

even in the darkest depths of the intermediate zone between stages two and three, the "near-death" or "beyond-death" experiences, then there is always the possibility for renewal.

Voice: That's it. Self-consciousness is the awareness of context—you know . . . the view from above, the motivation to keep flipping the power switch back on.

Narrator: That reminds me of a recurring dream I have.

Voice: Tell me.

Narrator: There is nothing but black. I am awake. Lying on my back, I sense my breathing, quiet and regular. I roll over and stare upwards. I see nothing, or rather I am trying to understand what I am seeing. There is the sensation of space, palpable in the blackness, but it is depth without the reassuring content of an image. There is the sensation of my body, its extension and weight pressing downwards. And there are these questions in silent dialogue with the darkness. I bring my hand up to my face. There is nothing. I turn it over, wave it and the slight brush of the movement of air is felt against my cheek. I lie motionless. There is a slight ringing sensation in my ears, and my mouth feels dry because I haven't wanted to move, not even to swallow. Without motion, I slowly am aware of the loss of sensation in my limbs. I don't know how long I have been lying like this. I imagine the darkness as an immense soft black cloud of cotton wool, silent and weightless, gradually pressing in around my body. Everything seems to be closing down to a small opening just around my face; outside of this small area, the oblivion of nothing. Finally, like a body under water focused on breathing through a tiny straw, I let that go and feel myself submerged in the great comfort of the senseless and weightless void.

Voice: [Dumbfounded silence]

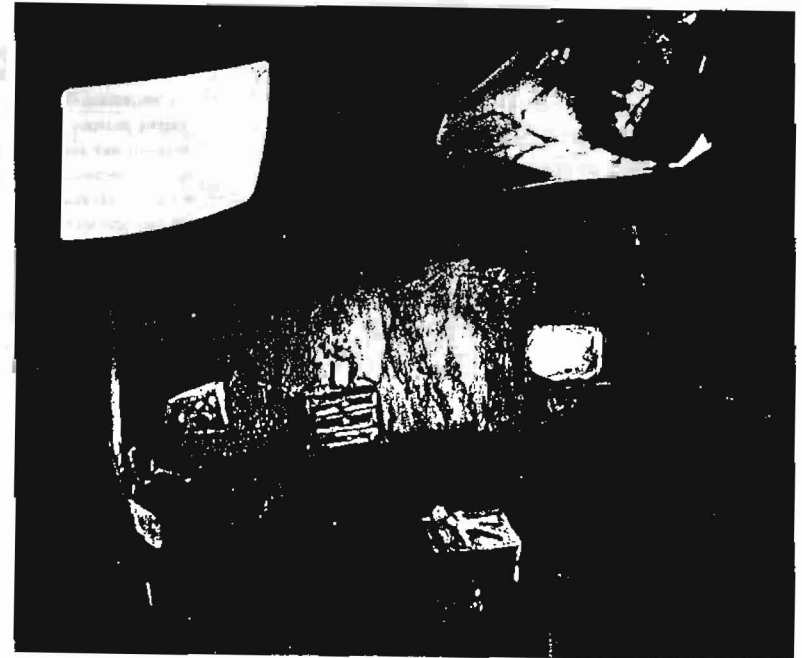
Fade to black.

In two minutes, the tape runs out and the screen is plunged into snow. The hissing sound jars the viewer from sleep. A hand slowly comes in and fumbles for the power button. There is a click, silence, and the snow on the screen abruptly collapses into a momentary point of light, which gradually fades while the glass screen quietly crackles, dissipating its static charge, and the internal circuits begin to lose their heat to the cold night.

non-
Illuminating
video "

Phototropic

TONY OURSLER



Tony Oursler, *Video Dream*, from *Spheres of Influence*, 1989.

The spectrum of tragedy brings people together. Its many jagged colors, together, make a white light . . . or so they say. He takes his broken dreams to the congregation at the TV show in hopes of illuminating many homes. The contestants, suffering from a range of sexual maladies, a major problem in the modern world, volunteer to be artificially stimulated to orgasm. With the aid of the highest technology the images which run through their minds at the exact point of orgasm are presented for all to see. These visions are scrutinized and re-

warded according to their entertainment value.

—Tony Oursler, *Spheres of Influence* (a video tape and installation)

Evidence of a Narrative MetaSystem: The function of the NMS can only be described by its effects upon the lives of its Hosts and by the traces left by its subsurface ebbs and flows as they emerge through psychomimetic technologies. The NMS, coupled with these technologies, acts as a construc-

tive corrosive and dissolves physical boundaries to form the Screened World.

What has happened to my body?

First, I would like to match the two clocks.

Zita Mellon, Artist (1897-)	Advents Electricity Radio Automobile Flight TV Atomic DNA Moon Synthetic Virus
---------------------------------	--

The bowerbird family, Ptilonorhynchidae, is closely related to the bird of paradise. The satin, stage-maker, and all other members of this species are known for their remarkable *bowers*. These chambers, arenas, and runways are constructed for the sole purpose of mating. Within his bower, each male bowerbird performs an elaborate "dance" until he attracts a mate. The bowers are built of various decorative, color-coded (by plumage) materials such as insect bodies, shells, feathers, creepers, grasses, mosses, orchids, and other flowers. The decorations, as they become withered or faded, are cleared from the site and replaced. Recently, the bowerbird has added brightly colored synthetics that fit into its building palette. Some bowerbirds are festooned with bright plumage, while

others are rather dull and inconspicuous. This range of coloration is reflected in the process of bower building; the more colorful the bower the less colorful the bird and vice versa. (There is a continuing debate surrounding this phenomenon in relation to theories of evolution. Some say the bird is a freak of nature, constantly struggling to make up for a lack of adequate gender marking while others see its habits as a "neo-natural" mutation with far-reaching implications.)

The Screened World has facilitated the displacement of the "natural" ecosystem by the "artificial" Echo-System. Thus, a shunting of life force transpires.

Artifice redefined.

One of the most interesting things about TV is that people spend so much time watching something that has nothing to do with their lives.

—Unknown member of the medical industry

Federal Communications Commission (FCC) broadcasts, once received, cause the location of their reception to undergo a transformation of psycho/architectural fusion: electronic prison. FCC narratives and their codification can be seen as a shape. Alternatives to these transmissions can be deduced by perceiving the negative of that shape.

An inside look at the FCC Electronic Prison:

There is a distinct presence of Christianity here, an adulterated

brand of Christianity, suffering from a perversion of its founding doctrine resulting in the shift of its primary symbolism from the resurrection to the crucifixion. This shift in emphasis and its endless contradictions is central to the schizophrenic predisposition of the American. The FCC piggybacks its narratives on this predisposition, exploiting it as a means of supplying the public with an endless stream of capitalistic verisimilitude. The FCC, acting as both the pusher and the drug, profits by narcotizing viewers and keeping them addicted.

Within the confines of this prison the viewer is conditioned to automatically and unconsciously enter into a state of willing suspension of disbelief. The viewer sits as a nullity, hypnotized by the light and synced to the electromagnetic waves of the Utility of Television.

A body may live long underground conserved by the Astral Light in a complete state of lucid somnambulism. Their souls are then bound to the sleeping body by an invisible chain, and if those souls are greedy and criminal they can draw on the quintessence of the blood in the persons who are naturally asleep; they can transmit this sap to their interred bodies for their longer preservation, in the vague hope that they may be restored ultimately to life.

—Colin Wilson, *The Occult**

While under the influence of the Utility, the viewer manifests one of the predominate signs of schizophrenia: the inability to identify the per-

imeter of the body or to perceive the point at which the body ends and the rest of the world begins . . .

To induce the out-of-body experience, a symbolic species identification is evoked within the viewer. To achieve this, a visualsonic code is projected that can be decoded or constructed by the viewer to resemble a human form known as a Surrogate. Electronic Animism is triggered by the presence of the Surrogate, followed by a remarkable degree of viewer empathy, decapitation, possession, and, finally, the most damaging result of FCC transmissions, repression of the Evolving Collective Unconscious.

There is no such thing as an actor.

What are these empathy-inducing entities? To understand the psychoactive cipher the code must be broken. To begin, we must identify some of the elements that retain the characteristics of the Surrogate.

- A period.
- A period screaming.
- A hole with language coming out of it.
- Effigy.
- Six Japanese dressed in black, all operating one small puppet.
- A piece of meat moving around . . . in sync with language.
- Any evidence of life.
- Excrement.
- Anything in the foreground.
- The whole picture.
- Anything that moves.
- Anything more interesting than you.

* See the writings of Constance De la . . .

Ability of "Natural" to
Adapt + Absorb the "Synthetic"

Summa
Self
is
TV
lad

18

Mirror.
 Anything mind altering.
 Anything mood altering.
 Frankenstein.
 Empathy.

One encodes sensory experience by means of a rearrangement of neural electronics and chemistry, resulting in the physical imprint of a neural narrative.

When I was a young child, I was convinced that what was shown on the Utility was real—even the scenarios depicting death. I thought that prisoners on death row were given the choice to die as a TV cowboy or army man or to die in a gas chamber or electric chair.

"Oh, looks like I killed her."

—Robert Chambers, from his untitled videotape

[The tape was produced by Mr. Chambers and four "girlfriends" before the start of his trial for the murder of Ms. Levin. Ms. Levin, whose body was found in Central Park (cause of death: strangulation) near the Metropolitan Museum of Art, was at one time a "girlfriend" of Mr. Chambers. He claimed that he killed her by mistake during "rough sex" in what became sensationalized in the press as the "Preppie Murder Trial."

After a protracted debate regarding Chambers's guilt or innocence, during which the defense mounted a campaign of character assassination against the late Ms. Levin, Chambers was convicted and sentenced for manslaughter to a minimum term in

prison. Soon after he began serving his sentence, one of the "girlfriends" who helped make the videotape sold it to a local New York TV station for \$10,000. No one, except Chambers and friends, knew of the existence of the videotape until the announcement of its sale. The video, which showed Chambers committing mock strangulations while the "girlfriends" acted as victim, judge, and jury, won top prime-time ratings and, as was noted by the press, outstripped *Wheel of Fortune* for two days in a row. The Chambers statement quoted above, was made on the videotape while removing a doll's head from its body. (It has been brought to my attention, by filmmaker Joe Gibbons, that if the security cameras at the Metropolitan Museum had been in working order at the time the original murder was committed the event would have been captured on video for all to judge.)

In *Manslaughter*, the heroine was a speed demon. In one scene, her car was to be chased by a motorcycle policeman. Then her car was to skid around and be hit dead center by the motorcycle. . . . The stunt man somersaulted over the car, landing on the other side with broken ribs, pelvis, and collarbone. Later the actress commented, "They shouldn't have risked a man's life for that shot. When you see it on screen, it looks exactly like a dummy!"

The director of the first *Ben Hur* carried the use of real people to the fatal extreme. . . . It was the fiery clash between the slave ship and the pirate ship that really upset newspapers and public opinion. When the Italian extras had

Form for Reporting a Violent Copycat Media Event

Part II: ORIGINAL EVENT

Medium Film
TV
Cable
Other

Title of Media Event: _____

Description of Media Event: _____

Part II: COPYCAT EVENT

Date of Event: _____

Time of Event: _____

Location: _____

Description of Copycat Event: _____

