Luis Booth
Prof. Horne
March 18 2022

<center>Any Face, Whatever Body</center>

Any Face, Whatever Body, is an experimental short that functions simultaneously on personal and theoretical planes. On the personal level, it is an expression of processing an instance of racial trauma I experienced years ago when a White woman told me I was a "deer person or something" because I'm indigenous. This piece is meant to illustrate how such violence becomes internalized and self-affirmed. Theoretically, this project employs Kuleshov montage theory alongside the photogenie of the close-up to inspect a tension between Levinasian and Agambenian conceptions of the facial encounter under a lens of racial "othering".

The combination of Kuleshov montage and photogenie was necessary for my desired message. The soviet montage creates hallucinogenic relationships between multiple seemingly unrelated images for an audience.[1] Contrastingly, photogenie distorts the relationship a subject has to its own meaning within a close-up shot.[2] Thus, the meanings of a given shot or sequence are constantly altered through these two theoretical techniques, such that the visual meaning of an image is altered by other images and alters itself as the film moves forth. This mirrors the processing of racial trauma, as experiencing such violence damages my relationship to myself as an image in relationship to "other" racial images. My sound design reinforces this raciality by conceiving a tension between philosophers Levinas and Agamben as a racial tension. On one hand, Levinas sees the face as an opportunity to embrace an "other" by respecting their difference from yourself.[3] Agamben, however, believes that the "otherness" within faces is a superficial shell to be transcended in favor of unitarian humanity.[4] In the film I recite prose that speaks to my experience of internalized violence and elucidates how the Agambenian dismissal of racial difference as "superficial" erroneously invalidates the racial trauma which people of

---

[1] L. V, Kuleshov, "The Principles of Montage," In *Kuleshov on Film : Writings*, ed. Ronald Levaco (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 192-194.

[2] Jean, Epstein, "On Certain Characteristics of Photogenie," In *French Film Theory and Criticism, Volume 1 A History/Anthology, 1907-1939,* ed. Richard Abel(Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1993), 314-318.

[3] Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity : An Essay on Exteriority* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 1980), 190.

[4] Giorgio Agamben*, The Coming Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 65.

color experience. This is a philosophical conversation explored in depth in Jennifer Gonzalez's *The Face and the Public: Race, Secrecy and Digital Art Practice*.[5]

Furthermore, this piece repurposes ideologies of colorblindness to express the processing of racial violence through the flashing of face collages which stitch together facial parts from different ethnicities, edited alongside the faces where the parts were derived from. The semiotic result of this could potentially be interpreted as Hansen's idea of a "pure", universally human affective experience conceived as transcendent of ethnic identity.[6] The faces, in their combination of ethnicity, lack perceivable identity or raciality, such that the only receivable experience from their sporadic flashing is the "pure" emotion both expressed by the fragmented facial features and by the actual human faces edited alongside them. Hansen might see this as a plea for a de-racialized world. However, my project focalizes an emotional experience rooted in social categorization, and utilizes the indiscernibility of the face collages to call attention to the integral role race has in producing facial meaning - the fact that all a viewer can gather from these collages is a "pure" emotion highlights the integral role race plays in cultivating facial meaning. They are not faces, they are visualized emotions - this project defines the face as a location of social and ethnic identity, which the collages lack due to their absence of racial comprehensibility.

---

[5] Jennifer González, "The Face and the Public: Race, Secrecy, and Digital Art Practice," *Camera Obscura* (Durham, NC) 24, no. 1 (2009): 37–65.
[6] Mark B. N. Hansen. "Digitizing the Racialized Body or The Politics of Universal Address," *SubStance 33*, no. 2 (2004): 122.

Bibliography

Agamben, Giorgio. *The Coming Community*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

Epstein, Jean. "On Certain Characteristics of Photogenie." In *French Film Theory and Criticism, Volume 1 A History/Anthology, 1907-1939,* edited by Richard Abel, 314-318. Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1993.

González, Jennifer. *The Face and the Public: Race, Secrecy, and Digital Art Practice.* Camera Obscura (Durham, NC) 24, no. 1 (2009): 37–65.

Kuleshov, L. V. "The Principles of Montage." In *Kuleshov on Film : Writings*, edited by Ronald Levaco, 183-195. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974.

Levinas, E. *Totality and Infinity : An Essay on Exteriority*. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 1980. Accessed March 15, 2022. ProQuest Ebook Central. 190.

Mark B. N. Hansen. *Digitizing the Racialized Body or The Politics of Universal Address.* SubStance 33, no. 2 (2004): 107–33. https://doi.org/10.2307/3685406.