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Cinema's Memoropolitics: Hypnotic Images, Contingent Pasts, Forgetting

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What makes a medium a medium (as Lorenz Engell phrases it) is the medium's capacity to disclose its own conditions of production and experience.¹ Media are not just tools or devices with predetermined operative functions, but kinds of reflective surfaces—acts of “dédoublement,” or double reflections that, more or less, clearly and vividly, mirror themselves, including the ways in which they come to shape our capacities of becoming cognizant of ourselves and the world around us.

This level of self-reflection is apparent in *The Mystery of the Rocks of Kador* (*Le Mystère des roches de Kador*), a unique film on cinema technology, trauma, and memory directed by Léonce Perret in 1912. *Kador* includes one of the most compelling film-within-a-film scenes in the early history of cinema, which presents an original take on the act of film viewing and what it entails psychologically, as well as on the role that cinema has played in modifying the modern psyche more generally speaking (see figure 1a, 1c–d). While self-reflective scenes where cinema filmed itself, so to speak, revealing its conditions of showing and experience, were not lacking in the early cinema period (quite the contrary), what distinguishes *Kador* is the particular position it imagines for cinema in psychological treatment and the picture of memory, trauma, and subjectivity it draws.

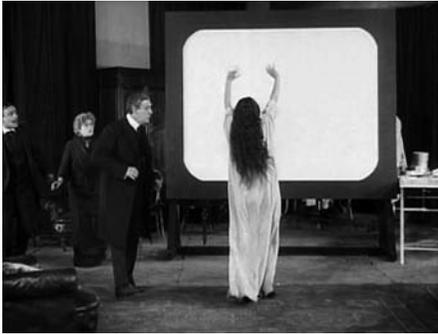


Figure 1a. Phone book.

Figure 1b. Play of light and shadow.

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|----|----------------------------|----------------|-------|
| 04 | Dr BALLE T Gilbert | Odéon 12-25 | Dr AC |
| 45 | Dr CHASLIN Philippe | Europe 02-36 | Dr AM |
| 43 | Dr CLAUDE Henri | Central 01-42 | Dr CA |
| 21 | Dr DUPRÉ Ernest | Balzac 24-40 | Dr EM |
| 36 | Dr GRASSET Joseph | Danton 06-20 | Dr GA |
| 04 | Dr JANET Pierre | Voltaire 19-96 | Dr IS |
| 78 | Dr LADAME Paul-Louis | Opéra 18-32 | Dr GE |
| 01 | Dr PITRES Albert | Archive 26-20 | Dr HE |
| 26 | Dr SEGLAS Ernest | Bergère 32-00 | Dr LE |
| 01 | Dr WILLIAMS Pierre | Nord 03-62 | Dr MA |
| 21 | MOUR Henri | Sablons 13-14 | Dr NO |
| 40 | Victor | Odéon 96-38 | Dr PR |



Figure 1c. Hypnotic circuit.

Figure 1d. Screen of forgetting. From *The Mystery of the Rocks of Kador*, dir. Léonce Perret (Gaumont, 1912).



The film's story line immerses the viewer in a psychological drama of conflicting desires, motivations, and actions, which revolve around the protagonist Suzanne de Lormel (played by Suzanne Grandais), who has just recently become heir of an immense fortune. Underage, she is appointed a guardian, her cousin Fernand de Keranic (played by Léonce Perret himself). When Suzanne approaches the age of inheritance, she falls in love with Captain Jean d'Erquy (Emile Keppens), yet at the same time Fernand is hoping to marry her mainly in order to get his hands to the fortune and clear his own heavy debts. His marriage proposal refused, Fernand reverts to a clause in Suzanne's uncle's testament, which states that should Suzanne die or "enter the convent, or be struck by serious illness, such as blindness or insanity," Fernand himself would become the sole heir. So Fernand concocts a plan: he arranges for the two lovers to come on a beach beneath the Rocks of Kador (rugged, cliffy seashore located in Brittany), drugs Suzanne, who passes out, and shoots Jean. Miraculously, Jean, who is wounded, is able to drag Suzanne onto a rowboat before the flood comes in, and they are left drifting in the sea. At some point, Suzanne awakes and finds herself in this desperate situation, howling in despair, apparently believing that Jean is dead. The next morning, the couple is rescued by local fishermen, but Suzanne has undergone a total change of personality. The previously cheerful, sparkling young woman has fallen into what resembles a catatonic state: she is almost completely inactive and doesn't seem to understand speech, let alone speak herself. There is no sign that she possesses any memories of the past; rather, she appears like an automaton who is closed off from personal experience, endowed with only a very rudimentary consciousness and possessed by involuntary bodily movements such as the nervous tic that haunts Suzanne's left eye and cheek.

The word *automaton* indeed comes across as pertinent in this context because it was one of the key notions used to describe mental disturbances in psychological discourses at the turn of the twentieth century. A notable psychologist of his times in France, Pierre Janet, for instance, coined the concept of *psychological automatism* to unearth a realm of intertwined dissociated mental states, ranging from somnambulism and catalepsy to what would today be called multiple personality disorder. The concept was to make sense of regular and predetermined mental phenomena that had become detached from personal consciousness, were lacking personality's sense of self, and were in essence related to disturbances of memory, as Janet stressed: "Phenomena of memory are perhaps the most important for our psychological organization, and even

their slightest modifications have considerable repercussions in our life."²

After the shooting incident, Suzanne appears, above all, as amnesiac. A culminating point in *The Mystery of the Rocks of Kador* occurs when a certain Professor Williams is called in to apply his new cinema-based therapeutic method in the treatment of Suzanne, and when Suzanne is made to watch a film that lets her (re)experience the traumatic shooting incident. This is the point where *Kador* turns into a philosophically informed articulation of cinema and subjectivity in modernity, which I wish to analyze in what follows.³ My concern will be how the cinematic medium connected with new models for thinking of who we are and what constitutes us as individual bodies and persons—models that emerged in new dynamic psychological sciences at the turn of the twentieth century in particular. The focus will be on the sayabilities and visibilities through which subjectivity became knowable during that period and which were characterized by a model or, perhaps better put, an emergent diagram of forgetting that then traversed psychological discourses, cinematic forms, scientific experiments, and so on. By diagram, I mean, following Gilles Deleuze's reading of Michel Foucault, the expression of certain relations of forces that shape the social field, or a part thereof, at a given moment, a kind of "map," as Deleuze put it, the coordinates and codes of which are actualized in the thoughts, gestures, communications, emotions, and individuations performing the social.⁴ The following will be an exploration into scientific sayabilities and cinematic visibilities that, circa 1900, started to predicate subjectivity on temporal and contingent processes of remembering and forgetting.

Sciences of Memory ca. 1900

A close-up shot pretty plainly connects *Kador* with the epistemopolitics of psychological sciences and the study of mental pathologies at the turn of the twentieth century: a page of a phone book that appears in the scene after the shooting incident when Suzanne's fiancé Jean has recovered and returned home (see figure 1b). Jean receives a letter recommending that he should seek advice from Professor Williams for the cure of Suzanne, who has just published an article about the use of the cinematograph in psychotherapy. When the servant opens the phone book for Jean to look up the number of Professor Williams's practice, we are shown an impressive list of historical names: Philippe Chaslin, who studied pathologies of consciousness; Ernest Dupré, a psychologist famous

for his work on compulsive lying; Joseph Grasset, a neurologist who was interested in mental pathologies, as well as parapsychological phenomena; Pierre Janet (whose work will be later treated in more detail); neurologist Albert Pitres, who wrote about hysteria, obsessions, and hypnosis; Ernest Séglas, who studied all sorts of abnormal mental phenomena, from hallucinations to language disorders; and so more.⁵ As it is from this impressive list of potential therapists (many of whom in fact studied at the Salpêtrière Hospital with Jean-Martin Charcot) that Jean chooses Dr. Pierre Williams, the discursive realm within which *Kador* wishes to situate its image of cinema seems rather obvious.

Above all, this was a realm that represented a new way of speaking about the soul and emerged in relation to the study of traumas and traumatic memories in particular. The word *trauma*, as Ian Hacking reminds us, was used by surgeons and referred to bodily wounds before it came to acquire its specifically psychological meaning.⁶ Central to modernity's modes of subjectivity, however, was the leap of trauma from the body to the psyche, which, Hacking argues, was a gradual process that took place at the end of the nineteenth century. While the credit for the "psychologization" of trauma is often given to Sigmund Freud's early work on neurosis and hysteria, which conceived of these afflictions as signs of repressed memories of seduction and sexual assault, the notion of trauma psychologically understood was nonetheless already in place before that. In France, an epistemological formation that Hacking calls "sciences of memory" had emerged in the 1880s, involving a new model of selfhood and personality. This was a branch of psychological science that provided the epistemological background for the emergence of a specific politics of memory in modernity, a particular kind of arrangement of power and knowledge that Hacking distinguishes from what Michel Foucault in his work analyzed as the realms of the anatomopolitics of the body and the biopolitics of populations.⁷

In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault outlined how, starting in the seventeenth century, two basic forms of "power over life" gradually emerged in the West, which constituted "two poles of development linked together by a whole intermediary cluster of relations."⁸ The first one of these was by nature disciplinary and conceived of individual bodies as types of machines the capabilities and performance of which needed to be optimized, economized, and controlled. The second one, on the other hand, focused on what Foucault called "the species body, the body imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of the biological processes: propagation, births and mortality, the level

of health, life expectancy, and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these vary.⁹ Rather than aiming at disciplining individual bodies, the latter form was to capture and enhance life processes on the level of populations by means of statistical knowledge and regulatory policies, for instance. Hacking points out that these two forms of power have also had their closely intertwined lines of development in the history of psychology, the anatomopolitics of the body being related to those branches of psychology that have sought to produce knowledge of the mind primarily through the anatomy and physiology of the brain, while the biopolitics of populations has been yoked with experimental psychology and its statistical methods. However, the new dynamic psychological sciences of circa 1900 represented a way of conceptualizing the subject distinct from the anatomopolitical and biopolitical models: instead of being occupied with individual brains or the statistical qualities of a population, memoropolitics was interested in the psychic life of individuals, which it wrested from religion and started to conceptualize in relation to a complex psychology of needs, deeds, memories, forgotten traumatic events, and alternating states of mind.

But how did trauma travel from the body to the soul in the late nineteenth century? The answer is, in short, via disturbances of memory. Hacking emphasizes that “the background for memoropolitics is pathological forgetting.”¹⁰ Forgetting was observed first of all in cases of physical injury. In the 1870s, French surgeon Eugène Azam studied a wide range of head-injury cases (railway accidents, blows to the head, etc.) that resulted in various mental disorders, ranging from alterations of personality and hallucinations to loss of memory. As Hacking notes, what made Azam’s work important was the way in which it signaled amnesia as a new kind of object of perception and conceptualization.¹¹ As Azam pointed out about head injuries,

There is one thing that dominates all the others: always, or almost always, the injured has lost their memory, not only the memory of what has happened after the accident until they regained consciousness, but the memory of what had happened during a more or less long period of time that *preceded the accident*.¹²

What Azam was discovering here was what he called “traumatic amnesia” in relation to physical accidents. However, he also observed that traumatic amnesias were not necessarily related to blows to the head but characterized pathological mental states where the individual’s personality would double and even

multiply. Félicité X was one of the most famous cases that Azam studied, which disclosed how one individual could have two different personalities separated by an absence of memory instead of being defined by a single transcendental ego. Azam noted how Félicité suffered from periodical alterations between two different personalities, both of which had their own continuous chains of memories separated by periods of amnesia. Crucially, it seemed that the two personalities were largely ignorant of each other, and when in one state of personality Félicité couldn't remember what she had been doing in the other state.

What we see emerging in Azam's work is a conception of memory—and traumatic memory in particular—as a kind of pathogenic secret. Allan Young notes that in the nineteenth century traumatic memories became considered, on the one hand, “pathogenic” because they were “reputed to cause psychiatric disorders” and, on the other, “secret” because they were concealed in the sense that the subject did not know about their existence (that is, they were forgotten).¹³ Félicité X's case was among the many examples of traumatic periodic amnesia that psychologist Théodule Ribot cited in his *Diseases of Memory* (originally published in 1881), a book that was perused by Sigmund Freud, Henri Bergson, and Pierre Janet, among many others. Ribot's book is an account of memory as something inseparable from the concept of the self (*le moi*, translated in the original English version as “ego”). For Ribot, traumatic amnesia as exemplified by alternating-personality cases disclosed that the self is something transformable, fundamentally lacking in identity and fixity.¹⁴ In general terms, Ribot argued that selfhood needs to be understood as a protean compound of associations made between the memorized past and the present state of awareness. Whereas self-awareness results from the fluid sensory impressions that form the center of consciousness at a given moment, *conscious personality* is experienced in the continuity of this constantly renewing self-awareness with the past. Personality is predicated upon the individual's knowledge of their past, which is subject to processes of growth, degeneration, and reproduction as memories fade and new ones replace them. Thus, the self, according to Ribot, is nourished but also transformed by processes of remembering and forgetting:

We arrive, then, at this paradoxical conclusion, that one condition of memory is forgetfulness. Without the total obliteration of an immense number of states of consciousness, and the momentary repression of many more, recollection would be impossible. Forgetfulness, except in certain cases, is not a disease of memory, but a condition of health and life.¹⁵

The fundamental idea of the science of memory as articulated by Ribot was that memory, and consequently selfhood, is not based on unity but is something malleable. The textures of memory and sensibility that sustain the subject betray themselves as easily torn. "That the ego exists only on the condition of continually changing, is an incontestable fact," Ribot argued.¹⁶ Or, as French philosopher Alfred Fouillée summarized the ideas of the "new school in psychology" in 1891, "In sum, selfhood is a continuous center of memories and of motivations attached to these memories; alterations of the self can thus be explained in terms of alterations of memory."¹⁷ Crucially, the subject became fundamentally porous, accidental, and contingent, prone to continuous modulations, predicated on the fundamental capacity to forget, a capacity that could easily become a pathogenic cause and origin of altered psychological states circumscribing the uncertain boundaries of where one self begins and another ends, as we have seen in the case of Félicité X and the periodic amnesia that separated her different personalities from each other.

Forgetting thus became seen as intrinsic to subjectivity, both so-called normal and pathological. The fact that we forget also made us something that is not one but always already potentially many. Fouillée pointed out that the new psychological science of memory circa 1900 represented the psyche as a theater where "a troupe of very different actors" enacted an interior drama, "each of them having a more or less rudimentary personality."¹⁸ It is this view of the soul that also informs Suzanne's character in *The Mystery of the Rocks of Kador*: a traumatic event instigates pathological forgetting, which splits Suzanne's psyche, whereby elementary psychological automatisms dethrone conscious personality—automatisms that are visibly manifest in tics and involuntary gestures that the cinematic image as a particular kind of "somatogram" of the soul (to borrow a concept from Stanley Cavell) alone can disclose.¹⁹ Zooming in on Suzanne's physical appearance as the manifestation of psychic forces out of the ego's command, the film teaches us that the self is fundamentally uncertain, something accidental even, and susceptible to modulations through disturbances of memory. Seen in this light, it seems that the word "mystery" in the title of Perret's film refers primarily to mysteries of memory, to concealed, forgotten, and traumatic memories that lead their lives within the subject, potentially decomposing and multiplying the in-dividual.

Hypnotic Image

It is within this problematic of pathological forgetting that *Kador* locates the power of cinema over its spectators. Professor Williams's experimental cinematographic method in psychotherapy consists in restaging and filming traumatic events and showing these clips to the patient, assuming thereby that modifications of the processes of remembering and forgetting provide indeed the key to the treatment of maladies of the soul. Nonetheless, very little further insight is given in the film as to what Professor Williams's rationale for his therapeutic invention is. The only hint we have is the glimpse of a dossier that Williams has prepared for the Academy of Medicine ("Observations by Professor Williams on the Application of the Cinématographe to Psychotherapy"), from which a booklet that accompanied the release of *Kador* highlighted the following extract:

This marvelous invention, used only recently in "mental medicine," seems destined to occupy a prominent place in it very quickly. The luminous vibrations of cinematographic images, transmitted by means of the optic nerve of the retina, are registered on the cells of the cerebral cortex and result in a particular state of hypnosis which lends itself admirably well to therapeutic suggestion.²⁰

This is all we know about the science behind Professor Williams's approach, yet the description gives us a certain indication of the epistemic preoccupations of Williams's cinema-based psychotherapy, the key words here being "luminous vibrations," "particular state of hypnosis," and "therapeutic suggestion."

If the issues of hypnosis and suggestion appear in *Kador* as relatively latent and abstract, apprehensible indirectly through visual analogies, the notion of "luminous vibrations" becomes tangible in the scene in which Suzanne is being treated by Professor Williams. Catatonic Suzanne is escorted to the projection room and made to sit on a chair: only a single source of light, apparently the white screen illuminated by the projector, distinguishes her face from the darkness in a visual composition lacking depth and coordinates (see figure 1c). "Behold, Suzanne," Professor Williams utters, and the film begins. The next shot shows Suzanne gazing toward the cinema screen (see figure 1d): the external world has receded from the fields of visibility and awareness, and what remains is a concentrated luminous circuit between Suzanne and the screen.

This visual play of light and shadow, of luminous vibrations, resonates in particular with the notion of "nervous light" that

Hippolyte Bernheim used in describing hypnotic induction and the mental process of suggestion.²¹ Bernheim, the leader of the Nancy school of psychology in France that was influential in establishing hypnosis as a recognized psychotherapeutic method, understood the psyche as a projection apparatus of sorts, which in the waking state casts its light outward and illuminates images received through the sensory organs. In the hypnotic state, by contrast, internal mental images are illuminated in accordance with the suggestions from the hypnotizer. In his treatise on therapeutic suggestion from 1888, Bernheim wrote,

The suggested image is a fictitious image, and . . . answers to no material representation in space. . . . The hallucinatory image may be as distinct, as bright, and as active to the subject as reality itself, but, borne entirely in the subject's imagination, he sees it as he conceives it, as he interprets it, as conscious or unconscious memory brings it up again in the sensorium. It is a psychical cerebral image and not a physical one. It does not pass by the peripheral apparatus of vision, has no objective reality, follows no optical laws, but obeys solely the caprices of the imagination.²²

Crucially, Bernheim's studies of hypnosis and suggestion disclosed that even in so-called normal conditions it is not always possible to clearly distinguish between imagination and reality, between endogenous animations and exogenous imagistic material. We all are, Bernheim asserted, exposed to illusions and varying suggestions from others.²³ As Debora Silverman observes, Bernheim's work underscored how "energy, visual impressions, and intangible forces emanating from the external environment were elements as powerful as conscious decision making or assimilation of information about the world."²⁴ Furthermore, striking in Bernheim's writings is the highly visual and even cinematic vocabulary they employ: the psyche is populated by *images*, which can be contagious and effectively blur distinctions between the subjective interior and the external world. For Stefan Andriopoulos, the language of nervous light and animated images indicates how Bernheim conceived of mental processes in anticipated cinematographic terms.²⁵ This coincides (in a reverse picture) with *The Mystery of the Rocks of Kador*, which, as noted, gestures toward conceiving cinematographic processes and film spectatorship in terms of hypnosis and suggestion.

Following this line of thought—that hypnosis in a sense provides an implicit conceptualization of cinematic subjectivity—let us make a short detour, before continuing on to *Kador*; and point out one of the earliest films that articulates cinema with hypnotic suggestion. Namely, browsing through the Auguste and Louis Lumière

company catalog, one encounters two titles that stand out in their singularity: *Une Scène d'hypnotisme I* and *Une Scène d'hypnotisme II*, two films on hypnosis made sometime in 1897–98, the second of which presents a woman who is induced into—or at least simulates the process of being induced into—a hypnotic state. The woman, whom the Lumière catalog identifies as a certain Mademoiselle Lina de Ferkel, stands tensely in front of the camera in a room that looks like a painter's atelier, a large empty painting frame occupying the left side of the image.²⁶ We see the back of a male figure, supposedly the cameraman or the hypnotist, appear for a brief moment until it vanishes off screen, and simultaneously Mademoiselle de Ferkel starts to breathe heavily and gesticulate frantically. Her body performs a specific motor pattern that follows a wavelike rhythm until she freezes into immobility, her hands stretched wide open in the air in a kind of catalepsy.

Clearly, *Une Scène d'hypnotisme*, like *The Mystery of the Rocks of Kador*, plays on the exhibitionary and spectacular pull of the body that acts out of conscious control, or at least without the intervention of the self. As popular entertainment, the Lumière brothers' piece can be seen as remediating the quasi-scientific performances on hypnotic subjects common in music halls, vaudeville theaters, and also special *cabinets* at the end of the nineteenth century—generally speaking the same locations where the culture of cinema also developed. Georges Gilles de la Tourette observed in 1887 that in Paris there were more than five hundred cabinets displaying somnambulists (*cabinets somnambuliques*) that capitalized on the spectacular effects one was capable of conjuring with hypnotic suggestion.²⁷ However, during this period hypnosis also played the role of a new kind of epistemic tool, destabilizing familiar notions of individual identity and assumptions about the limits of selfhood. Important in the Lumière company's one-minute hypnotic scene is the way in which it connects cinema technology with the model of subjectivity that emerged in late-nineteenth-century psychological sciences and with experiments on hypnosis in particular—a model, as we have seen, that portrays the individual as fundamentally split and shaped by phenomena antithetical to Western rationality: influence without any logical foundation, dissociative disorders, engulfment of the self by its outside, mental contagion, and the production of an illusory relation with the world.

The person filmed, Lina de Ferkel, in fact participated in the 1890s in experiments on hypnotic suggestion conducted by colonel Albert de Rochas, which concerned, among other things, what de Rochas called the *exteriorization of sensibility*, referring to how, under certain circumstances, the subject's sensitivity can start to

occupy the uncertain thresholds between the self and the other, inside and outside, individual and milieu. De Rochas's experiments became quite famous, ending up being reported by *Pall Mall Gazette* in the United Kingdom, which described Lina's remarkable hypnotic sensitivity:

When in a [hypnotic] trance her sensibility leaves her body and can be localized by the operator in any object he [de Rochas] desires within a few feet of her. If this object be pricked or otherwise manipulated, Mlle. Lina experiences exactly the same sensation as if the act had been performed on her own person, whereas her body while she is in this state is whole insensible. . . . On one occasion, the sensibility of Mlle. Lina had been transferred to a photographic plate. Various experiments were made, and then the subject was brought back, as it was thought, to her normal condition. After the lapse of a considerable time Mlle. Lina was suddenly seized with shivering, and then with violent sickness. It was found that simultaneously with the appearance of these symptoms M. Euer, to whom the photographic plate belonged, had immersed it, unknown to the rest of the company, and in a dark room in a distant corner of the house, in a chemical bath, and was developing it in the usual way—a process which had afflicted Mlle. Lina with a sort of sea-sickness.²⁸

Induced in hypnotic trance, Lina de Ferkel thus seemed to lose personal experience and become completely immersed in the life of inanimate things and beings, her regime of sensibility being disseminated into the surroundings while her own body was anesthetic. Here it is indeed hard to delineate between the inside and the outside and to judge in which case images are subjective and/or objective, endogenous and/or exogenous.

This (quite likely apocryphal) story resonates with the implicit conceptualization of film experience that the Lumière company's hypnotic scene puts forward, concerning the perception of space the film gives rise to in particular. The momentary glimpse of the back of a male figure, which quickly disappears from the frame, introduces an uncannily indirect awareness of the felt presence of the person that looms off screen—an awareness that entwines the spectator into a circuit of virtual influence and invisible forces of attraction. In this regard, we could understand the Lumière film as an early experiment with offscreen space, which does not establish continuity of action but rather a certain kind of phantom presence, the existence of *someone* who influences what I see and cannot see, an Other within me who directs my perception and sensibility.

The absent figure refers to a process of dissociation that is potentially involved in film spectatorship in general, crystallizing

the projected moving image as, quoting Gilles Deleuze quoting Jean-Louis Schefer, “a giant in the back of our heads, Cartesian diver, dummy or machine, mechanical man without birth who brings the world into suspense.”²⁹ In a key passage of his *L'Homme ordinaire du cinéma*, Schefer speculates how the cinema spectator gets suspended in the luminous interval between the projector and the screen and becomes closed off from the outer world, and how this suspension gives rise to a “phantom existence” within the subject, an “unexpected vampire” or a machinelike giant, who groans, laughs, and dreams through the spectator’s body.³⁰ In the cinema, it is as though an outsider had suddenly gained possession of my body and now sees and feels through me. Understood in this sense, film viewing comes across as analogous to hypnotic suggestion in which circuits of “nervous light” suspend the outside world and evoke a realm of endogenous apparitions, the luminous vibrations of the silver screen converging with hypnosis as a specific kind of technology for the “production of reality,” as Léon Chertok and Isabelle Stengers characterize hypnosis, which according to them, comes before “reality is linked to the problems of truth and illusion, of test, of submission and denial.”³¹

Modulated Memories

It is this kind of production of reality that also informs the use of cinema for therapeutic suggestion in *The Mystery of the Rocks of Kador*. In *Kador*, however, the luminous vibrations of the silver screen realize the replacement and decomposition of memory in addition to sensibility. In the process of curing Suzanne, a hypnotic-like circuit of nervous light that is established between the cinema screen and the spectator opens up the subject’s intimate memory for modification, reminding one of Freud confessing in 1897 how “to this day I cannot understand how it can be supposed that by merely holding up a finger and saying once ‘go to sleep’ I had created in the patient the peculiar psychological state in which her memory had access to all her psychological experiences.”³² However, the curious point about *Kador* is that Suzanne herself never actually witnessed the events that took place on the shore, as she was passed out during the entire incident. What she is suffering from is not traumatic memories per se but traumatic forgetting; it is the absence of memories and thus the incapacity of forgetting (those memories) that seems to provoke Suzanne’s illness. In this context, Professor Williams’s method is not to uncover existing (but concealed) memories but to implant new ones by means

of cinematography—and ostensibly thereby to induce the intertwined processes of remembering and forgetting, which, to quote the words of Ribot again, are “a condition of health and life.”

To emphasize, in *Kador*, the circuit between the screen and the soul established by the hypnotic-like play of light and shadow is meant to create new memories, new pasts. The picture of memory the film draws is hence somewhat different from the one often associated with modernity whereby memory gets understood through the metaphors of inscription, mark, or trace.³³ Freud, for one, at one point compared the unconscious, or memory, with a storage space where nothing could be erased, but memory traces existed, like archaeological facts, outside time and destruction, reiterating thus what could be called an archival understanding of memory as a faculty of storing and retrieving remembrances common in the nineteenth century.³⁴ Even if fantasies, as Freud observed in his 1899 article “Screen Memories,” come to transform memories we have from early childhood in particular, there must nonetheless be “a memory-trace the content of which offers the phantasy a point of contact.”³⁵ Even if the psyche twists and distorts so as to let repressed material emerge in consciousness, there must be an originary scene the contents of which remain unchanged and consequently the truthfulness of which cannot be doubted.³⁶

In *Kador*, by contrast, memory is displayed as something protean and organic in the sense that it appears as open to constant modifications and adaptations, even complete erasure. In this regard, Professor Williams's approach closely parallels Janet's use of hypnosis as a therapeutic and experimental technology for the modulation of memory. In Janet's hands, hypnosis not only disclosed concealed past events but, more importantly, made it possible to act upon the past, to redraw the traces that the past had inscribed on the individual. To take an example, in *L'Automatisme psychologique* from 1889, Janet recounted the case history of Marie, who suffered, among many other ailments, from blindness in the left eye.³⁷ This blindness was not of a purely physiological nature, which was evidenced by the fact that when Janet transported Marie back to the age of five by means of hypnosis, she would resume the sensibility she had at this age, being able to see very well with both of her eyes.³⁸ As a result, Janet reasoned that the blindness must be of psychological origin and have started at some point when Marie was six years old. To probe further into the origins of the illness, he induced Marie into somnambulism (a deep state of hypnosis) and made her relive the principal moments of her life at that age, discovering during the process the following “pointless,” as Janet

called it, but traumatic event: despite her cries, Marie was made to sleep next to a child who had impetigo mainly on the left side of her face. From that moment, Marie became anesthetic on the left side of her face and lost sight from her left eye.

Janet described Marie's case as interesting in that it demonstrated the "importance of subconscious fixed ideas and the role they play in certain physical illness as well as in moral illness," suggesting also how "subconscious life" acted in an intellectual and coordinated fashion.³⁹ Janet saw that fixed ideas generally developed as the result of accidents of a traumatic nature and could even take complete control over the psyche in dreams and somnambulistic states. He defined them as unified groups of emotionally charged, pathogenic mental images, which had become isolated from conscious personality—that is to say, they were amnesiac and automatic—and which could keep repeating themselves indefinitely and transform themselves into hallucinations and involuntary bodily movements.⁴⁰ It is worth paying attention to Janet's vocabulary here: for Janet, the subject became contingent upon the work of images, the *image* understood as the form under which past sensations are reproduced in memory.⁴¹ Furthermore, this visually imbued conceptual framework, as we will see shortly, provided (similarly to Bernheim's notions of nervous light and animated images) an implicit conceptualization of cinema as a specific kind of memoropolitical technology.

But what did Janet do to cure Marie? How could one gain command of the fixed ideas or groups of *fixed images*—forgotten, traumatic memories—that acted out of conscious control and produced all sorts of pathological phenomena, from dissociation to anesthesia? Janet's approach was by means of hypnotic suggestion to take Marie back to the past traumatic event and to replace her memories with new ones. The psychologist made the patient believe that the child sleeping next to her was "very kind," compelled her to caress the child's face, and led her to infer that she had no impetigo, after all. After a few sessions, Marie actually regained sight in her left eye. Janet's method thus, by means of hypnosis, rendered the past as contingent, something that is not fixed and determinate but is open to modifications. Instead of searching for traces and truths in the past, Janet's pragmatic approach was to erase those memories that turned out to be pathogenic and to create and implement new ones, to create a new past for the patient.

Another case study from an article published in 1894 demonstrates the process vividly.⁴² This was about the case of Justine, who suffered from a curious fear of cholera and dying and was, in Janet's words, "occupied by numerous and varying images that are

grouped together so as to form a fully unified picture [*tableau*].⁴³ These images encompassed corpses bearing the marks of the disease, one of which in particular was “visible on the foreground, ‘a completely naked poor old man, green and blue,’” as well as odors of decaying corpses, the tolling of bells and cries of cholera, or even cramps, cries, and vomiting of the victims that Justine had witnessed and that she also reproduced in the hysterical crisis. In this case, too, Janet’s method was by means of hypnotic suggestion to modify and replace the traumatic memories—a method that he described in terms of the decomposition and substitution of images.⁴⁴ Over the course of several sessions, the naked corpses were provided with clothes, the particularly troubling green-and-blue corpse of an old man being given the costume of a Chinese general whom Justine had previously seen at a Universal Exposition. The success was “complete,” to an extent at least, when Janet managed to make the Chinese general stand up and walk.

In his psychotherapeutic practice, Janet worked like a film director, or editor, who created new scenarios by decomposing scenes from the past into separate elements and by substituting these with other previous memory images, or with completely new and fabricated ones. All of a sudden, the naked become clothed, and dead bodies become alive again. The allusion here to the magic of cinema is striking—suffice to think of Georges Méliès’s story about how he invented the stop-motion substitution trick when his camera jammed and he was able to continue filming only after a lapse of time: when the film was projected, a Madeleine-Bastille trolley suddenly changed into a hearse and men changed into women.⁴⁵ In his recent work, Raymond Bellour has compellingly shown how the “dispositifs” of cinema and hypnosis correspond to one another closely, especially in terms of the power they share to “configure the world,” which is a power to produce endogenous apparitions and imaginations.⁴⁶ In Janet’s case, this power meant the power to make one forget by implanting memories of events that had never taken place. In the case of *Kador*, it seems that this power also means the power of making one forget; however, at this time, making one forget forgetfulness itself by implanting memories that the subject effectively never had. As noted, the film that Professor Williams produces is not meant to affirm the existence of hidden memories and to reveal them to the therapist as well as the patient. Instead, what Suzanne is made to watch is something she cannot remember, and the white screen she confronts when the film ends and before which she recoils and passes out should in this sense be considered, fundamentally, a screen of forgetting (see figure 1a).

In both Janet and *Kador*, we are dealing with the power to produce the real by creating new pasts for the subject, quite like the “power of the false” that Deleuze describes in *Cinema 2*, where he discusses a modality of cinematic expression and narration of time that ceases to claim to be true and is operated by “a power of the false which replaces and supersedes the form of the true, because it poses . . . the co-existence of not-necessarily true pasts.”⁴⁷ Here, the question of cinema hinges on the impossibility of distinguishing the objective from the subjective, the external world from subjective interiority, or as Deleuze puts it, quoting Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Twilight of the Idols* (1889), “With the real world we have also abolished the apparent world.”⁴⁸ The cinematic image unmask itself as incapable of letting us decide between what actually happened and what did not happen. In this respect, it is not possessed by any “will to truth” but a specific kind of “will to power,” which is the cinema’s power to modify memory by fabricating the past, to produce reality by animating imagination, and thus to reconfigure the world in which the subject lives.

* * *

What does *The Mystery of the Rocks of Kador* compel us to think about cinema? First of all, in its self-reflective mode, *Kador* situates cinema within the context of the sciences of memory that emerged during the latter half of the nineteenth century and came up with a model of subjectivity that conceptualized the individual as porous, accidental, prone to continuous modulations, and predicated above all on the fundamental capacity to forget. Memory, like the individual, became something uncertain, suggestible, and malleable. Secondly, the way in which *Kador* articulates the power that cinema is able to exercise over its spectators draws precisely on the idea of modulating individual capacities of remembering and forgetting, the contingent textures of memory that make up the soul and provide the key to its pathologies. Here, the technology of cinema parallels with hypnosis, which by the turn of the twentieth century had become a technique for disclosing forgotten, traumatic pasts and acting on these pasts by making one forget and implementing false memories. This is the most radical argument *Kador* puts forward: that cinematic images amount to new descriptions of the past, and that we go to the cinema to forget. Like hypnosis, cinema renders our subjective pasts as indeterminate. Cinema’s memoropolitical power lies in the way in which it, paraphrasing Hacking, is able to make us experience now, in memory, something that did not exist before.⁴⁹ Cinema, in other words, is capable of revising our

subjective pasts retroactively. The white screen in *Kador* should indeed be considered an emblem of this capacity the cinema has to make us forget.

Notes

¹ Lorenz Engell, "Ontogenetic Machinery," *Radical Philosophy* 169 (2011): 10–12.

² Pierre Janet, *L'Automatisme psychologique: Essai de psychologie expérimentale sur les formes inférieures de l'activité humaine* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1889), 73 (my translation).

³ For an earlier analysis of Léonce Perret's *The Mystery of the Rocks of Kador* (1912), see my *Mapping the Moving Image: Gesture, Thought and Cinema circa 1900*, *Film Culture in Transition* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 109–32. The current essay expands on and gives a new direction to the more brief reading of *Kador* presented in the book. This essay is based on a talk given at the Memoryscapes conference in Basel, Switzerland, in November 2011, and I thank the conference organizers, Ute Holl and Matthias Wittmann, as well as the participants for their insightful comments and suggestions for the original paper.

⁴ Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (Paris: Minuit, 2004), 42–46.

⁵ Key publications include Philippe Chaslin, *La Confusion mentale primitive: Stupidité, démence aiguë, stupeur primitive* (Paris: Asselin & Houzeau, 1895); Ernest Dupré, *La Mythomanie: Etude psychologique et médico-légale du mensonge et de la fabrication morbides* (Paris: Jean Gainche, 1905); Joseph Grasset, *Demifous et demiresponsibles* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1907); Albert Pitres, *Leçons cliniques sur l'hystérie et l'hypnotisme* (Paris: Doin, 1891); and Jules Ernest Séglas, *Des troubles du langage chez les aliénés* (Paris: J. Rueff et Cie, 1892).

⁶ Ian Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 183.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 214–20.

⁸ Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, trans. Robert Hurley, vol. 1 of *The History of Sexuality* (London: Penguin, 1998), 139.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul*, 214.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 190.

¹² Eugène Azam, *Hypnotisme et double conscience: Origine de leur étude et divers travaux sur des sujets analogiques* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1893), 190–91 (my translation).

¹³ Allan Young, *The Harmony of Illusions: Inventing Post-traumatic Stress Disorder* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 28.

¹⁴ Théodule Ribot, *Diseases of Memory: An Essay in the Positive Psychology*, trans. William Huntington Smith (New York: D. Appleton, 1887), 98–116.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹⁶ Théodule Ribot, *The Diseases of Personality*, 4th ed. (Chicago: Open Court, 1910), 28. Significantly, for Ribot, the distinction between so-called normal and

pathological alterations of personality seemed to be merely a quantitative and not a qualitative one: "With patience and careful research one could find in mental pathology sufficient observations to establish a progression, or rather a continuous regression, from the most transient change to the most complete alteration of the ego" (30).

¹⁷ Alfred Fouillée, "Les Grandes conclusions de la psychologie contemporaine," *Revue des deux mondes* 107 (1891): 788–818, quotation on 805 (my translation).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 798.

¹⁹ Stanley Cavell, "What Photography Calls Thinking," in *Cavell on Cinema*, ed. William Rothman, Horizons of Cinema (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2005), 115–33, esp. 126.

²⁰ As quoted in Janet Bergstrom's "Introduction: Parallel Lines," in *Endless Night: Cinema and Psychoanalysis, Parallel Histories*, ed. Janet Bergstrom (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 1–23, quotation on 16.

²¹ Hippolyte Bernheim, *De la suggestion et de ses applications à la thérapeutique* (Paris: Octave Doin, 1888), 207.

²² Hippolyte Bernheim, *Suggestive Therapeutics: A Treatise on the Nature and Uses of Hypnotism*, trans. Christian A. Herter (New York: Putnam, 1889), 103–4.

²³ Hippolyte Bernheim, *De la suggestion dans l'état hypnotique and dans l'état de veille* (Paris: Doin, 1884), 78.

²⁴ Debora Silverman, "Psychologie Nouvelle," in *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Vanessa Schwartz and Jeannene Przyblyski, In Sight: Visual Culture (New York: Routledge, 2004), 371–92, quotation on 378.

²⁵ Stefan Andriopoulos, *Possessed: Hypnotic Crimes, Corporate Fiction, and the Invention of Cinema*, Cinema and Modernity (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 111–12.

²⁶ Michelle Aubert and Jean-Claude Seguin, eds., *La Production cinématographique des Frères Lumière* (Paris: Bibliothèque du Film, 1996), 150–51.

²⁷ Gilles de la Tourette, *L'Hypnotisme et les états analogues au point de vue médico-légal* (Paris: E. Plon, 1887), 392.

²⁸ "Remarkable Hypnotic Experiments," *Pall Mall Gazette*, no. 10522, 16 December 1896.

²⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (London: Athlone, 1989), 263.

³⁰ Jean-Louis Schefer, *L'Homme ordinaire du cinéma* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma/Gallimard, 1980), 104, 112–14.

³¹ Léon Chertok and Isabelle Stengers, *A Critique of Psychoanalytic Reason: Hypnosis as a Scientific Problem from Lavoisier to Lacan*, trans. Martha Noel Evans (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 162.

³² Joseph Breuer and Sigmund Freud, *Studies on Hysteria*, vol. 2 of *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. James Strachey, in collaboration with Anna Freud, 24 vols. (London: Vintage, 2001), 101.

³³ On memory understood in terms of inscription and trace in modernity, see Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 39.

³⁴ On the uses of the word *memory* in the late nineteenth century, see Young, *Harmony of Illusions*, 28.

³⁵ Sigmund Freud, "Screen Memories," in *Standard Edition* (see note 32), 3:303–22, quotation on 318.

³⁶ See Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul*, 195–96.

³⁷ Janet, *L'Automatisme psychologique*, 436–40.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 439.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 440.

⁴⁰ Pierre Janet, *Névroses et idées fixes* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1898), 1–2, 215–19.

⁴¹ See Janet, *L'Automatisme psychologique*, 95–96.

⁴² Pierre Janet, "L'Histoire d'une idée fixe," *Revue Philosophique* 37 (1894): 21–163.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 126.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁴⁵ Georges Méliès, "Cinematographic Views," trans. Stuart Liebman, in *French Film Theory and Criticism: A History/Anthology, Volume 1, 1907–1929*, ed. Richard Abel (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 35–47.

⁴⁶ Raymond Bellour, *Le Corps du cinéma: Hypnoses, émotions, animalités* (Paris: P.O.L., 2009), 86, 104.

⁴⁷ Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 131.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁴⁹ See Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul*, 249.