

Today the above is more important than force
or kilotons.

—ERABUN EABOCKI,

"REALITY WOULD HAVE TO BEGIN"

14 **Far Above the Madding Crowd: The Spatial Rhetoric of Mass Representation**

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Introduction: Counting Crowds

On February 21, 2003, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Northern California's largest paper, led with a headline "Photos Show 65,000 at Peak of S.F. Rally." The occasion was an unprecedented collective protest—potentially "the largest synchronized global dissent in history"—across the major capitals of the world. It marked a decisive end to the sympathy which had greeted the United States in the aftermath of 9/11, and revealed the depth of incomprehension, fear, and anger to which the policies and rhetoric of the Bush administration has so quickly given rise (figs. 14.1 and 14.2). The specific number presented by the *Chronicle* was taken not as an indication as to the size and strength of the protest, but rather of its paucity and weakness. In fact, the specific number—and the story that would unfold beneath it—did not concern themselves with the situation to which this mass of people had gathered to respond, but only with the situation of the mass gathering itself.²

The original number of demonstrators, reported at two hundred thousand by both organizers and police alike, had been disseminated to news agencies throughout the world. So although this story was about the relative paucity of the crowd (at least compared to the initial estimates), it was essentially about the more general problem of visually representing the crowd—that is, of representing a phenomenon that was itself in a particular act of representation. In so doing, the *Chronicle* unconsciously placed itself in a long line of questioning, within the arts and philosophy of the modern era, of this problem of "mass representation." This tradition concerns both the crowd as a specific problem of visual representation, and the way in which this particular question of representing the



Figure 14.1 Anti-War Protests in Madrid, Spain,

masses comes to stand in for a more general question of mass representation as such within twentieth-century visual culture. This number reproduced in the headline—sixty-five thousand—was shocking at the time because both organizers and police had estimated a much higher number. Throughout the 1990s, as various groups became adept at organizing large-scale demonstrations in Washington, Americans were treated to the Million Man March, the Million Mom March, the Promise Keepers rally, and so forth. In a quintessentially American supersizing of the demonstration, these increasingly regularized spectacles were greeted with progressively less and less media attention. According to Todd Gitlin, the practice of splitting the difference between often widely divergent estimates of the protesters and the police agencies was finally abandoned in the 1990s in favor of simply reporting both numbers, thereby admitting a certain representational instability. The size of the crowd is by necessity what Alex Jones of the Harvard Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy calls “an emotional issue, not a factual issue” precisely in that, by seemingly adjudicating the significance of the demonstration, it stands to confirm or deny the very existence of the situation to which the demonstration was ostensibly responding.¹ For tens of thousands, the desire to be “seen,



Figure 14.2 and Rome, Italy, February 15, 2003.

heard, and counted” was much more than an articulation of disagreement with state policy; it was a primary instance of subjectification—a rare moment of collective disidentification from the world-as-presented through the often totalizing lens of the mass media.

Yet the *Chronicle*, which commissioned this particular survey, organized a very different kind of truth-claim based around a very different account of representation. Its representation of the demonstration was presented as the truth of the detached, objective view—a truth ostensibly beyond emotion and politics, gained through the resources of aerial photography and “scientific” procedure. “The world from above looks different than it does from street level” here signifies, “above the clamor of the street, above the intense emotions of the interested parties, above all that would distort one’s perception, there is a clear, objective view to be found—a ‘detached’ and therefore ‘truthful’ perspective” (fig. 14.3). In the upper-level corner of the page, under the heading “The Camera,” we encounter a torrent of seemingly superfluous technical minutiae. We find, for instance, that the camera’s aperture had been set to f_4 , its shutter speed was $1/300$ of a second, and that the film used had been AFGA Pan 80. Rhetorically, this detail is essential to the overall message being conveyed, namely, “This sur-

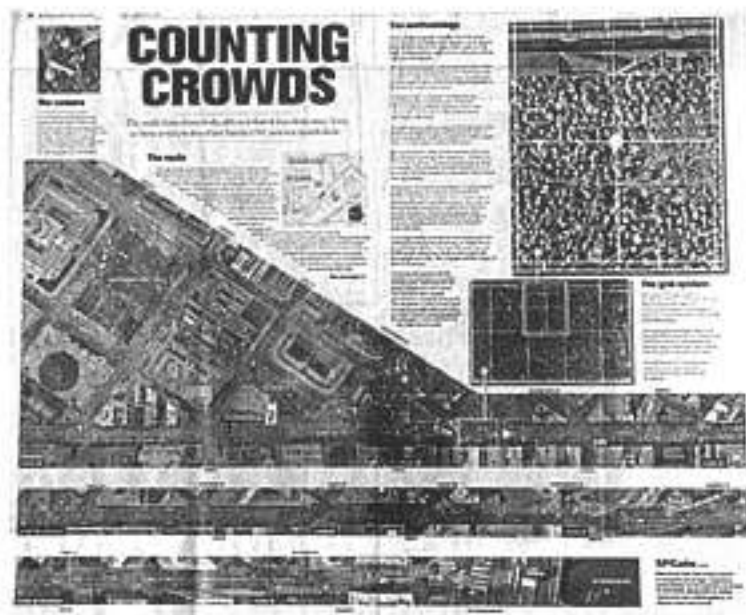


Figure 14.3 "Counting Crowds: The world from above looks different than it does from street level, as these aerial photographs of last Sunday's S.F. Anti-War march show."

vey has been well-done. It was scientific. Advanced equipment has been used by trained professionals. As such, the data, however controversial, is objectively accurate and the message it conveys can be trusted.⁹ Far from the maddening crowd—and specifically far *above* that crowd—such a perspective yearns to offer much more than an accurate count. It would offer a truthful accounting of the event outside the normal give-and-take of the various involved parties—outside the concrete, lived perspectives of the demonstrators, the police, and the bystanders. The "neutrality" and "objectivity" of its method would proclaim not simply a particular perspective on the event, but what we colloquially term "the long view"—the descendent of the god's-eye view of the Middle Ages. Not just any perspective, it is the privileged perspective that, in transforming the subjective image into an objective data set, would secure the social and political normalcy that the very existence of the crowd was taken to challenge.⁹

The *Chronicle's* "scientific" technique certainly seems to provide a more precise means of ascertaining the number at a mass gathering, especially compared with the necessary vagaries of personal eye-witness testimony. Doubtless such a technique will become, in time, the established practice for the measurement of large demonstrations. Yet because it has not yet hardened into routine, this particular image and imagination of the crowd—mass representation figured as a detached, objective measurement—can still strike us as uncanny. Yet it is precisely because of this that we should pause to consider what such a practice of representation, and the desire for such a practice, signifies—above all when it is applied to such a peculiar kind of phenomenon as the mass demonstration. For the mass demonstration is, of course, already itself an instance of representation in both the visual and political sense of the term. In accepting the technical question as to the validity of the data, as the question to be answered, we unwittingly accept not

simply a particular representation of the crowd, but a particularly narrow conception of the very practice and goals of representation as such. For these “objective” numbers, upon which such rhetorical importance is placed, can only acquire significance within a particular social, cultural, and political context, and against other numbers, from other times and other places. Even if such measurements were to become standardized, so many variables remain that such precision would likely have only a negligible effect on the necessary interpretation of the historic significance of any individual event. Far more important than the scientific precision of this technique, then, is the desire for such precision, and the idea—which usually goes unquestioned—that this specific kind of measurement, objectification, and distanced perspective is the most appropriate modality of representation.

The Long View: From the Picture Window to the Data Set

We might begin to approach these questions of distance and representation by considering the imbricated history of aerial photography and the instrumentality of vision. The desire to employ photography for the distanced gathering of information is, in fact, as old as the apparatus itself. In 1858, Albrecht Meydenbauer wrote that experience has proven that one can see, not everything, but many things better in scale measurement than on the spot. Meydenbauer had been charged with measuring the facade of a cathedral in Wezlar, Germany. To save the time and expense of erecting scaffolding, he traversed the length by means of a hanging basket. One evening, so the story goes, as he tried to climb directly into one of the upper windows from the suspended platform, he suddenly lost his balance—just managing to catch the window and save himself from falling by kicking away his platform. “As I came

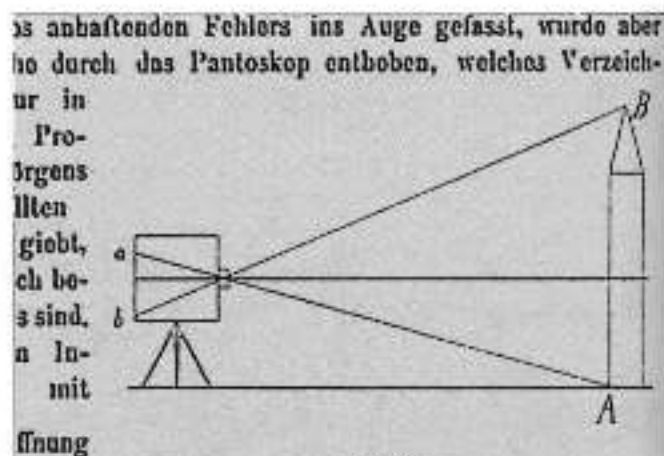


Fig. 14.

Figure 14.4 Meydenbauer's illustration, as reproduced in Fatockí, *Images of the World and the Inscription of War* (1988).

down, the thought occurred to me: is it not possible to replace measurement by hand by the reversal of that perspectival seeing which is captured in a photographic image? This thought, which eliminated the personal difficulty and danger involved in measuring buildings, was father to the technique of scale measurement.”⁶ Meydenbauer's experience was a traumatic one—born literally from a suspension between life and death. Thus photography—already a technology of memorialization—is given an additional apotropaic role, charged not simply with preserving the memory of the body, but protecting the body itself against the threat of death, giving the eyewitness an ever greater physical and temporal distance from that which he surveys.⁷ In Meydenbauer's text, we find the physical experience of danger eviscerated by the elegance of a geometric theorem (fig. 14.4). The same year that Meydenbauer was attempting to transform the photograph into a data set, the great early portraitist Nadar (né Felix Tournachon) was reorienting the very ground of the perspectival frame. With the simple act of successfully exposing a photographic plate 262 feet over Bièvre, France, Nadar caused photography to break with the Quattrocento rules that had gov-

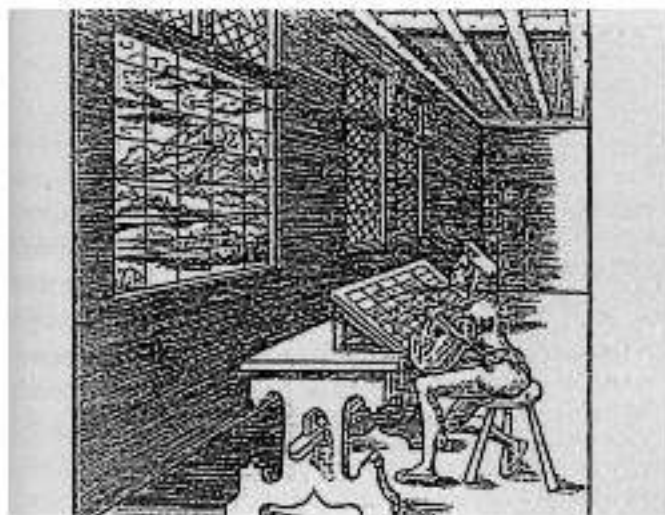


Figure 14.5 The reorientation of perspective, from picture window to data-set. Alberti (left) and Auschwitz (right), film stills from *Rocky*, *Images of the World and the Inscription of War* (1988).

erned visual representation since the Renaissance. It is the same break with which Leo Steinberg, a hundred years later, would famously characterize the radicality of Rauschenberg's work of the late 1950s and 1960s—the so-called Flatbed Picture Plane.

Despite “the most drastic changes in style” artists had developed over the centuries, Steinberg argued that a single axiom could hold together all western artistic representation from that of the old masters through American abstract expressionism, and this was “the conception of a picture as representing a world . . . which reads on the picture plane in correspondence with the erect human posture . . . [even] where the Renaissance world space concept almost breaks down, there is still a harking back to implied acts of vision, to something that was once actually seen.” Yet for Steinberg, Rauschenberg's radicality consisted in upending this representational doxa, operating through “a radically new orientation, in which the painted surface is no longer the analogue of a visual experience of nature but of operational processes . . . I tend to regard the tilt of the picture plane from vertical to horizontal as expressive of the

most radical shift in the subject matter of art, the shift from nature to culture,” a surface “on which data is entered, on which information may be received, printed, impressed” (fig. 14.5).⁸

Steinberg's discussion contains a number of important themes for our inquiry into the history of the aerial perspective. “As a criterion of classification, [the flatbed picture plane] cuts across the terms ‘abstract’ and ‘representational,’” he concludes, and we can locate a similar representational ambiguity within the aerial photograph a hundred years before. It is an image which represents visual data—but no longer as it had been experienced in nature by the human eye. “Abstract,” as Siegfried Kracauer would say with regards to the ornamental formations of the Tiller Girls, and yet still referential, analogical.⁹ It is a new category of image that is part of the human world, and operationally useful to human affairs, but which no longer represents that world from an embodied, human perspective. Rather, it *models* that world—as information to be recorded, data to be analyzed and processed.¹⁰ Yet this newly oriented image as a site of the informational, as a site of

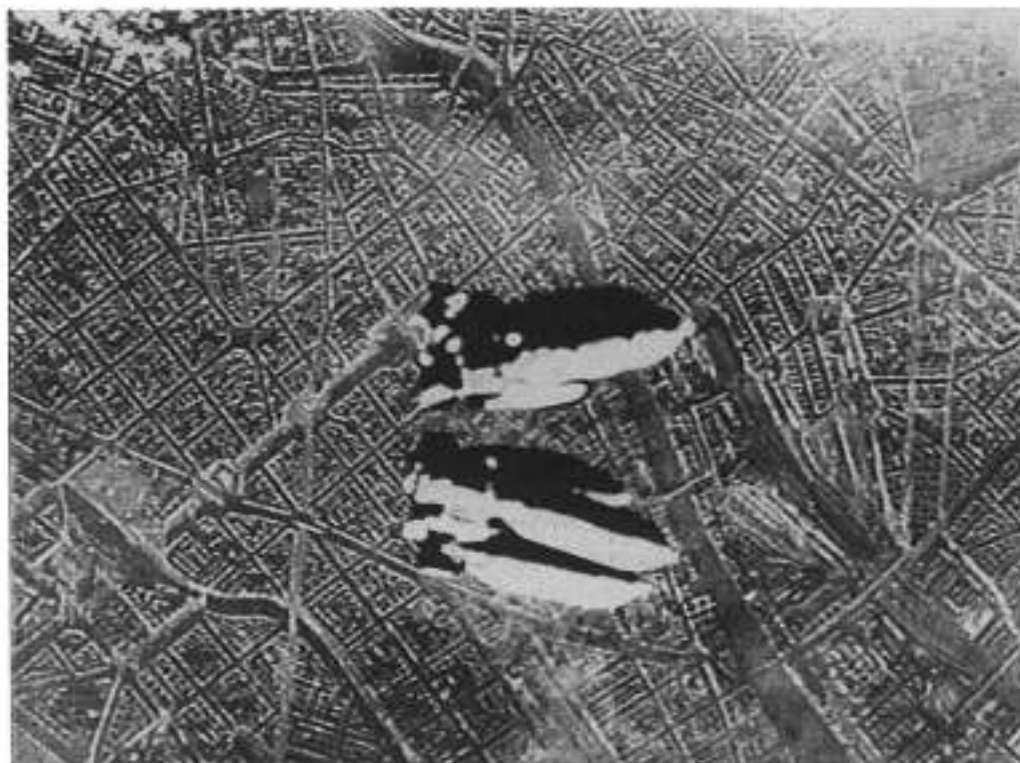


Figure 14.6 “The preserving photograph, the destroying bomb—these two now press together . . .” Film still and text of voice-over from Farocki, *Images of the World and the Inscription of War* (1988).

data processing rather than naturalistic vision, had already issued forth—a hundred years before Rauschenberg and others would “rediscover” it for contemporary art—in the historical conjunction between Meydenbauer and Nadar. Their simultaneous inventions would become increasingly bound together by the turn of the century and would augur a radically new relation between the human body and the image within twentieth-century visual culture. What we might call the abstract and the informational were together conjoined the moment Nadar was asked to undertake photo reconnaissance for the French army. He refused, but by 1882, unmanned photo balloons—joined soon after by photo rockets, kites, and even carrier pigeons—had already taken aerial photography out of human hands.¹² When Wilbur Wright produced the first photograph from an airplane in 1909, the potential value of aerial reconnais-

sance is judged to be of such importance that in the space of just a few years, as many as ten thousand photographs were being developed and delivered to field commanders in World War I each day.

Harun Farocki relates Meydenbauer's story in his *Images of the World and the Inscription of War*, in which his narrator adds the text, “Arduous and dangerous, to hold out physically on the spot. Safer to take a picture, and evaluate it later, protected from the elements, at one's desk.”¹³ Like the work of Paul Virilio and Michael de Landa, Farocki's film seeks to trace the imbricated history of visual technologies of distanciation with the modern instruments and policies of surveillance and war.¹⁴ Because many, if not most, of the technologies of aerial photography were developed for military use, aggression and surveillance have come to be indissociable from the perspective it provides. And the

The Rationalization of Sight

technologies of distanced imaging—from the radar technology that enabled Britain's Royal Air Force to defeat the much larger German Luftwaffe in World War II's Battle of Britain to the satellite imaging, the global positioning system, and airpower that enabled the U.S. victories in Serbia, Afghanistan, and the Persian Gulf—have played an ever-greater role in military supremacy and, by extension, the character of globalization within the last half-century (see fig. 14.6).¹¹ These authors help us to understand that this association of visual and militaristic technologies was not simply a historical accident, but a profound imbrication of new technologies of representation, technologies that would occasion a transformation in the epistemology of representation within the modern era.

Whereas Virilio has developed the important historical and cultural association between militarism and technologies of representation, between "War and Cinema," as it were, there is a more fundamental, and potentially more disturbing, genealogy that Farocki's film, in its dialogue with the work of Martin Heidegger, is interested in tracing. It is a story of the world becoming picture, becoming representation, and our human capacities for perception—capacities crucially linked to the ambiguities, blind spots, and above all the reciprocity and mutual imbrication of seen and viewer, viewer and world, being renounced in favor of what Heidegger calls the securing and mastering of practices of a modality of representation—that sets the world before us as picture, something to be evaluated from a safe distance, or as Farocki's narrator puts it, "protected from the elements, at one's desk." It is a transformation that leads away from an experience of the world grounded in the phenomenology of embodied vision, toward an experience and epistemology of the visual field that we might describe as "informational," increasingly mediated through the instrumentality of calculation and regulation.

The recent work of Lev Manovich can help us place the inventions of Meydenbauer and Nadar within a longer historical perspective that both clarifies their relation to the Quattrocento system of perspective and links them to the future developments of radar and satellite imaging. Manovich has taken up the larger cultural trajectory of what William Ivans, in his influential 1939 book, called "the rationalization of sight," to propose that a particular modality of representation, for which he coins the term "visual nominalism," has accounted for an influential, although under-acknowledged, tradition arising out the Renaissance invention of perspective. He defines visual nominalism as "the use of vision to capture the identity of individual objects and spaces by recording *distances and shapes*," and he goes on to trace how "the rationalization of perspectival sight" proceeded simultaneously along two directions throughout the nineteenth century: "On the one hand, perspective became the foundation for the development of the *techniques* of descriptive and perspective geometry that became a *standard visual language* for modern engineers and architects. On the other hand, photographic *technologies* automated the creation of perspectival images."¹²

The system of perspectival imaging that had begun, for theorists like Alberti and painters like da Vinci, as a mere aid for what was acknowledged as an infinitely more complex practice of painterly representation by and for man, became instrumentalized in the nineteenth century for the acquisition and analysis of all matter of objective data. And with modern technologies of the automation of vision, the difference between human perception and the mere acquisition of this visual data becomes increasingly pronounced. Aerial photography begins the break with embodied vision, even in the increasingly rare instances when it is carried out by human photographers, because the images it produces no longer correspond to a shared experience of the

visual world. Manovich describes radar technology as the culmination of this tradition, for there the essential data of identity and location becomes completely divorced from all other “extraneous” aspects of human perception:

All it sees and all it shows are the positions of objects, 3-d coordinates of points in space, points which correspond to submarines, aircrafts, birds, or missiles. Color, texture, even shape are disregarded. Instead of Alberti's window, opening onto the full richness of the visible world, a radar operator sees a screen, a dark field with a few bright spots . . . but it performs [its delimited function] more efficiently than any previous perspectival technique or technology.²⁷

Manovich cites Lacan's contention that, “what is at issue in geometric perspective is simply the mapping of space, not sight,” and that “the whole trick . . . of the classic dialectic around perception, derives from the fact that it deals with geometric vision, that is to say, with *vision in so far as it is situated in a space that is not in its essence the visual.*”²⁸ If what Manovich calls the “automation of visual nominalism” has reached such an apogee within the contemporary era that the traditional foundation of representation in the human act of seeing is henceforth both unnecessary and inconvenient for its operation, we may well be in a better position to ask after those aspects of “seeing” that this tradition so actively/aggressively forecloses.

Farocki's film does so in an extended dialogue with the work of Heidegger, effecting precisely the kind of “Questioning Concerning Technology” that Heidegger considered an ethical necessity within an age in which the world has, as he put it, “become Picture.”²⁹ In Heidegger's work, we must situate the specific ideology of militarism only within a much broader domain of instrumentality—the fantasy of managing the complexity of human affairs with a detached scientific objectivity that lent itself, throughout the twentieth century, to the most destructive of human acts being justified through nebulous conceptions of “progress.” Heidegger's critique of a particularly modern concep-

tion of representation as *Vorstellung*, or “setting-before,” is that it is not really a matter of perception as such, so much as an ordering and securing of the visual field in advance of its exercise. It is a modality of representation necessarily involved in the domination of that which it would figure—even when it is not directly used, as it so often comes to be, in the exercise of destructive force.³⁰

Thus when the trope of the “view from above”—our modern equivalent of the god's-eye view—replaces the Quattrocento perspectival system, it brings with it an inescapable ambivalence. On the one hand, it seeks to present a single, comprehensive view of the totality, a mastering view that would survey and take in everything that lies below it. But unlike the traditional Quattrocento system, the “view from above” is no longer, in its essence, a view *for man*. It is first propelled by daring individuals in balloons or airplanes, but almost immediately it is replaced by all manner of unmanned vehicles, from the first kites and unmanned balloons of the nineteenth century to the orbiting geosynchronous satellites of the twenty-first, to convey photographic information which no human eye could ever independently grasp. Thus even as Manovich is correct to find the roots of this system in the Renaissance techniques, their elaboration within contemporary technologies of vision effects a dramatic change in the basic trajectory: man is no longer the measure of that which he surveys. Instead, the world has become so much data—increasingly only *is* and *as*—which can only confirm, or fail to confirm, to the preexistent frames laid down to contain it. Unable to occupy, even theoretically, the locus of vision, man has increasingly allowed technologies of perception to see, even to interpret, in his place—hence the increasing “automation of perception” within computerization.

The tradition of visual nominalism that Manovich describes is one that, as Lacan says, loses the very essence of the visible, in that it rejects the reciprocity between viewer and viewed that lies at the heart of the experience of human

perception. And while he is often regarded as the origin of the modern tradition of scientific perspectival construction, Alberti had been careful to note that he had no intention of settling what he termed the "truly difficult question" that had occasioned considerable dispute among the ancients, namely, "whether these rays emerge from the surface or from the eye."²⁰ This phenomenon has been addressed and described in many ways since ancient times, but in the contemporary era it has been put forth most forcefully by Merleau-Ponty as a bidirectionality of perception, the bilinearity or chiasmatic intertwining of viewer and viewed, and the immersion of both the seer and the seen within a single, overlapping visual field. Farocki writes, "the photographic image is built up of points and decomposes into points. The human eye synthesizes the points into an image. A machine can capture the same image, without any consciousness or experience of the form, by situating the image points in a coordinate system. . . . To conceive of a photographic image as a measuring device is to insist on the mathematicality, calculability, and finally the 'computability' of the image-world."²¹ The photograph is made up of points, of data, and thus can certainly be again so decomposed through instrumental calculation. Yet in so doing, the image is no longer an image, but a data set. "Secured-in-advance," as Heidegger would say, it can no longer provoke a true encounter, because its field of intelligibility has already been posited in advance of its visibility. The information required of it functions to delimit its possible operation—just as the photographic evidence of the concentration camp at Auschwitz accidentally captured by U.S. surveillance would not be recognized until decades later, because those examining the images had not been instructed to look for it.

When Farocki uses the terms *image* and *form* in the passage above, they stand opposed to that kind of "image-world" that can be rationalized and automated because they function in an affective, and not simply a cognitive,

register. In the *Chronicle's* story with which I began, the reporter approvingly cited Jones's assertion that the size of a crowd is an "emotional" not a "factual issue." This strikes at something true, but not simply, as the *Chronicle* seems to imply, because people are too caught up in their own emotions to see what "really is." Rather, it is fundamentally because human perception, as such, is always and irreducibly bound to affect and affective identification, and this "truth" is something that numerical data can neither change nor even adequately address. And yet human perception is not the inevitable result of our looking. The possibility for affective encounter is bound up with the possibility of visual reciprocity, the extent to which the object is capable of returning our gaze. Without this dimension of reciprocity, the world—and even the people within that world—become reduced to what Heidegger termed *standing-reserve*, mere data to be analyzed and manipulated according to its potential use value. What Heidegger considered the "greatest danger" within contemporary visual technologies may lie in the fact that the very difficulty in seeing, the complexity and ambivalence involved in human perception, becomes obscured within a field of instrumental rationalization that increasingly serves as its own justification.

This "rationalization of sight" that Farocki, Manovich, and Heidegger all describe as a dominant feature of our current representational era is crucially related to the distanced perspective of aerial photography through this dimension of what I am calling visual reciprocity. It is not simply the sense that the other sees back, but rather that the other seen is recognized as a seer in the first place, as one capable of returning the gaze.²² If the crowd can only be seen as crowd from a spatially divergent position—specifically from an elevated, distanced, detached perspective—it might seem that identification and disidentification would be predictable, perhaps ineradicable psychological correlates of its visual representation.

This association between the detached perspective, in-



Figure 14.7 "Would you really feel any pity if one of those . . . dots stopped moving forever?" Aerial view from *The Third Man* (1949), text spoken by Orson Welles.

strumentalization, and violence has a long history within numerous forms of twentieth-century visual culture. A poignant cinematic example occurs in the pivotal scene of Carol Reed's *The Third Man* (1949), in which the two central characters ride a Ferris wheel high above the amusement park they survey (fig. 14.7). Harry's highly profitable practice of smuggling diluted penicillin is revealed to have

caused the death and insanity of dozens of people in destitute postwar Vienna. When Holly, his childhood friend, demands whether Harry had ever seen his victims, Harry insists the question is melodramatic. Opening the door to the car and looking out, he instructs Holly to look down on the tiny figures below. "Would you really feel any pity if one of those . . . dots stopped moving forever?" Harry asks,

"If I offered you [a quarter million dollars] for every dot that stopped, would you really, old man, tell me to keep my money? Or would you calculate how many dots you could afford to spare?"³⁸ Later, making an explicit connection to the kind of instrumental vision that characterizes the bureaucracy of modern states, capitalist and communist both, Harry (Welles) declares, "Nobody thinks in terms of human beings . . . governments don't, why should we? They talk about 'The People' and 'The Proletariat.' I talk about the suckers and the mugs—it's the same thing. They have their 'Five Year Plans,' so have I."

The identification and disidentification that almost always appears correlative to the distanced perspective could be said to be the primary reason that the figuration of the crowd became such an acute dilemma for progressive politics in the first part of the twentieth century, as well as why—despite the great desire and relative ease of photographically representing large collectivities—artists, filmmakers, and theorists of artistic modernism devoted so much time and energy to the problem of how to represent the multitude as phenomenon, as event, and as subject. The crowd was perhaps the quintessential object for the social scientist and the policy maker to "get into hand" through representation, such that the regularity and calculability of such an admittedly volatile object could be ensured. As Jeffrey T. Schnapp and others have argued, the crowd represents both the power and the legitimacy of the modern state, after the traditional markers of authority were dispersed through the progress of the Enlightenment. And yet we might consider how, within the visual rhetoric and theoretical reflection of artistic modernism, the crowd continued to defy this particular logic of representation, to inhabit a space "outside the picture" I have so far been describing. In whatever guise it appears, the collective subject tends to emerge as a site of representational breakdown; it is that which cannot be representationally secured. This is why, within the tradition of artistic modernism, the crowd

tends to be figured either through a kind of essential ambivalence, or else as a particularly liminal kind of object—fleeting, insubstantial, transitory. And precisely because it seems to defy representation, the figure of the crowd often comes to stand in for the perceived limitations of both the practice, and the epistemology, of the particular modality of representation I have been describing.

The New Vision of the Modern Metropolis

In his discussion of the radical reorientation of perspectival relations within postwar art, Steinberg concludes by claiming that this transformation of the "picture window" into the "flatbed picture plane" was what "let the world back in again. Not the world of the Renaissance man who looked for his weather clues out of the window; but the world of men who turn knobs to hear a taped message, 'precipitation probability ten percent tonight,' electronically transmitted from some windowless booth. Rauschenberg's picture plane is for *the consciousness immersed in the brain of the city.*"³⁹ Here Steinberg locates what we have been calling the "informational" structure not only with a new modality of vertically oriented perception, but specifically with the urban—with a change in contemporary consciousness structured by the experience of urban modernity.

In "The Metropolis and Mental Life," Georg Simmel argues that "the metropolis presents the peculiar conditions which are revealed to us as the opportunities and the stimuli for the development of psychic existence," and historically, the rise of the crowd—as objective fact and as psychological condition—was certainly tied to the growth of the industrial city. Only with the rise of the new industrial economies of the nineteenth century did the extreme density of the urban population make the crowd such a potent site of cultural and political struggle. It is thus no coinci-

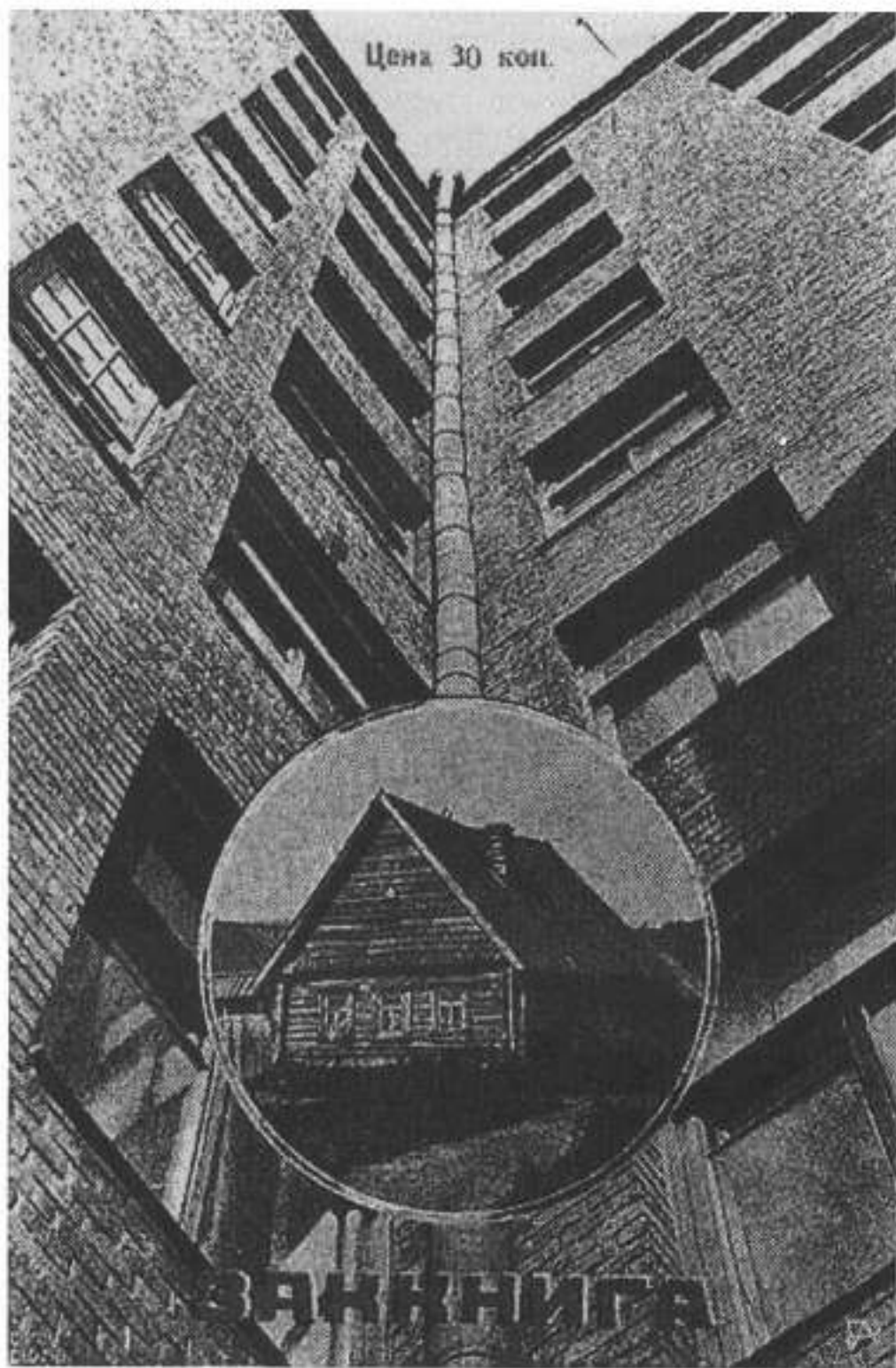


Figure 14.8 The verticality of the city as *unheimlich*—a new strangeness at the heart of the domestic. Photo collage by Aleksandr Rodchenko, 1925.

dence that during this decade in which visual and theoretical reflection on the crowd was to take on such visibility and importance, we find a concomitant discourse on the spatial topography of the modern metropolis. Both are organized, to some extent, around this topos of verticality and elevation as it was understood to engender both a new somatic economy of vision and a new level of visibility for the crowd.

Aleksandr Rodchenko, the Soviet constructivist, would be one of the most vocal proponents of the necessity of a "new photographic vision" tied to the specific spatial, perceptual, and somatic experience of the new urban environment. Nor was he alone: throughout Europe, one of the unifying threads of the otherwise widely divergent styles of the photographic New Vision, as it came to be known, was an attention to the heretofore unexamined representational possibilities and characteristics of the metropolis.¹⁸ A 1925 photomontage by Rodchenko would give his visual economy programmatic illustration (fig. 14.8). Within its frame, two radically different perspectives are forced into collision. In Rodchenko's constructivist project, the word *perspective* can be seen to take on both a visual and ideological valence. The country house is placed, rather mockingly, in center stage; framed in a Renaissance tondo, it is presented as a kind of quaint little picture, a memory trace. The modern apartment building rises up all around, enveloping it with armlike walls. Unframed, it continues to the edge of the page. Although the small house presents us with a total image, whole and detached—seen as if through a telescope, from a distance—the apartment building is necessarily incomplete. We immediately feel the structure continuing beyond the frame, just as we inescapably feel that particular embodied perspective—on the street, craning our neck—from which this image was captured.

The ideological message is unmistakable: the space of the city, of modernity, has radically shifted from that of the country, of tradition. It demands a new kind of repre-

sentation and a new kind of spectator. Within the image, the isolation of the individual family gives way to the congregated masses of the apartment building. The fantasy of a total vision, the view from a distance, has given way to a fractured and partial perspective. Rodchenko insisted on this ideological program through a privileging of the snapshot over the "artistic photograph," of the multiple and temporal over the singular and eternal. But he also did so by reinserting the specificity of the corporeal experience of vision into a traditionally detached, generic practice of representation.

This corporeal experience of vision was one on which the vertical topography of the city simply insisted. The city is not simply an object but, as Simmel would have it, a total perceptual and psychic environment. And its most obvious and striking new feature, for Rodchenko as for many of the New Vision photographers, was precisely the conspicuous verticality of its topography. Despite the complexity of the metropolis, the impossibility that sociologists like Simmel found in attempting to describe the multiplicity of its conditions and transformations, there was a single architectural form that symbolized the ambivalent hopes and fears about modernity, one that traversed both capitalist and communist countries, both avant-garde and popular representation, that emerged as a synecdoche for the modern metropolis as a whole. That form was the American skyscraper.

Rodchenko's specific fascination with the high-rise emerged on account of the basic disjunction between our lived experience of the new urban environment and the decidedly disorienting effect of simply reproducing this experience photographically. Because we spend only the smallest fraction of our lives looking above a thirty-degree incline, representations of such "natural" perceptions become coded as deviant. Rodchenko increasingly found himself accused of "formalist distortion" for shooting from these angles. Tall buildings, ironically enough, only seem natural when photographed from miles away. Yet within the me-

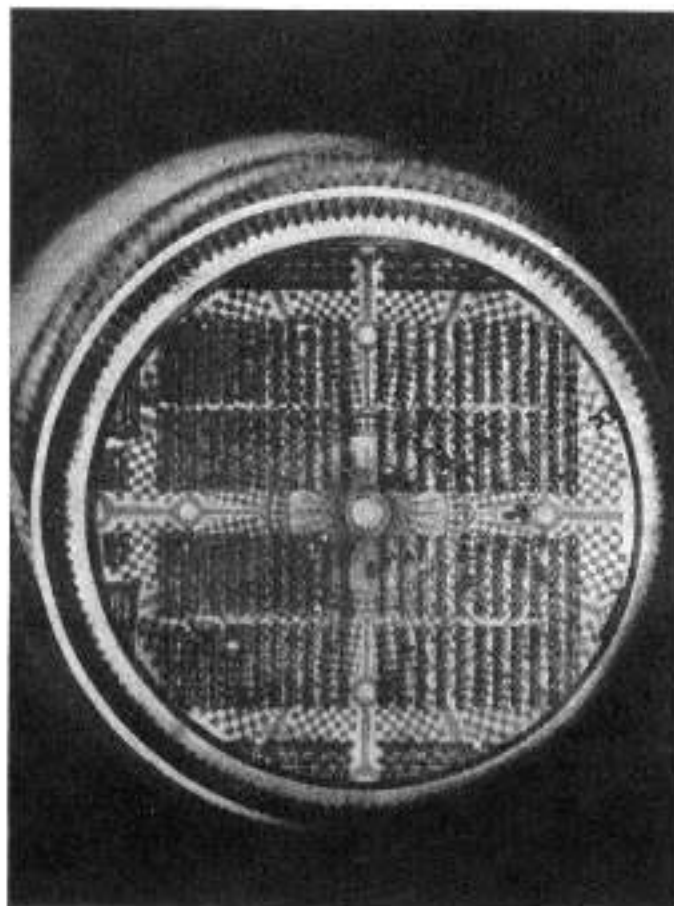


Figure 14.9 Aerial view of the New Vision—the world as “ornament,” as “data.” Zeibilder’s “St. Paul’s Cathedral, London.”

tropolis, between its unprecedented congestion and verticality of its architecture, such distanced views no longer correspond to perceptual experience.⁴⁶

The Dada artist Raoul Haussman had been arguing since 1921 that technology and the metropolis had together given rise to an epochal shift in visual culture and sense experience, and Moholy-Nagy’s unrealized film script *Dynamic of the Metropolis* (1921–1922) had called for a plethora of radical perspectives on the city.⁴⁷ Yet perhaps more influential than either of these would be a rather prosaic book of pho-

tographs of new American skyscrapers taken by the German architect Erich Mendelsohn on his trip to New York in 1924. Because neither Europe nor the Soviet Union had any real skyscrapers at this time, Mendelsohn’s images were influential in bringing the new spatial dynamics of the New York skyscraper into the European aesthetic debates and practices of the mid- to late 1920s, as well as helping nourish a growing collective European fantasy of America’s power, efficiency, progress, and triumph over nature. In his review of the book, the constructivist El Lissitzky was so taken by surprising angles and perspectival disjuncture to which these massive structures gave rise that he exclaimed the only proper way to look at these images was to “hold the book above your head and rotate it”—specifically acknowledging the corporeal dimension that the representation of this new spatial topography seemed to imply.⁴⁸ By contrast, this famous image of Zeibilder illustrates what we might call, after Siegfried Kracauer, the “ornamental” dimension of the aerial view—its tendency to de-realize what it portrays (fig. 14.9).⁴⁹ In this image, it is difficult to feel any sense of identification with either the photographer or the world depicted. Despite the extreme heights and possible danger the photographer endured, one feels nothing of the vertigo or precariousness that inhabits the camerawork of Rodchenko or Vertov. At such an extreme distance, there is no longer anything human with which to identify; the human world has been photographically decomposed into pure form and rendered as an abstract series of shapes and tonalities.

Rodchenko’s aerial perspectives do not abstract from corporeal experience, but become inescapably vertiginous only through their appeal to embodied perception. In this way, they call to mind the Stenberg Brothers’ contemporaneous poster for *Man with the Movie Camera*, in which we are placed on the street, craning our necks to stare up at the lofty peaks of the skyscrapers (fig. 14.10). Out of the sky, a woman appears to be falling directly onto us—but something about those receding buildings is so vertiginous, they



Figure 14.10 The (dis)embodied experience of the metropolis—loss of center, loss of gravity. Sternberg Brothers, Poster for *Man with a Movie Camera*, 1929.

seem to extend downward, as if we were the one falling through the air, tumbling from the edge of one of the skyscrapers. The spiraling text redoubles this vertiginous descent, marking an inversion of both the physical and ideological valence of the skyscraper's verticality. The traditional

subject cannot remain whole against the dynamic energy of cinematic technology and the new metropolis, the Sternbergs' poster seems to declare, but comes flying apart. And indeed, Vertov's masterpiece will be about the deconstruction and reconstruction, both visual and ideological, of the new Soviet city and the new Soviet citizen.

The View from Above, the View from the Street

Aerial photography did not become a truly widespread aspect of visual culture until its use in World War I, and it is thus no surprise that the New Vision of the 1920s, just a few years after, would take up this "view from above" within the city from the perspective of the newly towering structures to which it was giving rise. And what kinds of objects did this newly elevated perspective suddenly make visible to the photographer? Precisely that curious and seemingly unrepresentable phenomenon of urban modernity: the crowd as such. Seen from above, the crowd gathers a solidity, an objectivity, that it could never possess from the street. And because it can be represented photographically—captured, as we say—it achieves an objective existence of a particular kind (fig. 14.11). One might consider the ways in which the securing aspects of the view from above might serve to inoculate the viewer against that which is inherently unstable and ambiguous in visual representations of the crowd. Matthew Tiews has traced out the importance of a rhetoric of contagion in nineteenth-century cultural history of the crowd that remains crucial to a consideration of how this desire for a distanced representation begins to operate within the twentieth-century visual rhetoric of film and photography. The desire to see from a distance is not only the desire for mastery over, but that of inoculation from. The crowd is something to be feared, from the perspective of the bourgeois individualist subject, because it threatens

desubjectification on a primary level. This desubjectivification occurs, as we know from *L'air de la Bon*, and others, through some irrational vector of transmission—not the Enlightenment model of rational discussion and individual choice, but the murky and nebulous realm of identification, affect, and seduction. “The opinions and beliefs of crowds are specially propagated by contagion,” *Le Bon* succinctly declared. Thus in distinction to the “distanced mastery” of the aerial perspective, “the street” emerges as a rhetorical locus of traffic and transmission—an especially difficult place to represent, administer, and control.

Within the visual and discursive rhetoric of early twentieth-century modernity, “the view from above” and “the view from the street” become much more than mere spatial relation. Scott Bukatman suggests that what is at stake is nothing less than competing versions of the modernist project—a fundamental opposition between the modernism of “the rational, planned city of efficient circulation, perhaps epitomized by the designs of Le Corbusier” and “another modernism entirely . . . the experience of the city described by Simmel, Benjamin and Kracauer—disorganized, heterogeneous, street-level.”⁴⁴ Michel de Certeau describes the unique pleasure of looking from atop a skyscraper in New York in terms of both a ritual of transubstantiation and an “erotics of knowledge.” The spectator is lifted, “out of the city’s grasp. One’s body is no longer clasped by the streets that turn and return it according to an anonymous law; nor is it possessed, whether as player or played, by the rumble of so many differences and by the nervousness of New York traffic . . . up there, he leaves behind the mass that carries off and mixes up in itself any identity of authors and spectators . . . his elevation transfigures him into a voyeur.”⁴⁵ No longer necessarily “possessed” of a body, he places himself

at a distance. It transforms the bewitching world by which one was “possessed” into a text that lies before one’s eyes. It allows one to read it, to become a solar eye, looking down like a god . . .

Medieval or Renaissance painters represented the city as seen in a perspective that no eye had yet enjoyed. This fiction already made the medieval spectator into a celestial eye . . . the 1370 ft high tower that serves as a prow for Manhattan continues to construct the fiction that creates readers, makes the complexity of the city readable, and immobilizes its opaque mobility in a transparent text.”

For de Certeau, the aerial perspective of the skyscraper turns the embodied viewer into the disembodied reader of what seems a transparent text of social relations. Although the city dweller of Simmel, Benjamin, and Kracauer is similarly a kind of reader, the spatial text—seen from the vantage of the street—is seen as decidedly more ambiguous and polyvalent in its message.

Aspects of the 1920s New Vision might be productively understood as interrogating this particular dialectic of the skyscraper and the street, as analyzing how the spatial topography of the modern metropolis was transforming not only the formal characteristics of perception but also the dynamics of intersubjectivity and identification within which visual reciprocity plays a crucial role.

The Crowd (1928)

King Vidor gave a particularly vivid expression to conjoined dynamics of visibility and identification within the new metropolis in his silent-era masterpiece *The Crowd* (1928). Despite its matter-of-fact title, Vidor’s film is a complex and compelling portrait within which the crowd is considered not an objective fact to be recorded so much as a psychological disposition to be analyzed. The film begins with the birth and childhood of a certain John Sims, an American Everyman, who, despite his failure to evidence any particular distinction, is repeatedly told—practically enjoined—that he will grow up to “be somebody.”⁴⁶ After his father’s abrupt death and his own coming of age, John travels to New York to make a life for himself. In so doing,

Vidor presents him as exchanging the horizontal openness of the country, and the past, to vertical congestion of the city of the future.

Within the metropolis, Vidor depicts John's desire to prove himself equal to his father's mandate through an explicit visual rhetoric of verticality. Throughout the film, this verticality—the constant struggle to move up, to distance himself from that below—conditions John's struggle for subjectification as one that can only take place against the street and against the crowd.

Upon first seeing New York, Vidor's camera remains curiously divorced from both the narrative and any possible point of view within the film's diagesis. When we emerge from this detached view from above, we are given the film's only real crowd scenes: images of the congested New York streets, taken from above, filled with all manner of vehicular and pedestrian traffic. As befits the expressionist style he often appropriated, Vidor presents these images not as objective evidence of material reality, but as subjective evidence of a psychological reality. These crowd images, although associated with the view from above, would seem to mock that perspective through their obvious framing and overt manipulation. In the first, two separate images of a crowded street are superimposed upon one another, creating an unrecognizable visual cacophony. We cut to another superimposition, this time of a busy intersection, where ghosted cars and pedestrians seem to pass through one another unscathed. Yet as Vidor's camera pans right, we see that this cacophony was simply the result of an intervening windowpane, casting reflections from another street. The street ahead is relatively clear and orderly, its perceived chaos merely the result of an intervening screen.

When Vidor shows us the next image of a high-rise, the one that begins the story, it is from the perspective of the street. As if illustrating the very enacting of "embodied perception" with which Lissitzky characterized Mendelsohn's New York, Vidor's camera abandons the still,

fixed distance of his earlier aerial shots for the movement and perspective of the man on the street, turning his body to face the structure. The camera, no longer distanced or abstract, suddenly seems to stand in for a distinctly human gaze, perhaps marveling at the imposing structure before it. But then, suddenly, we are flying up the side of the building, higher and higher, seemingly about to surmount the structure completely.²⁴ Slowing near the top, and turning in toward the building's surface, the monumental unity of the form begins to dissolve into a serial arrangement of identical windows that themselves dissolve into a serial arrangement of desks, each with its own identical employee. While John dreams of climbing above the crowded street, the reality of this elevated position allows no escape from the dehumanization of the Taylorized workplace. The project of representational mastery with which I have characterized the distanced perspective is encoded into Vidor's dramatic use of perspective as soon as we enter John's workplace, high above the street. The desks completely cover the visual field in a perfect grid-like formation, organized and ordered for optimal surveillance. At the center and limit of that field, Sims lies trapped, himself reduced to a number. His occupation—endlessly calculating sums—likewise concerns only numbers. By locating the protagonist precisely at the vanishing point of a deep perspectival field, Vidor explicitly associates the Quattrocento's organization of the visual field with the Cartesian rationalization of sight and the alienated production of data.

In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvite writes that "the arrogant verticality of skyscrapers . . . is to convey an impression of authority to each spectator." Yet the equation Vidor's visual rhetoric makes between the monumentality of the skyscraper and the seriality of the windows and desks illustrates how this authority can develop not only through confrontation with, but also through, incorporation of the spectator. By allowing individuals to recognize themselves

in relation to its own repetitive structure, the monumental can build itself out of the serial—can allow the individual to sign on to something greater, and so magnify his individual importance.⁵⁵ This logic of amalgamation is one of the basic principles of mass psychology, according to Le Bon, and is found in successful corporations of all kinds.⁵⁶ Yet Sims's tragedy lies in that he is either unwilling or unable to recognize himself within this metonymic logic, and so is destined perpetually to strive for differentiation.

In his work, John might be considered one of the white-collar office workers whom Siegfried Kracauer was writing about at this time.⁵⁷ In *Die Angestellten*, Kracauer argued that although this burgeoning species of relatively untrained office worker was essentially proletarian in his working conditions, he based his ostensibly middle-class status on a fantasy of upward mobility and a concomitant disidentification with those below. John is similarly disgusted by the crowd; from the moment he gets out of work, he attempts to distinguish himself through disassociation. We see John walking with the crowd for the first and only time in the film when he is finally talked into going on a double date.⁵⁸ Yet just moments later, this organic relation is once again given over to differentiation as the two couples climb on top of a double-decker bus. The bus is something of an interstitial space from which the perception of the crowd remains decidedly ambivalent. While it is *above* and away from the crowd—enabling the crowd to be seen as such—it remains *on* the street, continuing to afford the potential for interaction. Because it is neither wholly detached, like the aerial perspective, nor involved, like the view from the street, this liminal space is perhaps more open to identificatory transformation in that it does not preclude visual reciprocity. Within Vidor's film, it thus becomes the site of a decisive identificatory transformation.

After climbing into their seats in the front, John basks for a moment in the reflection he finds in the monumental towers around him, and his date, Mary, seems taken by his

grand aspirations. But John's first and decisive vision is that of the crowd he has left below. "Look at that crowd!" he exclaims of those they have just left behind on the street—"the poor boobs, all in the same rut." Rather than agreeing, Mary simply looks at him in incomprehension as his expression—never taking his eyes from the crowd—changes from contempt to melancholy recognition.

Admonished to "cut out the high-hat" by his buddy, John focuses his attention on Mary, insisting that although "most people" give him a pain in the neck, "she's different." Although she initially denies such distinction, she visibly begins to relish the thought. While the bus is momentarily stopped, a clown on the street catches their eye, and John is clearly disquieted by this visual reciprocity. He relegates the clown back to the facelessness of the mass by telling his companions, "the poor sap, I bet his father thought he'd be president someday."⁵⁹ This time Mary joins him in the mocking laughter as their companions look on with disgust and disbelief. To win John's heart, Mary surprises everyone by spitting off the side of the bus, onto the crowd. Obviously made for each other, they are soon married.

It is significant that "the crowd," as an objective visual phenomenon, is almost entirely absent from Vidor's film. Instead, we are shown a world that, in being ironized or blatantly contradicted, emerges as John's solipsistic fantasy. Throughout the rest of the film, Vidor will depict John's struggle with the crowd as a struggle with himself, with his own need to master and overcome, as well as with the isolation and social anomie generated by an individuation that can only ever set itself against the other. In a particularly amusing moment, John and Mary have gone to the beach on vacation, and we see John, playing his ukulele, singing about being "gloriously alone." The camera pans to reveal both a fully crowded beach, as Mary—enjoying somewhat less of a vacation—juggles preparing lunch, keeping the fire lit, and corralling their screaming child.

Rather than conquering against all odds, as we might

expect within the ideology of Hollywood, Vidor depicts Sims's resolute individualism as obstinate, even pathological: although he tries to wall himself off from the crowd, he is ultimately swallowed up by it. Because John's identity comes to consist solely through his *disidentification* with the crowd, his destiny is forever tied to it, whatever his fortune brings. Vidor presents his starkly individualistic ethos, his desire for strict separation and autonomy, as a pathological form of self-imposed alienation. It is the noisy, uncontrollable street, Vidor seems to suggest, that contains John's only real chance for happiness and even freedom, but paradoxically, it is a freedom with the crowd and not, as he dreams, apart from it.

In the final scene, we find John reduced to juggling for pennies on the streets—a mirror image of the clown he had begun his married life by mocking. His wife and child have finally given up and left him in disgust. Nevertheless, John hopes to win back their hearts, if only for a night, by taking them to the theater. A kind of social reciprocity there ensues that has been unknown for John—he slaps a stranger on the back to aid his coughing, and moments later, the stranger congratulates him upon seeing John's winning advertisement in the show's program. Yet immediately after, the camera begins to slowly crane up and back, revealing row upon row of people, bobbing back and forth with what now seem identical, mechanical movements. What seemed an ordinary amusement becomes increasingly freakish and inhuman the further we crane away until, at its limit and before the screen goes completely black, we are left with an unrecognizable orchestration of flickering lights. For John, Mary, and their immediate company, the moment is one of shared amusement and joy. Yet from our vantage point, above and apart, we cannot even make out individuals—only an abstract, ornamental pattern. As the crowd dissolves into visual data, a binary code of light and darkness, we return to the distanced view from above that characterized our initial approach to the city, and our initial perception of John's plight.⁴⁶

Constructivism and the Apparitional Ontology of the Crowd

Even in the golden age of the crowd in the 1920s and 1930s many of the great photographers and filmmakers seemed to confront the possibility that the representation of the mass as a concrete thing tended to produce an empathic distancing regardless of the sociopolitical context within which it is inscribed. This might explain why even the most threatening depictions of mass consciousness or mass action need not necessarily stir the viewer to any concrete political consciousness of their own situation—or in the case of the historical dramas that Kracauer analyzed, precisely the opposite.⁴⁷

This question of location, of the viewer's standpoint vis-à-vis the crowd, was considered crucial for many visual theorists of the time attempting to wrestle with the difficulty of "mass representation." For instance, while otherwise affirming the importance of the singular take over the principle of disjunctive montage, Siegfried Kracauer insisted that the crowd was a special kind of cinematic object, one which could only be adequately addressed through a fragmentation of space. Constantly intercutting between the closeup and the long shot, cinematic montage alone had the ability to "launch the spectator into a movement enabling him really to grasp the street demonstration."⁴⁸ Pudovkin similarly considered disjunctive space and a mobile point of view crucial to any attempt to portray the revolutionary crowd cinematically. He wrote, "The observer must . . . climb upon the roof of a house to get a view from above of the procession as a whole and measure its dimension; next he must come down and look out through the first-floor window at the inscriptions carried by the demonstrators; finally, he must mingle with the crowd to gain an idea of the outward appearance of the participants."⁴⁹

Before the fascist mass spectacles of the 1930s, Soviet constructivism was probably the twentieth-century aesthetic movement most specifically concerned with the problem of mass representation. Yet unlike the fascist aesthetics with which it would be replaced, constructivist photographic practice and theory proposed both the representation of the collective, and the newly collective means of representation, as an ongoing aesthetic, social, and political problem—not simply to create an art practice for the masses, but to question and reevaluate accepted aspects of aesthetic doctrine around the questions and problems of this category of mass representation itself. Within the constructivist movement, Dziga Vertov and Aleksandr Rodchenko both assiduously avoided the objectification to which even Eisenstein's cinema often fell prey, yet their own efforts were, perhaps paradoxically, only accomplished through a certain refusal of representation as such. Rather than presenting the mass—whether positively or negatively—as a thing to be grasped, their work might be said to invoke the mass, to imbue it with a kind of aleatory or spectral ontology.

In this canonical image from Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*, the cameraman—despite his revolutionary ambitions to relate organically with the crowd, to be in and among them—seems to be necessarily, structurally divorced from it (fig. 14.11). This very position seems to figure him maliciously—looking down on the crowd. A second camera, absent an operator, might even be said to instantiate the purely detached, inhuman view from above. Yet the image is decidedly ambiguous on this score. For despite the structural distancing it projects, it also depicts the cameraman and his instrument as but ghostly and transparent, even insubstantial, entities. Furthermore, they do not simply float above the crowd, detached, but rather seem to rise up out of it from within. The cameraman stands both with the crowd and above it, and in neither place is he solid, obdurate—a living agent capable of providing the single representation or “photo-picture” that Rodchenko would con-

demn. Rather, this spectral cameraman shows us our own viewing position, essentially reduplicating our own perspective on the crowd below within the cinematic frame, thus marking this image of the crowd as itself a construction, contingent, provisional.⁴⁴

Yet Vertov's most important image of the crowd emerges earlier in the film, in a paradoxical moment of temporal arrest. The image itself is not a photograph—or rather, it is not witnessed in the time, manner, or material in which we are accustomed to thinking about photographs. The image, or rather series of images, is assigned a particular temporal duration that serves to reflect back upon the temporality of the photographic moment itself—both its capture and its review. Inscripting the act of filming, and hence the spectator perceiving, into this image of the crowd, Vertov—in perhaps the central scene of his *Man with a Movie Camera* (1928), shows us an image of the crowd that is simultaneously still and in motion, both within and outside of time. The images in this sequence are shown to “come to life” as their photogram is replaced by the full-frame image, now in motion (fig. 14.12). This scene has often been mentioned within the literature on Vertov's film for its paradigmatic reflexivity, the labor of production “now visible again back on the street rather than behind the scenes.”⁴⁵ Yet significantly, and unlike the other shots of the sequence, Vertov never presents the crowd image as a celluloid photogram. Whereas the previous shots have exposed the brute materiality of the support in their construction of the experience of “plentitude,” the crowd image is shown twice in full frame—first stilled, then, intercut with the children's wonder at the magician, in motion. The most probable reason for this omission seems quite simple: the image would have been too small to recognize. Presented as a photogram, it would have seemed nothing but a decorative pattern, an ornament. But this simple practicality points to an important discontinuity within the series.

The image of the crowd—apparently important enough



Figure 14.11 Still from *Man with a Movie Camera*. Courtesy of Kino International.

to take pride of place as the first brought back to life by the magic of the cinematic magician—cannot be similarly distanced by the foregrounding of the cinematic apparatus. This is because the image of the crowd is always already experienced as distanced. Its aerial perspective takes in the whole of the street, but only at the cost of losing the specificity of its inhabitants. As both an image of the crowd and an image of the production of that image, Vertov's act of representation here insists on its own temporal disjuncture, its own artificial scission from the flow of life, and its own mortification of that which it would portray (a mortification that fig. 14.13 must still portray). The crowd it presents is indelible, but gone in an instant. A moment later, through the magic of the editing table, we see it again, and now every individual dot, every individual, will begin to flicker and move, the whole beginning to swell with life. Yet this new "life" continues to recall to the deathlike stillness

the image had just contained—a paradoxical stillness: this new image, even though it has now been placed in motion, *still* contains.

This movement between photography and film—between stasis and motion, the finality of an essence versus a kind of apparitional ontology—is of course the very question of the crowd, and it is thus no surprise that we can find, at this canonical moment in artistic modernism, the problem of representing the crowd thus standing in for the problem of representation as such. Rodchenko's "Assembling for a Demonstration" is a single, still image, but like Vertov's sequence, it too inscribes a kind of duration (fig. 14.14). Rodchenko depicts a formation in process, a figure not quite realized. A mobilization *in potentia*, it is an event just now unfolding. We seem to hear witness to the twilight moments of emergence: this crowd of people, this "formation," in the moment of its emergence as form out

14A 'Tolpa': Russian

Dustin Condren

The Russian noun *tolpa* has the principal definition of a large, disorderly congregation of people (*Slovar' sovremennogo russkogo literaturnogo izyaka*). Its usage in modern Russian also shares with its equivalents in many other languages a sense of chaos, loss of individuality, and unpredictable movement.

The earliest known written usage of *tolpa* appears in an ecclesiastical manuscript of the late eleventh century, the *Service Menology for November 1097* (*Služebnisa miasa za nojabr' 1097 g.*), a text written in Old Church Slavonic, the clerical tongue and early literary language for much of the Slavic world. *Tolpa* is used in this selection in reference to the twelve apostles, suggesting that at this moment in time the term signifies merely a grouping of people, without the elements of mass and chaos that it bears today.

However, by the time that the Laurentian *Chronicle of the Tale of Bygone Years* (*Povest' vremenykh let*) appears in the twelfth century, *tolpa* seems to have already developed its denotation of the large crowd, the term being applied in one instance to a large group of people thronging at the gates (PVL, 6582). Another interesting early occurrence of *tolpa* comes in the hagiography *Pecherskii Paterikon* (*Paterik pecherskii*), in which Isakii is able to distinguish one face among the crowd whose countenance is brighter than all the rest. This moment provides an exact indicator of the boundaries of the word *tolpa*: the crowd exists



Figure 14.12 Stills from *Man with a Movie Camera*. Courtesy of Kino International.

of a group of individuals. Oddly enough, the stains on the ground—likely water, tossed out from cleaning the street, evaporating in the afternoon sun—compete with the mass for our attention as figures. Despite emerging from opposite ends of the tonal spectrum, both are flattened against the ground; both take on the qualities of a surface. They even intersect near the top in an odd blending in that one dark-clothed man—clearly not part of the gathering crowd—almost disappears completely, dissolving into the ground, evaporating like the water spots that, from our particular vantage point, he seems to resemble.⁴⁶

All this is visible as figure, of course, because we are not there, on the ground. In that case, the crowd, the organization, would not be visible as such. From an enclosed terrace, a woman happens to be gazing down, mimicking our gaze. Her presence calls attention to the spatial dynamics of the scene, to our position as spectator, and to the crowd's position as ornament against the flatness of Rodchenko's visual field. This redoubling inscribes our act of spectatorship into the visual field. The two women—one looking down, the other looking away—in fact form a sequence that inscribes a kind of duration to this process of looking, and to the gradual appearance of the mass as ornament.

The complex temporality, reflexivity, and aleatory status of the crowd are even more dramatically highlighted when compared with Rodchenko's contemporary



Figure 14.13 Stills from *Man with a Movie Camera*. Courtesy of Kino International.

"Courtyard of Vkhutemas" (fig. 14.15). There, it is as if all movement and temporality were consciously drained from the image of the crowd below. Rodchenko is brutally insistent on what Kracauer calls the "mass as ornament," presenting it from a wholly detached, aerial perspective. Without the mediation of an external viewer, without the slight angle of "Assembling for a Demonstration" that allows the visual field to continue up to our position upon the balcony, "The Courtyard" presents itself as an imperious, detached view of the scene below. This perspective, deprived of the temporality inherent in the process of perception, makes a durational event into a static thing capable of being definitively captured on film—a temporal shift registered in the grammar of the titles, from a gerund to a noun. Despite what was likely a banal occasion, there is something decidedly sinister about the image of the crowd thus portrayed. The formal dimension present in the previous image receives no counterbalancing degree of recognition or identification. If, in the previous image, the water spots blended together with the people's shadows, they here seem more directly identified with the people themselves. Not only the regimentation of the line but also its formal extension off either side of the pictorial space invoke stasis, the endless duration of idle waiting.

In aerial photographs like "Assembling for a Demonstration," the view from

as a collective body, with which one may come face to face, yet if any member of that collective differs strongly enough from the whole of the body, this individual may be independent of the crowd, although located simultaneously within.

Another term that begins to appear in places where one might expect to find *tolpa* is the noun *chern'*. *Chern'* might also be translated as "crowd," but it brings with it the distinction of the crowd of common people—more directly translated, the black masses. The etymology of *chern'* is tightly woven with the adjective *chernyi* (black), which historically had its application with the common people (*prostonarodie*)—for example, the lower levels of society in ancient Novgorod were referred to as the *chernyi narod* (black folk), *chernsia sotnia* (black hundred), or *chernye ljudi* (black people).

A conception of the crowd, in which *tolpa* and *chern'* are used interchangeably, is eloquently established in Pushkin's 1828 poem, "The Poet and the Crowd" (*Poet i Tolpa*). The poet is confronted by a "cold and haughty group of unconsecrated people" (*a khladnyi i nadmenyi/Krugom narod neposviashchennyi*) who listen to him without understanding. The poem is constructed partially in dramatic format with the character "Poet" having a dialogue with the character "Chern'," which, it should be noted, speaks with one voice. The poet is merciless in his upbraiding of this *chern'* and its members' inability to transcend their mundane terrestrial lives. He calls them "mindless slaves" (*rslov bezumnykh*) and creates a pun from the word *chern'* referring to the crowd as *chern' zemli* (worm of the earth). This crowd is interested in poetry (and by metonymy, anything representing high culture) only as it becomes practical for use in the

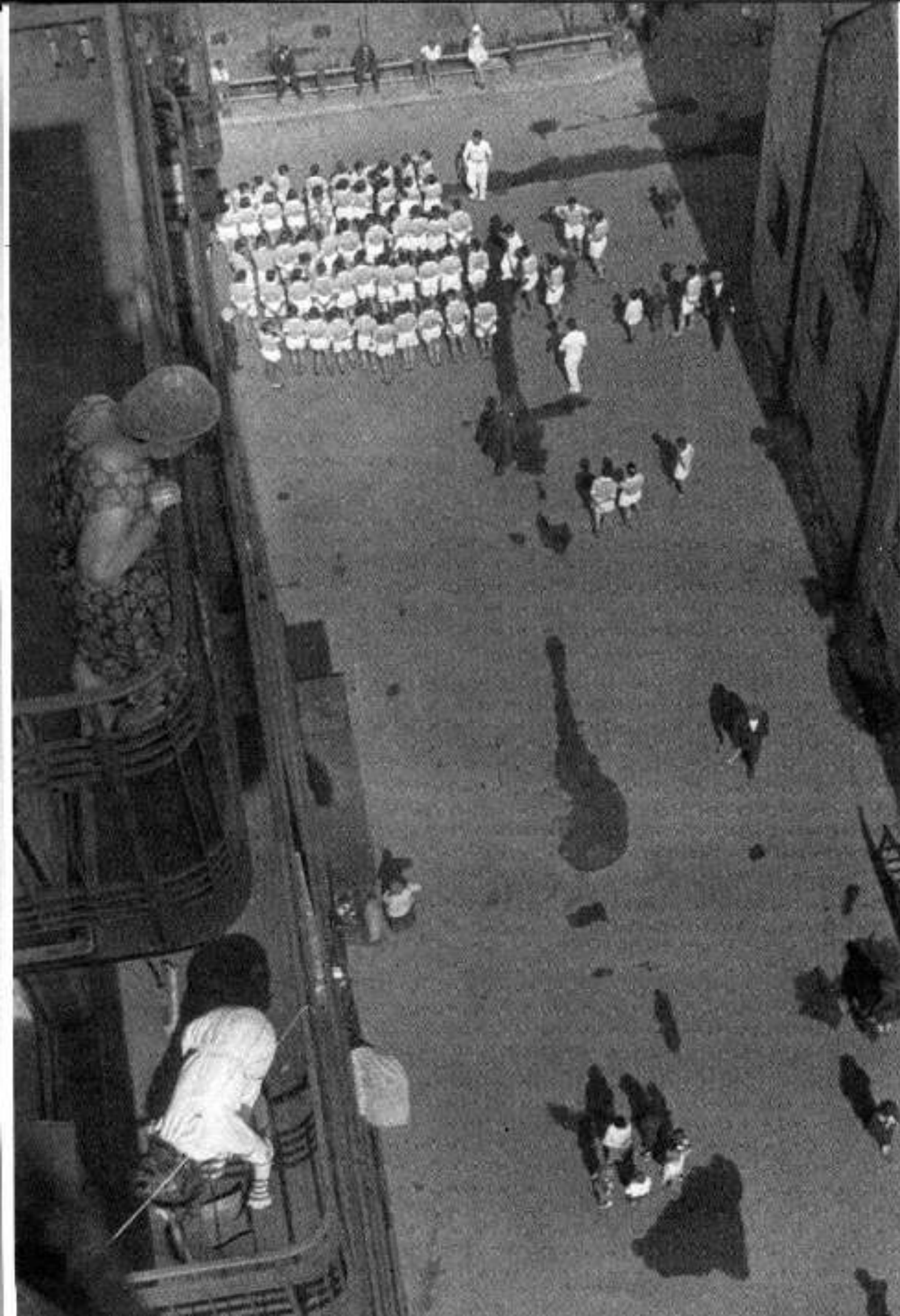


Figure 14.14 "Assembling for a Demonstration," Rodchenko (1918-19).



Figure 14.15 "The Courtyard of Vkhutemas," Rodchenko (1928–30).

above does not become detached, but rather still contains within it both the somatic locus of perception and the lack of finality that characterizes his works from the street. Thus while Pudovkin and Kracauer rightly point out the problem of spatial position with regard to the representation of the mass, the perspective inscribed by the camera cannot be reduced to the mere location of the camera in physical space. Of much greater import was how this perspective could be experienced by the viewer—whether it could be translated into a practice of identification, or whether it was inevitably detached, abstract, and informational.

Beyond Representation—The Mass in/as Movement

There were certainly aspects of the New Vision that, rather than foregrounding this complex interplay between identification and spatiality, were simply content to capture the most radical and shocking images possible. Often these practices lead to a total detachment—esthetic and identificatory—between the image and its referent. Combined with an uncritical praise of industrialization and machine culture, these images set the stage for an overt politicization of the New Vision in the Soviet and German fascist visual culture of the 1930s. Yet in opposing the

humdrum of daily life—for Pushkin, this is the core of their philistinism, their ignorance of the spiritual value of poetry.

Although the use of *chern'* is almost exclusively negative, the connotation of *tolpa* is dependent on usage, but varies mainly between neutral and negative. The negative connotation seems mainly due to the association with mindlessness, imperviousness to higher thought and feeling. This specificity for the two terms is especially important as the Marxist rhetoric of masses and proletariat begins to hold sway in the twentieth century. The *tolpa* remains somewhat undesirable, lacking direction, whereas the historically motivated forward movement of the proletariat *massa* gives the concept of the crowd an entirely new reading that departs wholly from the concept's previous lexical incarnation in both *tolpa* and *chern'*.

148 Crowd Experiences

Hayden White

Crowds. I tend to avoid them. The most memorable experiences? Political riots in Rome in 1954, when Italians were protesting the British occupation of Trieste. I blundered upon a crowd that was bent on finding and punishing British citizens (or subjects), property, and institutions. I heard the swell of the mob as I walked from Piazza Capranica toward Via del Corso. It was the noise that was most unnerving, for it was like a swarm of bees or locusts, utterly without specific direction or target. What did I do? Melted into a side street and proceeded toward home. I never feel curiosity for what the mob will do. One can be sure it will be up to no good.

Then in 1971, during the anti-Vietnam War resistance in Los Angeles, on the campus of UCLA, a police riot. Police were called in to suppress a crowd that had been demonstrating peaceably enough until someone (it turned out to be an agent provocateur of the Los Angeles Police Department) threw something—a rock, a trash can, who knows?—into a store window. This infuriated the police, who immediately dispersed over the entire UCLA campus, beating up people indiscriminately, invading the library where they seized people working at their tables in the reading room, put them in police come-along grips, and escorted them to the nearby vans for arraignment. Police helicopters overhead, tear gas everywhere, panic on the part of the faculty (who immediately thought that the rioters would come and destroy their pre-

authoritarian detachment of the view from above, those who struggled with this question of mass representation were left with an aporia: the view from the street did not in fact represent the mass directly, as a thing with qualities, but only indirectly, as a temporalized process or event. Often the movement between different vantage points worked to allegorize this dynamic ontology of the collective subject.

Rhetorically, the German *Mass* often tends to be used interchangeably with the English *crowd* or *mob*, but the terms are actually quite different with respect to this issue of movement. *Mob* (Latin *mobile vulgus*) implies a dynamism, as well as a loose sort of direction and intentionality. *Mass*, by contrast, is something relatively inert—a thing to be shaped, molded, “pressed” into service by exterior forces.⁴⁷ Crowd (Old English *crudan*, “to press or drive”) occupies something of a middle space between these two terms, as it implies a degree of movement without granting intention.

Samuel Weber has called attention to the fact that whenever Benjamin uses the term *mass*, he specifically goes against the grain of tradition by associating it with a movement or dynamism.⁴⁸ Weber thus wonders what it implies for Benjamin that the masslike quality of technical reproducibility itself leads to its *Aufnahmen* (reception/production) in a state of *Zerstreung*—not simply distraction, but also the spatially oriented sense of being scattered or dispersed.⁴⁹ Although I cannot here rehearse the complexities of Benjamin’s thought, for our purposes, it should suffice to say that it was, in part, the spatiality of this *Zerstreung* that was seen to necessitate an indirect mode of mass representation. For himself, Benjamin famously turned to the poetry of Baudelaire to illustrate how the crowd could be invoked, rather than represented, through the figure of the individual *passante*. Weber describes her “ostensible individuality” as

anything but individual: she comes to be only in passing by. And in so doing, she reveals herself to be the allegorical emblem of the mass, its coming-to-be in and as the other, in and as the singularity of an ephemeral apparition. The mass movement—the mass in/as movement—produces itself as this apparition, which provides an alternative to the formed and mobilized masses of the political movements of the Thirties.⁵⁰

This alternative conception of the “mass in/as movement”—what we might call the apparitional ontology of the crowd—was not exclusive to Benjamin’s writing but, as I have attempted to show, can be found throughout the visual culture of artistic modernism as it wrestled, more or less explicitly, with this crucial yet intractable question of mass representation.

If the films of Farocki, Reed, and Vidor show us both the attraction and the dangers of this distanced perspective on the crowd, the liminal kinds of representation invoked by Vertov and Rodchenko illustrate a somewhat different possibility, one that might be said to continue the kind of apparitional ontology of the crowd found in Poe and Baudelaire. Here, the crowd is represented in motion precisely because it “is” not—its “being” is not solid and substantial but impermanent, temporal, aleatory—multiple, mobile, in progress. This is why, for those who truly grapple with the problem of representation in general and the problem of mass representation in particular, “the crowd” is so often represented as something ephemeral, fleeting—something incapable of *being* represented.

Authors such as Heidegger, Virilio, and Manovich show us how, as the mechanical eye has replaced the human eye in technologies of mass visual culture, the eye of the machine has become our modern substitute for the medieval “eye of god”—an ultimately detached perspective that could separate fact from fiction, sort through the competing discursive claims, and establish a final metaphysical “truth.” When this modality of representation is turned on something as complex, multivalent, and aleatory as a collectivity, it necessarily forsakes these qualities in order to reconstruct it as an object of knowledge. Delimited in time and space, solid and bounded, it becomes “a crowd”—something that can be dissected, studied, and above all, factored into social, economic, and political calculations. It finally “appears” only when splayed out on the dissection table like a once-living creature.

By contrast, there has been, within the visual and theoretical discourses of artistic modernism, another kind of representation that in some ways refuses representation altogether. This struggle over representation might be said to go back to Leonardo da Vinci, whose drawings—despite their scientific value—stand opposed to the manner of scientific objectification with which Heidegger diagnoses our current “Age of the World-Picture.” For Leonardo, technical precision did not necessitate conforming to the detachment of the perspectival grid. He instructed his students that they should refrain from placing hard outlines around those things they would represent, but instead should keep them soft and malleable, as they exist for the perceiving eye.

Within the artistic modernism of the 1920s, such a practice figures the crowd not as a concrete object, for which one can have a distanced judgment (either positive or negative), but as a kind of liminal, identificatory event—a spectral presence that seems flickering, insubstantial, precisely because it cannot exist apart from the viewing subject or the event of perception. As a durational experience, transforming in energy, purpose, and character, the collectivity can be finally represented as

scious research notes), a sense of high drama and delight among the principal student activists engaged in the event. I witnessed a crime committed by a police officer (he had been undercover, enrolled as a student in one of my courses, and his cover blown a couple of days before when he gave testimony against the antiwar agitators: he had been assigned to gather dossiers on faculty and students suspected of participating in antiwar activities), and (foolishly) reported it to . . . the police! As a result, I found myself charged with having attacked this officer, having torn his uniform from his back (he was in civilian clothes), and so threatening him that he had had to flee for his life. All this on Los Angeles television within a couple of hours. I was then investigated by the L.A. Police's Internal Affairs, who had only to take a look at me to realize that the idea of my attacking two police officers was ludicrous. Nothing came of it.

Peace demonstrations and civil rights demonstrations in Washington in the fall of 1972: peaceful, pacific, flower-power mood, lots of good, decent people with their kids, expressing their belief in the constitution and civil rights.

My experience of crowds: I stay away from them unless I am compelled by some obligation to a friend or political ally to turn up for a demonstration.

neither subject nor object, its outlines are never hard, but soft. Like Leonardo's drawings, it emerges as both still and in motion.

Just as the geography of the city at the beginning of the last century made the transformation of the conditions of representation into an acute question of aesthetic, social, and political investigation, so the electronic geography of the new century is in the process of transforming representational practices once again.²⁴ The globalization effected through the ever-expanding networks of multinational capitalism and the new transactional spaces of the globalized internet portend similarly novel transformations of space

and relationality. How and to what extent these transformations affect our representational practices, or allow novel formulations of aesthetic, social, and political problems, remains to be seen.

Yet because the representation of collectivities within the visual rhetoric and discourses of artistic modernism was never a secure practice, but rather a difficult and ever-changing terrain of investigation, we can similarly expect that the crowd, as figure and metaphor, will continue to circulate as a persistent, if elusive, site of representational breakdown, and aesthetic, social, and political contestation.

In Memoriam, Michael Rogin (1937–2001)

22. *Ibid.*, 226.
23. Robert Glen, *Urban Workers in the Early Industrial Revolution* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 245.
24. John Belchem, *Industrialization and the Working Class: The English Experience, 1750–1900* (Aldershot: Scolar, 1990), 73–144; Charles Tilly, *Popular Contention in Great Britain, 1758–1834* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 240–319.
25. Wendy Hinde, *Catholic Emancipation: A Shake to Men's Minds* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992); Fergus O'Farrall, *Catholic Emancipation: Daniel O'Connell and the Birth of Irish Democracy 1820–30* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1985); Charles Tilly, *Contention and Democracy in Europe, 1850–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 149–56.
26. J. Franklin Jameson, *The American Revolution Considered as a Social Movement* (Boston: Beacon, 1956), 9.
27. *Ibid.*, 100.
28. Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 38.
29. Seymour Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 70.
30. *Ibid.*, 79.
31. Lynn Hunt, *Revolution and Urban Politics in Provincial France: Trojes and Reims, 1786–1790* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1978); Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); John Markoff, *The Abolition of Feudalism: Peasants, Lords, and Legislation in the French Revolution* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996); Peter McPhee, "Les formes d'intervention populaire en Roussillon: L'exemple de Collioure, 1789–1815," in *Les pratiques politiques en province à l'époque de la Révolution française, Centre d'Histoire Contemporaine du Languedoc-Méditerranéen et du Roussillon* (Montpellier: Publications de la Recherche, Université de Montpellier, 1988); Isser Woloch, *Jacobin Legacy: The Democratic Movement Under the Directory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970); Woloch, *The New Regime: Transformations of the French Civil Order, 1789–1820* (New York: Norton, 1994).
32. Charles Tilly, *The Contentious French* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), chap. 9.
33. Rudolf Dekker, *Holland in beroering: Oproeren in de 17de en 18de eeuw* (Baarn: Ambocker, 1982); Dekker, "Women in Revolt: Popular Protest and Its Social Basis in Holland in the 17th and

18th Centuries," *Theory and Society* 16 (1987): 337–62; Karin van Honacker, *Lokaal Verzet en Opmer in de 17de en 18de Eeuw: Collectieve Acties tegen het centraal gezag in Brussel, Antwerpen en Leuven* (Heule: UGA, 1994); von Honacker, "Résistance locale et émeutes dans les chef-villes brabançonnaises aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles," *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine* 47 (2000): 37–68.

34. Wayne te Brake, *Regents and Rebels: The Revolutionary World of the 18th Century Dutch City* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989); te Brake, "How Much in How Little? Dutch Revolution in Comparative Perspective," *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis* 16 (1990): 349–63.

CHAPTER 13A

1. Sources: Ágy Endre, *Őzsej Költeménye*, <http://www.mek.ifi.hu>; Benkő Loránd, ed., *A Magyar Nyelv Történeti-Etimológiai Szótára* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1967–1978); Ballagi Mór, *A Magyar Nyelv Tízes Szótára* (Pest: Heckenast Gusztáv, 1873); *Hungarian Historical Corpus*, <http://www.nyud.hu/hhc>; *Porófi-Szótár* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1975–1987); *Révai Nagylexikona* (Budapest: Révai Testvérek, 1923); *Új Idők Lexikona* (Budapest: Singer és Wolfner, 1942).

CHAPTER 14

1. Austin Bunn, "Them Against the World," *New York Times Magazine*, November 16, 2003. Bunn puts the number at six to ten million, but estimates have varied widely.

2. Of course, at least the *Chronicle* covered the demonstrations. Most American news outlets provided scant if any coverage of the mass protests, domestically or internationally. In so doing, they played an active and crucial role in dissociating those on the street from those at home, as well as those in the United States from those abroad. Any questioning concerning the "representation" of the crowd necessarily involves the larger issues of media consolidation and deregulation.

3. "The number of people (in a crowd) is a mythical number, and now you're going to turn it into a fact, and that won't be welcomed. . . . There's an old saying in journalism: people only see what they believe. This is an emotional issue, not a factual issue as far as most people are concerned." Alex Jones, director of the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, Harvard University, quoted in the *Chronicle*, A6.

4. The *Chronicle's* project, despite its predilection for new solutions grounded in advanced technology, presents itself in the garb of the old-fashioned and hence the trustworthy. Although entirely computerized solutions could likely have been used, they opted rather for midcentury methods of human analysis. This "human touch" might seem to serve no purpose because the analysis was nothing more than the accurate counting of dots, which could be done more effectively by computer scanning. Yet its rhetorical purpose was clear: it fostered a sense of human subjectivity that served to mitigate the "cold rationality" of the machine.

5. This fantasy of the "long view" is increasingly, in the new millennium, tied to economics and the perception of a "healthy national economy." As I am writing, some twenty-four hundred protesters are scheduled to go to trial in San Francisco for disturbing the normal flow of traffic—many articles highlight the dramatically increased cost to the city for the "police overtime" due to the demonstration, and imply that the demonstrators should remunerate the city, in this time of economic downturn, for their actions. Abstracting from the cause of the demonstration, or even the rights of free association, the media coverage has tended to use a "massive" dollar amount without any context, thus implying that public demonstrations are too costly for America to sustain.

6. Cited in Albert Grimm, *120 Jahre Photogrammetrie in Deutschland: Das Tagebuch von Albrecht Meydenbauer* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1978); reproduced in Harun Farocki, "Reality Would Have to Begin," in *Imprint: Writings* (New York: Lukas and Sternberg, 2001), 188.

7. For the seminal elaborations of this idea, see Siegfried Kracauer, "Photography," in *The Mass Ornament*, ed. and trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995); and André Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," in *What Is Cinema? (1945–1957)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970).

8. Leo Steinberg, *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 82.

9. Kracauer, *Mass Ornament*.

10. In implying that the aerial perspective is not an embodied, human perspective, I am well aware of the extent to which we, in the twenty-first century, may nevertheless feel this type of vision to be a natural, everyday state of affairs. It is this very "naturalization" that I seek to describe and diagnose in this essay, a naturalization that has been effected through the massive prolif-

eration of photographic representations in print, television, and the Internet media we regularly consume. Yet what troubles me is how the naturalization of the aerial perspective brings with it a situation in which the visual reciprocity inherent in our perceptual encounter with other beings in the world is negated, and this lack of reciprocity becomes increasingly naturalized and familiar. One of Merleau-Ponty's central claims in the *Phenomenology of Perception* is that the phenomenal world presents itself to us as "needing to be clarified." What seems most troubling to me is how this naturalization of the aerial perspective seems to be related to a world that no longer presents itself as needing to be clarified, a world that is increasingly encountered as data, as information that is already clear unto itself and that needs no further "investigation." When the reduction of human beings to bits of data no longer strikes us as a terrifying, liminal experience, but rather as a familiar and useful state of affairs, we may be on the verge of losing something ethically foundational as regards human perception. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 1962).

11. Cited in Lev Manovich, "Modern Surveillance Machines: Perspective, Radar, 3-D Computer Graphics, and Computer Vision," in *CTRL [Space]: Rhetoric of Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother*, ed. Thomas Levin et al. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002); and Michael de Landa, *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines* (New York: Zone Books, 1991). Surveillance balloons were also used by both sides in the American Civil War, though photographic equipment was not yet employed.

12. A slightly modified formulation can be found in Farocki, "Reality," 190.

13. See in particular Paul Virilio, *War and Cinema: A Logistics of Perception* (New York: Verso, 1989); de Landa, *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines*; and Farocki, "Reality."

14. The basic question of who owns satellites—what might almost seem a puerile game of "who's got the highest view"—nevertheless is what enables U.S. government and business interests unparalleled military and economic dominance over much of the world they survey.

15. Manovich, "Modern Surveillance Machines," 385.

16. *Ibid.*, 386.

17. Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Norton, 1978), 86, 94.

18. Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*,

trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977). I am here translating the German *Bild* with "representation," rather than the traditional "picture," in order to bring out what Heidegger terms its manner of "setting-before."

19. In perhaps the decisive moment of his *Question Concerning Technology*, Heidegger writes, "Man stands so decisively in attendance on the challenging-forth of Enframing that he does not apprehend Enframing as a claim, he fails to see himself as the one spoken to." Heidegger is clear that "what is dangerous is not technology," or even, I would claim, the "enframing" of the natural world as such, so much as the *totalizing* regime of representational thought that this regime tends to bring about. Heidegger claims that where this ordering "holds sway" the "regulating and securing of the standing-reserve mark all revealing." Because this particular mode of revealing works to drive out "every other possibility," the supreme danger lies in that it might no longer allow its own "fundamental characteristic [to] appear, namely, this revealing as such." Man would thus lose the ability to hear this "question concerning technology" amid the spectacle of technological accomplishments, and the very naturalization of the increasing regulation of the mental landscape it tends to effect. Heidegger, *Question Concerning Technology*, 27–28. Farocki's film also is in dialogue with Heidegger's earlier essay, "The Age of the World Picture," in the same volume.

20. Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1956), 40.

21. Farocki, "Reality," 198.

22. This is why, in the philosophy of Lacan and Merleau-Ponty, the gaze can be placed not only in another person, but at the site of the world as such. This is a complex point that exceeds the bounds of this essay. The primary texts would be Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, Lacan's *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, and Merleau-Ponty's *The Visible and the Invisible*, as well as Kaja Silverman's *World Spectators* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001).

23. Adjusted for inflation to preserve the feeling of the scene. The original figure, £20,000, would today be well over \$250,000.

24. Steinberg, *Other Criteria*, 90; my emphasis. So as to forestall any confusion, I need to clarify that although I accept Steinberg's analysis, I will be reversing his terminology of the vertical and horizontal. This is because Steinberg describes this "shift" in

terms of the spatial position of the canvas as object, rather than in terms of modality of spectatorship that an object produces. He describes the traditional "picture window" as hanging "vertically" on the wall, as opposed to the "flatbed picture plane" which (theoretically) lies flat and horizontal along the floor. Because I am discussing the modality of spectatorship produced by this new orientation, I will be discussing the shift from the perspective of the viewer. Hence, the terms will be inverted—the spectator looks in front of herself, across the room, towards the horizon of the traditional "picture window," while she must stand directly above, and look down vertically at the "flatbed picture plane."

25. See Christopher Phillips, ed., *The New Vision: Photography Between the World Wars: Ford Motor Company Collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989).

26. Ironically, the established practice of architectural photography distorts the perspectival optics through the use of tilt and shift in a view camera in order to keep parallel lines from converging. Such representation does not correspond to our phenomenological experience of such sites, but nevertheless strikes us as more comfortable and "realistic" as a photographic representation.

27. Raoul Haussman, "Die Neue Kunst," *Die Aktion* 11, nos. 19–20 (May 12, 1921), cited in Phillips, *New Vision*, 80–81 and n.46.

28. El Lissitzky's review of Erich Mendelsohn's *Amerika: Bilderbuch eines Architekten* was originally published in *Sovetskii naia promyslennoii* (Moscow) and is cited in Phillips, *New Vision*, 58.

29. Kracauer's text is chiefly concerned with what might be called the "seriality" of modern, capitalist production and the uncanny repetition of its structures within the "ornamental" patterns of bodies in the spectacles of Busby Berkeley and the Tiller Girls. Yet throughout his essay, Kracauer calls attention not simply to objectification of human beings with the newly Taylorized workplace, but to the way in which the masses are represented to themselves spatially. He writes that the "ornament resembles aerial photographs of landscapes and cities in that it does not emerge out of the interior of the given circumstances, but rather appears above them." The mass ornament can thus be understood as obstructing not simply transparency, but identification. The mass, from up in the bleachers, does not see itself in what is out there on the field; in fact, the ornamental structure—by which I am

now referring not simply to those popular revues of geometric figures but any mass representation within this particular spatial logic—would seem to produce a concomitant disidentification. For Kracauer, the “tragic misrecognition” consists in the fact that the mass can only see itself as ornament, whereas beneath, it is beginning to reveal itself, historically, as subject. See Kracauer, *Mass Ornament*.

30. Scott Bukáttman, *Blade Runner* (London: BFI, 1997), 61.

31. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 92.

32. *Ibid.* The relation between spirituality, emotional investment, knowledge, and the “distanced perspective” is the complex subject of Wim Wenders’s rich and beautiful *Wings of Desire* (1988), an adequate discussion of which unfortunately lies beyond the scope of this essay.

33. That Vidor’s protagonist is not destined for distinction can be seen already within his name. Not only is John metaphorical for “nobody” (John Doe), but “Sims” is linked to both the Latin *similis*, “similar,” and *simia*, “ape-like” (the two are conjoined in the English expression, “to ape”). John Sims is Everyman, simply one of the crowd or, as Vidor’s working title had it, “One of the Mob.”

34. The Superman comics of a few years later would explicitly vocalize this fantasy of “leaping tall buildings in a single bound.”

35. “In an apartment building comprising stack after stack of ‘boxes for living in’, for example, the spectators-cum-tenants grasp the relationship between part and whole directly; furthermore, they recognize themselves in that relationship. By constantly expanding the scale of things, this movement serves to compensate for the pathetically small size of each set of living-quarters.” Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 98. Lefebvre speaks of the ways in which we represent a building as a solid, monumental structure, thereby ignoring the ways such a supposedly “sealed” structure is permeated, pierced by myriad forces—electricity, radio signals, water, sewage, communication, windows, doorways. Benjamin thought the perfectly revolutionary house would be transparent, and I think he means in the way Buck-Morss describes the neural system in her commentary on Benjamin—as something opening out to the world, stretching out in all directions, in the way the nervous system is not self-

contained, but stretches out into the world as experienced.

36. It is also the logic Freud would use to develop both the myth of the primal horde in *Moses and Monotheism* and his overall argument in *Group Psychology*.

37. Although Vidor, beginning the film with the death of John’s father and his final injunction that his son will grow up to “be somebody important,” anchors the film in a Freudian narrative about *individual* subjectification, Miriam Hansen has usefully linked John’s personal situation to the larger socioeconomic conditions of class identification and disidentification in the 1920s. She correctly sees John as an example of the new species of “white collar office worker” with which Siegfried Kracauer’s novel *Die Angestellten* was concerned. See her “Ambivalence and the Mass Ornament,” *Qui Parle* 5, no. 2 (1997): 102–19.

38. Significantly, this is not just the only time John is seen *with*, rather than *against*, the crowd, it is also the only time we see him “from the street”—that is, from the position of the crowd.

39. Thus unconsciously identifying with the clown, because John’s own father had made similarly improbable prophecies about him.

40. Unfortunately, this effect simply cannot be demonstrated in prose. The sequence is approximately ten seconds from end of the film. Additionally, there seems to be a kind of disjunction between the fifth and sixth images of this series that critics have not previously mentioned. The final image of “crowd as ornament” before the final fade to black seems to involve an additional camera farther above, or perhaps a different image altogether. It is curious, in the terms of the argument I am developing, because this mechanical “disjuncture” occurs at the precise moment in which we would expect the disjuncture of recognition to occur naturally. It was as if the crowd, in this penultimate shot, was still not small enough for Vidor, that he wanted to be absolutely certain we could no longer recognize people in these flickering specks of light.

41. See his “Little Shoppers Go to the Movies,” in *Mass Ornament*. This would correspond to Godard’s distinction between “making political films” and “making films politically.”

42. Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 51.

43. Pudovkin, *Film Technique and Film Acting*, 53–54, cited in Kracauer, *Theory of Film*.

44. Nearly contemporary with Vertov’s film, Siegfried Kra-

crauer would claim that "for the first time in history, photography brings to light the entire natural cocoon . . . the photographic archive assembles in effigy the last elements of a nature alienated from meaning. . . . The images of the stock of nature disintegrated into its elements are offered up for consciousness' free disposal. Their original order is lost . . . the order they assume is necessarily provisional. It is therefore incumbent on consciousness to establish the provisional status of all given configurations." "Photography," in *Mass Ornament*, 59.

45. Garrett Stewart, *Between Film and Screen: Modernism's Photo-Synthesis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), 13–15.

46. Compare this to the image of the fairground from Carol Reed's *The Third Man* (fig. 14.7), in which the shadows are more visible than the people from whom they emerge.

47. The etymology of *mas* is unclear. Gertrud Koch has recently suggested derivation from the Hebrew *mazza*, as in *mazzeb*, or unleavened bread. See Siegfried Kracauer, trans. Jeremy Gaines (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 27. Incidentally, after starting production on *The Crowd*, Vidor began to understand and reject the rhetorically agitational implications of his working title: "One of the Mob." With good reason—John Sims is certainly not part of a "mob," insofar as a "mob" is predicated on group cohesion and direction, and these are precisely the things that John will spend the film fighting against.

48. Samuel Weber, *Mass Media: Form, Technique, Media* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996), 84. For three different translations of the same German word, see Freud's "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego" ("Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse"), Kracauer's *Mass Ornament* (Die Ornament der Masse), and Harry Zohn's rather fluid translation, within Benjamin's artwork essay, of *massenweise* (literally, "mass-like") by the English "a plurality of copies."

49. See "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Mechanical Reproducibility," in Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, vols. 3 and 4 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002–2003).

50. *Ibid.*, 97.

51. Of the many accounts currently available, perhaps the best starting place is William J. Mitchell's *City of Bits* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996).

CHAPTER 14A

1. Sources: Vladimir Dal, *Tolkovyi slovar' zbirnogo velikoruskogo iazyka* (Saint Petersburg: M. O. Vol'fa, 1882); Maks Fasmer, *Etimologicheskii slovar' russkogo iazyka* (Moscow: Progress, 1975); Ipat'evskaia letopis', *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Iazyki Russkoi Kul'tury, 1998); N. M. Karamzin, *Istoria gosudarstva russkogo* (Moscow: Kniga, 1988); A. S. Pushkin, "Piset i tolpa," *Sobranie Sochinenii v piati tomakh* (Saint Petersburg: Bibliopolis, 1995); *Slovar' iazyka Pushkina* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Inostrannykh i Natsional'nykh Slovarci, 1961); *Slovar' anonimov russkogo iazyka* (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Nauka, 1971); *Slovar' sovremennogo russkogo iazyka* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1963); I. I. Sreznevskii, *Materialy dlia slovaria drevne-russkogo iazyka po pis'mennym pamiatnikam* (Saint Petersburg: Tipografiia Imperatorskoi Akademii Nauk, 1903); D. N. Ushakov, ed., *Tolkovyi slovar' russkogo iazyka*, 4 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Slavia Publishers, 1974).

CHAPTER 15

1. J. W. Goethe, *Faust*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Anchor Books, 1990), 71.

2. Georg Lukács, *Die Theorie des Romans: Ein geschichtsphilosophischer Versuch über die Form der großen Epik* (Frankfurt am Main: Luchterhand, 1977).

3. Francesco Petrarca, *De vita solitaria*, ed. Antonietta Rufano (Turin: Einaudi, 1977), 1.6, 76; hereafter abbreviated as *DVS*. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.

4. Timothy J. Reiss, *Mirages of the Self: Patterns of Personhood in Ancient and Early Modern Europe* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), 326; "The debate between contemplative and social, eternal and worldly—terms more exact than the now-familiar oppositions *innertouter*, *private/public*—was Augustinian, with *The City of God* perhaps its exemplary text" (327).

5. Paul Oskar Kristeller, "The Active and the Contemplative Life in Renaissance Humanism," in *Arbeit, Musse, Meditation: Betrachtungen zur "Vita activa" und "Vita contemplativa"*, ed. Brian Vickers (Zürich: Verlag der Fachvereine, 1983), 133–52.

6. Cf. Ugo Dotti, *Vita di Petrarca* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1978), 141.

7. The classic statement of this genetic argument is Michael Seidlmayer, "Petrarca: Das Urbild des Humanisten," in *Wege und Wandlungen des Humanismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und

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Stanford University Press
Stanford, California

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This book has been published with the assistance of
the Stanford Humanities Lab and The Scaevr Institute.

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Printed in the United States of America on acid-free,
archival-quality paper

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Crowds / edited by Jeffrey T. Schnapp and Matthew
Tiews.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-8047-5479-9 (cloth : alk. paper)

ISBN 0-8047-5480-2 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Crowds. 2. Collective behavior. I. Schnapp,

Jeffrey T. (Jeffrey Thompson), 1954- II. Tiews,
Matthew.

HM871.C76 2006

302.3'3—0022

2005026558

Designed by Tim Roberts

Typeset in Helvetica Black and Adobe Garamond

