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## An 'exemplary contemporary technical object': thinking cinema between Hansen and Stiegler

**Abstract** This article explores the work of Mark B.N. Hansen and Bernard Stiegler in relation to technology, experience and cinema. It highlights the differences between their positions and evaluates their ongoing usefulness for 'technocultural' studies. The article starts by describing and evaluating Hansen's critique of Stiegler on cinematic temporality. Here it argues that their very different reading of Gilbert Simondon's work (and especially his concept of individuation) are crucial to understanding the difference between Hansen and Stiegler. The article then moves on to look directly at Stiegler's approach to cinema through an analysis of his reading of Alain Resnais's film *On connaît la chanson* (*Same Old Song*). It shows here how the frequent citation of popular French song in this film underlines Stiegler's concept of the 'industrialisation of memory'. The economic and cultural problematic that Stiegler locates in the film is contrasted with the seemingly positive reappropriation of culture industry which Lawrence Lessig describes as 'remix culture'. The article then concludes by discussing what is at stake, theoretically and politically, in Stiegler and Hansen's different ways of thinking about cinema.

**Keywords:** technics, individuation, chanson, industrialisation, grammatisation

### Introduction

In his 2012 article 'Technics Beyond the Temporal Object' Mark Hansen describes his personal excitement at first reading Bernard Stiegler's multi-volume work on technics:

It is hard for me to convey just how great was my excitement at discovering the work of Bernard Stiegler. For me, this discovery – initially of *Technics and Time*, volume 1 and the short essay on the cinema – was a veritable revelation [...] I was deeply moved by Stiegler's core argument that technics contaminates thought not (simply) from the outside, but in some 'essential' way – a way that even Derrida could not think; and I found utterly compelling his demonstration that Husserl's model of time-consciousness depends on 'objective' or worldly technical temporal objects, and that it does so not in some way fatal to its coherence, but *precisely as the very principle of its critical force*.<sup>1</sup>

As Hansen goes on to discuss, his interest in Stiegler's work stems from its close relationship with his own. Hansen's first book, *Embodying Technesis*, highlights the failure of philosophy and cultural studies to really take account of technology. He argues that '[technology's] impact on experience is at once so primitive and so pervasive that any attempt to fathom it through cultural critique will have already presupposed what it sets out to isolate and clarify'.<sup>2</sup> In a similar way, Stiegler consistently argues that philosophy represses a technological condition that ought to be its 'proper question'.<sup>3</sup> Indeed in Hansen's (2004) article "'Realtime Synthesis" and the Différance of the Body' he lauds Stiegler's work and argues that the 'ultimate consequence of [his] correlation of the human and the technical is ... the (re)discovery of deconstruction within cultural studies ... transforming cultural studies into *technocultural* studies'.<sup>4</sup> Both writers, albeit at different stages in their development, have been greatly influenced by the work of Gilbert Simondon. *Technics and Time* leans heavily on Simondon from the outset and his ideas around individuation are at the centre

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1 Mark B.N. Hansen, 'Technics Beyond the Temporal Object', *New Formations*, 77, 1 (2012), 44–62, pp44–45.

2 Mark B.N. Hansen, *Embodying Technesis: Technology Beyond Writing*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2000, p3.

3 Bernard Stiegler, *Philosopher par accident: Entretiens avec Élie During*, Paris, Galilée, 2004, p15.

4 Mark B.N. Hansen, 'Realtime Synthesis and the Différance of the Body: Technocultural Studies in the Wake of Deconstruction', *Culture Machine*, 6 (2004) <<http://www.culturemachine.net/index.php/cm/article/view/9>> [accessed 24 February 2014].

of Stiegler's critique of hyperindustrial society. Hansen ends his *New Philosophy for New Media* with an appeal to the concept of the preindividual and makes extensive use of Simondon in his later book, *Bodies in Code*.<sup>5</sup> Ostensibly the projects of these two writers share many assumptions and occupy much of the same terrain. Nevertheless there are important distinctions between their work which are apparent from the outset. In particular a careful reading of Hansen's well developed critique of Stiegler can help to clarify the theoretical projects of both writers.

The purpose of this article, then, is to articulate and clarify the differences between Hansen and Stiegler's understanding of technocultural studies. The particular focus here will be their arguments about technology and cinema. Through an analysis of Stiegler's reading of Alain Resnais's film *On connaît la chanson* (*Same Old Song*), I will show how the two writers make very different use of Simondon's concept of the preindividual. I will demonstrate how Stiegler's understands the citational practices of the film (lip-synching of popular French *chanson*) as an industrialisation of memory. Stiegler's approach to the film will be contrasted with the 'remix culture' perspective articulated by Lawrence Lessig, showing how the cultural and political stakes here go beyond questions of intellectual property. I will then conclude by examining how these two thinkers' accounts of cinema and, more broadly, of contemporary technology, take them in different theoretical and political directions.

### Hansen on Stiegler

From the outset, following the (early) approach of Richard Beardsworth,<sup>6</sup> Hansen sees Stiegler making a productive break with Derrida:

Stiegler's work, as I see it, forges a much needed position *between* positivism and abstraction – between the various strategies for positivising *différance* that one finds in contemporary cultural studies (for example, in the 'radical empiricism' of audience research studies and more generally in the ubiquitous call for explorations of heterogeneity as a 'positive', that is, concrete phenomenon) and the retreat to a pretechnical, precultural quasi-politics of the promise that Derrida has recently articulated.<sup>7</sup>

In this simple sense Hansen expresses a common objection to the deconstruction of speech and writing: Derrida installs material inscription at the heart of thought (and not as its dangerous supplement) but focuses on the quasi-transcendental status of what he calls 'arche-writing' and ignores – or even eliminates – the material specificity of different forms of inscription. For example, Mark Poster, taking Derrida's comments on McLuhan in his essay 'Signature Event Context' as a basis, argues that Derrida's focus on arche-writing 'eliminates media specificity, and indeed one might say the problematic of media itself'.<sup>8</sup> It is true that Derrida does object to the idea (that he finds in McLuhan) that a new form of media is replacing discursive mediation with a communicative transparency beyond writing. However it is not clear that this leads Derrida to a wholesale dismissal of the specificity of different forms of writing, or different forms of media. Indeed in *Archive Fever* Derrida himself speculates about the 'geo-techno-logical shocks' that would have been visited on the psychoanalytic archive (and thereby discourse and practice) had Freud and his contemporaries communicated by email rather than by writing letters.<sup>9</sup> In some ways the argument that Derrida ignores the specificity of different technological forms can be seen as a

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5 Mark B.N. Hansen, *New Philosophy for New Media*, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 2004; Mark B.N. Hansen, *Bodies in Code: interfaces with digital media*, New York, Routledge, 2006.

6 Richard Beardsworth, 'From a Genealogy of Matter to a Politics of Memory: Stiegler's Thinking of Technics', *Tekhnema: Journal of Philosophy and Technology*, 2 (1995), 85–115; Richard Beardsworth, *Derrida and the Political*, London, Routledge, 1996. Beardsworth's recent work is more critical of Stiegler.

7 Hansen, 'Realtime Synthesis and the Différance of the Body', op. cit.

8 Mark Poster, 'McLuhan and the Cultural Theory of Media', *Media Tropes*, 2, 2 (2010), 1–18, p13.

9 Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*, E. Prenowitz (trans.), Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1998, p16.

misunderstanding of the very status of arche-writing as *quasi*-transcendental which, as Geoffrey Bennington argues ‘shuttles between what would be traditionally distinguished as transcendental and empirical planes, asserting the priority of neither and the subordination of both to a wider movement neither is in a position to understand’.<sup>10</sup> The emphasis on arche-writing as the condition of mediation does not simply eliminate the question of media specificity. However it is fair to say that Hansen has a more extensive argument about writing waiting in the wings, one that goes to the heart of his own thinking around technology.

That argument can be found in his first book, *Embodying Technesis*. Here Hansen mounts a robust attack on existing forms of ‘cultural critique’ of technology. The reasoning bears equally on social studies of science and poststructuralist-influenced accounts of technology. These approaches share the problem which Hansen calls *technesis*: ‘the putting-into-discourse of technology’.<sup>11</sup> By focusing on ‘the technical modification of representation’ they lose sight of the ‘robust materiality’ of technology and our experience of it beyond representation, in the ‘material rhythms of embodied life’.<sup>12</sup> In other words, they embrace a certain materiality of representation but fail to reckon with a more profound, embodied account of materiality and technology in general:

The various materialities invoked by the aforementioned cultural critics – materialities encountered in cultural and social life, in virtual hardware / software, and in the nonsignifying elements of language – all comprise examples of the quasi materiality (or relative exteriority) that Derrida’s critique of logocentrism unleashes within the domain of thought. As mere supplements or material supports for the production of knowledge/thought/desire, none can furnish the site for a resistance against the imperialism of theoretical (or linguistic) idealism.<sup>13</sup>

*Embodying Technesis* takes aim at a number of ‘poststructuralist’ thinkers such as Heidegger, Lacan and Deleuze and calls them to account for their contribution to this ‘technesis’ approach. However, as the above quote perhaps indicates, it is predominantly and most particularly Derrida who Hansen seems to hold responsible for ‘... the reduction currently enjoying hegemonic sway within contemporary cultural criticism: the reduction of technology to representational technology.’<sup>14</sup> The argument seems to be that by finding technicity and materiality at the centre of language, Derrida thinks materiality and technicity only as a dimension of, or support for, language. In doing so he lays the foundation for conceiving technology primarily as the exteriorisation of thought. Against this, Hansen advocates an affective or embodied understanding of technology, an argument which he develops at greater length in *New Philosophy for New Media*. He can therefore be seen, as Patricia Clough argues, as part of the ‘affective turn’ in cultural studies, although in his rereading of Bergson he takes some distance from the Deleuzean understanding of affect.<sup>15</sup>

But how credible is Hansen’s account of Derrida? *Embodying Technesis* argues that Derrida ‘defines exteriority as the “exteriority of meaning”’ but the sentence cited from *Of Grammatology* actually reads ‘[t]he epoch of the logos thus debases writing considered as mediation of mediation and as a fall into the exteriority of meaning’.<sup>16</sup> It is not at all clear that in saying this Derrida ‘defines’ exteriority as the exteriority of meaning. The general form of Hansen’s argument seems to be that if representation is exteriorisation then exteriorisation (or exteriority in general) is

10 Geoffrey Bennington, *Interrupting Derrida*, London, Routledge, 2000, p19.

11 Hansen, *Embodying Technesis: Technology Beyond Writing*, op. cit., p4.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 P. T. Clough, ‘The Affective Turn: Political Economy, Biomedicine and Bodies’, *Theory, Culture & Society*, 25, 1 (2008), 1–22, pp7–9; Mark B.N. Hansen, ‘The Time of Affect, or Bearing Witness to Life’, *Critical Inquiry*, 30, Spring (2004), 584–626.

16 Hansen, *Embodying Technesis: Technology Beyond Writing*, op. cit., p126; Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, New York, John Hopkins UP, 1976, pp12–13.

representation. That does not follow as a general logic and there are also good reasons for supposing it is not true in the case of Derrida. Jeremy Gilbert puts it very succinctly in an article about affect and cultural studies:

Derrida's notion of the arche-trace which precedes signification as such, of an always-already-disseminated writing which precedes speech and all the rest, is right from the start a deliberate problematisation of the very distinction between signifier and signified on which the Saussurean break in cultural studies rests. In these terms, culture would be thought of as the order, not of the signifier, but of the trace; and such a thinking of culture would necessarily finally displace the privilege accorded to *meaning* as the defining characteristic of culture and the cultural.<sup>17</sup>

In other words in place of reducing exteriority to the 'exteriority of meaning', the exteriority of the trace breaches meaning from the outset. On Gilbert's reading, far from reducing everything to discourse, '[Derrida] not only legitimates the erasure of the distinction between the discursive and the non-discursive, but must simultaneously erase the conceptual hierarchy which accords verbal language priority as the key metaphor for all other forms of social practice'.<sup>18</sup> This is quite the opposite of what Hansen finds, where the erasure of the distinction between discursive and non-discursive seems to extend the domain of 'linguistic imperialism'. But Derrida's deconstruction of the opposition between interior/exterior alongside meaning/nonmeaning does not render everything textual and linguistic, any more than it eliminates the difference between interior and exterior.

But let us suppose, for the purposes of our discussion here, that we accept Hansen's reading of Derrida. Where does that leave Stiegler? Would not his themes of technics, the exteriorisation of memory and grammatisation, or his extension of Derrida's own problematic of arche-writing, make his work an even more refined instance of the tendency Hansen condemns as 'technesis'? In one sense Hansen's answer to this question appears from the outset to be 'yes'. In part this is due to the emphasis Stiegler places on mnemotechnics; picking up on Geoffrey Bennington's early observation that the concept of tool is too restrictive, Hansen argues that '[b]ecause of Stiegler's unbending commitment to memory, his explanation cannot even recognise that there is a more primordial level at which technology impacts (or 'contaminates') experience'.<sup>19</sup> As Hansen puts it:

...Stiegler's account is marked by the conspicuous absence of any consideration that there may in fact be any other dimension to our contemporary technogenesis than the mental. To my mind, this leaves out an entire dimension of contemporary technology's address to our experience. For if we accept Stiegler's standard, how can we make sense of, let alone even recognise, that impact of technology - its direct impact on our sensory life - that remains inaccessible to consciousness, that doesn't appear as such inside the mental?<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, Hansen's response is moderated by an appreciation of the originality and interest of Stiegler's project. One way of putting it would be that even if Stiegler's account of technology ultimately affirms the 'technesis' approach, in arriving at that destination he can aid the break with technesis that Hansen seeks. Even if he still thinks in terms of technesis, Stiegler goes far beyond Derrida in his understanding of the contamination of thought by technics.

### **Cinema and tertiary memory**

17 Jeremy Gilbert, 'Signifying Nothing: 'Culture,' 'Discourse' and the Sociality of Affect', *Culture Machine*, 6, 0 (2004) <<http://www.culturemachine.net/index.php/cm/article/view/8>> [accessed 29 April 2014].

18 Ibid.

19 Hansen, 'Realtime Synthesis and the Différance of the Body', op. cit.; Geoffrey Bennington, 'Emergencies', *The Oxford Literary Review*, 18, 1-2 (1996), 175-216, p212n34; Hansen, 'Technics Beyond the Temporal Object', op. cit., p50.

20 Hansen, 'Technics Beyond the Temporal Object', op. cit., p48.

One aspect of Stiegler's novelty for Hansen is, as we have seen, his positivism. But his other innovation is his transformation of Husserl. Stiegler derives the term tertiary memory from Husserl's account of memory. Husserl distinguishes between primary retention or memory and secondary retention or memory. Primary retention is the kind of memory that is necessary to perceive a temporal object such as a melody: in effect the melody will not exist as an object of perception unless the listener retains or remembers the notes that precede the one that is currently heard.<sup>21</sup> Secondary retention is the more conventional understanding of memory where I might recall a melody I heard last week. Finally there is a third kind of memory, which Husserl calls 'image consciousness' and Stiegler calls 'tertiary memory' where an external object, such as a picture or photograph, reactivates a memory. Now for Husserl primary memory can be rigorously distinguished from secondary or tertiary memory because it belongs to the act of perception itself – perceiving the melody necessarily involves this kind of retention. Secondary or tertiary memory, on the other hand, involve acts of imaginative selection. Secondary and tertiary memory are thus derivative from primary memory. For Stiegler, however, something like the reverse is true: tertiary memory, the exteriorisation of memory into technical objects—mnemotechnics—is constitutive of primary memory, secondary memory or our perception of the temporal object.<sup>22</sup>

One obvious example of mnemotechnics is writing and indeed Stiegler dedicates a large part of the second volume of *Technics and Time: Disorientation* to a discussion of the transformation in mnemotechnics represented by the shift to orthographic writing.<sup>23</sup> However, it is in a new transformation in the course of mnemotechnics, one represented by the globalised mass media system, which concern Stiegler. In part this is because new forms of audio-visual recording introduce a new class of *industrial* temporal object and therefore a new relation between primary, secondary and tertiary memory. Stiegler argues that this can be seen in repeated listenings of a gramophone record where the ear 'never hears the same thing', each hearing, each primary retention of melody is affected by the previous one.<sup>24</sup> Primary memory –the perception of melody – is being affected by the imaginative selections of secondary and tertiary memory. What the gramophone record illustrates is twofold: firstly, as the 'phonographic revelation of the structure of all temporal objects' it demonstrates that tertiary memory is constitutive of all primary retention and reveals, as Hansen puts it, 'the intrinsically technical basis of time-consciousness'.<sup>25</sup> Secondly, it shows how new forms of recoding, new forms of mnemotechnics, can bring about modifications in time consciousness itself as new forms of selection.

Now the other great example of the industrial temporal object is to be found in cinema. As Hansen puts it:

For Stiegler this situation is best exemplified by cinema ... all the more so because cinema is the technological art of selection *par excellence*. In cinema, more than any other recording technology, the selection criteria through which consciousness passes on prior retentions is, first and foremost, the work of tertiary memory: in cinematic perception, we select almost exclusively from memories of experience that have not been lived by us ... by suturing the flux of consciousness to the flux of a temporal object that is almost entirely composed of tertiary memories, cinema exerts an objective stranglehold over time-consciousness.<sup>26</sup>

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21 Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time 3: Cinematic Time and the Question of Malaise*, S. Barker (trans.), Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2011, p14.

22 Technical objects all support a type of cultural, non-genetic or 'epiphylogenetic', memory, but there is a subset that 'one must call mnemotechnics, to speak properly' a type of technics that is specifically 'made for keeping memory': Stiegler, *Philosopher par accident*, op. cit., pp59–60.

23 Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time: 2. Disorientation*, S. Barker (trans.), Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2008, pp53–57.

24 Bernard Stiegler, 'The Time of Cinema', *Tekhnema*, , 4, 1998, 62–113, p72.

25 Ibid.; Hansen, *New Philosophy for New Media*, op. cit., p255.

26 Hansen, *New Philosophy for New Media*, op. cit., pp256–7.

In this sense cinema for Stiegler is not just one industrial temporal object among many, but the 'exemplary contemporary technical object'.<sup>27</sup> This is partly because of the relationship between perception and technical selection, as Hansen points out here. But it is also because it brings to the fore the relationship between the temporal object and its systematic commercial exploitation, the industrialisation and politics of memory. As Hansen argues elsewhere, cinema in the wider sense understood by Stiegler is 'the object of a media system that aims precisely and in the most calculated manner imaginable to subordinate the subjective flux of thinking to pre-programmed and thoroughly standardized temporal patterns of media artifacts'.<sup>28</sup>

However sympathetic he may be to this account of the industrial temporal object, in the final chapter of *New Philosophy for New Media* Hansen outlines a problem with Stiegler's conception of cinema, one which makes it diverge both from Deleuze's account of cinema and Hansen's own Bergson-inspired critique of that which is outlined in the earlier chapters. This is because what is distinctive about the 'Bergsonian-Deleuzian' understanding of cinema is, 'the way that perception places consciousness into a relation with a domain fundamentally heterogeneous to it'.<sup>29</sup> If the contribution that Stiegler makes is to demonstrate, through cinema, the technical 'contamination' of time-consciousness, the limitation is that it forecloses on the possibility of cinema introducing anything *beyond* conscious perception of the temporal object. (This is in fact a reiteration of the argument against technesis in general.) As Hansen argues in a later article, '[Stiegler's] thinking is thus conflictual at its very core, for whereas his analysis of technics opens a dimension of impact that is properly beyond the grasp of consciousness, his argument for technical contamination retains consciousness as the exclusive scope for thinking technics'.<sup>30</sup> In relation to cinema, Hansen asserts, '[f]or Stiegler ... the range of what a film can present is necessarily limited to that which can take the form of memory – of memory that could be proper to consciousness, even if for the most part it is not'.<sup>31</sup> Noting that this limitation can be extended beyond cinema to the impact of technology on perception in general, he then asks, rhetorically, whether the understanding of cinema as tertiary memory doesn't curtail 'cinema's capacity to change life'.<sup>32</sup>

But how exactly does Hansen think moving beyond the limits of perception and memory allows cinema to 'change life'? As elsewhere in *New Philosophy for New Media* (and also *Bodies in Code*), the place to find this radicalisation of 'cinema', or indeed move beyond cinema, is new media art. In this context Hansen seeks to counter Stiegler's understanding of cinema through the example of Bill Viola's *Quintet for the Astonished* (2000). Viola's video installation was shot on high speed (384fps) film and then transferred and slowed down on video. The result is a sixteen-minute piece depicting, in slow motion, the changing emotions in the faces of five actors. Hansen emphasises in his account Viola's 'insight into the autonomy of emotion beyond time'.<sup>33</sup> He charts the way in which the spectator of *Quintet for the Astonished* is taken beyond the temporal object:

When the viewer takes in this intensely oversaturated temporal object, the guiding mechanism of cinematic temporality – the perceptual coincidence between the flux of the film and that of consciousness – gives way to a kind of affective contagion through which consciousness, by being put face-to-face with what it cannot properly perceive and yet what constitutes the very condition out of which the perceivable emerges, undergoes a profound self-affectation. In this incredibly intense experience, consciousness is made to live through (affectively, not perceptively) the very process through which it continually emerges ... as

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27 Hansen, 'Realtime Synthesis and the Différance of the Body', op. cit.

28 Mark B.N. Hansen, 'Media Theory', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 23, 2–3 (2006), 297–306, p304.

29 Hansen, *New Philosophy for New Media*, op. cit., p257.

30 Hansen, 'Technics Beyond the Temporal Object', op. cit., p46.

31 Hansen, *New Philosophy for New Media*, op. cit., p257.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

the selection from a nonlived strictly contemporaneous with it ...<sup>34</sup>

This reading of Viola turns out to be pivotal to Hansen's project. What the experience of *Quintet for the Astonished* achieves is to confront the consciousness of the spectator with the constitutive role of her own affective embodiment. It is evidence of Hansen's fundamental 'neo-Bergsonian' assertion that perception is rooted, via affect, in the activity of the body.<sup>35</sup> In effect there are two linked claims here: first is the bodily basis for affectivity and the second is that affectivity is constitutive of perception. This claim is also the basis of Hansen's criticism of Deleuze's theory of cinema: Deleuze makes the affect-image a type of perception and thereby divorces affect from its bodily basis.<sup>36</sup> Deleuze is also therefore at odds with Bergson who, in Hansen's reading, clearly separates affection and perception. In summary *New Philosophy for New Media* contends that both Stiegler and Deleuze's (very different) understandings of cinema founder on their failure to move beyond perception. Both therefore fail to provide a framework for understanding the true radical potential, or 'Bergsonian vocation' of contemporary new media, 'as the catalyst for the expansion of the margin of indetermination constitutive of our technically facilitated embodiment'.<sup>37</sup>

### *Same Old Song*

Here it is worth pointing out that Stiegler's reworking of Husserl, his theorisation of cinema as industrial temporal object, does not lead him to view it simply as the commercial exploitation of consciousness or to dismiss its potential altogether. One might look for example at Stiegler's discussion of the Alain Resnais film *On connaît la chanson* [*Same Old Song*] (1997) in the first volume of *De la misère symbolique (On symbolic misery)*. Stiegler uses the film as a basis to explore the funny age ['*drôle d'époque*'] in which our collective memory is constituted through these industrial temporal objects.

The characters in *On connaît la chanson* ventriloquise various well known French chanson in a manner reminiscent of (and, in fact, influenced by) Dennis Potter. They thus project *chanson* as the shared cultural memory of the film's (French) audience. Resnais's film is ostensibly a sort of romantic comedy or romantic tragicomedy set in contemporary Paris and based around the lives of two sisters, Camille (Agnès Jaoui) and Odile (Sabina Azéma). It combines a basically conventional cinematic narrative with interspersed scenes where the characters mime or lip-synch popular French song or *chanson*. Resnais conceived the film partly as an homage to Dennis Potter who in a number of television series, the most famous of which is probably *The Singing Detective* (1986), used a similar narrative technique, lip-synching actors to the words of popular songs. Potter's work inspired many imitations, not least in advertising. However Potter's use of these songs made much greater reference to the genre of the musical film. Indeed, as Samuel Marinov has argued, Potter's work can be seen as a parody of the simple narrative conventions of the musical, in such a way as to break the causal relationship between plot and character and as a vehicle for a kind of authorial intrusion into the unfolding of a realist drama or the idea that these are 'real people in real time, space and circumstances'.<sup>38</sup>

Resnais's film shares some themes with Potter, for example a physiological condition that conceals or reveals a more psychological malaise as is the case for Camille and Nicolas (Jean-Pierre Bacri) in *On connaît la chanson* and Marlow (Michael Gambon) in *The Singing Detective*. However the use

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34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 Mark B.N. Hansen, 'Affect as Medium, or the 'Digital-Facial-Image'', *Journal of Visual Culture*, 2, 2 (2003), 205–228, p211.

37 Hansen, *New Philosophy for New Media*, op. cit., p146.

38 Samuel G Marinov, 'Pennies from Heaven, The Singing Detective and Lipstick on Your Collar: Redefining the Genre of Musical Film', in V.W. Gras and in J.R. Cook (eds), *The Passion of Dennis Potter*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2000, p201.



of *chanson* in Resnais's film is arguably rather different. In one way it is less intrusive, in the sense that we generally do not see full blown musical numbers. Indeed Resnais tends to rely more on relatively short sections of lip synching. As such the songs seem to fulfil a role that falls ambiguously between being incorporated into the action of the film (for example, as dialogue) and functioning as a sort of aside or interior monologue by a particular character. The effect here is in a sense starker than Potter, drawing primarily on the power of *chanson* itself and a French-speaking audiences' familiarity with it, rather than on the wider dramatic conventions of film musical.

It is precisely this quality that Stiegler draws attention to in his account. That is to say, what the songs bring into play is a shared past or community between the 'we' of the French audience and the characters of the film. These are songs that, having been heard a thousand times, haunt both the film's cast and its audience, as if, in a strange way, 'we belonged to the same family', suggests Stiegler.<sup>39</sup> This is underlined by the fact that the songs are not sung, but only mimed, the characters are animated or brought to life by songs that they themselves never themselves recorded, putting them in the same situation as the spectator. Both character and spectator ventriloquise through *chanson* the same set of clichés.

In some ways there is nothing remarkable about the technique utilised by Potter and Resnais because in the age of online video sharing this kind of performance has become common place. Indeed one of the most common uses of youtube is to 'broadcast yourself', to use its original byline, miming along to a well known piece of pop music. In youtube's original 'broadcast yourself' perhaps we should hear also 'broadcast oneself', that is to say transmit a one that is woven through the collective set of industrial temporal objects. Another popular approach has been to edit collections of existing footage put together in the form of a music video. An example of this kind of work (although not drawn from youtube) can be seen in Johan Söderberg's *Read My Lips: Bush and Blair* (2002) which consists in a series of shots of George Bush and Tony Blair put together in such a way as to lip synch Diana Ross and Lionel Richie's rendition of his song 'Endless Love'.

Söderberg's film is used by Lawrence Lessig to illustrate what he calls 'remix culture'. Lessig, who has written widely about issues around intellectual property in books such as *The Future of Ideas* and *Free Culture*, shares some common concerns with Stiegler.<sup>40</sup> In *Remix*, for example, Lessig addresses the dangers of what he calls a 'read only culture' writing about the potential of the 'remix' to reclaim an industrialised culture – and therefore to reinstate citizens as writers and not only readers of culture.<sup>41</sup> However, the outcomes and assumptions of the two approaches are quite different and this helps to elucidate Stiegler's much broader critique of the era he calls 'hyperindustrial'.

For Lessig, works such as Söderberg's are important because they demonstrate the creative value of the remix or sampling of culture. Lessig illustrates this using John Philip Sousa's campaign against the gramophone at the turn of the twentieth century. Sousa's worry was that it would lead to a situation where ordinary people no longer sung songs or played instruments themselves but simply relied on the gramophone. In other words, from a situation where people participated in the making of music themselves, a 'read/write culture' as Lessig puts it, we would move to a read-only culture, 'a culture where creativity is consumed, but the consumer is not a creator'. On the other hand when consumers take those records and videos and remix them, as they do on youtube, they are reasserting a type of read/write culture. However, the problem here is copyright. It is perfectly legal to quote from other texts when writing a critical text (I have quoted from Bernard Stiegler several times already and I do not think he is going to take me to court about it, or at least I hope not). But

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39 Bernard Stiegler, *De la misère symbolique: 1. L'époque hyperindustrielle*, Paris, Galilée, 2004, p60.

40 Lawrence Lessig, *The Future of Ideas: The Fate of the Commons in a Connected World*, New York, Vintage, 2002; Lawrence Lessig, *Free Culture: The Nature and Future of Creativity*, New York, Penguin, 2004.

41 Lawrence Lessig, *Remix: making art and commerce thrive in the hybrid economy*, New York, NY, Penguin Books, 2009.

the same rights do not really exist in relation to the industrial temporal objects of music and film (and indeed the industry works extremely hard to make sure that this is not so). As Stiegler mentions, Resnais himself wanted to make a film entirely composed of clips from other films but realised that copyright clearance would make it financially impossible.

Lessig therefore sees this problem of remix culture in terms of a need to reform copyright law to enable new rights. Essentially Lessig's argument is not with copyright *per se* but with an unrelenting increase in its scope and effectiveness. For Lessig, if intellectual property rights such as copyright are extended too far then they restrict creativity because they make it hard to create anything new without infringing someone else's intellectual property. (Lessig gives a number of recent examples how copyright law is already creating bizarre hurdles to film production, for example). For Lessig, then, it is important, firstly, to acknowledge that creativity always builds upon the past and, secondly, protect a public domain of ideas and creative work that people can build upon in a creative manner. It is this public domain that is under attack. Indeed one of Lessig's most well-known examples is to demonstrate that many of Disney's early works built upon work in the public domain and that such creative reinvention would be basically impossible in the copyright environment of today, an environment bought about partly through the lobbying activity of the Disney Corporation. However, for Lessig the need to protect the public domain does not imply an attack on copyright or the notion of intellectual property as such. Indeed despite the name of the "creative commons", which may seem as if it were aiming at questioning the private ownership of so-called intellectual property, Lessig's aims are essentially liberal. The aim is to protect freedom, rather than to question the very notion of property in relation to intellectual work:

To question assumptions about the scope of "property" is not to question property. I am fanatically pro-market, in the market's proper sphere. I don't doubt the important and valuable role played by property in most, maybe just about all, contexts. This is not an argument about commerce *versus* something else. The innovation that I defend is commercial and noncommercial alike; the arguments I draw upon to defend it are as strongly tied to the Right as to the Left.<sup>42</sup>

Moreover, Lessig will go on to argue that restricting property rights in this area is consistent with the history of capitalism in the U.S.. He cites air space as an example of property rights being abrogated (landowners do not own the airspace above their properties) in order to protect the freedom to fly.<sup>43</sup> However while Lessig wants to restrict intellectual property rights, he is ambivalent on the issue of whether the concept of 'property' is appropriate with respect to creative and intellectual works:

We have always treated rights in creative property differently from the rights resident in all other property owners. They have never been the same. And they should never be the same, because, however counterintuitive this may seem, to make them the same would be to fundamentally weaken the opportunity for new creators to create. Creativity depends upon the owners of creativity having less than perfect control.<sup>44</sup>

Essentially, as we can see from this quote, Lessig's argument leans heavily on a discourse of property in relation to creative works. He does not challenge—or at least not head on—the idea that it is appropriate to talk of 'property' in relation to creative works. Rather his argument is that property rights in this case need to be different. In this sense Lessig is countering the legal and political arguments of the entertainment industry that creative 'property' ought to be treated exactly like any other type of property; in some sense it should be acknowledged that it is Lessig's explicit

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42 Lessig, *The Future of Ideas: The Fate of the Commons in a Connected World*, op. cit., p6.

43 See Lessig, *Free Culture: The Nature and Future of Creativity*, op. cit..

44 Ibid.

legal/rhetorical strategy *not* to query or theorize notions of ‘property’, ‘ownership’, or ‘creativity’ in relation to intellectual work. Lessig does not argue with property rights as such but rather the application and extension of these rights in relation to creative and intellectual work in a manner that would restrict freedom.

So here we see the big difference between Lessig and Stiegler. For Lessig the problems of an industrial culture are legal, not cultural or economic, and can be solved simply through a reform of copyright, that is, enabling the right to ‘remix’ and ‘reuse’ that culture. But for Stiegler the malaise is much deeper than that. It is not possible to reclaim this culture simply through a reform of copyright law or through enabling freedom. As we have seen in relation to *On connaît la chanson*, for him, the heart of the question is the way in which the industrialisation of culture threatens individuation (or ‘creativity’ in Lessig’s terms) not simply in legal terms. To ‘sample’ or ‘remix’ is not really the same as citations, crafting a new work on the basis of previous ones, because we ourselves are constituted through the tertiary memory of the industrial temporal object we never simply cite it. Thus for Stiegler the empowerment offered by the remix, even in the hands of Alain Resnais, is a much more ambiguous one.

In truth the songs are woven into the experience of both cast and audience. As Stiegler puts it ‘I cite them without knowing that I cite them’.<sup>45</sup> But there is something lacking in this common ground on which the film and its French audience rest which means that it not really the experience of a ‘nous’ or a ‘we’. As Stiegler puts it:

In *On connaît la chanson*, I perceive that in effect we [*on*] all know the songs, me included, and that as such this ‘all’ is a ‘one’ [*on*] rather than a ‘we’ [*nous*]: I belong to this ‘one’, neutral, impersonal (and, on the other hand, also so intimate), but not in the end perhaps, at least not quite, a ‘we’. As if it lacked something. As if, in the time of these industrial temporal objects, *we* were lacking [*nous faisons défaut*]

And that is because for Stiegler, the age of industrial temporal objects is the age of *mal-être*, a key term for Stiegler. It has been translated variously as ill-being or malaise. Patrick Crogan defines it rather nicely as ‘a “pollution” of the reciprocal dynamic through which individual and cultural development takes place’.<sup>46</sup> To be precise what is lost is the technical milieu in which psychic or collective individuation takes place. Here Stiegler draws on Simondon’s ideas about individuation.

In *Du mode d'existence des objets techniques (On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects)*, Simondon argues that the rise of the machine tool removes the ability of the skilled worker to differentiate their labour from that of other workers. Stiegler sees the ‘loss of individuation’ extended in hyperindustrial society to consciousness through new teletechnologies and their ‘industrialisation of memory’. For him the process of industrialisation is also a *grammatisation*, that is to say a process, analogous to that of the development of writing, by which idiomatic actions (for example, those of the weaver) are standardised, discretised and materialised (for example, in the Jacquard loom).<sup>47</sup> As he puts it, ‘[t]he current loss of individuation is a stage of grammatisation where three individuations, psychic, collective and techno-machinic, generalise the formalisation by calculation’.<sup>48</sup> However he also makes a break with Simondon, arguing that the latter failed to connect his twin theses about technical individuation, on the one hand, and psychic or collective

45 Stiegler, *De la misère symbolique: 1. L'époque hyperindustrielle*, op. cit., p62.

46 Patrick Crogan, ‘Essential Viewing: Bernard Stiegler (2001) *La technique et le temps 3: Le temps du cinéma et la question du mal-être*’, *Film-Philosophy*, 10, 2 (2009), p50 <<http://www.film-philosophy.com/index.php/fp/article/view/166>>.

47 Bernard Stiegler, *For a New Critique of Political Economy*, D. Ross (trans.), Cambridge, Polity Press, 2010, pp10–11. Ibid.

48 Stiegler, *De la misère symbolique: 1. L'époque hyperindustrielle*, op. cit., p142.

individuation on the other.<sup>49</sup> For Stiegler, psychosocial individuation depends on a preindividual that is essentially constituted through organised, inorganic objects or technics. In this context it might seem odd that Hansen, in his reading of Viola's new media artwork, seems to oppose the Simondonian concept of the preindividual to Stiegler's model of 'grammatisation':

We can thus say that Viola's work deploys media to catalyse a temporal experience that moves beyond the 'cinematographic grammatisation' that, for Stiegler, forms the basis of contemporary real-time media [...] [W]hat Viola shows is that media, far from being the vehicle for a reproduction (writing, grammatisation) of life, is a mechanism for exposing the fundamental correlation of life with what Gilbert Simondon calls the 'preindividual', the domain of a nonlived that is strictly contemporaneous with the living and that forms the condition of possibility for its continued viability in the future.<sup>50</sup>

This quote really illustrates how close, and yet how different, Hansen and Stiegler's respective positions are. Both see the Simondonian preindividual as central to their account of technology. But whereas, for Stiegler, the preindividual is itself structured by the non-lived as the already-there of tertiary memory, for Hansen the preindividual is, 'the experience of affectivity, which names a modality that differs fundamentally from perception'.<sup>51</sup> Hansen can support this by pointing to Simondon's distinction in *L'individuation psychique et collective* between perception as belonging to the already constituted individual and affectivity as the relation between the individualised being and preindividual reality.<sup>52</sup> This seems to give affect a central role in the possibility of new individuations. Hansen's point, then, is that Stiegler's concept of tertiary memory, derived as it is from Husserl's understanding of the *perception* of the temporal object cannot in fact account for the affective relation with the preindividual.

However the problem with this account is that it does not take seriously Stiegler's own reworking of Simondon. As he has made clear on numerous occasions,<sup>53</sup> Stiegler actually makes a significant break with Simondon. He admits freely that their understandings of the preindividual differ.<sup>54</sup> Indeed Stiegler finds it surprising that Simondon does not think psychic and social individuation alongside each other. In doing so himself, he brings together the preindividual with Heidegger's concept of the historical 'already there'.<sup>55</sup> But Stiegler, unlike Heidegger, thinks this already-there as technically constituted, as tertiary memory. This creates a very different perspective:

The individuation process results from an irreducible inadequation at the heart of the individual, as always incomplete but also as the play of 'pre-individual forces' in the individual: interiorised, interpretable tertiary retentions that are equally at play in social individuation in which the psychic individual participates in the individuation process. Interpreted in this way, the pre-individual (different from Simondon's interpretation) is the 'already there', the potential for an inadequation instantiated by the *psychological*

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49 Stiegler finds it surprising that Simondon does not think these two modes of individuation together. See Bernard Stiegler, 'Temps et individuation technique, psychique, et collective dans l'oeuvre de Simondon', *Futur Antérieur*, 19-20 (1993) <<http://multitudes.samizdat.net/Temps-et-individuation-technique.html>> [accessed 3 June 2009]; Stiegler, *De la misère symbolique: 1. L'époque hyperindustrielle*, op. cit., pp106, 141.

50 Hansen, *New Philosophy for New Media*, op. cit., pp265–6.

51 Ibid.

52 Hansen, 'The Time of Affect, or Bearing Witness to Life', op. cit., pp609–610; Gilbert Simondon, *L'individuation psychique et collective: à la lumière des notions de forme, information, potentiel et métastabilité*, Paris, Aubier, 2007, p108.

53 For example: Stiegler, *De la misère symbolique: 1. L'époque hyperindustrielle*, op. cit., p106,141; Bernard Stiegler, *Aimer, s'aimer, nous aimer: Du 11 septembre au 21 avril*, Paris, Editions Galilée, 2003, p83n1; Bernard Stiegler, *Decadence of Industrial Democracies - Volume 1*, D. Ross (trans.), Polity Press, 2011, pp162–165n3; Stiegler, *Technics and Time 3*, op. cit., p95; Stiegler, 'Temps et individuation technique, psychique, et collective dans l'oeuvre de Simondon', op. cit.

54 Stiegler, *Technics and Time 3*, op. cit., p95.

55 Bernard Stiegler, 'The Theater of Individuation: phase-shift and resolution in Simondon and Heidegger', K. Lebedeva (trans.), *Parrhesia*, 7 (2009), 46–57, p48.

individual.<sup>56</sup>

This quotation illustrates very clearly Stiegler's difference both from Simondon and Hansen. Here the singularity of the individual, its inadequacy or potential for new individuation, is equated with the possibility of reinterpreting the preindividual already-there. This 'already there' is given in the exteriorised form of tertiary memory: recordings, artefacts, systems of writing and so on. This passage is a reminder of the argument about orthographic writing in the second volume of *Technics and Time*, where the individual 'who' is conceived as the experience of the infinite recontextualisation of the already-there of writing.<sup>57</sup> Individuation, here, is the potential for new interpretations. It arises, as for Simondon, out of the relation between the individual and the preindividual, but also as an intrinsic possibility of the preindividual as already-there.

One can readily see how this reading of individuation as potential for reinterpretation would confirm Hansen's suspicion that Stiegler, as with other thinkers of 'technesis', simply reduces the technical, through interpretation, to the exteriorisation of thought. But it also underlines the subtle difference in the way they think about indetermination. For Hansen indetermination is an intrinsic property of human affective embodiment: the body is the 'centre of indetermination'. For Stiegler, indetermination is the product of a transductive relationship between the who and the what and new technical configurations may indeed result (at least temporarily) in a 'loss of individuation'. For that reason psychic and collective individuation is inseparable from technical individuation.

Another way of thinking about this is to say, how is it possible for cinema to think something new? For Deleuze this belongs to the capacity of cinematic perception to go beyond or extend human perception. For Hansen, on the other hand, the newness can only emerge to the extent that 'new' media art goes beyond cinematic perception in engaging with our affective embodiment. For Stiegler cinema is most often the name for a globalised grammatisation and programming of consciousness that in fact forecloses or reduces the possibility for differentiation or newness. However, within that there is always the possibility, as with Resnais, for cinema itself to allow us to reinterpret this cinematic condition. As Patrick Crogan points out, it is only through inventive, idiosyncratic adoptions of the technical system that new relations can emerge in the form of what Stiegler often calls 'epochal redoubling' and 'art in general' is one of the mechanisms by which that can take place.<sup>58</sup> Stiegler himself says of *On connaît la chanson*:

In this film full of ambiguities, it is the recorded song and its subtle staging by cinema that constitutes what is at stake and the tension. It is through it that 'the emotion and the rationality of the spectator find each other', as Eisenstein said. The recorded song is here at once both the carrier-of ill-being (*mal-être*), the industrialisation of appearances, and the possibility of its salvation, of its expression, of its beneficial revelation.<sup>59</sup>

Ultimately what emerges from Stiegler's engagement with cinema is very different from that of Hansen, despite commonality in the terrain they explore. The rethinking of cinema, on the basis of Husserl, as the industrial temporal project is only ever the prolegomena to a wider project. The point here is not, as Hansen argues, a narrow claim about the 'technical contamination' of perception, but to establish through the concept of tertiary memory a wider argument about the intrinsic link between technical, psychic and collective individuation. This indeed involves a substantial rethinking of Simondon and a rearticulation of his work with the 'technesis' tradition that Hansen identifies in Heidegger and Derrida.

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56 Stiegler, *Technics and Time 3*, op. cit., p95.

57 Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 2*, op. cit., pp56–57.

58 Patrick Crogan, 'Thinking cinema (tically) and the Industrial Temporal Object: Schemes and technics of experience in Bernard Stiegler's *Technics and Time* series', *Scan*, 4, 2 (2007) <[http://scan.net.au/scan/journal/display.php?journal\\_id=93;](http://scan.net.au/scan/journal/display.php?journal_id=93;)> [accessed 30 April 2014]; Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 2*, op. cit., p7; Stiegler, *De la misère symbolique: 1. L'époque hyperindustrielle*, op. cit., p182.

59 Stiegler, *De la misère symbolique: 1. L'époque hyperindustrielle*, op. cit., p93.

Stiegler's problematic illuminates a potential problem with Hansen's reading of Simondon in his own focus on an account of technology in terms of human embodied *experience*. This leads him to a version of individuation that is perhaps too focused on *human* individuation, psychic or collective. Hansen perhaps loses sight of what Stiegler understands as technical individuation, or grammatisation, in favour of thinking technology as the 'robust materiality' of affective experience.

What implications are there here for the project of 'technocultural studies'? Both Hansen and Stiegler can be seen, in a very general way, as heirs to a Frankfurt School suspicion about technology as a source of domination and threat to human autonomy. Both can be seen using Simondon's thinking of individuation as a way of rethinking the concept of autonomy (and the autonomous individual). Hansen, as we have seen, draws on the idea of a preindividual affective embodiment both as the source of human agency and also grounds for thinking the 'robust materiality' of technology. Such a thinking marks a break with *technesis*, that is, thinking technology as the exteriorisation of thought, a tendency which he diagnoses both in 'poststructuralists', such as Derrida, Lacan and Deleuze, and the science studies of, for example, Bruno Latour. In broad terms one could say that Hansen's critical theory of technology then moves in the same general direction as affect theory and new materialism, without fully embracing either.

Stiegler's contribution to technocultural studies, on the other hand, is to describe something which he calls a 'general organology', understood in Simondonian terms as the co-individuation of the human, technical and social. His great advance here is to understand how Simondon might be used not just as a way of rethinking autonomy (that is, as the potential for new psychic and social individuation) *but also* industrialisation understood as a technological process of standardisation and conformity. He does this, as we have seen, by viewing the industrial as part of a more general process of technical grammatisation. Grammatization can mean a loss of individuation, for example, through the standardisation and homogenisation of idiomatic differences. This is the case when the mechanical loom takes the place of artisan weavers, or a national language supplants regional dialects. But it can also mean the possibility of *new* individuations. One might see this in Lessig's example of Sousa and the gramophone. In one way the system of industrialised audio recordings takes the place of a culture in which music is both listened to and played (a read write culture, in Lessig's terms). Clearly this can be understood as a process of grammatisation in which the music-listening public loses the ability to differentiate and individuate themselves through interpretative performance. On the other hand that music-playing culture was itself the product of a prior process of technical grammatisation represented by, for example, the standardisation of musical notation, tunings, musical instrument manufacture and so on. The grammatisation represented by the imposition of standard notation and equal temperament was itself the milieu in which new musical individuation became possible. Grammatization, as technical individuation, has to be thought alongside psychic and social individuation, but the relationship is not simply causal but rather, as it were, economic. Stiegler's innovation here, then, is to understand the process of individuation as inseparable from that of technical grammatisation.

This insight about grammatisation ultimately takes Stiegler's version of technocultural studies in a very different direction from Hansen. For Hansen the resources for a political engagement with technology seem to lie in affective embodiment and, therefore, in our embodied experience of technology. Indeed it is affective embodiment as the experience of singularity that puts the 'newness', or potential for change, into new media. His work therefore points in the direction of technocultural studies *as* technocultural practice. New media art here plays a leading role through opening up the experience of our affective embodiment. Stiegler's version of technocultural studies (not that he would use this term) on the other hand points more in the direction of classical critical theory. He undertakes a critique of the technological condition, albeit of a deconstructively shaped 'pharmacological' variety, and out of that arises a more or less explicit political programme. So, for example, in recent work such as *La Société Automatique* (Automatic Society), Stiegler's critical account of the technicity of knowledge aims to support what Morozov calls 'robust technology

policy on the left' through advocating a new economy of work and knowledge.<sup>60</sup> This implies a critique not only of the technicity of experience (where Hansen and Stiegler share common ground) but also the specific 'hyperindustrial' structures of contemporary technology, such as those embodied in what has become known in Europe as GAFA (Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon). Such an approach clearly has a stake in the idea that contemporary technoculture, as well as being a source of standardisation and conformity, can be reworked in ways that are conducive to a more politically 'healthy' transindividuation and that this reworking can be, among other things, a matter of public policy. The differences in the way in which Stiegler and Hansen theorise technocultural studies therefore lead to dramatically different models of technocultural politics.

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60 Bernard Stiegler, 'Automatic Society 1: The Future of Work – Introduction', D. Ross (trans.), *La Deleuziana*, , 1, 2015, 121–140, p140.