

**ABSENCE IN CINEMA**  
**THE ART OF SHOWING NOTHING**

**JUSTIN REMES**

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## 4

### MARTIN ARNOLD'S DISAPPEARING ACT

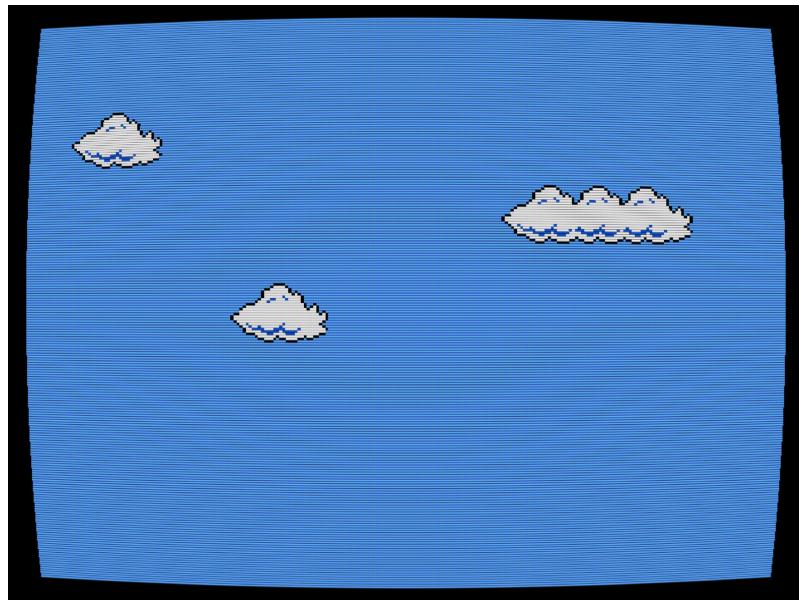
*I am going to close my eyes, stop my ears, extinguish one by one the sensations that come to me from the outer world. Now it is done; all my perceptions vanish, the material universe sinks into silence and the night.*

—Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*

*Whoever must be a creator also annihilates.*

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*

In 2002 the American artist Cory Arcangel created the video installation *Super Mario Clouds* by modifying a cartridge of the Nintendo game *Super Mario Bros.* (1985) with a drill, wire clippers, and a soldering iron. In the process, he stripped the classic video game not only of its music and sound effects but also of its objects (coins, castles, flags) and characters (Mario, Princess Toadstool, the Goombas). All that remained of the original video game were clouds slowly traveling across a blue sky, which Arcangel projected as a continuous loop on a large screen in a museum space (see figure 4.1). If the video game *Super Mario Bros.* is interactive, complex, and exciting, *Super Mario Clouds* is autonomous, minimalist, and uneventful. And the experience of watching 8-bit clouds slowly trace their way across a gallery wall is evocative. As Robert Burgoyne notes, “Stripped of the linear forward momentum of the game, the screen becomes an image of transience, of fleeting impermanence, a loop centered on memory, duration, and loss.”<sup>1</sup>



**FIGURE 4.1** Cory Arcangel, *Super Mario Clouds* (2002)

In the same year that Arcangel released *Super Mario Clouds*, the Austrian avant-gardist Martin Arnold released another work of aesthetic erasure: *Deanimated* (2002). To create this found footage film, Arnold digitally removed characters, objects, and lines of dialogue from Joseph H. Lewis's *Invisible Ghost* (1941), a macabre horror film featuring an intricate (and barely comprehensible) plot involving homicide, hallucination, hypnosis, and a long lost twin brother. Arnold's revision of *Invisible Ghost* begins with no modifications at all. Soon, however, one begins to notice subtle erasures: a missing line of dialogue, a character who has disappeared. Eventually, one sees nothing more than decontextualized objects in dark rooms: a painting, a window, a fireplace. Like Arcangel's *Super Mario Clouds*, Arnold's *Deanimated* erases elements from a pop culture artifact and transmogrifies a complex and exciting aesthetic experience into one that is quiet and meditative. Arnold does this not with a single monolithic void but with a series of interlocking voids, including silence, emptiness, and blackness.

In this chapter I link Arnold's film with explorations of disappearance in other media, such as the poetry of Vasilisk Gnedov and the paintings of Kazimir Malevich, thus pointing to a broader tendency in avant-garde aesthetics to move gradually from presence to absence. I further argue that Arnold's voids constitute instantiations of the Buddhist concept of sunyata, in which emptiness is understood not as deprivation or lack but as a state of radical openness. Before entering these voids, however, it will be helpful to situate *Deanimated* within Arnold's broader artistic oeuvre.

## REPETITION AND REMOVAL

*How do you interpret what you do not or cannot see?*

—Martin Arnold, “Black Holes”

Ever since his first film, *pièce touchée*, in 1989, Arnold has obsessively deconstructed excerpts from classical Hollywood cinema. In *pièce touchée* Arnold stretches eighteen seconds of footage from *The Human Jungle* (Joseph M. Newman, 1954) into a sixteen-minute film. The original footage (of a man walking through a door and greeting a woman) becomes an absurd concatenation of Sisyphean repetitions: the door opens and closes repeatedly; the woman gets out of her chair, sits down, and gets up once more. Arnold manipulates these two characters like chess pieces that are moved around a board aimlessly. (The title of the film, which means “touched piece,” refers to a rule in chess that requires a player to move a piece after touching it.)

Arnold’s second film, *passage à lacte* (1993), applies similar looping procedures to a scene from *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Robert Mulligan, 1962). In this case, not only are the images looped but the sounds are as well. The incessant repetition of phrases, words, and phonemes evokes both the poetry of Gertrude Stein (“a rose is a rose is a rose is a rose”) and the tape pieces of the minimalist composer Steve Reich, such as *It’s Gonna Rain* (1965) and *Come Out* (1966).<sup>2</sup> *passage à lacte* also reveals Arnold’s deep interest in psychoanalysis, a subject that he studied intensively in Vienna. More specifically, in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the young girl, Scout, gives her father, Atticus Finch, a brief kiss on the cheek before running outside. In *passage à lacte*, Arnold loops this kiss again and again, thus suggesting that Scout suffers from an Electra complex. (Arnold’s investment in psychoanalysis is further underscored by the title, *passage à lacte*—or “transition into action”—a concept used by Freud and Lacan to describe a psychological shift into a state of disruption and aggression.)

Arnold’s third major film, *Alone. Life Wastes Andy Hardy* (1998), is even more direct in its exploration of Freudian themes. The film begins with an excerpt of an old Mickey Rooney film in which Rooney approaches his mother from behind to give her a kiss on the cheek. Arnold loops this brief encounter so that Rooney kisses his mother slowly and repeatedly as her face contorts in orgasmic delight. And these Oedipal themes recur throughout the film. For example, at one point, Rooney has a violent confrontation with his father, who screams at his son and slaps him across the face three times.<sup>3</sup>

*pièce touchée*, *passage à lacte*, and *Alone*. *Life Wastes Andy Hardy* are often grouped together as a “trilogy of compulsive repetition.”<sup>4</sup> Building on this framework, I would suggest that Arnold’s first three films of the twenty-first century—*Forsaken* (2002), *Dissociated* (2002), and *Deanimated*—constitute a *trilogy of erasure*. While Arnold’s early found footage work uses radical repetition to unearth the cinematic “unconscious,” his trilogy of erasure uses digital processes to remove elements from preexisting films, thus producing works that are preternaturally empty. In *Forsaken*, two projection screens face each other while playing nine-minute loops from the western *High Noon* (Fred Zinnemann, 1952). Arnold’s decision to erase most of the film’s characters from these loops results in an unsettling form of audiovisual counterpoint: while one *hears* suspenseful music, melodramatic breathing, and gunfire, one often *sees* little more than a door, a fence, or an abandoned barn. (At one point, one also sees a random dead body lying on the street, although it is never made clear who this man is or who killed him.)

Two screens facing each other are used once again in *Dissociated*. In this case, the appropriated content comes from *All About Eve* (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1950). One screen displays a close-up of Karen (played by Celeste Holm), while the other screen displays a close-up of Eve (played by Anne Baxter). Each appears in a perpetually repeating eight-minute loop. Neither Karen nor Eve says anything, although we do hear them breathe and swallow. Both characters look like they want to speak but simply cannot. Karen’s mouth opens for a moment but nothing comes out; Eve leans forward as if to deliver important information to the spectator but simply stares into space.<sup>5</sup>

But Arnold pushes cinematic absence even further in the third film of his trilogy of erasure: *Deanimated*. The source material for this film is *Invisible Ghost*, a B-horror movie starring Bela Lugosi as Mr. Kessler, a wealthy man whose wife has left him for his best friend. In *Invisible Ghost*, Kessler is so distraught over his wife’s disappearance that each year on their wedding anniversary, he pretends she is present. He asks his butler, Evans (Clarence Muse), to bring dinner to her empty chair, and he proceeds to carry out a one-sided conversation with his absent wife. Arnold has indicated that one of his goals in making *Deanimated* was to “spread” Kessler’s neurosis to the other characters in the film: “They get the same symptom and start talking to thin air, and in the end they all get lost.”<sup>6</sup> To accomplish this, Arnold erased characters and lines of dialogue from *Invisible Ghost*. Unlike the erasures in Naomi Uman’s *removed*, however, which are clearly indicated by a white, splotchy hole, the erasures in *Deanimated* are seamless. Arnold worked with a team of assistants to fill in the holes he created using digital compositing software.<sup>7</sup> As

the philosopher Anna Farenikova has noted, there are circumstances in which an absence is *seen*, as when you suddenly discover that “the keys are missing from the drawer,” but there are other circumstances in which an absence is only *sensed*, as when you intuit that “something is missing … from your desk,” even though “you cannot, for the life of you, figure out *what* is missing.”<sup>8</sup> In Uman’s *removed*, absences are seen: it is clear *who* is missing (the women) and from *where* (the sites of the film’s jittery holes). In Arnold’s *Deanimated*, however, absences are generally only sensed. Spectators regularly get the distinct impression that *something* is missing, but who or what is missing (and from where) is often mysterious.

I should briefly note that Arnold’s recent animated works, such as *Soft Palate* (2010), *Whistle Stop* (2014), and *Elsewhere* (2016), exploit both repetition and removal. In these works, Arnold digitally removes elements from classic Disney cartoons and loops what remains over and over again. When watching these works, one is often confronted by an “amputated” body part (a hand, a foot, a tongue) moving back and forth on a black screen for no apparent reason. The result is uncanny. (Recall that one of Freud’s examples of the uncanny is “a hand detached from the arm.”)<sup>9</sup> And the sounds of these works are no less unsettling. When the cute noises and cheerful songs of Disney cartoons become fractured and looped ad infinitum, they become menacing. Like Arnold’s trilogy of erasure, these works are constructed through a process of deconstruction. As Emmanuelle André argues—borrowing key concepts from Leonardo da Vinci—while most films are created *per via di porre* (through addition), Arnold’s recent films have been created *per via di levare* (through subtraction).<sup>10</sup>

How have audiences responded to Arnold’s repetitions and removals? Results have varied. After Arnold released his first two films—*pièce touchée* and *passage à l’acte*—film scholar Scott MacDonald marveled at Arnold’s ability to fuse “theoretical and formal sophistication” with “widely accessible pleasure.” Here are nonnarrative films that use complex mathematical patterns to explore ideas in Freudian psychoanalysis—and yet, they are also “laugh-out-loud funny.”<sup>11</sup> And *Deanimated* also occupies this strange space between the esoteric and the accessible. As James Leo Cahill observes, *Deanimated* “is often funny, indeed hysterical, but this does little to alleviate the considerable demands the piece asks of us as viewers.”<sup>12</sup> On the one hand, I have seen recalcitrant skeptics of the avant-garde break out in joyous laughter while viewing *Deanimated*. On the other hand, I have seen adventurous cinephiles driven to madness by the film’s glacial pace. Arnold is well aware of how polarizing his cinema can be. When he was asked in 2016 how audiences generally respond to his films, he noted that most reactions

are “pretty good,” but he also acknowledged the violent antipathy that his work can provoke: “The one bad reaction—although I wasn’t there, I just read about this—was when they showed one of my films at Cannes before a feature film. And people didn’t like it there. The French were shouting ‘Arnold, go home!’ which was very funny because I was home, I wasn’t there!”<sup>13</sup> Like the characters of *Deanimated*, the audience at Cannes ended up having a one-sided conversation with someone who “wasn’t there.” Perhaps this audience expected Arnold to respond to their angry jeering, but all they got in response was silence. And it is to Arnold’s silences that I now turn.

## SILENCE

*Always listen for what you can leave out.*

—Miles Davis

While *Invisible Ghost* features a great deal of dialogue, *Deanimated* is dominated by silence. (By my count, there are only 258 words in Arnold’s one-hour film.) Whenever Arnold removes a character from a shot, he also removes that character’s dialogue. He does this, he claims, in order to avoid the “invisible man effect.”<sup>14</sup> But these are not the only silences that Arnold exploits. Even when characters are present in *Deanimated*, he often erases their dialogue from the sound track and uses digital editing to suture their mouths shut. According to Akira Mizuta Lippit, the result of these mutations is a “deformed set of bodily gestures that seem like impulsive twitches and attempted restraint.”<sup>15</sup> During these moments, characters often look as if they are exerting a great deal of effort to suppress statements that they cannot bear to say aloud. To better appreciate the effect of these dialogic erasures, consider the opening scenes of *Invisible Ghost* and *Deanimated*. Both films begin with Kessler’s imaginary dinner with his absent wife. Partway through this anniversary celebration, the doorbell rings. It is Ralph (John McGuire), the fiancé of Kessler’s daughter, Virginia (Polly Ann Young). Here is an excerpt from Ralph and Virginia’s conversation in *Invisible Ghost*:

Ralph: Hello, Virginia.

Virginia: I told you not to come here this evening, Ralph.

Ralph: Why? Didn’t you want to see me?

Virginia: Well, it isn’t that I didn’t want to see you.

Ralph: You’re certainly acting strange, darling. What’s all the mystery about?

Virginia: Let’s go into the library.

[Ralph hears something and walks away.]

Virginia: Ralph!

[Ralph sees Kessler pretending to dine with his absent wife.]

Kessler: After dinner, we are taking a long walk.

Virginia: I'd like to speak to you, Ralph.

Ralph: What's come over your father, Virginia? Is that why you didn't want me here tonight?

Virginia: Yes.

Ralph: It stopped me cold. I'm sorry if I accidentally stumbled on something you didn't want me to know.

Virginia: It must seem weird to someone who's never seen it before. It happens once a year.

Ralph: He always appeared perfectly rational to me.

Virginia: There's something I must tell you. It's about my mother.

Ralph: I don't understand.

Virginia: Well, it happened several years ago. My father and mother were apparently as happy as two people could be. He worshipped her.

Ralph: Another man.

Virginia: The usual best friend. It almost broke my father's heart. He seems reconciled, but he never forgets their wedding anniversary and celebrates it that way.

Ralph: I guess he isn't the only one who resorts to make-believe, but it does give one an uncanny feeling.

This same conversation takes on a very different character in *Deanimated*, since Arnold has erased (and reconfigured) much of the dialogue:

Ralph: [Silence.]

Virginia: I told you not to come here this evening.

Ralph: Why? Didn't you want to see me?

Virginia: [Silence.]

Ralph: You're certainly acting strange, darling. [Silence.]

Virginia: Let's go into the library.

[Ralph hears something and walks away.]

Virginia: Ralph!

[Ralph sees Kessler pretending to dine with his absent wife.]

Kessler: After dinner, we are taking a long walk.

Virginia: [Silence.]

Ralph: [Silence.]

Virginia: [Silence.]

Ralph: It stopped me cold. I'm sorry if I accidentally stumbled on something you didn't want me to know.

Virginia: [Silence.]

Ralph: He always appeared perfectly rational to me.

Virginia: There's something I must tell you. [Silence.]

Ralph: I don't understand.

Virginia: Well, it happened several years ago. [Silence.] Father worshipped me.

Ralph: [Silence.]

Virginia: [Silence.] It almost broke my father's heart. [Silence.]

Ralph: [Silence.]

There are a number of elements worth noting in this brief exchange. To begin, *Deanimated* is aesthetically quite distinct from Arnold's trilogy of compulsive repetition. The audience is no longer barraged with the clamor of characters performing the same actions over and over again. Instead,

*Deanimated* is filled with aimless characters staring into space (à la Warhol) and long silences (à la Beckett). In spite of this aesthetic shift, Arnold's Freudian obsessions remain prominent. Notice that in *Invisible Ghost*, Virginia tells Ralph that Kessler worshipped *his wife*. Arnold remixes this dialogue so that Virginia instead says, "Father worshipped *me*." By introducing the suggestion of incest, Arnold is merely intensifying Freudian dynamics that are already present in the original film. At one point in *Invisible Ghost*, for example, Virginia plays with her father's suit jacket, and he flirtatiously slaps her face and kisses her forehead. After this, Virginia says, "Good night, my pet," and her father replies, "Good night, sweet." (Was it common for women to address their fathers as "my pet" in the 1940s?) At another point in *Invisible Ghost*, Kessler enters his daughter's bedroom while she is sleeping and removes his suit jacket. (In the context of the film, he is planning on murdering her, but the sexual subtext is inescapable.) Stranger still, Jules (Ernie Adams), the gardener in *Invisible Ghost*, repeatedly calls his wife "Mama," a habit that is never explained in the original film. Arnold amplifies these Freudian motifs through erasure and transferal. Like a cinematic psychoanalyst, Arnold seeks to uncover forbidden drives and impulses that are present but repressed in the original film.

It is also significant that Arnold retains the moment in which Ralph tells Virginia, "You're certainly acting strange, darling." The meaning of this line in *Invisible Ghost* is straightforward: Virginia is acting strange because she does not want Ralph to find out about her father's delusions. In *Deanimated*, however, the line takes on a new meaning. Virginia is acting even stranger in this film, as she keeps darting her eyes about and gesticulating without saying anything. Indeed, everyone in *Deanimated* is "acting strange," as they are all repeatedly silenced by Arnold and are often reduced to staring at each other in helpless despair. In fact, since Arnold omits the scenes from *Invisible Ghost* that take place outside the mansion, one gets the sense that these characters are inexplicably confined. A number of works with similar premises haunt *Deanimated*: Sartre's *No Exit* (1944), Beckett's *Endgame* (1957), Buñuel's *The Exterminating Angel* (1962). And while Arnold erases a significant amount of dialogue from the opening scene, he erases far more as the film continues. In fact, in many of the scenes that follow, Arnold erases *all* dialogue, so that characters simply stare at each other dumbly for several minutes. The result is an epistemological vacuum: it becomes impossible to know who these characters are or what they are doing. Indeed, the characters *themselves* do not seem to know who they are or what they are doing. While *Invisible Ghost* presents a murder mystery that will eventually be solved, *Deanimated* presents an existential mystery that is insoluble.

## EMPTINESS

*There is no nothingness. Zero does not exist. Everything is something. Nothing is nothing.*

—Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*

But Arnold does not simply erase dialogue from *Invisible Ghost*—he erases characters as well. The result is often a complex dialectic between absence and presence. In one scene, for example, the doorbell rings, and when the butler, Evans, answers it, no one is there. But Evans seems to see *someone*, as he stares incredulously for several seconds at a vacant space, even moving his head to follow its invisible movements. In the next shot, Kessler and his daughter, Virginia, get up from the dinner table to look in amazement at nothing in particular. (Virginia even brings her hands up to her face in melodramatic alarm.) The character that Arnold has erased is Paul, the long-lost twin brother of Virginia's fiancé, Ralph. In *Invisible Ghost*, Evans, Kessler, and Virginia are all astonished when they see Paul because he looks exactly like Ralph, who has just been executed. In *Deanimated*, however, the object of the characters' gaze is no longer visible: he has become a disembodied ghost. And such ghosts are ubiquitous in Arnold's film: invisible presences open and close doors, move through hallways, and murder the residents of the mansion. Arnold's ghosts partake in an ambiguous and indefinable ontology. They are ostensibly invisible, yet characters see them. They seem to be incorporeal, yet characters touch them. In fact, this paradoxical ontology has always bedeviled accounts of ghosts, spirits, and gods. This is why Jacques Derrida, in his book *Specters of Marx*, conceptualizes ghosts as being “there without being there,” as occupying “a space of invisible visibility.”<sup>16</sup> Along similar lines (albeit working in a very different philosophical tradition), Daniel Dennett, in his book *Consciousness Explained*, begins a critique of the “incoherence” of Cartesian dualism by noting a revealing contradiction in a comic strip of Casper the Friendly Ghost:

How can Casper *both* glide through walls and grab a falling towel? How can mind stuff *both* elude all physical measurement and control the body? A ghost in the machine is of no help in our theories unless it is a ghost that can move things around—like a noisy poltergeist who can tip over a lamp or slam a door—but anything that can move a physical thing is itself a physical thing (although perhaps a strange and heretofore unstudied kind of physical thing).<sup>17</sup>

As Dennett notes, common conceptions of ghosts tend to be fraught with paradoxes: these slippery spirits are somehow both corporeal and incorporeal, visible and invisible. Tom Gunning draws attention to this vexed ontology in

his essay on the phantasmatic, in which he attempts to answer the question, “What does a ghost look like?” His answer is instructive: “A ghost puts the nature of the human senses, vision especially, in crisis. A ghost, a spirit, or a phantom is something that is sensed without being seen.”<sup>18</sup>

By the end of *Deanimated*, everyone has become a ghost: visible characters disappear from the film one by one, until all that is left is the house itself. (Incidentally, Arnold returns to the motif of haunting in a short animated film from 2012 entitled *Haunted House*.) As a result of Arnold’s erasures, spectators must be content to stare at inanimate objects for a lengthy period of time: flickering candles in an empty kitchen (see figure 4.2), a phone that rings and rings with no one around to answer it (see figure 4.3), an empty chair (see figure 4.4). One is reminded of Yasujirō Ozu’s pillow shots—or perhaps the depopulated environments at the end of Michelangelo Antonioni’s *L’Eclisse* (1962). In Arnold’s hands, however, these absences are not confined to a handful of shots or even an entire scene—rather, they become the currency of the film. As Thomas Miessgang points out, these empty spaces proliferate and produce a “shadowy silhouette of evanescence, an uncanny presence of the absent.”<sup>19</sup>



FIGURE 4.2 Martin Arnold, *Deanimated* (2002)



FIGURE 4.3 Martin Arnold, *Deanimated* (2002)

This “uncanny presence of the absent” is not localized to the film’s mise-en-scènes, however. It also permeates the theatrical space. *Deanimated* is designed to be screened in a makeshift movie theater nested within an art gallery, and Arnold has specified that this theater should have far too many seats. The effect is that one does not merely experience the visual and auditory absences inscribed in the film; one also experiences absence via the vacant, ghostly theater in which the screening takes place. Here is how Arnold described his ambitions before completing *Deanimated*: “What I plan to do is construct a movie theatre—like an old theatre that smells bad, a rather fucked up place! What I want is to create the impression that the audience is also lost—not only the actors. So what I’ll do is put in tons of rows of chairs, and usually there won’t be more than 10 people in the whole theatre. It will be like a cheap, outdated, countryside movie space, showing an outdated film where the actors are getting lost.”<sup>20</sup>



FIGURE 4.4 Martin Arnold, *Deanimated* (2002)

It is worth reflecting on Arnold's unorthodox screening conditions. To begin, it is significant that *Deanimated* is not simply screened in a movie theater or an art gallery—it is screened in a movie theater *within* an art gallery. Thus the reception conditions reflect the work's own complex ontological status as a hybrid film/video installation. It is also highly unusual that Arnold installs far too many seats in the theatrical space. As James Leo Cahill notes, the "excess of seats" engenders "an exaggerated sense of emptiness, isolation, absence, and abandonment—suggesting the disappearance of the public rituals and social institutions associated with classical cinema-going."<sup>21</sup> Normally, of course, an abundance of empty chairs signals that a film screening has not been especially successful, that far fewer spectators have shown up than were anticipated. In the case of *Deanimated*, however, the empty chairs in the theater are essential to the atmosphere of absence that Arnold wants to create. In fact, it is one of many ways that Arnold constructs a situation in which what is happening in the film mirrors what is happening in the theatrical space. There are a number of empty chairs on the screen and a number of empty chairs in the theater. The characters in the film wander in and out of the mise-en-scène aimlessly, and the gallery visitors wander in and out of the theater aimlessly. (Indeed, it is quite likely that many of the film's spectators are just as confused by what is going around them as the characters in the film seem to be.) Additionally, as the characters in the film disappear, many of those in the audience disappear, as they begin to give up on trying to "get" the cryptic experiment on the screen. And a number of the lines of dialogue that Arnold retains in *Deanimated* could easily be spoken by bewildered spectators of the film: "I don't understand," "What?," and the last two words uttered in the film: "Now what?"

In spite of the confusion that *Deanimated* engenders, the film's title does help one to better understand its raison d'être. The *Oxford English Dictionary* provides a number of definitions of the transitive verb *animate*, including "to give (an image, character, film, etc.) the appearance of movement using animation techniques" and "to breathe life into."<sup>22</sup> Regardless of which definition one prefers, Arnold subverts the telos of animation. If cinema has traditionally animated stills by putting them in motion, *Deanimated* begins with movement and transitions into stasis: shots of lively conversations give way to shots of isolated characters staring into space, and shots of empty rooms give way to a static black screen. If most filmmakers have attempted to "breathe life into" their characters, Arnold sucks the life out of his. They have less and less to say as the film progresses, and the last character we see is a woman who falls down dead for no apparent reason. Additionally, throughout the course of *Deanimated*, the shots get progressively darker, as if the light is fading and the film itself is experiencing a slow death. By the time the film reaches its (anti)climax, Arnold's void has swallowed up everything: characters, objects, settings, music, and sounds. The film ends with six minutes of a black screen accompanied by silence. (One wonders how many gallery visitors wandered into the theater shortly after the black screen appeared, waited several minutes for something to happen, and left in frustration.)

This gradual descent into nothingness mirrors artistic experiments of the early Russian avant-garde, such as those of the poet Vasilisk Gnedov and the painter Kazimir Malevich. In 1913 the Russian Futurist Gnedov published a series of proto-minimalist poems in an eight-page booklet called *Death to Art* (*Smert' Iskusstvu*). The first poem of the volume is sparse (one line in length), and as the volume progresses, the poems get sparser still. One poem consists of a single nonexistent word; another poem consists of a single letter. The fifteenth (and final) poem of the collection pushes this asceticism to its logical conclusion: "a poem without language."<sup>23</sup> It is nothing more than a title—"Poem of the End" (*Poema Kontsa*)—on a blank page:

VASILISK GNEDOV, "POEM OF THE END"

Among those who expressed interest in Gnedov's work was Kazimir Malevich.<sup>24</sup> One cannot help but wonder if Gnedov's *Death to Art* served as the inspiration for Malevich's Sixteenth State Exhibition in 1920. At this exhibition, Malevich did not simply present decontextualized blank canvases as works of art (as daring and provocative as such a gesture might have been). Instead, the first rooms that visitors entered were populated with dozens of abstract paintings. It was only once visitors reached the final room of the exhibition that they were confronted with empty canvases. In other words, Gnedov, Malevich, and Arnold are not merely interested in absence but in *disappearance*. They all present spectators with minimal content (words on a page, abstract forms, characters in a mansion) and proceed to efface that content until nothing remains.

But are a blank page, an empty canvas, and an imageless cinema screen really *nothing*? When looking at Gnedov's wordless "Poem of the End," one sees the imperfections of the paper on which it is printed (or perhaps the smudges on one's e-reader). When looking at an imageless painting by Malevich, one sees one's own shadow hovering over the canvas. And when one stares into Arnold's black screen at the end of *Deanimated*, one notices

how the inky blackness is occasionally punctuated by the random specks and scratches on the filmstrip. One also notices that the conclusion of *Deanimated* is not completely silent. Rather, one hears the sounds that a record on a phonograph might make if it had no music on it.<sup>25</sup> In other words, Robert Rauschenberg is correct when he claims that “a canvas is never empty,” and John Cage is correct when he asserts that “there is no such thing as silence.”<sup>26</sup> As the Pre-Socratic philosopher Melissus of Samos argued, “nothing cannot exist.”<sup>27</sup> Every absence is a presence in disguise.

While this theorization of absence strikes many in the West as deeply counterintuitive, it has a long history in the East. Consider, for example, the Buddhist concept of sunyata (or *shunyata*). This Sanskrit word is often translated as *the Void*, but as Stephen Batchelor notes, this translation can be highly misleading:

*Shunyata* (emptiness) is rendered into English as “the Void” by translators who overlook the fact that the term is neither prefixed by a definite article (“the”) nor exalted with a capital letter, both of which are absent in classical Asian languages. From here it is only a hop, skip, and a jump to equating emptiness with such metaphysical notions as “the Absolute,” “the Truth,” or even “God.”

The notion of emptiness falls prey to the very habit of mind it was intended to undermine.<sup>28</sup>

While translating sunyata as *emptiness* (rather than *the Void*) helps one to avoid this metaphysical morass, it still risks obscuring the term’s complexity and ambivalence. This is because, strictly speaking, sunyata is neither absence nor presence per se, but *both*. As Gay Watson has noted, the term is derived from the Sanskrit *svi* or *sva*, “which denotes hollowness and swelling, as of a seed as it expands. Thus Buddhist emptiness in its very etymology holds a hint of fullness that is lost in its English translation.”<sup>29</sup> Or, in the words of the Japanese philosopher Masao Abe, sunyata posits a “dialectical and dynamic structure” in which “emptiness is fullness and fullness is emptiness.”<sup>30</sup>

For many in the West, understanding the value of emptiness requires a shift in perspective. The term is often used as a pejorative, as indicated by a number of the definitions provided by the Oxford English Dictionary: “inanity,” “poverty of artistic content,” “futility,” “pointlessness.”<sup>31</sup> Western philosophers have long used the term *emptiness* to describe a state of existential despair, as when Arthur Schopenhauer rails against “the emptiness of existence” or when Søren Kierkegaard argues that a Godless universe would be “empty and devoid of comfort.”<sup>32</sup> But in the texts of Zen Buddhism, emptiness is often understood as “inclusive” and “sublime.”<sup>33</sup> Consider the valorization of emptiness in the following Zen koan:

Nan-in, a Japanese master during the Meiji era (1868–1912), received a university professor who came to inquire about Zen.

Nan-in served tea. He poured his visitor's cup full and then kept on pouring.

The professor watched the overflow until he no longer could restrain himself. "It is overfull. No more will go in!"

"Like this cup," Nan-in said, "you are full of your own opinions and speculations. How can I show you Zen unless you first empty your cup?"<sup>34</sup>

Does this mean that Arnold's trilogy of erasure was informed by the Zen Buddhist tradition? Yes and no. On the one hand, it is unlikely that Arnold was directly influenced by Zen. When one searches through interviews with Arnold for a discussion of Buddhism, one only finds references to psychoanalysis, structural cinema, and hip-hop.<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, I would argue that Arnold's investment in sunyata was indirectly influenced by Zen Buddhism by way of John Cage and Andy Warhol.

Let's begin with Cage. In addition to his "silent" composition, *4'33"* (1952), Cage also repeatedly emphasized the value of absence and emptiness in his writings and lectures. Consider just a handful of relevant quotations from Cage's book *Silence*:

But now we are going from something towards nothing.

Listening is best in a state of mental emptiness.

In an utter emptiness anything can take place.

The thing to do is to keep the head alert but empty.<sup>36</sup>

This emphasis on emptiness was profoundly influenced by Zen Buddhism. As Cage writes in his foreword to *Silence*, "Without my engagement with Zen (attendance at lectures by Alan Watts and D. T. Suzuki, reading of the literature) I doubt whether I would have done what I have done."<sup>37</sup> Cage's Zen-inspired aesthetic of absence would prove to have a significant influence on Andy Warhol. In interviews, Warhol called Cage's work "marvelous" and "very influential."<sup>38</sup> What is more, when Warhol's long-term assistant Gerard Malanga was asked to list the pop artist's major influences, he mentioned Cage (along with Marcel Duchamp and Gertrude Stein).<sup>39</sup> Warhol's admiration for Cage helps to explain why he claimed that his early minimalist films, such as *Sleep* (1963) and *Empire* (1964), were designed precisely to help spectators become more empty: "The more you look at the same exact thing, the more the meaning goes away, and the better and emptier you feel."<sup>40</sup> And Warhol regularly articulated his fondness for absence and erasure:

The thing is to think of nothing ... nothing is exciting, nothing is sexy.

You have to treat the nothing as if it were something. Make something out of nothing.

My mind is like a tape recorder with one button—Erase.<sup>41</sup>

It is no wonder, then, that Arnold explicitly cites Warhol's cinema as a reference point for *Deanimated*:

[The characters of *Deanimated*] look as if they are relaxing, dreaming, waiting for the part they can act out, but they're either too early or too late. I think that's interesting, because it contradicts the usual expectations: actors are usually acting in feature films, they usually have something to do or to say, they don't hang around—hanging around in front of the camera is a Warhol-like approach that didn't exist in the 40s. Back then (times were better) actors were still actors and they had to act. That's what they were paid for. In *Deanimated* we're looking at actors in their spare time, Warholian actors that were born too early.<sup>42</sup>

*Deanimated* is Warholian not only in its emphasis on “waiting” and “hanging around” but also in its investment in emptiness. Arnold’s film presents an aesthetic instantiation of sunyata, one that comes indirectly from Zen Buddhism by way of Cage and Warhol.

## THE BLACK SCREEN

*Look upon some object, then slowly withdraw your sight from it, then slowly withdraw your thought from it.* Then.

—Shiva

While sunyata plays a prominent role throughout *Deanimated*, it reaches its apotheosis in the film’s concluding six minutes of blackness and silence. I must confess that when I first saw *Deanimated* in 2015, I did not experience this ascetic conclusion. I had read about the film in various essays and books and decided to purchase a research copy on DVD for \$60 from Amour Fou, an Austrian film production company. I found the film to be both unsettling and hysterical, and I was immediately haunted by its silenced characters and vacant spaces. But about two years later, it dawned on me that something was wrong. The DVD I had purchased indicated that the running time of the film was sixty minutes, but it was actually only fifty-four minutes in length. Was this just a typo? Had the version I received been projected at the wrong speed? Then I read an essay that indicated that *Deanimated* concluded with “six minutes of complete blackness” punctuated by the “scratchy ambient sounds from the original tail leader of the film.”<sup>43</sup> My version included only about thirty-six seconds of complete blackness. Arnold’s final absence was ...

absent. I had been robbed! I contacted Amour Fou to inform them of the mistake, but I was told that since so much time had passed, I would have to pay an additional \$60 to purchase another version with the full six minutes of blackness. Never had I spent so much money on nothing.

When I screen *Deanimated* for my classes, I am never quite sure how to handle its concluding six minutes. Should I “warn” my students that the film will end with silence and blackness? After all, without such advance knowledge, these absences can be quite disorienting. Students look around and wonder why I have not yet turned on the lights and started discussing the work. A number of them give me looks that seem to say, “The film is over, right?” My students already get annoyed that I ask them to sit through the closing credits of films. Am I really going to push my luck and ask them to stare at a black screen? A number of students fidget and begin to wonder what kind of responses might be appropriate. Is it okay if they check their text messages on their phones? They aren’t really going to “miss anything” at this point, are they? Can they whisper to their friends about the weirdness of what they just experienced? Would this be an acceptable time to leave the class for a minute to get a drink of water? In fact, maybe we should all disappear, one by one, just like the characters in *Deanimated*. We have just stared at dozens of shots of empty rooms. Perhaps the time has come to make this room empty as well.

Then again, what if I were to inform students about the film’s conclusion beforehand and even tell them what kinds of responses might be “appropriate”? I could ask them to meditate on an apposite aphorism during the blackout, such as Heraclitus’s “Fullness and emptiness are the same thing” or Heidegger’s “The absent is also present.”<sup>44</sup> Or I might encourage them to clear their minds of conscious thought, to make their minds as empty as the black screen in front of them. Perhaps I should pacify them by chatting with them about *Deanimated* while the black screen runs its course. But to fill Arnold’s silence with chatter seems to betray its spirit. I want my students to lose themselves in the darkness, to absorb the quiescence of the aleatory pops and hisses on the sound track. (After a while, these sounds seem to create their own rhythm. Are we listening to the same auditory “void” again and again? Is it possible to repeat silence?) I do not simply want my students to think about absence or to discuss absence; I want them to *experience* absence. I must admit that some of my students become annoyed at the prospect of sitting in a dark, silent room for six minutes without doing or saying anything. I am sometimes tempted to tell them, “I paid \$60 for this six minutes of blackness so you’re going to watch it and you’re going to enjoy it!”

It is hard for me to describe to my students (or to anyone else, for that matter) why I relish the opportunity to stare at Arnold's black screen. Perhaps it is partly because I am fond of looking at screens. (Why shouldn't one occasionally look *at* a screen rather than *through* it?) As Tanya Shilina-Conte notes, "Blank space draws attention to the *pageness* of the page and the *screenness* of the screen, both as material substrates (made of paper or vinyl) and as their respective conceptual constructs."<sup>45</sup> In contemporary Western culture, of course, screens are ubiquitous. I encounter numerous screens every day in the form of computers, smartphones, tablets, televisions, and cinema screens. But these screens tend to be teeming with images: explosions, consumer products, attractive models. I have no problem with any of this content per se, but I do sometimes find it exhausting. I need a breath, a moment without a barrage of images vying for my attention, an opportunity to look at (and perhaps feel) nothing. *Deanimated* gives us a respite from what Guy Debord has called a "society of images."<sup>46</sup> In the world of *Deanimated*, images do not endlessly proliferate as they do in our contemporary consumer culture; rather, images disappear, one by one, until they have all been consumed by the void. Sitting in a darkened theatrical space while listening to a (relative) silence, one can lose oneself in Arnold's "infinite emptiness."<sup>47</sup> Why do we so often prefer imagery to its absence, sound to silence? Or, to rephrase the classic philosophical question, "Why must there always be something rather than nothing?"

58. Many scholars in the humanities become nervous when appeals are made to fields like neuroscience and evolutionary biology. The concern, at least in part, seems to be that by positing a human nature, neuroscientists and biologists risk falling prey to biological determinism and essentialism. But as the evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould was fond of pointing out, “Biology is not inevitable destiny.” In other words, one’s upbringing, culture, and education can all profoundly inflect one’s genetic predispositions. So while Ramachandran is right to see the peekaboo principle as being a part of human nature, there is no reason to suspect that this tendency is *purely* biological, since biology interacts with social and historical factors in complex and multifaceted ways. See Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, rev. and exp. ed. (New York: Norton, 1996), 389.
59. See, for example, Brenda Love, *Encyclopedia of Unusual Sex Practices* (New York: Barricade, 1992), 1–2, 93; and Mark Griffiths, “Aural Sex? A Brief Overview of Ecouteurism and Acousticophilia,” *DrMarkGriffiths* (blog), September 28, 2012, <https://drmarkgriffiths.wordpress.com/2012/09/28/aural-sex-a-brief-overview-of-ecouteurism-and-acousticophilia/>. While scholarship on the role of sound in human sexuality is scant, notable exceptions include F. M. M. Mai, “A New Psychosexual Syndrome—‘Ecouteurism,’ ” *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 2, no. 4 (1968): 261–63; and Roy J. Levin, “Vocalised Sounds and Human Sex,” *Sexual and Relationship Therapy* 21, no. 1 (2006): 99–107.
60. Hilary Bergen and Sandra Huber, “Pornography, Ectoplasm, and the Secret Dancer: A Twin Reading of Naomi Uman’s *Removed*,” *Screening the Past* 43 (April 2018).
61. Colina and Turrent, *Objects of Desire*, 85.
62. Bruce Johnson, “Introduction,” in *Erogenous Zones: Sound, Sexuality, and Cinema*, ed. Bruce Johnson (London: Equinox, 2010), 2, 1.
63. Williams, *Hard Core*, 91, 8, 94. Italicics added.
64. John Corbett and Terri Kapsalis, “Aural Sex: The Female Orgasm in Popular Sound,” *Drama Review* 40, no. 3 (Fall 1996): 103.
65. Corbett and Kapsalis, “Aural Sex,” 104. Italicics in original.
66. Williams, *Hard Core*, 123, 139.
67. Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” 8.
68. Juan Diaz, “*I Love Dick*: Jill Soloway and Kevin Bacon Explain What the New Amazon Comedy’s Really About,” *IndieWire*, April 18, 2017, <https://www.indiewire.com/2017/04/i-love-dick-jill-soloway-kevin-bacon-behind-the-scenes-watch-1201806670/>.
69. Robert Bresson, *Notes on the Cinematograph*, trans. Jonathan Griffin (New York: New York Review of Books, 2016), 59.
70. Quoted in Peter Wagner, “Minding the Gaps: Ellipses in William Hogarth’s Narrative Art,” in *The Ruin and the Sketch in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Peter Wagner et al. (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2008), 121.

#### 4. MARTIN ARNOLD’S DISAPPEARING ACT

1. Robert Burgoyne, “Douglas Gordon and Cory Arcangel: Breaking the Toy,” in *Embodied Encounters: New Approaches to Psychoanalysis and Cinema*, ed. Agnieszka Piotrowska (London: Routledge, 2015), 159.

2. Gertrude Stein, "An Elucidation," in *Gertrude Stein: Selections*, ed. Joan Retallack (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 186.
3. Many scholarly analyses of *Alone. Life Wastes Andy Hardy* mistakenly claim that its content comes from the *Andy Hardy* series of the 1930s and 1940s, in which Mickey Rooney plays a clean-cut American teenager. See, for example, Michele Pierson, "Special Effects in Martin Arnold's and Peter Tscherkassky's Cinema of Mind," *Discourse* 28, no. 2/3 (Spring & Fall 2006): 40; and Steve Anker, "Reanimator, Stutterer, Eraser: Martin Arnold and the Ghosts of Cinema," in *Film Unframed: A History of Austrian Avant-Garde Cinema*, ed. Peter Tscherkassky (Vienna: sixpackfilm, 2012), 249. While Arnold does borrow footage from George B. Seitz's *Andy Hardy Meets Debutante* (1940), all the remaining footage in *Alone. Life Wastes Andy Hardy* comes from two Mickey Rooney films in which the actor does *not* play Andy Hardy: *Babes in Arms* (1939) and *Strike Up the Band* (1940) (both directed by Busby Berkeley).
4. The appellation "trilogy of compulsive repetition" originally comes from Dirk Schaeffer, "Alone. Life Wastes Andy Hardy," *Program Notes, Views from the Avant-Garde*, curated by Mark McElhatten and Gavin Smith, New York Film Festival, 1998. For Freud's analysis of "the compulsion to repeat," see Sigmund Freud, "Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through," in *The Penguin Freud Reader*, trans. John Reddick, ed. Adam Phillips (New York: Penguin, 2006), 391–401.
5. Steve Anker erroneously identifies the actress who appears opposite Anne Baxter in *Dissociated* as Bette Davis rather than Celeste Holm. See Anker, "Reanimator, Stutterer, Eraser," 250. While Davis plays a prominent role in *All About Eve*, she does not appear in Arnold's *Dissociated*.
6. See Mika Taanila, "Interview with Martin Arnold," Avanto/Helsinki Media Arts Festival 6, [http://www.avantofestival.com/avanto2001/2001\\_screenings/fv\\_arnold\\_interview.html](http://www.avantofestival.com/avanto2001/2001_screenings/fv_arnold_interview.html).
7. The trilogy of erasure represents the first time that Arnold worked with a team to modify found footage. According to Arnold, "This is absolutely necessary—otherwise I would only be able to show [Deanimated] maybe two weeks before I die! It's so time-consuming that it takes forever. We'll have an output of something like five seconds per day per person. That's not very much for a 60 minute movie." Taanila, "Interview with Martin Arnold."
8. Anna Farenikova, "Seeing Absence," *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* 166, no. 3 (December 2013): 430, 449. Italics added.
9. Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, trans. David McLintock (London: Penguin, 2003), 150.
10. Emmanuelle André, "Martin Arnold on Walt Disney: To Show *Per Via di Levare* (By Means of Subtraction)," trans. Martine Beugnet, *Screen* 58, no. 2 (Summer 2017): 210–17.
11. Scott MacDonald, "Sp ... Sp ... Spaces of Inscription: An Interview with Martin Arnold," *Film Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (Autumn 1994): 2.
12. Cahill, "... and Afterwards?: Martin Arnold's Phantom Cinema," *Spectator* 27 (2007): 25.
13. Taanila, "Interview with Martin Arnold."

14. Quoted in Akira Mizuta Lippit, *Ex-Cinema: From a Theory of Experimental Film and Video* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 132. Arnold is no doubt thinking here of James Whale's *The Invisible Man* (1933), in which the titular character can still be heard even when he cannot be seen.
15. Akira Mizuta Lippit, "----MA," in *Martin Arnold: Deanimated*, ed. Gerald Matt and Thomas Miessgang (Vienna: Springer, 2002), 31. The title of this essay by Lippit is remarkably rich. It mimics Arnold's use of erasure in *Deanimated* by eliminating the first four letters in the word CINEMA. The remaining syllable, *ma*, is the Japanese word for "gap" or "space," as well as an English word for the maternal figure (who plays such a dominant role in Freudian psychoanalysis). MA is also capitalized in Lippit's title, suggesting its status as an acronym: MA = Martin Arnold.
16. Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 2006), 124, 157.
17. Daniel C. Dennett, *Consciousness Explained* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1991), 35. Italics in original.
18. Tom Gunning, "To Scan a Ghost: The Ontology of Mediated Vision," *Grey Room* 26 (Winter 2007): 102.
19. Thomas Miessgang, "Beyond the Words: The Multiple Narratives of the Filmmaker Martin Arnold," in *Martin Arnold: Deanimated*, ed. Gerald Matt and Thomas Miessgang (Vienna: Springer, 2002), 15–18, 16.
20. Taanila, "Interview with Martin Arnold."
21. Cahill, "... and Afterwards?," 20.
22. *OED Online*, s.v. "animate," accessed February 22, 2018, <http://www.oed.com.proxy.lib.iastate.edu/view/Entry/7778?rskey=QpDbiq&result=2#eid>.
23. Crispin Brooks, *The Futurism of Vasilisk Gnedov* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 2000), 46.
24. Brooks, *The Futurism of Vasilisk Gnedov*, 48.
25. In fact, the sound track at the end of *Deanimated* is reminiscent of Ken Friedman's *Zen for Record* (1966), a phonograph record with no music on it that allows one to luxuriate in the aleatory pops and hisses produced by a needle on vinyl. As the title implies, *Zen for Record* was inspired by Nam June Paik's silent and imageless cinematic experiment *Zen for Film* (1962–1964).
26. Branden W. Joseph, *Random Order: Robert Rauschenberg and the Neo-Avant-Garde* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003), 21; John Cage, *Conversing with Cage*, ed. Richard Kostelanetz, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2003), 70.
27. See "Melissus of Samos," in *The First Philosophers: The Presocratics and Sophists*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 85.
28. Stephen Batchelor, *Buddhism Without Beliefs* (New York: Riverhead, 1997), 81.
29. Gay Watson, *A Philosophy of Emptiness* (London: Reaktion, 2014), 15.
30. Masao Abe, "Non-Being and Mu: The Metaphysical Nature of Negativity in the East and the West," *Religious Studies* 11, no. 2 (June 1975): 186.
31. *OED Online*, s.v. "emptiness," accessed May 24, 2018, <http://www.oed.com.proxy.lib.iastate.edu/view/Entry/61420?redirectedFrom=emptiness#eid>.
32. See Arthur Schopenhauer, "On the Vanity of Existence," in Arthur Schopenhauer, *Essays and Aphorisms*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Penguin, 1970), 53;

- Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, trans. Alastair Hannay (London: Penguin, 2003), 49.
33. The description of emptiness as “inclusive” comes from a biography of Bodhidharma written in 1004 by Dogen. Quoted in Paul Reps, “Foreword,” in *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones: A Collection of Zen and Pre-Zen Writings*, comp. Paul Reps and Nyogen Senzaki, (Tokyo: Tuttle, 1985), 15. The word “sublime” is used in “Flower Shower,” trans. Senzaki and Reps, in *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones*, 60.
34. “A Cup of Tea,” trans. Nyogen Senzaki and Paul Reps, in *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones: A Collection of Zen and Pre-Zen Writings*, comp. Paul Reps and Nyogen Senzaki (Tokyo: Tuttle, 1985), 23.
35. See, for example, MacDonald, “Sp ... Sp ... Spaces of Inscription,” 8, 11.
36. John Cage, *Silence: 50th Anniversary Edition* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2011), 143, 154, 160, 187.
37. Cage, xxxi. For more on Zen Buddhism’s influence on Cage, see Kay Larson, *Where the Heart Beats: John Cage, Zen Buddhism, and the Inner Life of Artists* (New York: Penguin, 2013).
38. Ruth Hirschman, “Pop Goes the Artist,” in *I’ll Be Your Mirror: The Selected Andy Warhol Interviews*, ed. Kenneth Goldsmith (New York: Carroll and Graf, 2004), 42; G. R. Swenson, “What Is Pop Art? Answers from 8 Painters, Part I,” in *I’ll Be Your Mirror*, 20.
39. Quoted in *The Autobiography and Sex Life of Andy Warhol*, ed. John Wilcock and Christopher Trela (New York: Trela, 2010), 116. For more on Cage’s influence on Warhol, see Edward D. Powers, “Attention Must Be Paid: Andy Warhol, John Cage, and Gertrude Stein,” *European Journal of American Culture* 33, no. 1 (2014): 5–31.
40. Andy Warhol and Pat Hackett, *POPism: The Warhol Sixties* (San Diego, Calif.: Harvest/HBJ, 1990), 64.
41. Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: From A to B and Back Again* (New York: Harvest/HBJ, 1975), 9, 183, 199.
42. Quoted in Lippit, “—MA,” 32.
43. Anker, “Reanimator, Stutterer, Eraser,” 253.
44. Heraclitus quoted in Thomas McEvilley, *The Shape of Ancient Thought: Comparative Studies in Greek and Indian Philosophies* (New York: Allworth, 2002), 431; Martin Heidegger, “Anaximander’s Saying,” in *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. and trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 261.
45. Tanya Shilina-Conte, “Black Screen, White Page: Ontology and Genealogy of Blank Space,” *Word & Image* 31, no 4 (October–December 2015): 504. Shilina-Conte has written extensively about the black screen in cinema. See also her “How It Feels: Black Screen as Negative Event in Early Cinema and 9/11 Films,” *Studia Phaenomenologica* 16 (2016): 409–38, and “Abbas Kiarostami’s ‘Lessons of Darkness’: Affect, Non-Representation, and Becoming-Imperceptible,” *Iran Namag* 2, no. 4 (Winter 2018): 94–123. Also noteworthy is Shilina-Conte’s as yet incomplete found footage film *This Video Does Not Exist*, a remix of imageless screens from dozens of different films across film history.
46. Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Fredy Perlman et al. (Detroit: Black and Red, 2010), 199.
47. Miessgang, “Beyond the Words,” 18.