurability of these positions only if we understand the image not simply in terms of its optical definition but in its extensions. For example, Bergson writes: «Perception is never a simple contact of the mind with the object present; it is completely impregnated with memory-images which complete and interpret it»[32]. This is the aspect of *durée* that Bergson calls *interpenetration*. In a commentary on Bergson, Gilles Deleuze writes: «The real and the virtual coexist and enter into a narrow circuit that takes us constantly from one to the other»[33]. What Deleuze calls the «virtual» component of the image will include public knowledge of what is being looked at – historical, philosophical, political, technical, aesthetic, and so on; it will include personal memories, fantasies and feelings; and it will include narratives.

The grand legitimating narrative of late capitalism is woven with the clock time of *The Eclipse*. The story of the relationship between Vittoria and Piero is its conventional vehicle. Handsome, hard-working and successful, his life is devoted to the pursuit of the pleasure of consuming, trading up and moving on – stocks, motor-cars and women. Piero is the complete Don Juan of late capitalism. The Lacanian theorist Alenka Zupancic has observed: «Don Juan can fuck as much as he likes, but, finally, it is he who is being fucked by the signifier, that is, by the famous list that he has to fill up with as many names as possible»[34]. The names cried out on the floor of the Rome stock exchange in Antonioni's film are a roll-call of the companies then driving Italy's post-war "economic miracle": Mediobanca, Pirelli, Generali, Fiat… When a joyrider drives Piero's Alpha Romeo into a lake and dies, Piero views the event exclusively as an opportunity to acquire a BMW; when Vittoria comes into sight he instantly dumps his girlfriend. All objects are equal before the Law in the symbolic order of late capitalism, and Piero obeys its only super-ego imperative: consume them all and enjoy. We are now near the end of Antonioni's film, the two protagonists have made love in Piero's office. As Vittoria prepares to leave, the two agree to meet each other again. Piero says: «At eight o'clock. Same place» – the spatio-temporal coordinates of a promise. Something inherent in the sexual relation, says Freud, resists satisfaction. Lacan says: «Il n'y a pas de rapport sexuelle». Antonioni wonders – with a note of anxiety – «whether even sentiments are arrested during an eclipse». Freud's biographer, Ernest Jones, gave a name – "aphanisis" – to the fear of the loss of sexual desire. Lost, perhaps stolen… in a 1940s movie Ava Gardner sings «Love is pure gold, and time a thief»[35]. In the clock time of late capitalism our desire is extracted from us along with our labour, and sold back to us in the form of the

commodity. The eclipse of this time may allow at least the possibility of a reconfiguration of desire, perhaps even the possibility of imagining a different form of society.

1 Michelangelo Antonioni, *Screenplays of Michelangelo Antonioni*, Souvenir, London 1963, p. x. See also, Seymour Chatman, *Antonioni, or, The Surface of the World*, University of California, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1985, pp. 72-73.

2 At least two versions of the final sequence of *The Eclipse* are described in the literature on the film. José Moure, in his book on the cinema of Antonioni, gives a one-and-a-half page description of the final sequence in which he mentions about forty shots (José Moure, *Michelangelo Antonioni: Cinéaste de l'évidement*, L'Harmattan, Paris 2001, pp. 82-83). The issue of *L'Avant-Scène Cinéma* devoted to *The Eclipse* lists precisely forty-four shots (*L'Éclipse*, *L'Avant-Scène Cinéma*, no. 419, February 1993, pp. 103-107). A closely detailed article by Mirella Jona Affron confirms this number (Mirella Jona Affron, "Text and Memory in Eclipse", in *Literature/Film Quarterly*, vol. 9, no. 3, 1981, pp. 139-151). However, a version of the screenplay published in 1963 describes fifty-seven shots (Michelangelo Antonioni, *Screenplays of Michelangelo Antonioni*, cit., pp. 356-361) and in a book on Antonioni, Sandro Bernardi refers to the «fifty-seven shots and seven minutes that constitute the final sequence» (Sandro Bernardi, *Antonioni: Personnage paysage*, Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, Saint-Denis 2006, p. 114, my translation) – this accurately describes the sequence that may be found on the 2007 DVD release of the film upon which I base my own remarks here (*L'Eclisse*, Optimum Releasing, 2007 – the exact time of the sequence is 07 min. 11 sec.). Nor are these "two versions" the only versions to have been released. It is reported that the producers of *The Eclipse* cut fourteen shots from the closing sequence of the film, and that the US distributor then made further cuts (Ted Perry, Rene Prieto, *Michelangelo Antonioni: A Guide to References and Resources*, G.K. Hall, Boston 1986, p. 109.).

3 The "EUR" building complex was begun by Benito Mussolini in 1935 but with the intercession of the war was left largely incomplete, and was still under construction when Antonioni filmed there in the early 1960s.

4 Although night descends during this sequence, we would not say that the sequence tells the story of nightfall.

5 Seymour Chatman, *Antonioni, or, The Surface of the World*, cit., pp. 81-82.

6 David Saul Rosenfeld, *Michelangelo Antonioni's* L'Eclisse – *a broken piece of wood, a matchbook, a woman, a man*, note 4, http://www.davidsaulrosenfeld.com/.

7 The camera moves in only thirteen of the fifty-seven shots that comprise the final seven minute sequence, and when it does so I have the feeling of looking for the next "photograph".

8 Philippe Dubois, *L'Acte photographique*, Nathan, Paris 1990 (my translation).

9 The names cried out on the floor of the exchange are a roll-call of the companies then driving Italy's post-war "economic miracle": Mediobanca, Pirelli, Generali, Fiat… Between 1958 and 1963 industrial output in Italy increased by over 10 percent per year – a rate surpassed only by Japan and West Germany. In *The Eclipse*, released in 1962, Antonioni stages a market crash. In reality, an economic slump began the year after the film was released from which Italy would not recover until the 1980s. *The Eclipse* is a film which resonates well with the present condition of a world where market values and relations have not only penetrated the economic, social and cultural life of the planet, but also suffuse both the conscious and unconscious registers of subjectivity.

10 Gilles Deleuze, *Cinéma 2: L'Image Temps*, Minuit, Paris 1985, p. 28.

11 "Entretien avec Michelangelo Antonioni", in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, no. 112, October 1960, quoted in Pierre Leprohon, *Michelangelo Antonioni*, Simon and Schuster, New York 1963, p. 25.

12 "Colloquio con Michelangelo Antonioni", in *Bianco e Nero*, June 1958, quoted in Pierre Leprohon, *Michelangelo Antonioni*, Simon and Schuster, New York 1963, p. 96.

13 See, for example, Michael Snow's film *A Casing Shelved*, which consists of a static shot of a book case; and the photographs in Eadweard Muybridge's *Animal Locomotion*.

14 Hollis Frampton, *For a Metahistory of Film: Commonplace Notes and Hypotheses* (1971), in Id., *Circles of Confusion: Film, Photography, Video; Texts 1968 - 1980*, Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester, N.Y. 1983, p. 114.

15 André Kertèsz, *On Reading*, Penguin, New York 1971.

16 Peter Wollen, "Fire and Ice", in *Photographies*, no. 4, April 1984.
17 Other, very different, examples is provided by Hollis Frampton's film *Nostalgia* (1971).
18 See Raymond Bellour, "The Pensive Spectator", in *Wide Angle*, vol. 9, no. 1, and Laura Mulvey, *The "Pensive Spectator" Revisited: Time and its Passing in the Still and Moving Image*, in David Green, (ed.), *Where Is the Photograph?*, Photoforum, Brighton 2003.
19 Philip Strick, *Antonioni*, Motion, Loughton 1963, p. 17.
20 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 6.41.
21 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea* (*La Nausée*, 1938), Penguin, London 1965, p. 180.
22 *Ibidem*, pp. 139-140.
23 «La gara atomica», «La pace è debole».
24 Mary Anne Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA-London, 2002, p. 12.
25 Michèle Huguet, *L'Ennui et ses discours*, PUF, Paris 1984, p. 215., cited in Patrice Petro, *After Shock/Between Boredom and History*, in Id. (ed.), *Fugitive Images: From Photography to Video*, Indiana, Bloomingdale- Indianapolis 1995, p. 271.
26 http://www.univ-paris8.fr/deleuze/article.php3?id_article=107 (my translation).
27 Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, Kessinger Publishing, Whitefish, MT 1996, p. 108.
28 *Ibidem*.
29 Georges Didi-Huberman, *Devant le Temps,* Minuit, Paris 2000, p. 114.
30 Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, University of Chicago, Chicago 1985, p. 52.
31 Clement Greenberg, "Four Photographers", in *New York Review of Books*, 23 January 1964.
32 Henri Bergson, *Matière et mémoire*, PUF, Paris 1999, p. 146.
33 Gilles Deleuze, Claire Parnet, *Dialogues*, Flammarion, Paris 2002, p. 184.
34 Alenka Zupancic, *The Shortest Shadow. Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Two*, MIT, Cambridge (MA) 2003, pp. 84-85.
35 *One Touch of Venus* (William A. Seiter, 1948).