

THE RIGHT TO LOOK



A COUNTERHISTORY OF VISUALITY

Nicholas Mirzoeff

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*For **KRIS, KARIN, and KATHLEEN***

with great love and respect, and in solidarity.

*And for **HANNAH** in hope of better futures*

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PREFACE

Ineluctable Visualities

It's a while now that I've been tarrying with what James Joyce, in *Ulysses*, called "the ineluctable modality of the ineluctable visuality." That typically Joycean phrase could detain us for a while: why is visuality ineluctable? Who has made it so? It's a repetition with a difference of a phrase that appears earlier in *Ulysses*—"ineluctable modality of the visible"—and both are part of *Proteus*, Stephen Dedalus's interior monologue on the beach early in the day. Visuality is not, then, the visible, but it is twice ineluctable, unavoidable, inevitable. Nor, to be brief, is it a new way of thinking, any more than that currently fashionable term *modality*. By linking *visuality* with the archaic *ineluctable*, Joyce pushes us in the direction of seventeenth-century metaphysics, and behind them Aristotle, appropriate to Dedalus's concern with the "veil" between life and death as he mourns his mother and seeks the "word known to all men." So visuality is not the visible, or even the social fact of the visible, as many of us had long assumed. Nor is it one of those annoying neologisms that are so ripe a target for the book reviewer, for, as Joyce perhaps realized, the word became part of official English in 1840, in the work of Thomas Carlyle, fulminator against modernity and emancipation of all kinds. As Carlyle himself emphasized, the ability of the Hero to visualize was no innovation but "Tradition," a mighty force in the eyes of imperial apologists. To get the measure of this long Tradition and

the force of authority that renders it so ineluctable takes some time and space with no apologies. That story, the one implied by an Anglo-Celtic (Carlyle was Scottish) imperial imaginary, is the one whose counterhistory is offered here.

For in trying to come to terms with the ineluctable qualities of visibility, I have wanted to provide a critical genealogy for the resistance to the society of the spectacle and the image wars of recent decades. In turn, that genealogy would provide a framework for critical work in what has become known as visual culture, not because historicizing is necessarily always good, but because visibility both has an extensive and important history and is itself a key part of the formation of Western historiography. More precisely, visibility and its visualizing of history are part of how the “West” historicizes and distinguishes itself from its others. In this view, the “visual turn” represented academically by visual culture was not liberating in and of itself, but sought to engage the deployment of visualized authority at its points of strength. In so doing, I have crossed multiple borders, whether literally in pursuit of archives or other materials researched on three continents and in two hemispheres, or figuratively in the interface with academically discrete sets of area studies, historical periodization, and media histories. One of the early criticisms of the field of visual culture was its apparent hesitation to engage with weighty issues. The publication of such major books as W. J. T. Mitchell’s *What Do Pictures Want?* (2005) and the late lamented Anne Friedberg’s *The Virtual Window: From Alberti to Microsoft* (2006) has handily disposed of such objections. In this book I hope to follow in such exalted footsteps by developing a comparative decolonial framework for the field. I was impelled to do so by the questions raised in my study of the war in Iraq, *Watching Babylon: The War in Iraq and Global Visual Culture* (2005). Writing quickly, in the sadly mistaken belief that this would be a short conflict, I came up against the paradox that the immense quantity of imagery generated by the war had relatively little effect on the general public, a phenomenon I labeled the “banality of images.” Nor did the Abu Ghraib photographs, disturbing as they of course were, challenge that view. The photographs were not mentioned in the U.S. elections of 2004, and no military figure above the level of the prison itself was subsequently disciplined: indeed, everyone in the chain of command leading to the Abu Ghraib scandal was promoted. Against all traditions of photojournalism and other modes of visual revelation, it seemed that visibility had become a weapon for authority, not against it. In order to make sense of the apparent

conundrum that such shocking images have had so little public effect, it is critical to locate them in the genealogy I describe here.

I am not trying to reduce the materialized visualization to a cipher. On the contrary, it seems to me that one of the major implications of W. J. T. Mitchell's famous claim, in 1994, that visual materials of all kinds are as complex and significant as print culture is that the visual image is an archive in its own right. Without extending this discussion, one issue of border crossing in this regard can be taken as an example of the issues involved. In a number of instances drawn from the plantation complex of the Atlantic world, I have used images—or sometimes even the knowledge that there were images which have been lost—as a form of evidence. When I draw inferences from enslaved, formerly enslaved, subaltern, or colonial subjects, there is often no textual support I can draw on beyond the visual image. Therefore I use the formal analysis of style, composition, and inference that is commonplace within the Western canon and its hinterlands to support my arguments. I further claim that the wider historical frame I am developing here would reinforce such interpretations, just as many cultural historians have done before me. I may be wrong, of course, but the use of the visual archive to “speak” for and about subaltern histories of this kind, as opposed to simply being illustrative of them, seems to me an important methodological question. If formal use of that visual archive is to be disallowed in, say, Puerto Rico, then I want it disqualified in Rome as well. And if that is not going to happen, then what methodological objection is operative in one place but not the other? This objection comes most often from those in the field of art history, where attribution is a central question. I do not, however, conceive of this book as art history, but rather as part of the critical interpretation of media and mediation, performing what Mitchell has usefully called “medium theory,” all puns intended. In this sense, I consider visibility to be both a medium for the transmission and dissemination of authority, and a means for the mediation of those subject to that authority.

The main text will either justify these claims to readers or not. Here I would like to indicate one or two omissions that might not be self-evident. As a matter of framing and containing this project, I have used the tradition of authority that first inspired Carlyle and then was inspired, directly or indirectly, by him. That is to say, this is a genealogy of the Anglo-French imperial project that was launched in the direction of plantation colonies in the mid-seventeenth century and then diverged radically with the out-

break of the French and Haitian Revolutions (1789–1804). This legacy was disseminated to the United States in its capacity as a former British colony and by Ralph Waldo Emerson’s adaptation of Carlyle, published as *Representative Men* (1850). While some scholars might question so extensive a reach, the imperial project writ large was (and is) an actively conceived zone of experience, intervention, and imagination. James Anthony Froude called it “Oceana,” in imitation of James Harrington’s seventeenth-century treatise. On the other hand, for some this sphere may not go far enough. I recognize the extent to which this Anglo-French-American “imagined community” was contrapuntally interfaced with the Spanish empire, and I have given this practical expression in a set of “counterpoints” from the Hispanophone Americas. These sections deal with various forms of visual imagery, not because I conceive of Spanish empire “as” an image, but because this is perhaps as far as I dare trust my knowledge and language skills. I have risked these brief moments of imperial interpenetration as a sign of my sense that a very promising direction for new research would be a collaborative exploration of the intersections of such globalizing visualities. While I certainly imagine these zones as extending to South and East Asia, it has not been within my skill-set to include them in this book, which I now conceive as simply the first step in a longer project. Would it not, then, be prudent to conceive of this current volume as several books? It is certainly true that I can imagine a book project on each of the different complexes of visibility that I describe here. If the mode of critical analysis that I promote here takes hold, then I certainly see a place for multiple books, whether written by myself or by others. Here I felt it was important to set out the framework as a whole in sufficient detail that its outlines became clear, yet without presuming that no modifications would be later necessary. Another suggestion to write a very short introduction to the topic seems to me to prioritize the current fashion in publishing over sustained argument: I do not see how a project for a reevaluation of modernity could be undertaken seriously in the hundred-page “very short” format so popular these days. Enough, then, of what this book is not, and on to what it, for all its faults, actually is.

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Among the many people that I want to thank, first place goes to the anonymous readers for Duke University Press, who extended and challenged my thinking. This was one instance of the double-blind peer review that really worked. Other readers and advisers who provided beyond-the-call-of-duty contributions were Terry Smith, Marita Sturken, and Dana Polan. I'd like to thank all my current colleagues in the department of media, culture and communication at New York University and those in the departments of art and comparative literature and cultural studies at Stony Brook University. Further, my thanks go to all those students who helped me figure this project out as I went along and experienced its growing pains. The picture research was enabled by the excellent work of first Max Liboiron and then Ami Kim, to whom special thanks are due. At Duke University Press, Ken Wissoker, Mandy Early, Jade Brooks, Tim Elfenbein, and Patricia Mickleberry have done sterling work keeping me focused and actually editing the manuscript, a rarity these days in my experience. Tara McPherson, Brian Goldfarb, Joan Saab, and Wendy Chun, my colleagues on the Alliance for Networking Visual Culture project, have had to listen to versions of these ideas many times, and for this and their inspiration and excellence, many thanks. I owe much to the friendship and intelligence of a remarkable group of people at the Hemispheric Institute for Performance and Politics, especially Marcial Godoy, Jill Lane, and Diana Taylor. My peer network of friends and colleagues, thank you all, especially: Arjun Appadurai, Jon Beller, Laurie-Beth Clark, Jill Casid, David Darts, Dipti Desai, Hank Drewal, Kevin Glynn, Amelia Jones, Alex Juhasz, Ira Livingston, Iona Man-Cheong, Carol Mavor, Jo Morra, Tom Mitchell, Lisa Nakamura, Lisa Parks, Carl Pope, Marq Smith and everyone at the NEH-Vectors Summer Institute "Broadening the Digital Humanities" at the University of California Research Institute in 2010.

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of learning from and living with an intellectual of the first rank, as she reconfigures her entire field. Latterly, I have witnessed her overcome some of the most serious challenges a person can face with courage, intelligence, and even good humor. That is an inspiration I seek to live up to every day, just as I try to become a better parent for the young woman that my daughter Hannah has become during the time it has taken me to write this book.

INTRODUCTION

The Right to Look

Or, How to Think With and

Against Visuality

I want to claim the right to look.¹ This claim is, not for the first or the last time, for a right to the real.² It might seem an odd request after all that we have seen in the first decade of the twenty-first century on old media and new, from the falling of the towers, to the drowning of cities, and violence without end. The right to look is not about seeing. It begins at a personal level with the look into someone else's eyes to express friendship, solidarity, or love. That look must be mutual, each person inventing the other, or it fails. As such, it is unrepresentable. The right to look claims autonomy, not individualism or voyeurism, but the claim to a political subjectivity and collectivity: "The right to look. The invention of the other."³ Jacques Derrida coined this phrase in describing Marie-Françoise Plissart's photo-essay depicting two women in ambiguous pursuit of each other, as lovers, and in knowing play with practices of looking (see fig. 1).⁴ This invention is common, it may be the common, even communist. For there is an exchange, but no creation of a surplus. You, or your group, allow another to find you, and, in so doing, you find both the other and yourself. It means requiring the recognition of the other in order to have a place from which to claim rights and to determine what is right. It is the claim to a subjectivity that has the autonomy to arrange the relations of the visible and the sayable. The right to look confronts the police who say to us, "Move on, there's nothing to see here."⁵ Only there is, and we know it and so do they. The opposite of



FIGURE 1. MARIE-FRANÇOISE PLISSART FROM *DROIT DE REGARDS*
(PARIS: EDITIONS DE MINUIT, 1985).

the right to look is not censorship, then, but “visuality,” that authority to tell us to move on, that exclusive claim to be able to look. *Visuality* is an old word for an old project. It is not a trendy theory word meaning the totality of all visual images and devices, but is in fact an early-nineteenth-century term meaning the visualization of history.⁶ This practice must be imaginary, rather than perceptual, because what is being visualized is too substantial for any one person to see and is created from information, images, and ideas. This ability to assemble a visualization manifests the authority of the visualizer. In turn, the authorizing of authority requires permanent renewal in order to win consent as the “normal,” or everyday, because it is always already contested. The autonomy claimed by the right to look is thus opposed by the authority of visuality. But the right to look came first, and we should not forget it.⁷

How can we think with and against visuality? Visuality’s first domains were the slave plantation, monitored by the surveillance of the overseer, operating as the surrogate of the sovereign. This sovereign surveillance was reinforced by violent punishment but sustained a modern division of labor. Visualizing was next the hallmark of the modern general from the late eighteenth-century onward, as the battlefield became too extensive and complex for any one person to physically see. Working on information sup-

plied by subalterns—the new lowest-ranked officer class created for this purpose—and his own ideas and images, the general in modern warfare, as practiced and theorized by Karl von Clausewitz, was responsible for visualizing the battlefield. At this moment, in 1840, visibility was named as such in English by the historian Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881) to refer to what he called the tradition of heroic leadership, which visualizes history to sustain autocratic authority. Carlyle attempted to conjure the Hero as a mystical figure, a “living light fountain that it is good and pleasant to be near . . . a natural luminary shining by the gift of Heaven.”⁸ If visibility had been the supplement to authority on the plantation, authority was now that light. Light is divine. Authority is thus visibly able to set things in motion, and that is then felt to be right: it is aesthetic. Visibility supplemented the violence of authority and its separations, forming a complex that came to seem natural by virtue of its investment in “history.” The autonomy claimed by the right to look is thus opposed by the authority of visibility. Visualizing is the production of visibility, meaning the making of the processes of “history” perceptible to authority. Visibility sought to present authority as self-evident, that “division of the sensible whereby domination imposes the sensible evidence of its legitimacy.”⁹ Despite its name, this process is not composed simply of visual perceptions in the physical sense, but is formed by a set of relations combining information, imagination, and insight into a rendition of physical and psychic space. I am not attributing agency to “visibility” but, as is now commonplace, treating it as a discursive practice that has material effects, like Foucault’s panopticism, the gaze or perspective. A given modality of visibility is composed of a series of operations that can be summarized under three headings: first, visibility classifies by naming, categorizing, and defining, a process defined by Foucault as “the nomination of the visible.”¹⁰ It was founded in plantation practice, from the mapping of plantation space to the identification of cash-crop cultivation techniques and the precise division of labor required to sustain them. Second, visibility separates the groups so classified as a means of social organization. Such visibility separates and segregates those it visualizes to prevent them from cohering as political subjects, such as the workers, the people, or the (decolonized) nation. Third, it makes this separated classification seem right and hence aesthetic. As the decolonial critic Frantz Fanon had it, such repeated experience generates an “aesthetic of respect for the status quo,” the aesthetics of the proper, of duty, of what is felt to be right and hence pleasing, ultimately even beautiful.¹¹ Classifying, separating, and aestheti-

cizing together form what I shall call a “complex of visuality.” All such Platonism depends on a servile class, whether formally chattel slaves or not, whose task it is to do the work that is to be done and nothing else.¹² We may engage in whatever labor is required to do that work, visual or otherwise, but for us, there is nothing to be seen.

The right to look claims autonomy from this authority, refuses to be segregated, and spontaneously invents new forms. It is not a right for declarations of human rights, or for advocacy, but a claim of the right to the real as the key to a democratic politics. That politics is not messianic or to come, but has a persistent genealogy that is explored in this book, from the opposition to slavery of all kinds to anticolonial, anti-imperial, and anti-fascist politics. Claiming the right to look has come to mean moving past such spontaneous oppositional undoing toward an autonomy based on one of its first principles: “the right to existence.” The constitutive assemblages of countervisuality that emerged from the confrontation with visuality sought to match and overcome its complex operations. I shall gloss these terms here using the radical genealogy of the philosopher Jacques Rancière, whose work has been central to this project, while emphasizing and insisting that they are derived from historical practice. Classification was countered by education understood as emancipation, meaning “the act of an intelligence obeying only itself, even while the will obeys another will.”¹³ Education has long been understood by working and subaltern classes as their paramount means of emancipation, from the efforts of the enslaved to achieve literacy, to nineteenth-century campaigns for universal education that culminated (in the United States) with the Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). Education was the practical means of moving on from the work allocated to you. Separation was countered by democracy, meaning not simply representative elections but the place of “the part that has no part” in power. Plato designated six categories of people with title to power: all those who remained, the great majority, are those without part, who do not count.¹⁴ Here the right to look is strongly interfaced with the right to be seen. In combining education and democracy, those classified as good to work and nothing else reasserted their place and title. The aesthetics of power were matched by the aesthetics of the body not simply as form but as affect and need. This aesthetic is not a classificatory scheme of the beautiful but “an ‘aesthetics’ at the core of politics . . . as the system of *a priori* forms determining what presents itself to sense experience.”¹⁵ In this book, these forms center around sustenance and what I shall call the “politics of

eating,” adapting a phrase from African and African diaspora discourse. It might now be described as sustainability. These countervisualities are not visual, you might say. I did not say they were. I claim that they are and were visualized as goals, strategies, and imagined forms of singularity and collectivity. If they do not seem “realistic,” that is the measure of the success of visuality, which has made “vision” and “leadership” into synonyms. It is precisely that extended sense of the real, the realistic, and realism(s) that is at stake in the conflict between visuality and countervisuality. The “realism” of countervisuality is the means by which one tries to make sense of the unreality created by visuality’s authority from the slave plantation to fascism and the war on terror that is nonetheless all too real, while at the same time proposing a real alternative. It is by no means a simple or mimetic depiction of lived experience, but one that depicts existing realities and counters them with a different realism. In short, the choice is between continuing to move on and authorizing authority or claiming that there is something to see and democratizing democracy.

COMPLEXES OF VISUALITY

The substance of this chapter—it is more than an introduction to the rest of the book, although it is of course also that—explores how to work with the interfaces between visuality and countervisuality within and between complexes of visuality from a decolonial perspective. “Complex” here means both the production of a set of social organizations and processes that form a given complex, such as the plantation complex, and the state of an individual’s psychic economy, such as the Oedipus complex. The resulting imbrication of mentality and organization produces a visualized deployment of bodies and a training of minds, organized so as to sustain both physical segregation between rulers and ruled, and mental compliance with those arrangements. The complex that thus emerges has volume and substance, forming a life-world that can be both visualized and inhabited. I consider the complexes of visuality to be an articulation of the claim to authority in what decolonial theory has called “coloniality,” meaning “the transhistoric expansion of colonial domination and the perpetuation of its effects in contemporary times.”¹⁶ As Achille Mbembe has shown, such coloniality is formed by modes of “entanglement” and “displacement,” producing “discontinuities, reversals, inertias and swings that overlay one another.”¹⁷ This sense that the “time is out of joint,” appropriated by Derrida from Hamlet,

has come to be seen as the expression of the contradictions of globalization.¹⁸ Identifying these entanglements and moments of displacement are central to defining the genealogies of visibility and form the material for the chapters that follow. Such networks also remind us that no such genealogy can be comprehensive. Mbembe's emphasis on complex temporality further suggests that one modality of visibility was not simply succeeded by another, but rather that their traces linger, and can be revived at unexpected moments. The present is precisely one such moment, in which the legacies of the plantation complex are once again active in the United States, due to the Obama presidency, while imperial dreams are being worked out globally in full interface with the military-industrial complex. The very emergence of all the modalities of visibility at once suggests an emergency, as both the condition of a critique of visibility and the possibility of the right to look. The symptom of that emergency is precisely the ability to detect the crisis of visibility, such that the visibility of visibility is paradoxically the index of that crisis.

The authority of coloniality has consistently required visibility to supplement its deployment of force. Visibility sutures authority to power and renders this association "natural." For Nelson Maldonado Torres, this colonial violence formed a "death ethic of war," meaning the extensive presence of war and related social practices, such as mass incarceration and the death penalty, to which I would add slavery, understood as being derived from "the constitutive character of coloniality and the naturalization of human difference that is tied to it in the emergence and unfolding of Western modernity."¹⁹ This decolonial genealogy means that it will not be sufficient to begin a critique of visibility in the present day, or in the recent past, but that it must engage with the formation of coloniality and slavery as modernity.²⁰ As Enrique Dussel has aptly put it: "Modernity is, in fact, a European phenomenon but one constituted in a dialectical relation with a non-European alterity that is its ultimate content."²¹ In order to challenge the claimed inevitability of this history and its hegemonic means to frame the present, any engagement with visibility in the present or the past requires establishing its counterhistory. In fact, I suggest that one of the very constitutive forms of visibility is the knowledge that it is always already opposed and in struggle. To coin a phrase, visibility is not war by other means: it is war. This war was constituted first by the experience of plantation slavery, the foundational moment of visibility and the right to look. In antiquity, authority was literally a patriarchal modality of slavery. The modern hero's

authority restates the ancient foundations of authority as slave-owner and interpreter of messages, the “eternal” half of modern visuality, to paraphrase Baudelaire, the tradition that was to be preserved.

Authority is derived from the Latin *auctor*. In Roman law, the *auctor* was at one level the “founder” of a family, literally the patriarch. He was also (and always) therefore a man empowered to sell slaves, among other forms of property, which completed the complex of authority.²² Authority can be said to be power over life, or biopower, foundationally rendered as authority over a “slave.”²³ However, this genealogy displaces the question: who or what empowers the person with authority to sell human beings? According to the Roman historian Livy, the indigenous people living on the site that would become Rome were subject to the authority (*auctoritas*) of Evander, son of Hermes, who ruled “more by authority than by power (*imperium*).” That authority was derived from Evander’s ability, as the son of the messenger of the gods, to interpret signs. As Rancière puts it, “The *auctor* is a specialist in messages.”²⁴ This ability to discern meaning in both the medium and the message generates visuality’s aura of authority. When it further becomes invested with power (*imperium*), that authority becomes the ability to designate who should serve and who should rule. Such certainties did not survive the violent decentering of the European worldview produced by the multiple shocks of “1492”: the encounter with the Americas, the expulsion of the Jews and Islam from Spain, and the heliocentric system of Copernicus. At the beginning of the modern period, Montaigne could already discern what he called the “mystical foundation of authority,” meaning that it was ultimately unclear who or what authorizes authority.²⁵ As Derrida suggests, “Since the origin of authority, the foundation or ground, the position of the law can’t by definition rest on anything but themselves, they are themselves a violence without a ground.”²⁶ Authority’s presumed origin in legality is in fact one of force, the enforcement of law, epitomized in this context by the commodification of the person as forced labor that is slavery. This self-authorizing of authority required a supplement to make it seem self-evident, which is what I am calling visuality.

The ancient Greek historian Herodotus tells us that the Scythians of antiquity blinded their slaves. As the Scythians were horse-riding nomads, modern historians have concluded that this practice was designed to prevent the slaves from escaping.²⁷ It cannot but also suggest that slavery is the removal of the right to look. The blinding makes a person a slave and removes the possibility of regaining the status of a free person. While chat-

tel slavery did not physically blind the enslaved, its legal authority now policed even their imagination, knowing that their labor required looking. For example, in the British colony of Jamaica the enslaved were forbidden even to “imagine the death of any white Person.”²⁸ By contrast, in the metropole it became a capital offence for subjects to imagine the death of a king only during the revolutionary crisis of the 1790s.²⁹ The difference in these laws suggest that any white person in the plantation colony was the equivalent of the sovereign in the “home” nation. Such laws became necessary when authority feared that the enslaved or feudal subject might act on such imaginings, the always possible revolutionizing of the plantation complex. This anxiety moved from plantation to metropole. In the North American context, “reckless eyeballing,” a simple looking at a white person, especially a white woman or person in authority, was forbidden those classified as “colored” under Jim Crow. Such looking was held to be both violent and sexualized in and of itself, a further intensification of the policing of visibility. As late as 1951, a farmer named Matt Ingram was convicted of the assault of a white woman in North Carolina because she had not liked the way he looked at her from a distance of sixty-five feet.³⁰ This monitoring of the look has been retained in the U.S. prison system so that, for example, detainees in the Abu Ghraib phase of the war in Iraq (2003–4) were forcefully told, “Don’t eyeball me!”³¹

In short, complexes are complex. They are divided against themselves first as configurations of visibility against countervisibility and then as material systems of administering authority interfaced with mental means of authorizing. In tracing a decolonial genealogy of visibility, I have identified three primary complexes of visibility and countervisibility in this book, from the “plantation complex” that sustained Atlantic slavery, via what was known to certain apologists for the British empire as the “imperialist complex,” to President Dwight Eisenhower’s “military-industrial complex,” which is still very much with us. Each responded to and generated forms of countervisibility. The clash of visibility and countervisibility produced not just imagined relations but materialized visualizations as images of all kinds, as natural history, law, politics, and so on. The extended encounter between the right to look and visibility created a “world-generating optic” on modernity, such that “modernity is produced as the West.”³² What was at stake was the form of the real, the realistic, and realism in all senses. From the decolonial perspective used here, it is the way that modernity looks when seen from the places of visibility’s application—the plantation, the

colony, the counterinsurgency—back toward the metropole. That look is not a copy, or even a reverse shot, but is equally constitutive by means of its own reality effect of the classified, spatialized, aestheticized, and militarized transnational culture that in its present-day form has come to be called “globalization.” Indeed, the contradiction that has generated change within the complexes of visibility has been that while authority claims to remain unchanged in the face of modernity, eternally deriving authority from its ability to interpret messages, it has been driven to radical transformation by the resistance it has itself produced. This force has applied to visibility and countervisibility alike as what Michel Foucault called “intensity,” rendering them “more economic and more effective.”³³ Under the pressure of intensification, each form of visibility becomes more specific and technical, so that within each complex there is, as it were, both a standard and an intensified form. That is the paradox glimpsed by Carlyle, in which history and visualization have become mutually constitutive as the reality of modernity, while failing to account entirely for each other.³⁴ It is that space between intention and accomplishment that allows for the possibility of a counter-visibility that is more than simply the opposition predicated by visibility as its necessary price of becoming.

In significant part, therefore, these modes of visibility are psychic events that nonetheless have material effects. In this sense, the visualized complex produced a set of psychic relations described by Sigmund Freud as “a group of interdependent ideational elements cathected with affect.”³⁵ For Freud, the complex, above all the famous Oedipus complex, was at first the name of the process by which the internal “pleasure principle” became reconciled with the “reality principle” of the exterior world. Following the experience of shell shock in the First World War, Freud revised his opinion to see the psychic economy as a conflict between the pleasure drive and the death drive, leading to a doubled set of disruptions. For Jacques Lacan, as Slavoj Žižek has described, the subject was constituted by the inevitable failure to overcome this lack: “The place of ‘reality’ within the psychic economy is that of an ‘excess,’ of a surplus which disturbs and blocks from within the autarky of the self-contained balance of the psychic apparatus—‘reality’ as the external necessity which forces the psychic apparatus to renounce the exclusive rule of the ‘pleasure principle’ is correlative to this inner stumbling block.”³⁶ The diagram that visualizes this process is an arrow that travels around a circle until it is blocked at the last minute. The pleasure principle cannot quite fulfill its wish because something from outside its

domain intrudes and prevents it from doing so. For Lacan that “thing” was epitomized by the Oedipus complex in which the law of the father prevented the infant from achieving its desire to possess the mother. Authority thus counters desire and produces a self-conscious subject who experiences both internal desire and external constraint as “reality.” In this book, I take the existence of this doubled complex to be the product of history, as opposed to a transhistorical human condition, specifically that of the violence with which colonial authority enforced its claims. From the dream-world of the Haitian and French Revolutions and their imaginaries to the imperial investigation of the “primitive” mind and Fanon’s deconstruction of colonial psychology, producing and exploring psychic complexes and complexity was central to the labor of visualization. Needless to say, visualization has in turn now become part of the labor of being analyzed.

THE PLANTATION COMPLEX: AUTHORITY, SLAVERY, MODERNITY

Visualized techniques were central to the operations of the Atlantic world formed by plantation slavery and its ordering of reality. The plantation complex as a material system lasted from the seventeenth century until the late nineteenth, and affected primarily those parts of the globe known as the Atlantic triangle: the European slave-owning nations, Central and West Africa, the Caribbean and the plantation colonies of the Americas. The plantation complex designates the system of forced labor on cash-crop plantations, in which the role of authority was described by historian Phillip Curtin: “The [slave] owner not only controlled his work force during working hours, he also had, at least de facto, some form of legal jurisdiction. His agents acted informally as policemen. They punished most minor criminals and settled most disputes without reference to higher authority.”³⁷ Sovereign authority was thus delegated to the plantation, where it was managed in a system of visualized surveillance. While the overseer was always confronted with revolt large and small, his authority was visualized as the surrogate of the monarch’s and hence Absolute. The overseer, who ran the colonial slave plantation, embodied the visualized techniques of its authority, and so I call them collectively “oversight.” Oversight combined the classifications of natural history, which defined the “slave” as a species, with the spatializing of mapping that separated and defined slave space and “free” space. These separations and distinctions were enabled by the force of law that allowed the overseer to enforce the slave codes. This

regime can be said to have been established between the passing of the Barbados Slave Code, in 1661, and the promulgation of Louis XIV's *Code Noir*, in 1685. This ordering of slavery was interactive with the "order of things" famously discerned as coming into being at the same period in Europe by Foucault. A certain set of people were classified as commodifiable and a resource for forced labor. By means of new legal and social codes, those so enslaved were of course separated from the free not just in physical space, but in law and natural history. Once assembled, the plantation complex came to be seen to be right. In his justifications for slavery, the nineteenth-century Southern planter John Hammond turned such stratagems into axioms of human existence: "You will say that man cannot hold property in man. The answer is that he can and actually does all the world over, in a variety of forms, and has always done so."³⁸

Under the plantation complex and in the long shadow of its memory, a moment that has yet to pass, slavery is both literal and metaphorical: it is the very real trauma of chattel slavery and an expression of a technically "free" social relation that is felt to be metaphorically equivalent to slavery. So, too, is abolition literal and metaphorical. It expresses a moment of emancipation, but also a condition in which slavery of all kinds would be impossible. As early as the mid-eighteenth century, the enslaved had devised counters to the key components of oversight. Maroons, or runaway slaves, had established settlements in many plantation colonies, sometimes signing formal treaties with colonial powers and thereby remapping the colony. The enslaved had a superior understanding of tropical botany and were able to put this knowledge to good effect in poisoning their masters, or so it was widely believed. Finally, the syncretic religions of the plantation complex had produced a new embodied aesthetic represented in the votive figures known as *garde-corps*, literally "body guard." The revolt led, in 1757, by François Makandal in Saint-Domingue, now Haiti, united these different techniques into an effective countervisuality that came close to overthrowing slavery. The plantocracy, as the ruling planter class was known, responded by intensifying slavery. By the time of the revolution, in 1791, Saint-Domingue was the single greatest producer of (colonial) wealth in the Western world. Huge numbers of people were imported as forced labor as the planters sought both to achieve autonomy for the island from the metropole and to automate the production process of the cash crops, especially sugar. This intensification in turn produced the world-historical event of the Haitian Revolution (1791–1804), the first successful act of de-

colonial liberation and the key transformation in producing modern visibility. This intensification in the countervisuality of antislavery produced the revolutionary hero as the embodied counter to the sovereign authority represented by the overseer. The popular hero, such as Toussaint L'Ouverture, incarnated democracy as the representative of the people, embodying a willed emancipation that was at once education and, in his or her symbolic form, an aesthetic of transformation. Almost immediately, the hero was subject to its own intensification within the new imaginary of the "people." This pressure produced a cleft within the revolution: was the priority now to be the imagined community of the nation-state or the sustainable community at local level? In the events covered by this book, this question has been persistently resolved by force in favor of the nation-state from Toussaint's 1801 Constitution for Haiti, to the ending of Reconstruction in the United States, in 1877, and the reconfiguration of the Algerian revolution, in 1965. The shared subsistence economy claimed by subaltern actors in each case, most familiar now in the Reconstruction slogan "forty acres and a mule," was presented as naïve, even reactionary, as it still is today in the face of the disaster of climate change. The perceived necessity to restate national authority opened the way for the imperial appropriation of the revolutionary hero in the figure of Napoleon Bonaparte, the archetype of the modern Hero for Carlyle.

The specter of Haiti haunted the long nineteenth century that ended with decolonization. The images of Dessalines cutting the white section out of Haiti's flag, in 1804, even as he declared it illegal for "whites" to own property on the island were, to use Michel-Rolph Trouillot's trenchant term, "unthinkable." The permanent alienation of "property" by the formerly enslaved in Haiti claiming their own right to autonomy forced the remaking of visibility as a permanent war, visualized as a battlefield map. These two-dimensional representations of the array of forces as they confront each other became the visualization of history in Carlyle's imagination. Given this separation, I will describe the forms of visibility and countervisuality separately from this point forward. Visualizing was the hallmark of the modern general from the late eighteenth century onward, as the battlefield became too extensive and complex for any one person to physically see. The general in modern warfare as practiced and theorized by Karl von Clausewitz was responsible for visualizing the battlefield. He worked on information supplied by subalterns — the new lowest-ranked officer class created for this purpose — and by his own ideas, intuitions, and images. Carlyle

and other defenders of authority appropriated the hero from the Atlantic revolutions and merged it with military visualization to create a new figure for modern autocracy. Although Carlyle liked to assert that visibility was an attribute of the hero from time immemorial, he was above all haunted by the abolition of slavery. In his monumental history of *The French Revolution* (1837), all revolution from below is “black,” a blackness that pertained to the popular forces in France, described as “black sans-culottes,” from the storming of the Bastille, in 1789, but especially to Saint-Domingue, “shaking, writhing, in long horrid death throes, it is Black without remedy; and remains, as African Haiti, a monition to the world.”³⁹ This “blackness” was the very antithesis of heroism that Napoleon finally negated. For Carlyle, to be Black was always to be on the side of Anarchy and disorder, beyond the possibility of Reality and impossibly remote from heroism. It is precisely, then, with “blackness” and slavery that a counterhistory of visibility must be concerned. The function of the Hero for Carlyle and other devotees, appropriated from those revolutions, was to lead and be worshipped and thereby to shut down such uncertainties. His visibility was the intensification of the plantation complex that culminated in the production of imperial visibility.

IMPERIAL COMPLEX: MISSIONARIES, CULTURE, AND THE RULING CLASS

Carlyle’s attempt to embody visualized authority in the Hero might have appeared somewhat marginal in the immediate aftermath of the emancipation of the enslaved and the envisaged self-determination of many British colonies, to which India, as a dependency, was understood as an exception. However, the multiple shocks generated by the Crimean War of 1856, and the return to a centralized model of empire following the Indian “mutiny” in 1857, and other acts of anticolonial resistance from Aotearoa New Zealand to Jamaica, reversed the position. Direct rule became the favored model of British imperial administration, emancipation and self-rule were out of favor, and Carlyle’s views became mainstream. The crisis of imperial rule caused the opening of what became known as the “ruling class” in Britain to certain sectors of the educated middle-classes, who would be central to the governance of the immense empire. The “eminent Victorians” debunked by Lytton Strachey were emblematic of that class, as was Strachey himself, as part of the Bloomsbury group. As Edward Said famously pointed out, by 1914 some 85 percent of the world’s surface was under the control of one

empire or another.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, the imperial complex was presented as if it were a form of mental disorder. In 1883, the historian J. R. Seeley described the British empire as having been acquired in a “fit of absence of mind.”⁴¹ The term “fit” is striking, as if the mental condition of “absence of mind” was closer to epilepsy than to forgetfulness. The phrase soon entered political language. For example, the Labour newspaper the *Daily Herald* argued, in 1923, having cited Seeley: “It was only when we found ourselves in occupation of vast expanses of territory in all parts of the world that we developed what psychoanalysts would call the ‘Imperialist complex.’”⁴² This modality of denial produced its counterpart in the colonized, as Fanon argued in a well-known passage of *Black Skin, White Masks*: “By calling on humanity, on the belief in dignity, on love, on charity, it would be easy to prove, or to win the admission, that the black is the equal of the white. But my purpose is quite different: What I want to do is help the black man to free himself of the arsenal of complexes that has been developed by the colonial environment.”⁴³ The contest of visibility and countervisibility is not, then, a simple battle for the same field. One sought to maintain the “colonial environment” as it was, the other to visualize a different reality, modern but decolonized.

In this second alignment of visibility, an imperial complex had emerged, linking centralized authority to a hierarchy of civilization in which the “cultured” were necessarily to dominate the “primitive.” This overarching classification was a hierarchy of mind as well as a means of production. Following Charles Darwin’s proposal of the theory of evolution, in 1859, it was now “culture” that became the key to imagining the relations of colonial centers and peripheries, as visualized by the colonizers. In 1869, Matthew Arnold famously divided British modernity into tendencies toward desired culture and feared anarchy, while giving unquestioned support to the forces of law: “While they administer, we steadily and with undivided heart support them in repressing anarchy and disorder; because without order there can be no society, and without society there can be no perfection.”⁴⁴ With an eye to the political violence in London in 1866, Arnold claimed “hereditary” authority from his father for his remedy, namely “flog the rank and file,” even if the cause were a good one, such as the “abolition of the slave-trade.” Ending slavery itself would not by 1869 take priority over maintaining authority. The classification of “culture” and “anarchy” had become a principle of separation whose authority was such that it had become right in and of itself.

Political divides at home between the forces of culture and those of anarchy were subsequently mapped onto the distinctions between different layers of civilization defined by ethnographers. So when Edward Tylor defined culture as the “condition of knowledge, religion, art, custom and the like” in primitive societies, he was clear that European civilization (as he saw it) stood above all such cultures.⁴⁵ This dramatic transformation in conceptualizing nations as a spatialized hierarchy of cultures took place almost overnight: Arnold’s *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) was followed by Darwin’s *Descent of Man* and Tylor’s *Primitive Culture*, in 1871. Tylor presented Darwin’s description of the evolution of humanity as existing in real time, with the “primitive” being separated only by space from the “civilized.” Whereas Carlyle’s hero was a literally mystical figure, it was now “civilization” that could visualize, whereas the “primitive” was ensconced in the “heart of darkness” produced by the willed forgetting of centuries of encounter. In this way, visibility became both three-dimensional and complexly separated in space. As Western civilization tended, in this view, toward “perfection,” it was felt to be aesthetic and the separations it engendered were simply right, albeit visible only to what Tylor called “a small critical minority of mankind.”⁴⁶ That minority was nonetheless in a position to administer a centralized empire as a practical matter in a way that Carlyle’s mystical heroes could not have done. The “white man’s burden” that Rudyard Kipling enshrined in verse was a felt, lived, and imagined relationship to the imperial network, now visualized in three dimensions. Its success was manifested in the visualization of the “primitive” as the hallmark of the modern, from Picasso’s *Desmoiselles d’Avignon* (1903) to the recent monument to the French president François Mitterrand’s imperial ambition that is the Musée du quai Branly, a museum of the primitive in all but name.

The foot soldiers of this labor of imperial visibility were Christian missionaries, who directly represented themselves to themselves as Heroes in the style of Carlyle, bringing Light into Darkness by means of the Word. One of the distinguishing features of imperial visibility was its emphasis on culture as language, or more precisely on the interpretation of the “signs” produced by both the “primitive” and the “modern.” As W. J. T. Mitchell among others has long stressed, word and image are closely imbricated, and this relation forms a field in itself, central to the understanding of modernism.⁴⁷ Rancière understands this as the “sentence-image . . . in which a certain ‘sight’ has vanished, where *saying* and *seeing* have entered into a communal space without distance and without connection. As a result, one

sees nothing: one does not see what is said by what one sees, or what is offered up to be seen by what one says.”⁴⁸ This chaos of the “civilized” was articulated in relation to the excavation of the “primitive” as a resource for the understanding of modernity and its civilization. Just as the plantation was the foundation of discipline, so can we see the missionaries as the agents of what Foucault called the “pastorate,” the model for governmentality. The Christian pastorate moved beyond territory, operating “a form of power that, taking the problem of salvation in its general set of themes, inserts into this global, general relationship an entire economy and technique of the circulation, transfer and reversal of merits.”⁴⁹ The global pastorate proceeded by specific techniques for the care and production of souls. Whereas in the West, the priority was from the first the conduct of souls, imperial visibility sought first to create them from the raw materials of the “heathen.” There is an entanglement that could be developed here with the genealogy of imperial visibility in the Americas, with the difference that the Carlyle-inspired missionaries never imagined the conversion of entire peoples so much as the delegated control of populations by means of targeted Christianizing. In this process, the colonized had to be made to feel and visualize his or her deficiency or sinfulness. This awareness would both lead them to Christianity and generate desires for the consumer goods of civilization, such as Western-style clothing. Only then could the newly minted “soul” be subjected to discipline, and these subjects, the mimics of the colonizers, were always a minority within the colony. The emblematic new souls were the indigenous baptized and especially the priesthood. Within the former plantation complex, the “souls of black folk” were, to borrow W. E. B. Du Bois’s famous phrase, subject to a “double consciousness” across the primary mode of division and separation in the twentieth century, the color line.

In this book, I explore these entanglements via the concept of *mana*, so central to modern theories of the “primitive” from Durkheim to Lévi-Strauss, which was reported to Britain’s Royal Anthropological Society, in 1881, by the missionary R. H. Codrington. Relying on two indigenous priests as “native informants,” Codrington had elaborated a theory of *mana* as that which works by the medium of spiritual power. This majesty and force then attached itself to specific individuals, the precursors of the modern hero. In short, the primitive mind was used as a source of, and justification for, the imperial theory of domination. Almost at once, by virtue

of the prevalent uniformitarianism, *mana* became central to the modern theory of the global primitive. However, *mana* has since been shown to be a verb, not a noun, expressing an abstract state rather than a spiritual medium. Imperial visuality was based on a set of misrecognitions that nonetheless sustained and enabled domination. In an often-overlooked moment in 1968, under pressure from radical students, Jacques Lacan admitted that the Oedipus complex was a colonial imposition. The Oedipus complex, complex of all complexes, instigator of the unconscious being structured as a language, stood refashioned as a tool of colonial domination, just as Fanon and others had insisted, marking a certain “end” to the imperial complex.

The viewpoint from which imperial visuality contemplated its domains was first epitomized in the shipboard view of a colonial coastline, generating the cliché of gunboat diplomacy—to resolve a problem in the empire, send a gunboat. This view was represented in the form of the panorama and told in the form of multi-destination travel narratives. Just as the theorist of the “primitive” relied on information supplied by missionaries that was actually obtained from a handful of local informants, imperial visuality displaced itself from the “battlefield” of history itself, where Carlyle had romantically placed his heroes. The place of visualization has literally and metaphorically continued to distance itself from the subject being viewed, intensifying first to that of aerial photography and more recently to that of satellites, a practical means of domination and surveillance.⁵⁰ The calm serenity of the high imperial worldview collapsed in the First World War. Far from being abandoned, it was intensified by bringing colonial techniques to bear on the metropole and the aestheticization of war, a merger of formerly distinct operations of visuality under the pressure of intensification. In this vein, the formerly discarded concept of the mystical hero-leader was revived as a key component of fascist politics, but, as Antonio Gramsci properly saw, this leader was the product of the centralized police state, not the other way around. In this context, fascism is understood as a politics of the police that renders the nation, the party, and the state as one, subject to the leadership of the heroic individual, defined and separated by the logics of racialization. The combination of aestheticized leadership and segregation came to constitute a form of reality, one which people came to feel was “right.” Fascist visuality imagined the terrain of history, held to be legible only to the fascist leader, as if seen by the aerial photography used to prepare and record the signature bombing campaigns of blitzkrieg. Fascists

from Manchester to Milan acclaimed Carlyle as a prophet and a predecessor, just as decolonial critics from Frantz Fanon on have seen fascism as the application of colonial techniques of domination to the metropole.

THE MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX: GLOBAL COUNTERINSURGENCY AND POST-PANOPTIC VISUALITY

While in Western Europe the end of the Second World War marked a break in this domination, these conditions were not changed in the colonies. This continuity was exemplified by the violent French repression of a nationalist demonstration, in 1945, in the town of Sétif, Algeria, on V-E Day itself (8 May 1945), with estimated casualties ranging from the French government figure of 1,500 to Fanon's claim of 45,000, following Arab media reports of the time. However, the war of independence that followed (1954–62) was not simply a continuance of imperialism. For the French, Algeria was not a colony, but simply part of France. For the resistance movement, led by the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN), much energy was expended in trying to gain the sympathies of the United Nations, including the legendary general strike known as the “battle of Algiers.” Algeria marked the failure of the imperial aesthetic to convince its subject populations that their domination was right. As part of the wave of decolonization, it was a central moment in the failure of the classification of “civilized” and “primitive” that was asserted as clinical fact by colonial psychology of the period. Despite their best efforts, the French were unable to sustain the physical and mental separation between the colonizer and the colonized. Counterinsurgency in Algeria began the practice of “disappearing” those suspected of aiding the insurgency in material or immaterial fashion, beginning the sorry genealogy that reaches from Argentina and Chile to today's “renditions” of suspected terrorists to so-called black sites by the CIA and other U.S. government agencies. Yet today French cities and villages are increasingly decorated with monuments and inscriptions to what are now called the wars in North Africa, marking the consolidation of global counterinsurgency as the hegemonic complex of Western visibility.

The emergence of the Cold War division between the United States and the Soviet Union almost immediately forced metropolitan and decolonial politics into a pattern whereby being anticolonial implied communist sympathies and supporting colonial domination was part of being pro-Western.⁵¹ This classification became separation in almost the same

moment, at once aestheticized as “freedom.” The Cold War quickly became a conflict so all-enveloping by 1961 that even President Dwight Eisenhower famously warned of the “total influence—economic, political, even spiritual” of what he called “the military-industrial complex.”⁵² In 1969, the novelist and former president of the Dominican Republic Juan Bosch, who had been deposed in a coup seven months after his election, in 1963, warned that “imperialism has been replaced by a superior force. Imperialism has been replaced by pentagonism.”⁵³ Bosch saw this “pentagonism” as being separate from capitalism, a development beyond Lenin’s thesis that imperialism was the last stage of capital. In common with the Situationists, Bosch envisaged a militarization and colonization of everyday life within the metropole. While his analysis is rarely remembered today, the global reach of counterinsurgency since 2001 and its ability to expand even as capital is in crisis has borne him out. The tactics of the now notorious COINTELPRO, or Counter-Intelligence Program (1956–71), of the FBI have now been globalized as the operating system of the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA). Launched at the end of the Cold War, the RMA was at first conceived as high-technology information war, but has intensified into a counterinsurgency whose goal is nothing less than the active consent of the “host” culture to neoliberal globalization.

The entanglements and violence of counterinsurgency that began in Algeria and continued in Vietnam and Latin America have intensified into today’s global counterinsurgency strategy, known to the U.S. military as GCOIN, which combines the cultural goals of imperial strategy with electronic and digital technologies of what I call post-panoptic visuality. Under this rubric, anywhere may be the site for an insurgency, so everywhere needs to be watched from multiple locations. Whereas during the Cold War, there were distinct “battle lines” producing “hot spots” of contestation, the entire planet is now taken to be the potential site for insurgency and must be visualized as such. Thus Britain, the closest ally of the United States, has also produced a steady stream of violent insurgents. Despite this literal globalization, visualizing remains a central to counterinsurgency. The Field Manual *FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency*, written at the behest of General David Petraeus, in 2006, tells its officers in the field that success depends on the efficacy of the “commander’s visualization” of the Area of Operations, incorporating history, culture, and other sets of “invisible” information into the topography. This visualization required of the commander in Iraq or Afghanistan—of the flow of history as it is happening, formed by

past events with an awareness of future possibilities—would have been entirely familiar to Carlyle, even if the digital metaphors and technologies would have eluded him. GCOIN is an entanglement of nineteenth-century strategy with twenty-first century technology. The counterinsurgency commander is further recommended to read T. E. Lawrence (of “Arabia”), whose First World War heroics were the apogee of imperial visuality, and such works as *Small Wars*, by a nineteenth-century British general. Today’s counterinsurgent is encouraged to see him or herself in a continuum with wars ranging from Algeria to Malaya (as was) and Latin America, and cognitively part of a history that is held to begin with the French Revolution, in 1789. In a further amalgam of past strategies of visuality, the distinction of “culture” that spatialized the imperial complex has now become the very terrain of conflict. Anthropologists are attached to combat brigades under the rubric of Human Terrain Systems so as to better interpret and understand local cultures. It has been with the counterinsurgency phase of the military-industrial complex that the “soul” of the (neo)colonized has most fully entered the frame. In this form of conflict, the counterinsurgent seeks not simply military domination, but an active and passive consent to the legitimacy of the supported regimes, meaning that regime change is only the precursor to cultural change. This desire for consent reaches across the entire population. As Carlyle would have wanted, today’s global hero wants both to win and to be worshipped.

The post-panoptic visuality of global counterinsurgency produces a visualized authority whose location not only cannot be determined from the visual technologies being used but may itself be invisible. This viewpoint can toggle between image sets, zoom in and out of an image whether by digital or optical means, and compare them to databases of previous imagery.⁵⁴ It is able to use satellite imagery, infrared, and other technologies to create previously unimaginable visualizations. In everyday life, the prevalence of closed-circuit television (CCTV) surveillance marks this switch to post-panoptic visualization, with its plethora of fragmented, time-delayed, low-resolution images monitored mostly by computer, to no other effect than to make the watching visible. For while CCTV has been able to track the path of the 9/11 or 7/7 terrorists after the fact, it did nothing to prevent those attacks, let alone reform those observed, as the panopticon was intended to do. The signature military technology of GCOIN is the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV), a computer-controlled drone armed with missiles that is manipulated by operators at any location, usually in safe spaces within the

United States, rather than in proximity to the battlefield itself. The rise of the UAV has caused controversy among the theorists of GCOIN, such as David Kilcullen, who feel that the tactic undermines the strategic goals of winning the consent of the population. As James der Derian has eloquently argued: “The rise of a military-industrial-media-entertainment network (MIME-NET) has increasingly virtualized international relations, setting the stage for virtuous wars in which history, experience, intuition and other human traits are subordinated to scripted strategies and technological artifice, in which worst-case scenarios produce the future they claim only to anticipate.”⁵⁵ Ironically, the script of using cultural understanding from history and experience to win consent has now simply been declared to have been enacted. The 2010 campaign in Afghanistan was marked by extraordinary theater in which General McChrystal announced his intention to capture Marja and Kandahar in advance, hoping to minimize civilian casualties, but this tactic also reduced Taliban casualties, so that it is entirely unclear who is really in charge on the ground. This suggests GCOIN is now a kind of theater, with competing stunts being performed for those who consider themselves always entitled to see. The U.S. military are having an intense internal debate about which form of GCOIN is the future of military tactics. It is clear that UAV missile attacks in Pakistan and Afghanistan have been notably accelerated. These tactics increasingly resemble those of the Israeli Defense Force, in which the real goal is maintaining a permanent state of crisis, rather than achieving a phantasmatic victory. In the game context in which war is now visualized, the point is less to win than to keep playing, permanently moving to the next level in the ultimate massively multiplayer environment.

In sum, the revolution in military affairs has designated the classification between insurgent and counterinsurgent as the key to the intensified phase of the military-industrial visuality. The separation to be enacted is that of insurgent from the “host” population by physical means, from the barriers separating the newly designated “Shia” and “Sunni” districts of Baghdad to the Israeli defense barrier in the Occupied Territories and the wall between Mexico and the United States, where border agents now use the rubrics of counterinsurgency. With the triumph of *The Hurt Locker* (dir. Kathryn Bigelow, 2008) in the movie awards ceremonies in 2009, counterinsurgency has achieved an “aesthetic” form. In this view, duty is its own narrative, giving pleasure in its fulfillment, as one bomb after another must be defused. The “enemy” are largely invisible, motiveless, and entirely evil. The