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The Parenthesis and the Standard

On a Film by Morgan Fisher

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The Fact of Industry

In his 16mm film Standard Gauge (USA: 1984), the American filmmaker Morgan Fisher presents, in a close-up long take of a light table, a series of frames from his collection of 35mm filmstrips. Throughout the course of his presentation, Fisher's voice-over narration frequently describes what connects him to each piece of film, while also providing fragments of a broader cultural history, tied to "the complex of economic activity that gives rise to an Industrial standard" such as the preferred gauge format of 35mm.[1]

Near the end of the film, as he recounts his work as editor and actor on a low-budget feature called Messiah of Evil (USA: Willard Huyck, 1974), he mentions that the printing lab was Technicolor. After noting that he rescued some films that the lab had been destroying ("with meat cleavers"), he makes the following commentary, which I quote in full:

> At that time Technicolor was still doing imbibition printing. Imbibition, or IB, printing was the dye transfer process that was the foundation of the Technicolor system. By means of filters, Technicolor would make a separation matrix from the original color negative for each of three colors: yellow, cyan, and magenta. To make a print, each matrix was immersed in a bath of the corresponding dye, which it would soak up, that is to say, imbibe. Each of the matrices was applied in turn to the print stock, each in correct registration with the others. All the photographic materials used in IB printing were monochrome, and the dyes were stable and resistant to fading, so the matrices and prints had a high degree of permanence. This is the head or tail, I don't know which, of the imbibition matrix for the magenta record. This material is beautiful to handle. It's more substantial than ordinary film. It's still pliable and limber, but in a different way. When IB release prints were ordered in large quantities, they were cheaper than other processes, and Technicolor was able to make money on the volume. But in the early seventies Technicolor came to a critical moment. The manufacture of IB prints was labor-intensive, and labor costs were going up. At the some time, studios became less confident of the market for their product and so began to order prints in smaller quantities. The only way Technicolor could offer IB printing and stay

> competitive with other processes was to automate, but they didn't have the resources to do so. A few years after we finished working on the film, the Hollywood plant stopped making IB prints. The People's Republic of China was interested in the IB process, but they didn't want the old machines. Technicolor built new machines for them, closed the Hollywood plant, and sold the old machines for scrap. A few months after the Hollywood plant closed, a display ad appeared in *The Hollywood Reporter* that took the form of a memorial announcement. It read: "In Loving Memory, IB. Born 1927 – Died 1975. Hollywood's own dye-transfer process whose life was unrivaled for beauty, longevity, and flexibility. We salute you." It was signed, "The Friends of IB."[2]

This extended quotation can serve as an introduction to the work of Morgan Fisher, whose most recent film, entitled ( ) (USA: 2003), is the subject of this essay.

Many cinephiles would likely regard Fisher's disquisition as a valuable example of the ongoing struggle between the practical exigencies of the business of Hollywood and the utopian promise of the industry's artistic and technical innovations. In some of the more melancholy manifestations of cinephilia, a sense of aesthetic loss or decline is accompanied by the desire to preserve the material artifacts of a dying art and to document a range of interrelated, perhaps obsolete processes (economic, artisanal, and technical). This dual desire seems to have served as a major motivation for Fisher during the conceptualization and production of Standard Gauge.

In an analysis written in 1999, film scholar David James describes Standard Gauge as Fisher's "requiem" for the mode of "reflexive minimalism" associated with P. Adams Sitney's category of "structural film."[3] In James' view, Standard Gauge asserts the "dependence of the avant-garde on the industry" while also suggesting "the passing of the antagonism to the culture industries that, however unconsciously, subtended it."[4] Interpreting the film as a "farewell to the artisanal mode of production and to the avant-garde cinema," James points out that Fisher "has not made any films since then – but he has sold an option on a script for a commercial feature, and is currently writing another that he hopes to direct himself." James' account of an artist's repudiatory gestures and his subsequent redefinition holds considerable appeal, but as Fisher's recent return to experimental filmmaking demonstrates, he neither abandoned nor renounced avant-garde cinema.[5]

In addition, the issue of whether the avant-garde is dependent on the industry, in any *generalizable* way, is not addressed in Standard Gauge. Fisher does make clear in an interview, however, that he seeks, through his films, "to acknowledge the unalterable fact of the Industry, which there is no getting around, and to maintain an openness toward what it is and what it has given us. I regard the Industry as a source of ideas and material, as a subject, and in

some ways as a model, even though I also criticize it."[6] In Standard Gauge and his latest film, the filmmaker's reliance on industrially produced footage is the most salient indicator of his interest in Hollywood, and, as his statement indicates, his response to the industry is multifaceted.

This essay argues that ( ), Fisher's first film since Standard Gauge, has its origins in the filmmaker's cinephilic tendencies, on the one hand, and, on the other, a set of self-imposed checks, limitations, and constraints designed to offset or counter a familiar set of aesthetic conventions, ideas, and methods. In a manner roughly similar to Standard Gauge, which avoids celebrating a predominantly subjective form of cinephilia by providing fragments of an industry's economic history, ( ) does not merely spotlight the beauty of its apparent subject matter, the often-marginalized "insert" shot (which comprises the entirety of its imagery).[7] ( ) is also an attempt to construct an alternative to two dominant montage traditions: editing for economic expressiveness and dramatic effect (in narrative film), and editing for poetic or metaphoric effect (in counter-Hollywood film).[8] Unlike the historical and biographical narratives of Standard Gauge, however, through which the filmmaker explains himself quite clearly and directly to the viewer, ( ) does not provide a clear indication *within the film* of the full extent of Fisher's concerns. The filmmaker's decision to refrain from providing an internal explanation of the film's dual subject matter (inserts and montage) is provocative, resisting commonly held notions about spectatorial experience and the value of supplemental information. Thus, Fisher's project assumes the challenges of an alternative approach to filmic construction and a revised view of the tasks of the spectator.

The Insert Made Visible

According to one definition, the insert shot presents "part of a scene as filmed from a different angle and/or focal length from the master shot. Inserts cover action already covered in the master shot, but emphasize a different aspect of that action due to the different framing... the term 'insert' is often confined to views of objects – and body parts, other than the [actor's] head" (or face).[9] Narrative silent films, for example, are especially inclined toward shots of letters, notes, and newspaper headlines because the insert allows for information to be conveyed from within the diegetic world, without recourse to conspicuous inter-titles.[10] The standard established during the silent era, of an unobtrusive, seamless insert, has been upheld throughout the long history of narrative sound films structured according to classical Hollywood principles.

In every normative case, the insert shot should be entirely functional, and therefore devoid of decorative supplements. In a written statement, Fisher observes that, despite their deeply subordinate nature, "Sometimes inserts are remarkably beautiful, but this beauty is usually hard to see because the only thing that registers is the news, the expository information, not what it is."[11] When Fisher presents his own archive of insert shots in ( ), he is asking viewers to take pleasure in the minimal, the functional, and the "utterly marginal."

The viewer of ( ) will notice a range of commonalities among the shots, including the prevalence of hands manipulating machines and technological devices of various kinds. Formal tendencies also emerge, in areas such as framing and lighting, along with a general sense of the insert's economy. Themes seem to be threaded throughout the film – most prominently, death and time. Paul Arthur's description of the film captures some of this:

> Detached from their enslavement to ongoing fictional events, shots of money, dice, knives, letters, pictures, and so on, come alive in dialogue with their neighbors. There are mysterious unmoored messages: "Meet you in front of this house at two o'clock"; "Do not disturb." Motifs spring up across the body of brief declarative close-ups: texts ranging from telegrams to tombstones; objects of danger; stealthy hand movements; measuring devices such as maps, cockpit gauges, an hourglass. Moreover, the narrative or genre *affect* originally pumped into the inserts by what preceded and came after them retains a kind of spectral presence. That is, even lacking the dramatic contexts in which these visual exclamation points carried out their tasks, we can sense an imminent anger or sadness or elation, heated onslaughts of betrayal, murder, insanity lurking just outside the frame.[12]

As Arthur points out, the spectator's experience tends to be informed by his or her previous knowledge of the insert's place within narrative film. It is this familiarity, borne of our affective investments in the cinema, that heightens the psychological resonance of the inserts in ( ): a knife in the back of a coat, wrists bound with rope, an object removed from a bloody palm, a fuse being lit, a mysterious powder being slipped into a teacup, a headline announcing "POLICE SEARCH CITY FOR GIRL STOWAWAY," a telegram prescribing a police raid "after the storm," a leg in chains, a government-issue license plate, a hand touching names carved in wood, and so on.

Of particular interest to Fisher is a paradox that lies at the heart of his project. For Fisher, inserts "embody" instrumentality "to the most extreme degree," and yet the fact that they are afforded "the least latitude for the exercise of expressive intelligence" makes them no less beautiful or psychologically engaging than conventionally expressive cinematic images. (And indeed, the inserts chosen by the filmmaker are evidence of a discerning eye.)[13] Fisher's grouping is motivated by the impulse to *liberate* inserts ("to release them from their self-

effacing performance of drudge-work, to free them from their servitude to story") and to make the spectator *see differently* ("a way of making them visible").[14] Thus, ( ) has its origins not only in the cinephile's experience of visual beauty, but also in a basic set of avant-garde beliefs.

Models for a Montage Method

Viewers searching for a context for ( ) within prevailing avant-garde practices might look to the tradition of "found footage." Defined by its appropriation of previously shot imagery, found footage filmmaking makes extensive use of what Arthur calls a "bottomless repository of suppressed materials... tacky archival footage, anonymous home movies, porn, and, perhaps most pointedly, a panoply of tools and movie-production processes usually erased or mystified in the name of seductive entertainment."[15] Key bodies of work in the found footage tradition, such as the films of Bruce Conner and Ken Jacobs, have long been characterized as cultural salvage operations, produced by artists devoted to the uncovering of "lost" and often unfamiliar cultural artifacts. In this context, the practice of putting together a found footage montage is said to take on political dimensions, even if a particular film does not deal with politics in any direct or topical sense.

Given that the discernment of motifs and themes seems to be a central feature of the experience of watching Fisher's film, it might seem as if the filmmaker has elected to employ montage in various metaphoric or symbolic ways. After all, found footage practice has explored the rhetorical and expressive possibilities of montage extensively.[16] In support of this view, one could cite a recent found footage video that bears some resemblance to ( ), namely The Phoenix Tapes (1999), produced by German filmmaker Matthias Müller and German video artist Christoph Girardet. More specifically, the second section of this six-part work, entitled "Burden of Proof," is dominated by insert shots, all selected from the films of Alfred Hitchcock.[17] Hitchcockian insert images in this section include a Social Security card, a nametag, pins for ties and lapels, a warning written on a matchbook ("They're on to you"), a finger with blood on it, a shower head, a brush passing through a woman's hair, a hand reaching for a doorknob, a drawer opened to reveal a knife, a key dropped near a shoe, and a knife plunged into a coat. In contrast to Fisher's film, Müller and Girardet's video contains a carefully constructed soundtrack, comprised of incidental noises (including many foley artist creations), environmental sounds, musical excerpts (often orchestral), and portions of dialogue. Following a montage of eyes, "Burden of Proof" ends with the close-up image of a light shining into the

eye of a doctor's patient, accompanied by a single line of dialogue: "Still can't understand how I fell down those stairs."

Through its cumulative structure, "Burden of Proof" manages to convey more than a general sense of danger and lurking menace, suggesting that Hitchcock's films are full of tense, neurotic, often homicidal characters. The partially-seen actors' jerky gestures and behavioral tics, for example, can be interpreted as pathological symptoms, with the doctor-patient scenario that ends the section taking on the qualities of a culmination or thematic restatement.

Despite the apparent resemblances between ( ) and "Burden of Proof," however, Fisher's film is distinguished by a crucial difference, one that is grounded in his ideas about the construction of meaning through purposive juxtaposition. As Fisher puts it, he sought out an "impersonal" system that could produce a film that was not "cut" or "edited" in any traditional sense of those terms.[18] In developing a set of anti-expressive, quasi-arbitrary montage principles, he allowed himself the freedom to borrow and modify structuring devices from literary and artistic genres (thus revealing the extent of his interest in disciplines and practices not commonly associated with the cinema). Fisher's ideal, then, is not the artfully interwoven tapestry of patterns and motifs created by the cinephile-turned-filmmaker, but rather the catalogue or database of the collector who seeks to remove himself from the archiving system after having chosen its contents.

The rule allowed Fisher to work out the structure of his film on paper, rather than the editing table. Since he only "needed the rule to make the film," the filmmaker does not describe in detail the system he constructed or the rules he followed, telling the reader of his explanatory statement that "it is not necessary for you to know what it is."[19] Fisher does divulge that his rule dictated the following: "No two shots from the same film appear in succession. Every cut is to another film." Seeking to avoid "the usual conventions of cutting, whether those of montage or those of story films" and to "free the inserts from their stories" through discontinuity, he adhered to a structuring device that ignores the specific content of his shots.

Fisher acknowledges that his role as the composer of the rule locates him as the author of the work, but he adds that "at least the rule introduces an intermediate term that does what it can to assign responsibility for the composing to somewhere else." Indeed, he views rules as being fundamentally "inconsonant with expressivity, as that notion is conventionally understood." This conventional understanding of expressivity is shaped by the following assumptions: the artistic ego can communicate to the receiver directly by mastering his or her medium, and mediating processes can neither alter the author's fundamental message nor dislodge the creative ego from its position of authority and accountability.

Fisher acknowledges that his questioning of such ideas is part of a long tradition. The practitioners he cites as precedents and influences come from the visual arts and literature – conceptual artist Sol LeWitt, writer Raymond Roussel, and filmmaker Thom Andersen.

An artist who is known for modular structures and serial drawings and paintings, all executed according to the instructions he provides for his assistants, LeWitt insists that the artist can be a planner who selects "the basic form and rules that would govern the solution of the problem. After that the fewer decisions made in the course of completing the work, the better. This eliminates the arbitrary, the capricious, and the subjective as much as possible."[20] The "problem" is shared by Fisher: How to circumvent the *dominance* of subjectivity? How to come up with a plan that can "design the work," in LeWitt's words? As David Batchelor notes, LeWitt's objective is not to incorporate "deeply significant ideas" into art or to raise art "to a form of quasi-scientific inquiry."[21] Rather, like Fisher, LeWitt seeks to discover whether his alternative approach to standard methods of construction can yield engaging images. Since neither LeWitt nor Fisher privileges the preconceived idea over the visual artifact, neither can be accurately characterized as an iconoclastic conceptualist.

In Roussel's work, Fisher sees how an "arbitrary and mechanical method" can produce, within "radically anti-dramatic" compositional structures, an array of disturbing "scenes utterly beyond the power of the imagination to invent."[22] The author composes the rules that will select a standard component (a word, phrase, line) of a text and determine which aspect of that component will be used for connective purposes – a word's double meanings, or its homonyms, for example. Roussel's strategies demonstrate that the author can treat his or her constructive processes as a self-contained puzzle, one that is no less solvable for being so intricate and complex.

Fisher acknowledges that Andersen introduced him to Roussel's work, and it is Andersen who demonstrates to Fisher, through his 1967 film entitled — ———— (made with Malcolm Brodwick), that a film made up diverse shots can be constructed according to rigorous rules. Beginning in the 1970s, through the completion of Standard Gauge, Fisher has avoided conventional "editing" by restricting himself to single-take films. In Standard Gauge, for example, the sequence of filmstrips and frames that Fisher manipulates by hand could only be called a "montage" in a very loosely defined sense. Like Andersen and Brodwick, Fisher allows himself to decide the sequence of frames (or shots) and the length of time that each will remain onscreen, thereby making choices in the production of Standard Gauge that resemble those of the professional editor. In contrast, Fisher's rules for ( ) prevent his determination of sequential order or shot length.

An 11-minute documentary about rock and roll and American culture (with a musical soundtrack and no narration), Andersen and Brodwick's film is based on two rules. The first is used to determine the relative length of its shots, and the second to assign a "dominant hue" for each shot and to order those hues.[23] Fisher is particularly fascinated by what the first rule produces, an emotional effect that he describes as a progressive "sense of a diffusion, a relaxation of tension." The montage sequence that elicits such a response stands in direct contrast to a specific aesthetic norm – the shortening of shots in narrative films during moments of escalating dramatic intensity. As in all of the above cases, Andersen and Brodwick's preconceived or rule-bound method is generative, producing innovation in artistic practice and expanding aesthetic experience through specially designed works.

Among the many possible precedents Fisher does not mention, one film in particular is worth reviewing. In the 1970s, Ken Jacobs discovered a 16mm print of a drama entitled The Doctor, a black-and-white short made for American television roughly twenty years earlier. In the seemingly banal story of a country doctor trying to cure a sick girl, Jacobs noticed various subtexts, including a perverse link between the elderly doctor and his young patient. Rather than tease out the short's Freudian subtext through a few carefully chosen juxtapositions of shots or scenes, however, he devised a simple, systematic process of reordering, executed by his university students (with a few mistakes he decided to keep). After determining the total number of shots in the original film, Jacobs began his own film, The Doctor's Dream (USA: 1978), in the numerical center of The Doctor, with the shot that lies precisely in the middle of the original film. Jacobs explains, "It then proceeds to the shot that came before that middle shot, then skips over to the other side and shows the shot that followed the middle shot and then keeps skipping back and forth to the outer shots."[24] Jacobs' method was inspired by a performance of Nam June Paik's, in which the artist began by playing the center keys of a piano, continued to alternating lower and higher notes, and finally progressed past the piano to alternating points in space.[25] Borrowing from Paik's performance art, in the tradition of experimental filmmakers adopting structural conceits from other disciplines, Jacobs finds a seemingly impersonal way to reveal implicit meanings or themes and suggest novel or unexpected views of conventional subject matter. As in Fisher's ( ), a montage method becomes a tool of discovery.[26]

Responses and Effects

Writing of the experience of reading the novels of Roussel, Fisher maintains that "you respond to what the method produced, some of the most extraordinary writing in all of literature," but he also acknowledges that Roussel felt the need to reveal his methods to his readership in *How I Wrote Certain of My Books*.[27] In doing so, Roussel differentiated his practice from that of the Surrealists, many of whom admired the dispassionate, dedramatized presentation of singularly strange scenarios in his texts. Unaware of Roussel's carefully structured approach to writing, of the constructive innovations that defined his practice, the Surrealists declared his work "magnificently poetic," in the words of Robert Desnos, based on its effect on the reader.[28] Fisher locates in his own film a roughly analogous pairing of conceptual methods and Surrealist effects: "( ) offers the improbable but nonetheless true case of a film that in its disjunctions and incongruous juxtapositions seems Surrealist, while in fact underneath it is a structural film. That was odd enough, I thought, that Surrealism and Structuralism could be joined, irrationality and chance on the one hand and clarity and order and predictability and graspability as to overall shape on the other."[29]

The viewer of ( ) can only discover this "odd" pairing with the aid of information that is not provided within the text of the film itself. Thus, the filmmaker allows for the possibility that ( ) is allegorical, insofar as "we need to know more than what we see in the work."[30] The notion that a work of art may need to be linked to an explanatory supplement runs counter to commonly-held beliefs regarding the autonomy and universal communicability of a completed film, but Fisher's attitude, which is less provocative in an artworld context than in movie culture, is consistent with his longstanding interest in the transformative impact of discursive elements upon our experience of images. Whereas Standard Gauge provides a framework through its narration, however, ( ) allows the viewer both more and less freedom. On the one hand, since the film's supplement (Fisher's statement of purpose) performs an important didactic function, one type of cinephilic ideal, that of the self-contained film, is challenged; on the other hand, some cinephiles will doubtless appreciate that the film itself remains entirely visual, a feature that facilitates the perpetual rediscovery both of the insert and of new approaches to composition.

It should be noted that Standard Gauge does point ahead to ( ) in certain moments. Near the end of the film, Fisher's narration becomes more fragmented and silently contemplative, taking more time to pause over filmstrips after simple introductory statements such as, "Here is a piece of film that to me is full of interesting incidents, none of them related to one another." In those moments, Standard Gauge becomes more open-ended, allowing for a wide range

of spectatorial reactions to its archived imagery. Such responses might be characterized as nostalgic, but Fisher would likely take a less restrictive view. His deictic gestures in the end of Standard Gauge are driven, in part, by the impulse to provoke a variety of reflective and affective responses, within which the cinephile's melancholy longing for an obsolete photochemical film aesthetic stands as merely one historically circumscribed possibility. Another response, more common to ( ), might be distinguished by a sense that the irrational can be located within a wide array of cinematic images ("full of interesting incidents, none of them related to one another"). In the cultural life of both Standard Gauge and ( ), many other reactions remain to be described and catalogued by the viewers with whom Fisher seeks to engage.

Practices in Relation

( ) is a doubly reflexive film, directing our attention to cinematic imagery and cinematic methods. Were Fisher merely a sensualist, a cinephile devoted to the beauty of film form, an artful compilation would suffice. Instead, by contributing to our understanding of a shot type that even film studies tend to neglect, the filmmaker functions as a cultural historian, albeit less explicitly than the narrator of Standard Gauge. He also provides a model for the multidisciplinary reassessment of montage practice, by looking for alternatives in a range of methods rarely considered by found footage filmmakers or video artists.

With a final quotation, a revealing recollection from Fisher, we can return to the topic of experimental film's relation to Hollywood cinema:

> I became interested in filmmaking in the middle sixties, when *Film Culture* presented articles about the New American Cinema and films made in Hollywood on an equal footing. In the same issue were stills from Flaming Creatures and the opening sequence of The Naked Kiss, where Constance Towers beats up her pimp. That was a golden moment. The unifying idea was that of being an artist in film, no matter where. There was also the implication, which I think is correct, that what independent films and commercial films have in common is as important, or perhaps more important, than what divides them. Soon afterwards the critical politics of the magazine shifted, and except for some old films that were enshrined in history, commercial films were dismissed as unspeakable.[31]

If *Film Culture* – and, according to David James, structural film – eventually came to represent a turn away from the attitude of receptivity and sense of relatedness Fisher recalls, then much of the output of found footage practice, Standard Gauge and ( ) included, constitutes a counter-history, one in which

visual pleasure and cultural critique are not assumed to be incompatible. Thus, despite its self-imposed limitations and constraints, Fisher's ( ) is, ultimately, the product of pluralist impulses. As such, it reflects the present state of avant-garde practice. The conceptual rigor with which Fisher treats the act of inserting, however, is a mark of distinction within a mode of production still dominated by expressive editing.

I thank Morgan Fisher for engaging in extensive exchanges with me regarding a number of aesthetic issues. His intellectual generosity and receptiveness made the process of working on this essay thoroughly enjoyable.

Notes

1. MacDonald, Scott. "Morgan Fisher." *A Critical Cinema: Interviews with Independent Filmmakers*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988, p. 359.
2. Fisher, Morgan. "Script of Standard Gauge." MacDonald, Scott (ed.). *Screen Writings: Scripts and Texts by Independent Filmmakers*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995, p. 187.
3. James, David E. "Hollywood Extras: One Tradition of 'Avant-Garde' Film in Los Angeles." *October*, 90 (fall 1999), pp. 13, 17. Sitney's structural film essay and the debates it engendered are reviewed in Peterson, James. *Dreams of Chaos, Visions of Order: Understanding the American Avant-Garde Cinema*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994, pp. 72-77.
4. James, "Hollywood Extras," op. cit., pp. 16, 17.
5. For a useful introduction to Fisher's work, see MacDonald, Scott. "Morgan Fisher: Film on Film." *Cinema Journal*, 28/2 (winter 1989), pp. 13-27.
6. MacDonald, Morgan Fisher, op. cit., p. 357.
7. Fisher writes, "By chance I learned that the root of 'parenthesis' is a Greek word that means the act of inserting. And so I was given the title of the film." Morgan Fisher, "( )" (statement first distributed during screenings in 2003), n. p. Available: <http://www.filmlinc.com/nyff/avantgarde2003mf.htm>.
8. The distinction employed here is schematic. Obviously, both traditions are closely interrelated, and each is locatable within industrial and independent modes of production.
9. Anonymous. "Inserts." *Wikipedia*. Available: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inserts>.
10. For brief discussions of diegetic inserts, see Salt, Barry. *Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis*, second edition, London: Starword, 1992, pp. 51, 138-139; Bordwell, David, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1985, pp. 188-189.
11. Fisher, "( )," n.p.
12. Arthur, Paul. "( )." *Film Comment*, 40/1 (January/February 2004), p. 75.

13. Fisher acknowledges that he selected shots (from nearly 100 films purchased on the auction website eBay) that were "clear," that made an "impact," that were "incongruous, striking, arresting, mysterious," and possessed of a "classical simplicity." But he also asserts that he did not seek out any one dominant feature. Morgan Fisher, interview with the author, 18 August 2004.
14. Fisher. "( )," n.p.
15. Arthur. "( )," p. 75.
16. This is particularly evident in the case of the found footage essay (in film or video), which advances an argument or perspective through narration and compiled footage. A recent example is Thom Andersen's Los Angeles Plays Itself (USA: 2003). In three parts, "The City As Background," "The City As a Character" and "The City As Subject," Andersen's film develops an extensive critique of the representation of Los Angeles in Hollywood cinema and presents the filmmaker's alternative view of the city.
17. For an analysis of The Phoenix Tapes, see my article "Hitchcock and the Found Footage Installation: Müller and Girardet's The Phoenix Tapes." *Hitchcock Annual*, 12 (2003-04), pp. 100-125.
18. Recalling his days as an editor in the industry, Fisher cites a few standard questions that convey the approach he sought to avoid: "How can we tighten things up? What is the heart of the shot? How can you get rid of the stuff you don't absolutely need?" Each question assumes that editing entails making each shot "fit" into a narrative structure as economically and effectively as possible. Morgan Fisher, interview with the author, August 18, 2004.
19. Fisher, "(.)," n.p. All quotations in this paragraph and the one that follows are taken from this text.
20. LeWitt, Sol. "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art" (1967). Zevi, Afdachiara (ed.). *Sol LeWitt: Critical Texts*, Rome: Libri de AEIOU, 1995, p. 79.
21. Batchelor, David. "Within and Between." *Sol LeWitt: Critical Texts*, p. 443. Batchelor's essay is an excellent introduction to LeWitt's art.
22. Fisher, "( )." n. p. This text includes a longer discussion of Roussel's work. See also Ford, Mark. *Raymond Roussel and the Republic of Dreams*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000, pp. 1-6; 187-201.
23. A more detailed description of the rules can be found in Fisher, "( )," n.p.
24. *Ken Jacobs: Interview by Lindley Hanlon June 10, June 12, 1979*, St. Paul and Minneapolis: Film in the Cities and Walker Art Center, 1979, p. 6.
25. Ken Jacobs, public discussion held at the American Museum of the Moving Image, New York City, 10 Nov. 2001.
26. Again, Paul Arthur provides a useful description: "Even though the spectator may not grasp the precise ordering principle, it is clear that as *Dream* unfolds the gaps in narrative logic between adjacent shots become increasingly attenuated and bizarre. With time wrenched out of joint, conventional markers of cause and effect get waylaid, producing weirdly expressive conjunctions... In this Kuleshov experiment in reverse, poetic themes and unsavory character motives seem to leap from the restirred detritus...." Arthur, Paul. "Creating Spectacle from Dross: The Chimeric Cinema of Ken Jacobs." *Film Comment*, 33/2 (March/April 1997), p. 61. For a more detailed analysis of Jacobs' film, see Gunning, Tom. "Doctor Jacobs' Dream Work." *Millennium Film Journal* 10/11 (fall/winter 1981-82), pp. 210-218.

27. Fisher. "( )," n. p. See also Roussel, Raymond. *How I Wrote Certain of My Books and other writings*, Trevor Winkfield (ed.), Boston: Exact Change, 1995.
28. Quoted in Ford, *Roussel and the Republic of Dreams*, p. 168.
29. Fisher, email correspondence with the author, 3 September 2004.
30. Fisher, email correspondence with the author, 26 August 2004.
31. MacDonald, Morgan Fisher, *A Critical Cinema*, p. 357.