

Image Re-presentation in Don DeLillo's *Point Omega*

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Abstract- While technological advancement and artistic creations have amazingly diversified the (re-)presentation of images, infinite image proliferation becomes an irresistible trend. To resist the subsuming power of the image-laden society, the renewed perceptions and interpretations of the image presentation are explored both in artistic presentation and in literary writing. *Point Omega* is a convergence of such an attempt. The paper explores how the time-featured image in *Point Omega* activates new ideas, sensuous responses, and transient self-perception. *Point Omega* represents Douglas Gordon's *24 Hour Psycho* which is an adaptation of Hitchcock's *Psycho*. By reframing the running speed to two frames a second, Gordon drastically challenges the familiar recognition and interpretation. Writing about Gordon's work, DeLillo stresses the emergence of various perceptions, imaginations, and association in the video-watching process. No longer resting on the cultural critique on the media society as what has been done in his earlier works, DeLillo marks time as the prominent variable for the emergence of the new and the unknown.

Moreover, DeLillo's image representation highlights the physical condition which is both an essential feature of Gordon's video installation and the hinge for DeLillo's distinct writing. For one thing, the emergence of the new and the unthought lies in the interweaving between the spectator's perception of the physicality and his responses to the reframed image. For another, the physicality of the time-reframed image resonates with the desert, the setting of the main story. The time-embedded desert echoing the time-featured image renders the distinctive conditions for different self-perception. Hence, the image representation in *Point Omega* proffers the condition for the unexpected and unthought, reconfigures the selfhood, and, significantly, enacts the alternative writing which goes from the filmic to the fictional, from the visual to the verbal.

Keywords- image representation; 24-Hour Psycho; time; Deleuze; Point Omega

INTRODUCTION

Point Omega (2010) furthers Don DeLillo's investigation of alternative image representation and shows his attempt in exploring new possibilities of writing. With technological advance, image proliferation and dissemination become an irresistible trend, marking an image-laden world featured by the simulation of reality or the nullification of meaning. As a writer who takes great interest in the power of image, DeLillo's writing shows his constant exploration of the image (re)presentation. His early works examine how image rigidifies the social configuration and self-perception. DeLillo in later works focuses on exploring the new and potential contrivance in image. *Point Omega* well demonstrates the latter and implies how the reframed image renders new possibilities for thoughts and innovates fictional writing.

Point Omega is a novel representing Douglas Gordon's *24 Hour Psycho*¹ which is an artistic installation adapted from Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*. What is modulated in *24 Hour Psycho* is the adjustment of the

running speed to two frames a second as well as the removal of the sound. In *Point Omega*, except for representing Gordon's work, DeLillo centers on the spectator's perception in watching the videowork. It espouses the reframed image to the physical condition of the gallery. The novel on the one hand displays how the spectator is uprooted from the original meaning and hinged onto new associations and self-recognition in watching the video. On the other hand, DeLillo enfolded different means of image (re-)presentation from the visual (the movie) to the empirical (the videowork installation) to the verbal (the novel) and makes a new terrain in image representation in fiction. Crossing the borders among cinema, artistic installation, and fiction, DeLillo marks the features of writing in image representation.

Significantly, time is foregrounded in representing *24 Hour Psycho*. DeLillo's distinctiveness lies not merely in how the altered running speed of the video dissolves the presupposed interpretation of the movie but in how the spectator perceives and recognizes himself. But, how does the reframed image dissolve the original meaning of the image and self-recognition? To understand the reason for the meaning dissolution and the renewed self-recognition, the questions this paper aims to explore are: What idea of time is embedded in Gordon's and DeLillo's image representation? How does the image elicit the un-

¹ At the end of *Point Omega*, DeLillo presents his acknowledgement to the work done by Douglas Gordon, which was first screened in 1993 in Glasgow and Berlin. And in the summer of 2006, the videowork was installed in the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

identifiable and elusive selfhood in DeLillo's novel? What is the significance of DeLillo's representing *24 Hour Psycho* in terms of writing? The following analysis will be divided into four parts. The first part presents an overview of DeLillo's writing on image and the second expounds the idea of time underlying the reconfigured image. The third part focuses on how the time-reframed image contributes to the evanescent selfhood in *Point Omega*. The fourth part examines how DeLillo's temporally-reframed image intriguingly mirrors the time-imbricated space in the main story of the novel.

I. IMAGE IN DELILLO'S WRITING

DeLillo's interest in the transaction between fiction and movies, words and image, is obvious, as he once said that "short stories and novels have been made into movies. I simply tried to reverse the process" (Osteen 1996: 446). This can be traced back to the influence of modern cinema on his writing. When asked about whom he has affinities with in terms of writing, he remarks that "the major influences on me have been European movies, jazz, and Abstract Expressionism" (Passaro 79). That is closely related to the significant feature of his writing which is marked by equivocality, pivoting on the liminal, as he comments on his works—"I've always liked being relatively obscure . . . I feel that's where my work belongs" (Passaro 77). The obscure and the liminal demonstrate his attempt to explore the possibility for new ideas in writing. In his talk with Thomas LeClair, a more specific clue is given concerning his connection with movies. He states, "the movies of Jean-Luc Godard² had a more immediate effect on my early work than anything I'd ever read. . . . The strong image, the short ambiguous scene, the dream sense of some movies, the artificiality, the arbitrary choices of some directors . . . The power of images" (2005: 9). What fascinates DeLillo about the power of filmic image is how the image reconstructs the way we face and perceive the world and triggers different self-recognition.

² Jean-Luc Godard, as Gilles Deleuze argues, is one of the most conspicuous filmmakers in modern movie. He is noted for the cinematic innovations which ignite *the unthought* to be free from the world—the introduction of 'something else' or the auteur (Deleuze 1989: 179). The strategies he applied in his film include the jump cuts in *Breathless* (1966), the jarring juxtapositions of sound and image in *A Woman is a Woman* (1961), the disintegration of narrative in *Pierrot le four* (1965), and the abrasive use of color in *Le Mépris* (1963), and *Made in USA* (1966) or *La Chinoise* (1967) (Rushton 110). That is a new way to comprehend and interpret the world. His influence is obvious in DeLillo's portraying the world. It is suffused with various images, either stunning or provoking. These images remold the way we see the world. Yet, Godard is not the only filmmaker who is influential to DeLillo in novelistic writing. In his talk with Anthony DeCurtis, DeLillo revealed that he has great fascination with the films by Antonioni, Fellini, Bergman as well as American directors Kubrick and Howard Hawks, etc. (DeCurtis 59).

With the keen and shrewd concern about modern danger and indeterminacy, his writing ranges from his consideration of the writer's role in society to the interrogation of the influence of the images on various media such as photograph, TV, movies as well as the performance of body artists on one's subjectivity. Images, mediated or empirical, become a prominent strategy and access for DeLillo's writing.

DeLillo's concern with the media or the power of image has been prevalent in his works. From his early works to the later ones, the image has been a prominent focus. His early works displays his criticism against how one is subsumed and constrained by the image-dominated world. The later works tend to see image as an invigorating power eliciting the potential and the unexpected of the selfhood as well as the aesthetic and literary innovations.

His early novels present "that the ubiquity of cameras has transformed us all into actors under constant observation, even by ourselves" (Osteen 2005: 64). In his first novel, *Americana*, the protagonist establishes his sense of self by making films. The novel demonstrates not only how he recognizes the world and himself through the lens but how provisionally the self-recognition is. DeLillo's presentation of the world of image corresponds to what John Hodgkins contends, drawing on the ideas of Paul Smethurst and Linda Hutcheon—it is a "literature to be both symptomatic and diagnostic, that is to say, it is a literature eminently capable of being simultaneously complicit in, and critical of, postmodern, postindustrial televisual culture" (56). DeLillo's early writing is both a presentation and a commentary on the world of image.

DeLillo is obviously highly conscious of the world overwhelmed with images, as it is said in *Running Dog* (1978), "[t]he camera's everywhere. . . . Everybody's on camera" (150). Together with other novels in his middle writing years, DeLillo shows a consistent concern about image, especially about how the technological advancement drastically blurs the actual and the fictional and twists the recognition of one's social relations. Jack Gladney in *White Noise*, seeing his wife on TV, feels skeptical and anxious about her *reality* and can't help but admit the mediated is part of the *real* her. Lee Oswald in *Libra* (1988), staring at himself being shot on TV, is split between the immediate dying experience and its represented image on TV. *Mao II* shows how writers lose the power to the image of terrorists which is used to establish the supreme authority and cement the political dominance.

About the turn of the twenty-first century, DeLillo starts to shift his focus from the impact of the images on social recognition and self-identification to the potentials of image-(re-)presentation. It features the empirical experience in image-making and perception.³ In writing,

³ Randy Laist in *Technology and Postmodern Subjectivity in Don DeLillo's Novels* (2010) makes a thorough analysis on how technology, including movies, TV, computer, and medical advancement, etc. have invaded and nullified human life.

he shifts his perspective from being an objective and critical observer, to that of an artist or an engaged participant exploring alternative aesthetic modes in image (re-)presentation. In *The Body Artist* (2001), *Cosmopolis* (2003), *Falling Man* (2007), and *Point Omega* (2010),⁴ DeLillo on the one hand illuminates the way image becomes the experiential and the embodied instead of the representational or spectacular. The stress on the empirical surfaces the new and unexpected perception of the image and nurtures new writing possibilities.

Point Omega is DeLillo's bold step on the exchange between fictional writing and the cinematic images. His image representation and artistic appropriation implicates the exploration of new writing possibilities.⁵ By representing Gordon's work in his writing, DeLillo makes fluid the distinction between the visual and the verbal. The reframed image is dislodged from the presumed signification and the habitual understanding. It renders the conditions for alternative perception and self-recognition. Such a transition and transgression in aesthetic presentation is significant as new vitality is instilled into the literary writing.

II. TIME IN THE REFRAMED IMAGE

In addition to understanding how DeLillo incorporates modern cinematic aesthetics in his writing,

⁴ In *The Body Artist*, Lauren Hartke, the body artist who performs art pieces on stage, is compelled to explore what life really means to her after her husband's committing suicide. It is a concept extending from her work, the body performance, to the examination of her real life in which everything becomes foreign so that she is forced to reacquire herself with the world she used to take for granted. *Cosmopolis* presents a movie-shooting scene in which hundreds of people go naked lying on the street and the protagonist, Eric, joins the crowd and feels an alternative sense of self—somewhere between the real and the fictional. It foregrounds the embodied image presentation. *Falling Man* talks about how people respond to life after the 911 event as the inserted scene of an artistic performance of a falling man attempts to remind the public what people have gone through in the catastrophe. *Point Omega* brings to the fore the perception of Douglas Gordon's *24-Hour Psycho*, which disturbingly arouses one's reaction to the image beyond presumed assumption and comprehension.

⁵ According to James Gourley, the change in DeLillo's image representation owes much to the 911 attack which forces the writers to reassess "their own work, and their entire field, and to propose a new method for literature . . . reassert the primacy of their interpretation of the world . . ." (9). Interestingly, time is the essential factor to reorient the axis of his writing since DeLillo argues that the "catastrophic event changes the way we think and act, moment to moment, week to week. . . . [t]he terrorists of September 11 want to bring back the past" (2001). The past is obviously a temporal concept; to the terrorists, it is something they live with at the present and are willing to retrieve at the cost of their life. Their incomprehensible and strong intension does shatter our sense of time, which is consistently meant for the future. Hence, violence is not the only fact that marks the terrorists' attacks; an alternative sense of time is also what they appeals to and the different thoughts they want to reveal.

Gordon's aesthetic ideas are essential to DeLillo's image representation in *Point Omega*.

Gordon de-familiarizes the images in various artistic installations. Most of his materials for creation have been derived from the works of literature, film, and music which are rather well-known and familiar to the public. Obviously, these are the works whose meanings are generally known to the public. However, the presupposed meanings or ideas associated with these works happen to be what Gordon means to challenge. He maintains,

these images are floating round the world; they can be picked up on the Internet, like any other images free from supplementary information, which in a strange way is an aestheticisation of something that's quite disturbing. . . . That I suppose is the key thing in all of the work that I'm doing whether with cinema or text or whatever. It's quite a radical dislocation from its roots but at the same time it's quite slightly done as well. (Brown 42)

Obvious is Gordon's attempt in subverting the established meanings of cinema or other texts. Prominently, going against the presupposed assumptions and the habitual meaning-association, Gordon's works have the viewer reconsider what the reconfigured image conveys or evokes. Nonetheless, the impact comes from the discrepancy between the original and the adapted. But, what is crucial in bringing forth the radical change? What is the significance of the radical change?

In Gordon's adaptation of *Psycho*, time serves as the most prominent factor to uproot the image from its original context and meaning-designation. *24 Hour Psycho* features temporal multiplicity. Gordon remarks, "[t]he viewer is catapulted back into the past by his recollection of the original, and at the same time he is drawn into the future by his expectations of an already familiar narrative. . . . A slowly changing present forces itself in between" (Ferguson 16). The contemporaneity of the past memory, the passing present and the elicited future marks the conspicuous temporal multiplicity. But, in what sense is the temporal intricacy built? How does the temporal multiplicity disengage the film from its original meaning? What effect does the reframed film have on the spectator?

The idea of the temporal multiplicity echoes Deleuze's notion of time. Bringing up Kant's idea of time⁶

⁶ Deleuze's time image is based on a different notion of time. It is derived from Kant's concept in *Critique of Pure Reason*. In his 1978 lecture, Deleuze maintains that Kant's greatest achievement is to innovate the notion of time as the statement that "time itself does not alter, but only something that is within time" (1998: 167). His argument aligns with Kant's idea that "[t]ime is not an empirical concept deduced from experience" but "a condition, *a priori*, of all phenomena whatsoever" (Kant 24, 27). Time presupposes what happens in experience. It is "a pure form of sensible intuition" (Kant 25). Rather than designate the successive moments, time refers to the pure form in which things

in the preface of the book, *Kant's Critical Philosophy*, Deleuze foregrounds time as a form or condition for transformation or changes. He restates "[t]ime is no longer related to the movement which it measures, but movement is related to time which conditions it. . . . It is *the form of everything that changes and moves*, but it is an immutable Form which does not change" (2003: vii-viii emphasis mine). In contrast to the instrumental sense, time is "a pure and empty form, in which all change of appearances is to be thought, but which does not change itself" (Voss 194-95). But, how can time remain unchanged for the changes?

Deleuze's "pure and empty form of time"⁷ . . . is essentially a 'belief in and of the future' and views the past as experience and the present as metamorphosis" (Deamer 369). In the pure and empty form of time lies the synthesis of the past, the present, and the future. The synthesis foregrounds the "caesura" in the metamorphosis of the present. And it is the caesura that incurs the immanent possibilities of the self.

Time is the most radical form of change, but the form of change does not change. The caesura, along with the before and after which it ordains once and for all, constitutes the fracture in the I. . . . the caesura, of whatever kind, must be determined in the image of a unique and tremendous event, an act which is adequate to time as a whole. (Deleuze 2015: 116)

The caesura, according to Daniela Voss, becomes "a point of metamorphosis, when all its possibilities of becoming are set free. It liberates the subject not only from the rule of identity and law, but also from the form of the true and thus bestows it with the power of the false and its artistic, creative potential" (207). The changed or fractured self can

be expounded in Deleuze's quote from Hume's thesis— "[r]epetition changes nothing in the object repeated, but does change something in the mind which contemplates it" (2015: 93). Deleuze's third synthesis of time, taking the concept of time as a pure form and eliciting changes in the self, well corresponds to DeLillo's depiction of the spectator's changes in watching *24 Hour Psycho*. What is remarkable about the caesura in time is how the false, the artistic, and the potential elicit various imagination, associations, and interpretations, and, prominently, the metamorphoses of the self.

In addition to temporal multiplicity, Gordon stresses the significance of the physical condition in watching and perceiving artistic works. In the interview with David Sylvester, Gordon contends that "[i]t was not exactly the social context but the physical context of watching that knitted together all of my experiences" (2001: 153). The physical context is highlighted for its influence on the feeling and associations. To Gordon, the way or the physical condition of watching the video serves as an essential variable to the effect of the cinematic images. The spectator's perception and interpretation are not merely related to the film or the image itself but to the physical condition surrounding it. For instance, the 360-degree screen of Gordon's *24 Hour Psycho* allows the viewer to watch from different angles and activates different perspectives and associations.

Katrina M. Brown contends about Gordon's intension in espousing the temporal complexity to the physical condition. She observes that *24 Hour Psycho* is marked by "exploiting the physicality of the screen, breaking down the authority of the single, distant, projected image and invoking the subjectivity of the viewer." Furthermore, it has the viewer "reflect and contemplate, allowing image and its history to resonate" (Brown 21-22). However, while the adapted video places the viewer in the uncharted experiences forged by the distinctive notion of time and the physical constitution, it is DeLillo's writing that reveals the emergence of the new and the self-transformation resulting from the video-watching.

The significance of exploring *Point Omega* lies in examining how DeLillo's image representation illuminates the transient self as well as the ingenious writing on the trans-media representation.⁸ What marks his writing in *Point Omega* is the extension of the reframed film by foregrounding the experience of viewing the video-work to probe into how the caesura in time and the physical condition induce new perceptions of the self. "[H]e began to understand, after all this time, that he'd been standing here waiting for something. What was it? It was something outside conscious grasp until now" (14). As the reframed video and the setting in the museum disengage the spectator from what he knows, the uncertain and the

are triggered to happen.

⁷ Deleuze's concept of time as a pure and empty form is the third passive syntheses of time as there are three syntheses of time in Deleuze's theory—the habituation of the present, the pure memory of the past and the empty, creative future (Deamer 373). The first passive synthesis of time is Habit. In Habit, the past is referred to as retention and the future as expectation; the past and the future no longer serve as separate measures but act as different dimensions of the present. The second synthesis of time is memory. Drawing on Bergson's notion of time, Deleuze contends that memory mainly refers to the relation of the present to the past. "Memory . . . recovers the particulars dissolved in generality" produced in habit (Deleuze 2015: 9). Here, memory is not composed of separate moments but taken as a whole. It intriguingly changes according to its relation to the present. "*Memory transforms the past* more than it conserves it. This is why the past is more virtual than actual memory contains elements that were never perceived in the past, purely virtual elements that cannot be reduced to past perceptions" (Faulkner 35). Memory, not necessarily actual, alters or keeps altering in the passing present. Memory "allows for freedom through the selection of the level at which the past is played out" (Somers-Hall 72). The third passive synthesis is the pure form of time which triggers the changes but does not change itself.

⁸ The trans-media representation refers to the layered presentation of artistic forms in DeLillo's writing, from Hitchcock's movie, to Gordon's artistic installation, to the presentation of watching the video-work.

unknown emerge. Most of all, DeLillo's writing reveals an idiosyncratic notion of time, space, and its relation with one's subjectivity which culminates in the idea of point omega as the title of the novel implies.

III. THE IMAGE REPRESENTATION PERCEIVED IN POINT OMEGA

DeLillo marks time as the prominent feature of *24 Hour Psycho* and concentrates on its effect on the spectator. The distinct notion of time sheds light on the temporal caesura as the image evokes the memory which resonates with the passing present and mobilizes the future changes. In this novel, DeLillo means to manifest how the temporal fissure brings about the transformation of the self. The anonymous spectator undergoes the self-reconfiguring and transforming process. His erratic perception, association, and imagination echo the indeterminacy of his identity—no name is given and no character is featured. The last but not the least is to shed light on how a seemingly irrelevant story in the text aligns with the temporally-reframed film.

Point Omega consists of the prelude, the coda, and the main story. The prelude and the coda depict an anonymous and elusive spectator who keeps coming back to the museum to watch *24 Hour Psycho*. Interestingly, the distinct perspective of the description lies in how the spectator not only watched the videowork but perceived everything in the museum including the other spectators, the guards, the place he stood, as well as the light and the temperature. The video-watching process reveals more about the spectator's sporadic feeling, perception, imagination, and association, the gallery and himself than the adapted film. As for the main plot, it is about a young man, Jim Finley, who went to a desert with an attempt to make a documentary on a secluded military adviser of the Pentagon, Elster. The intriguing relation between the main story and the video-watching parts lies in two aspects. One falls on the videowork, *24 Hour Psycho*, since Jim took Elster to the museum to watch *24 Hour Psycho* and noticed the anonymous spectator. The other aspect is how the anonymous spectator's experience echoes Elster's idea of life and Jim's self-transformation in the desert. For instance, the anonymous spectator's experience is reflected in Elster's words at the beginning of the main story— "[t]he true life takes place when we're alone, thinking, feeling, lost in memory, dreamingly self-aware, the submicroscopic moments" (17). As for the desert, Jim felt that "[t]ime slows down when I'm here. Time becomes blind. I feel the landscape more than see it. I never know what day it is. I never know if a minute has passed or an hour" (23-24). The slowed or even erased time in the desert aligns with that of Gordon's videowork. Time, space, and the selfhood are intertwined to mark the distinct feature of DeLillo's image representation in fictional writing.

As Gordon makes time a decisive factor in re-framing the film, DeLillo portrays its effect on the spectator in *Point Omega*. In commenting on *Point Omega*, James

Gourley maintains that "[t]he power and importance of cinema is DeLillo's subject: a medium which is more reflective of the world's perceptions . . . and one which may nevertheless provide an insightful model for time in the novel" (Gourley 86). Gourley's commentary indicates how cinema and time feature DeLillo's writing in *Point Omega*. The temporal configuration in *Point Omega* features in the resonance of the past and the present while the actual time is blurred or even dissolved. Specifically, it corresponds to Deleuze's idea of time and the spectator is uprooted from both the widely-known designation and the sense of the real. The image reframing and representation turn into "the generic conditions in which possibilities are created" (Flaxman 7). Hence, applying the alternative notion of time, DeLillo's writing stages the condition for new thoughts, idea, and, most of all, the evanescent selfhood.

The reframed image of *24 Hour Psycho* overwhelms the spectator with an intriguing sense of time. As depicted by DeLillo, "[t]he original movie has been slowed to a running time of twenty-four hours. What he was watching seemed pure film, pure time" (2010: 6). Confronted with the deliberately-reconfigured image, the viewer first perceived the temporal crevice and came to see the discrepancy between what he saw and what he remembered. Watching the video, the spectator found that he "wanted to bathe in the tempo, in the near rhythm of the image. . . . He wanted complete immersion, whatever that means. . . . Real time is meaningless. The phrase is meaningless. There's no such thing" (2010:115). The spectator was lured into the reset tempo and dislodged from the temporal context in reality. Moreover, the image is disengaged from the presupposed idea or meaning. Andy Birtwistle states that "Gordon's work lends opacity to the popular cinematic image by removing it from cinema— removing it from the flow of a narrative that demands transparency, from the modes of articulation and habituation that guarantee this transparency" (104). The reframed image defying the established meaning subsumes the spectator in an altered temporal configuration and self-recognition.

The alternative notion of time presented in *Point Omega* is marked by the time caesura forged in the split between one's memory of Hitchcock's *Psycho* and the present confrontation with Gordon's slowed version. The rupture happens when the tempo is particularly slowed to an extent that the viewer is confronted with an unfamiliar familiarity. One is surely reminded of Hitchcock's work, recalling the feelings in previous watching experiences. The memory, an inevitable and involuntary part of the watching process, makes an obvious contrast with the image reformed by Gordon. Yet, the caesura related to one's memory seems more complicated than expected. First, the anonymous spectator sensed the impossibility of the "authentic" memory, since "there was an element of forgetting involved in this experience" (DeLillo 2010: 11). As Deleuze contends, memory is different from habit. While habit maintains the past as the regular for the

present and the future, memory “recovers the particulars dissolved in generality” (Deleuze 2015: 9). Moreover, the recovery is never complete. Memory transforms the past more than conserves it, being more virtual and actual. Second, the memory includes both the film-watching experience in the past and that of the previous days since that was the fifth straight day of his visiting the museum. “He wanted to forget the original movie or at least limit the memory to a distant reference, unintrusive. There was also the memory of this version, seen and reseen all week” (DeLillo 2010:10). The interference of the intricate memories makes it impossible for him to hold onto any recognizable meaning of the film. “He kept feeling things whose meaning escaped him” (DeLillo 2010:11). The reframed film instead marks the temporal crevice with many folds of memory, and triggers the spectator’s desire to peek behind the *re-presentation* of the film. The reframed film echoes what Deleuze says in an interview, “[t]he image itself is a collection (*ensemble*) of time relations from which the present merely flows Time-relations are never seen in ordinary perception, but they are seen in the image, once it is creative” (1998: 53). DeLillo’s representation reveals the interwoven time relations. The complicated time relation activates the potential and new ideas of the film as well as the self.

Presenting the image in *24 Hour Psycho*, DeLillo shows how the potential thought or idea emerges in the spectatorship. The anonymous man first noticed that “[t]he film’s merciless pacing had no meaning without a corresponding watchfulness, the individual whose absolute alertness did not betray what was demanded. . . . The less there to see, the harder he looked, the more he saw” (DeLillo 2010: 5). Such a tempo, transcending what the previous image designates, has the anonymous man absorbed in the image and perceive *more* than what can be seen and identified. It is described: “[w]hen an actor moved a muscle, when eyes blinked, it was a revelation. Every action was broken into components so distinct from the entity that the watcher found himself isolated from every expectation” (DeLillo 2010: 8). The temporally reset film disengages the spectator from the presupposed or expected idea. It has him see something new while no definite or exact designation is assured.

There are two more aspects to detail the generation of the new and unexpected thoughts. First, the reset running speed of the film dissipates the original feeling or emotion attached to the film. “The broad horror of the old gothic movie was subsumed in time” (DeLillo 2010: 6). Horror and tension in the spectatorship are replaced by unexpected thoughts. When the viewer was watching the scene of Anthony Perkins’ turning his head in five incremental movements, he stood and watched and felt “there seemed to flow an array of ideas involving science and philosophy and nameless other things” (DeLillo 2010: 5). The deliberately slowed running speed highlights the caesura and allows new ideas or association to seep in, dissolving the original association and feeling. Moreover, the idea conjured in watching the video differs from time

to time. It is the reason why the unknown viewer in *Point Omega* keeps returning to the museum. Hence, despite the ostensibly familiar images, what actually features *24 Hour Psycho* is “outside categories, open to entry” (DeLillo 2010:102). This is an image that marks the distinct nature of time, as the viewer is placed at the “outside”—what is outside vision, outside communication, the not-yet-thought. The spectator is marked with the ‘impowers’ of thought—we are not yet thinking” (Rodowick181).

The emergence of the unknown thoughts raises one’s awareness of new subjectivity in the immediate perception and confrontation with the image. It is a process “[t]o see what’s here, finally to look and to know you’re looking, to feel time passing, to be alive to what is happening in the smallest registers of motion” (DeLillo 2010: 5). More exactly, it is the caesura making him aware of his watching and the emergence of the new. Watching the murder scene behind the curtain, the spectator in *Point Omega* is not subsumed in horror and suspense but is eager to assure the number of the rings in the curtain scene. The longer he watches, the more he feels like “being there, watching and thinking for hours, standing and watching, thinking into the film, into himself.” He then wonders if the film is “thinking into him, spilling through him like some kind of runaway brain fluid” (DeLillo 2010: 109). The film activating thinking enacts the new subjectivity as such image “leads us back individually to perception Subjectivity, then takes on a new sense, which is no longer motor or material, but temporal and spiritual . . .” (Deleuze 1989:47). Hence, from the image to new self-perception, DeLillo presents how subjectivity is constantly reformed in the pure form of time. The more the spectator looks into the film, the more he is conscious of his being elusive and transient.

The self-reflection in time image leads to self-dissolution “as he might have drawn it in his mind. He had no idea what he looked like to others. He wasn’t sure what he looked like to himself” (DeLillo 2010: 8). At the beginning, seeing “the fractured motion, film stills on the border of benumbed life,” the anonymous man knows that, to the general people, “[t]he original movie was what matters to them, a common experience to be relived on TV screens, at home, with dishes in the sink” (DeLillo 2010: 12). However, as he is immersed in watching the video, he starts to ponder on some essential questions—“if the run was extended and he kept coming, five, six, seven hours a day, week after week, would it be possible for him to live in the world? Did he want to? Where was it, the world?” In addition, his self-awareness as well as the sense of reality dissolves in the video-watching process. Despite his memory of the film, he wonders if “[t]he original movie was fiction, this was real” (DeLillo 2010: 13). But, why is the re-framed film, instead of the original one, real? What is the real or reality to him? Does the reality refer to the moment when the spectator feels engaged?

The spectator has more bewilderment than assurance as his perception gradually melts down the distinction between the world and himself, the real and the fictional,

the superimposed and the genuinely felt. The re-contextualized video-work has him rethink who or what he is in terms of the reframed image, the surroundings, and even other spectators. As transient thoughts and ideas come to him, the spectator senses that

[h]e is not responsible for these thoughts. But they're his thoughts, aren't they? He returns his attention to the screen, where everything is so intensely what it is The man . . . waits to be assimilated, pore by pore, to dissolve into the figure of Norman Bates, who will come into the house and walk up the stairs in subliminal time, two frames per second, and then turn toward the door of Mother's room. (DeLillo 2010:116)

Embedded in the passage are the intricate relations among the unknown spectator, the image, and the character. The ideas induced by the video have the spectator perceive the image differently and experience the ever-transforming self.

The spectator's self-dissolution is intriguingly expounded by the secluded military adviser in the main story, Richard Elster, a 73-year-old veteran. He used to advise the Pentagon on the Iraq war. He acts as a counterpart of the spectator. His argument about matter and man indicates DeLillo's further exploration of the relationship between time and humans.⁹ It is insinuated that the dissolved self is a state of life close to the point omega. During a filmmaker's visit for making a documentary on him, Elster tells the filmmaker,

Matter. All the stages, subatomic level to atoms to inorganic molecules. We expand, we fly outward, that's the nature of life ever since the cell. The cell was a revolution. . . . We're a crowd, a swarm. We think in groups, travel in armies. Armies carry the gene for self-destruction. . . . The blur of technology, this is where the oracles plot their wars. Because now comes the introversion. Father Teilhard knew this, this omega point. A leap out of our biology. Ask yourself this question. Do we have to be human forever? Consciousness is

⁹ In DeLillo's oeuvre, the idea of time is closely related to the way how the self is re-molded and how new thoughts are provoked. His idea of time is evidently explored in works such as *The Names*, *Cosmopolis*, and *White Noise*, etc. He has an idea of time whose contraction and expansion are decisive to the malleable state of the self. In the works mentioned above, the notion of time is termed as deep time, epochal time, and geologic time, etc. These are the macro-temporal concepts, paradoxically in sharp contrast with the micro-temporal one stressed in *Point Omega*. Between the contraction and expansion of the crystal time lies the distinction between the all-encompassing and exclusive notions of the self. DeLillo's idea of the self is never static but varies within time.

exhausted. Back now to inorganic matter. This is what we want. We want to be stones in field. (DeLillo 2010: 52-53)

With the knowledge of physical science and technology, Elster rereads the metamorphoses which designate an on-going process marching toward the omega point, a philosophical concept originally brought up by Father Teilhard.¹⁰ What Father Teilhard means is "a maximum level of complexity and consciousness" in the evolution of the universe. Based on Father Teilhard's idea of Point Omega, Elster refers to the dissolution of individuals, even the individual or human consciousness. Furthermore, what is particularly foregrounded is the human inability to comprehend or absorb what is evolving in the world. It is a condition in which people merge with the universe and reach a state of indiscernibility, as the watcher described in the novel—he "wanted the film to move even more slowly, requiring deeper involvement of eye and mind, always that, the thing he sees tunneling into the blood, into dense sensation, sharing consciousness with him" (DeLillo 2010: 115). He conflates with the image not merely mentally but physically. Thinking *through* and *in* the image contributes to an alternative sense of being as it detaches itself from the habitual, avers from the reminiscence, and opens up for the future.¹¹

The adapted videowork is not merely thought-provoking but also self-dissipating. It provides a condition which "engage[s] the individual at a depth beyond the usual assumption, the things he supposes and presumes and takes for granted" (DeLillo 2010: 7). In DeLillo's writing, *24 Hour Psycho* not only re-contextualizes the original film but also re-configures the state of the self. Such watching gives rise to new sensuous reactions. It is

¹⁰ Father Teilhard (Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, 1881-1955) was a French philosopher and Jesuit priest who specialized in geology and paleontology. He proposed a law of "complexity-consciousness," meaning the increasing degree of complexity as well as consciousness in the history of evolution which goes from "the inorganic to the organic, from less complex to more highly organized forms of life, through the process of hominization . . . achieve collectively an ultrahuman convergence, seen symbolically as a final 'Point Omega'" (*Encyclopedia.com*).

¹¹ The state of such image confrontation is different from what Eugene Goodheart talks about. Goodheart's idea of anaesthetic refers to how the repetition of the images wears away its effect on us. Taking the apocalypse as an example, he remarks that "its endless replay . . . perfects the image or our experience of it. By isolating the event and repeating it, its content, its horror evaporates. The event becomes aesthetic and the effect upon us anaesthetic" (122). What Goodheart means to portray is how the media accustom the public with the images while DeLillo in *Point Omega* attempts to depict the evacuating effect of such an image as it generates the conditions for new ideas or thoughts. The former tends to echo Debord's idea of the spectacle; in contrast, DeLillo, drawing on Father Teilhard's idea of *Point Omega*, depicts a unique sense of image perception which transcends the individual recognition or social designation, taking on a different sense of the world.

an inversion of self-awareness—from thought-provoking to self-dissolution.

Intriguingly, the effect of the temporally-reframed image presented by DeLillo is also related to and even actualized in space. That is, the space or the physical situation becomes a remarkable feature reinforcing the image as the pure form of time. It echoes but goes beyond Gordon's belief that the physical condition plays a significant role in constructing time image. While the physical condition in Gordon's installation enhances the effect of the time-reframed image, space in DeLillo's image-representation actualizes the pure form of time and enacts the evanescent self, too.

IV. THE TIME-REFRAMED IMAGE MIRRORED IN SPACE

As time is foregrounded in the reframed image, the spatial setting or physical condition tends to be considered not as important. However, DeLillo makes distinct that space, going beyond a static or concrete existence, intriguingly enhances the reframed image. Nonetheless, space has two implications in this novel. One refers to the physical condition while watching Gordon's artistic installation and the other signifies the desert in the main story which serves as the pure form of time and incurs changes in the self.

The reframed image is closely related to the physical condition, the museum. DeLillo distinctively depicts how the spectator was highly aware of himself in the museum—his standing, walking, and even preferring to cling to the north wall. And whatever he sensed about the image is interwoven with his perception of the physical condition. Importantly, the physical condition serves as a determinant in actualizing time-featured image in two dimensions. One is how the spectator reacts to the physicality of the museum and the other refers to how the spectator observes the other spectators in the museum. DeLillo marks the physical condition as an essential part in the image-watching process. Watching the videowork as an artistic installation differs greatly from seeing a movie which subsumes the audience into the image, ridding any possible disturbance. DeLillo's depiction of the videowork-watching highlights the spectator's awareness of everything in the gallery.

The unknown viewer in *Point Omega* has keen consciousness and observation of the physical condition of the videowork. He commented that "[f]or this film, in *this cold dark space*, it was completely necessary, black-and-white, one more neutralizing element, a way in which the action becomes something near to elemental life . . ." (DeLillo 2010:10 emphasis mine). The cold dark environment along with the black-and-white image has the spectator's attention converge on action—the essential feature of the film. Yet, the focus is blurred in perceiving the other physical device of the installation. In addition to the cold and dark physical condition, the 360-degree screen renders various angles to watch the work, incurring

colliding perspectives. While the viewer moved to the other side of the screen to watch Anthony Perkins' reaching for a car door, he found "Anthony Perkins using the left hand, the wrong hand, to reach for a car door and then open it. But could he call the left hand the wrong hand? Because what made this side of screen any less truthful than the other side?" (DeLillo 2010: 4) Different ideas emerge and even collide while he changes the viewing angle, surfacing the unknown and the immanent. Interestingly, after trying different viewing positions, he unknowingly felt some place, the north wall, was just right for him to be engaged in the image. He felt that

he was in place, as always, his place, in body contact with the north wall. . . . any kind of seating arrangement would sabotage the concept, the bare setting, the darkness, the chill air, and the guard motionless at the door. . . . always back to the wall, in physical touch, or he might find himself doing what, he wasn't sure, transmigrating, passing from this body into a quivering image on the screen. (DeLillo 2010: 102)

In the video-watching process, it is revealed that the viewer did not merely focus on the image but its physicality. And, the ideas or thoughts are evoked not only by the watcher's meditation on the film and by what he senses around him. It includes the way he approaches the image, the place he situates himself in, and even the direction he faces.

The physical condition renders intriguing intimacy and triggers the spectator's imagination about the relation with others. Apparent is the anonymous viewer's awareness of a female who stood by him. Never really taking a look at her, he talked to her occasionally in watching the video-work. Their interaction ranges from their comment on the video to the anonymous spectator's imagination of asking her out for a date or even having certain physical touch with her. Regarding her "as a shadow unfolding from the wall . . . [h]e imagined turning and pinning her to the wall with the room emptied out except for the guard who is looking straight ahead, nowhere, motionless, the film still running, the woman pinned, also motionless, watching the film over his shoulder" (DeLillo 2010: 111-12). The spectator's imagination makes a film-like scene. It is unknown if watching the film makes the spectator identify himself with the character and imagine approaching the girl standing by him. Yet, with the imaginary scene of himself and the others in the gallery, it is certain he is drifted into another sense of himself and others.

The transient self is surfaced in the holistic video-watching experience, inclusive of the video, the physical condition, and other spectators. The viewer's perception of the film interweaves with the inexplicable imagination and feelings stemming from the surroundings. At the end of the book, the anonymous viewer imagines that everyone walks out of the displaying room and the guard takes his gun and

shoots himself. "Then the screening ends, the museum closes down, he is alone in the dark room with the body of the guard" (DeLillo 2010: 116). The viewer's consciousness and imagination about the people and the physical surroundings are simultaneous with his watching the film. Both the associated and imagined are intertwined with the experienced and perceived. It corresponds to the nature of the temporally-reframed image in which the actual mingles with the virtual, the memory with the present, and the empirical with the imagined. Significantly, the elusive self is illuminated in his incorporating the physical condition in the video-watching and the transient ideas of his relation with the other spectators.

As the physical condition of the time-featured image enhances the evanescent and elusive self, the main story in *Point Omega* expounds how space actualizes time as a pure form and provides new possibilities for self-transformation as the temporally-reframed image. The story is about Jim Finley, the film-maker, going to the desert for making a documentary of a military adviser, Elster. But, by living with the adviser, Jim did not really work on his filming but engaged himself to the life of the desert. His sense of self is altered while immersing himself in the nature of the time-embedded desert.

Elster expounds the temporal feature of the desert and how it activates the reshaping force of the self. Like the time-reframed image, the desert is a pure form for changes, characterized by the vastness, plasticity, and indiscernibility. It is devoid of social restraints and regulations. Intriguingly, it is the time embedded in the desert that facilitates its transience. The desert intriguingly confronts man with the notion of time undivided into periods, minutes, or seconds.

There were no mornings or afternoons. It was one seamless day, every day, until the sun began to arc and fade, mountains emerging from their silhouettes. . . . Day turns to night eventually but it's a matter of light and darkness, it's not time passing, mortal time. There's none of the usual terror. It's different here, time is enormous, that's what I feel here, palpably. Time that precedes us and survives us.
(DeLillo 2010: 36, 44)

The desert as the pure and empty form of time is perceived as a whole instead of being the manmade calculating mechanism like that in the city—"the slinking time of watches, calendars, minutes left to live" (59). Time in the desert is paradoxically unmeasurable but perceivable. To live in the desert is less a confrontation with the vast and barren field than a direct confrontation with the pure form of time. It ushers us to converge with the "grand" time whose scope lies in the cosmos, the epoch, the geological evolution, as Jim observed how Elster immersed himself in such a state:

He'd exchanged all that for space and time. These were things he seemed to

absorb through his pores. There were the distances that enfolded every feature of the landscape and there was the force of geologic time, out there somewhere . . .
(DeLillo 2010: 19)

Staying in the desert designates not only his merging with the enormous space but, more significantly, enfolding the geologic time, which enables numerous changes or enacts the potentials. Time preconditions one's change in space. In addition, the desert, resembling time image, is ecologically transient: "[b]eyond the local shrubs and cactus, only waves of space, occasional far thunder, the wait for rain, the gaze across the hills to a mountain range that was there yesterday, lost today in lifeless skies" (DeLillo 2010: 64). The desert is perceived as a provisional entity rather than a fixated condition of the landscape. It *actualizes* the idea of time-reframed image in which the past and the present, the actual and the virtual are merged. Moreover, such a perception of the landscape, like time image, reveals a transient self.

It is in the desert that Jim experienced the self-transformation. In the midst of the desert, Jim felt that "[t]he desert was outside my range, it was an alien being, it was science fiction, both saturating and remote, and I had to force myself to believe I was here" (20). Paradoxically, Jim felt the desert is foreign and unrealistic but overwhelming. And, the confrontation with the desert as the pure form of time initiates the change of himself and his relation with others. He interestingly describes his relation with Elster's daughter in terms of time, saying that "it offered a release from the constant self-tunneling of my time here and also a kind of balance to her father's grip on my immediate future" (42). Elster's daughter renders him a different dimension of time in which he can embrace other potentials of the self, other than his original intention and Elster's future perception. Specifically, his relation with Elster and his daughter then turned into certain kind of family. He asked himself if "we were becoming a family, no more strange than most families that we had nothing to do, nowhere to go, but that's not so strange either, father, daughter and whatever-I-was" (54-55). More salient of his self-dissolution is his visiting the museum in which he had experience corresponding to that of the anonymous spectator—his perception of the invisible but on-going relation with other viewers. It is a relation established in not only sharing the presupposed idea of the film but watching the same videowork in the same room.

Jim's experience in the museum is an intriguing echo of the anonymous spectator in the prelude and the coda, though there is no apparent clue to the association in the text. Yet, this is an interesting hint that Jim undergoes self-transformation and dissolution while living in the desert as well as watching the time-reframed image.

Aligning with Deleuze's idea of time, DeLillo is found reinvigorating the image representation. From the visual to the empirical and the verbal, DeLillo spots a distinct edge in *representing* the image, foregrounding the image reconfiguration and the self-transformation. His image

representation highlights not merely the distinct notion of time but the transaction among the visual, the empirical, and the verbal. Prominently, the time-featured image incurs the evanescent self constantly metamorphosing in the video-watching process. Moreover, integrating Gordon's video-work in *Point Omega*, DeLillo gives prominence to the physical condition of the video-installation and the space in enhancing the image as the pure form of time and an alternative way of writing.

CONCLUSION

Overall, *Point Omega* foregrounds a time-reframed image and explores a new approach for image representation in writing. First, by presenting the experience of watching *24 Hour Psycho*, DeLillo examines how the image representation precipitates new possibilities for ideas and subjectivity instead of rigidifying or stifling the meanings or interpretations. DeLillo's image representation aligns with Deleuze's idea of time in which time is conceived as a pure form instead of successive moments. It is no longer subsumed to movement or taken as the measurement of events or action. The pure form of time highlights the changes brought about by the interaction between the passing present, the past in memory, and the anticipated future. And, it is based on the spectator's perception and reaction that DeLillo displays the effect of the time-reframed image, showing how the presupposed assumptions or ideas are defied, and new perception, imagination, and understanding are procured. Intriguingly, the video-watching process enacts an elusive state of the self which echoes what Elster contends in the story about one's approaching *the true life* in the evanescent feeling and thoughts. Yet, DeLillo's notion of the true life in this book, interestingly, does not designate certain eternity but the incessant emergence of the new and the unexpected.

DeLillo's writing remarkably takes the physical condition as the prominent feature of the reframed image. DeLillo highlights how the physicality helps actualize the time-featured image representation as the anonymous man's perception, imagination, and even relationship with the place and the other spectators are revealed. In the video-watching process, the transient subjectivity of the spectator is initiated by both watching the reframed film and perceiving the relation with the surroundings. The physical condition of the museum enacts the pure form of time embedded in the image and mobilizes the generic conditions for possibilities. The integration of the physical condition in the perception of time-featured image is significant since it illuminates the emergence of the new and the self-dissolution.

Another distinguishable dimension in DeLillo's *Point Omega* is how the idea of time image corresponds to the story and illustrates an alternative writing style. Despite being a concrete space, the desert actualizes the pure form of time altering Jim's self-recognition as well as his relation with others. The desert sets him free from the pre-

existed social bondage. DeLillo merges the character with the cosmic and geologic time, portraying the contemporaneity of here and there, now and then, and the world and the self. The desert as another form of time-featured image renders the possibilities and condition for the emergence of the new and the unknown. From Gordon's videowork to the corresponding story about the time-featured desert, *Point Omega* sheds light on how image representation proffers the condition for unthought, reconfigures the subjectivity, and enacts an alternative writing, especially in incorporating the aesthetic idea of time in filmic image in writing.

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