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4 Cézanne and the Lumière Brothers  
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6 *Angela Dalle Vacche*  
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14 *Three men, seated at a table playing cards. Their faces*  
15 *are tense, their hands move swiftly. ... It seems as if these*  
16 *people have died and their shadows have been condemned*  
17 *to play cards in silence unto eternity. ...*

18 —Maxim Gorky, 1896 (as cited in *The Art of Moving*  
19 *Shadows*, eds. A. Michelson, D. Gomery, P. Loughney  
20 (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1989), p. 15.)  
21

22 In the history of art, the standard narrative about the invention of  
23 photography in 1839 and the advent of cinema in 1895 is that painting  
24 turned to abstraction, while photography and cinema took on the leg-  
25 acy of figuration and realism.<sup>1</sup> This split becomes much more nuanced  
26 as soon as we examine two thematically interrelated works: the first is  
27 Cézanne's one and only genre painting, and the second is a short film  
28 by Louis Lumière. By setting up a dialogue between these two works,  
29 I will focus on how Cézanne's *The Card Players* (1890–96) (Figure 3.1)  
30 comments on the crisis of painting<sup>2</sup> and on how the Lumières' *Partie*  
31 *d'Écarté* (1896) (Figure 3.2) calls attention to the economic and artistic  
32 uncertainties surrounding the new-born cinema.<sup>3</sup> My overall argument  
33 will be that this enigmatic painting is about the turning of bodies into  
34 shadows. By the end, I will show how the invention of the cinema,  
35 regardless of the painter's intentions, occupies, in visual culture,  
36 a position adjacent enough to painting, so that it can function as an  
37 appropriate term of reference for Cézanne's work.<sup>4</sup>

38 Cézanne's painting and Louis Lumière's short film are linked by  
39 invocations of a familiar iconography of card-playing, fortune-telling,  
40 alcohol abuse, cheating, conviviality, greed, chance and fate, young  
41 dupes, and shrewd operators. The most famous examples of this

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22 *Figure 3.1* Paul Cézanne, *The Card Players*, 1890–95. Musée d'Orsay, Paris. Photo  
23 credit: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, New York

24  
25 iconography are: Caravaggio's *The Fortune Teller* (1594–5), Georges de  
26 La Tour's *Cheat with the Ace of Clubs* (1636–8), and Jean-Baptiste Simeon  
27 Chardin's *House of Cards* (1737). There is also the lesser known *Soldiers*  
28 *Playing Cards* by Mathieu Le Nain (1607–77), which Cézanne might  
29 have seen at the Musée Granet in his town of Aix-en-Provence. Yet, as  
30 soon as we consider *The Card Players'* serious atmosphere, it becomes  
31 evident that these players are quiet, and there are no signs of cheating.  
32 In this particular case, the iconography of card-playing expands into  
33 a game of life and death. Cinema was only one year old by the winter  
34 of 1896 when Louis staged his card game for a home movie, while, by  
35 then, Cézanne had already acquired fame thanks to his new dealer,  
36 Ambroise Vollard, who organized his first successful solo exhibition in  
37 Rue Laffitte in 1895.<sup>5</sup>

38 *The Card Players* was hardly ever exhibited, hence it is likely that the  
39 Lumières never saw Cézanne's version of this pervasive pictorial trope.  
40 Nor shall we ever be able to establish whether Cézanne ever walked  
41 by a cinematographic exhibition in Paris or in Provence. However,  
posters on public walls<sup>6</sup> announcing the Lumières' cinematograph,

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Figure 3.2 *Partie d'écarté* (Cat. Lumière N°73). Louis Lumière, France – La Ciotat, 1896. Left to right: Antoine Lumière, Félicien Trewey, Antoine Féraud, Alphonse Winckler. © Association frères Lumière

were visible in the capital as well as in the provinces. What is for sure is that Cézanne died on October 23, 1906, and that is only 11 years after the cinema had been most officially presented to a paying audience in the Salon Indien of the Grand Café on the Boulevard des Capucines in the heart of Paris.<sup>7</sup> The point here is that the theme of card-playing during the days of early cinema was not only a way to talk about social rules, but also an opportunity for the inventors and art lovers in the Lumière family to quote realist painting. In filming *Partie d'Écarté* with Antoine Lumière on the left, Louis—son of Antoine and the director of *Partie d'Écarté*—was perfectly aware of one crucial fact: he was showcasing the family painter and patriarch of their household's fortune in photography.

After learning carpentry as an adolescent, Antoine Lumière (1842–1911) had formally studied painting in Paris and pursued his artistic vocation during his early married life in Besançon.<sup>8</sup> There he also started his first photographic studio. Besides joining a Masonic lodge where he met other artists, Antoine specialized in portraiture and landscapes, two genres based on realistic detail and reproducible thanks to photography. Antoine's choices were compatible with the two sides of

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Figure 3.3 Olympe Aguado de las Marismas, *Card Players*, c. 1860. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Suzanne Winsberg Collection. Gift of Suzanne Winsberg. Photo credit: Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, New York

his life split between art and business. Oddly enough, my searches for nineteenth-century photographs of card-playing have led me to only one example: Olympe Aguado de las Marismas' *Card Players* (1860) (Figure 3.3). Photographs of people sitting quietly as they concentrate on playing checkers or chess are much easier to find. It seems that still photographs of table games usually taken from a certain distance did not go well with the situation of playing a game of cards. This was perhaps due to the fact that card-playing in genre paintings involved cheating and rowdy scenes, unpredictable or secret movements, so that all this kinetic energy might have been difficult to represent with early photography and its long motionless exposure times.

1 It was only after the birth of Auguste and Louis in Besançon that  
2 Antoine's family moved to Lyon. Despite its popular success, photogra-  
3 phy was still the humble medium of mechanical reproduction, which  
4 meant lack of originality and the loss of uniqueness—as with clichés or  
5 stereotypes in printing. The printing term *cliché* refers to the printing  
6 plate cast from movable type. This was also called *stereotype*. Within this  
7 framework of industrial manufacturing and mass consumption, any  
8 moving image in 1896 was also comparable to the humble wood signs  
9 from the city of Épinal, produced in the Vosges region of northeastern  
10 France.<sup>9</sup> In a society with illiterate masses of people, the *image d'Épinal*  
11 was supposed to be a combination of lettering and/or pictures anyone  
12 could figure out. Often hanging outside the front door of a shop or a  
13 public place, the *images d'Épinal* slowly became the visual alphabet of  
14 uneducated adults and schoolchildren. In fact, these images had to  
15 do with storybook characters and folktales, while they also surveyed  
16 Napoleonic episodes and military history (BL).

17 Not far from the tradition of the *image d'Épinal*, the manufacturing of  
18 playing cards existed between a simplified realist style for genre vignettes  
19 and a quasi-abstract flat version of stock characters and suit patterns. But  
20 the playing card was also used as a metaphor in artistic circles. According  
21 to art historian Kurt Badt, everybody knew of the “playing-card versus  
22 billiard-ball joke.” The joke went like this: realist Courbet said that mod-  
23 ernist Manet relied on such an extreme two-dimensional style that his  
24 Olympia looked as flat as a playing card, namely the Queen of Spades.  
25 Manet answered that all Courbet could paint was a bunch of billiard  
26 balls, because his style had become so emphatically three-dimensional  
27 to underline the roundness of plump female bodies.<sup>10</sup> Thinking about  
28 this episode retrospectively, the joke was clearly about the battle between  
29 Manet's modern, quasi-abstracting approach, influenced by Japanese  
30 woodblock prints, and Courbet's three-dimensional realism with non-  
31 conventional topics from daily life. This latter trend was also involved  
32 with modernity, because it replaced the academic mode of allegorical  
33 picture-making with scenes from mythology or religion still dominating  
34 in the conservative world of art salons and juries.

35 The Manet versus Courbet joke underlines how male-dominated  
36 the Parisian art world was in those days. Yet the stylistic competition  
37 between the flat, but svelte Olympia by Manet and Courbet's realist, but  
38 rotund females spells out an uncertainty about the human figure and its  
39 potential for either animation or dismemberment, figuration or efface-  
40 ment. Indeed, the point of a comparison between Cézanne's *Card Players*  
41 with two figures and the Lumières' family vignette on film, is to discuss

1 what happens to the body within a climate of business rivalries among  
 2 inventors and of competing artistic styles, not only between Manet and  
 3 Courbet, but also between Jean-Léon Gérôme and Paul Delaroche.

4 To begin with, by 1872 in the wake of motion studies carried out by  
 5 Eadweard Muybridge (thanks to California mogul Leland Stanford), even  
 6 Gérôme, a famous academic French painter, had begun to go realist, if  
 7 not scientific, to the point of calculating his shadows in *Pollice Verso*  
 8 (1872) according to a precise time of the day. Thanks to Muybridge,  
 9 it became possible for painters to visualize the so-called unsupported  
 10 transit moment of galloping horses with all four hooves lifted from  
 11 the ground.<sup>11</sup> Muybridge visited Paris in 1881 and gave two lectures  
 12 on motion studies, held respectively in the laboratory of his colleague  
 13 Jules-Étienne Marey and in the studio of the painter Jean Louis Ernest  
 14 Meissonier. Through these two events—attended by Gérôme, a friend  
 15 of Meissonier—the marriage of photography and painting became offi-  
 16 cial.<sup>12</sup> As Helen Gardner explains, this use of scientific precision in art  
 17 will make Gérôme’s colleague, the academic painter Paul Delaroche,  
 18 exclaim: “Painting is Dead!” In fact, Gardner compares, briefly, *Pollice*  
 19 *Verso* with Delaroche’s *The Death of the Duke de Guise* (1835):  
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21 With Delaroche, the figures are un-centered within the frame, leav-  
 22 ing a void in the middle. The frame controls the figures so as to give  
 23 the whole the appearance of a stage upon which actors are playing  
 24 a scene. This makes the viewer feel like the member of an audi-  
 25 ence sitting in front of a play. What we see is play-acting and not  
 26 a real murder. Gérôme, on the other hand, relies on a comparable  
 27 off-centered placement of figures for *Pollice Verso*, yet he makes us  
 28 viewers of the painting become spectators at a “real” event, because  
 29 we have the impression of witnessing it from within the framed  
 30 space of the action. Gérôme brings us onto the stage, while with  
 31 Delaroche we are still outside and in front of it.<sup>13</sup>  
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33 With Gérôme, we feel as if we were sitting in the Roman amphitheater  
 34 and what we are looking at, is really going on, in all its violence, blood,  
 35 and cruelty. The sensation of horror joins the activity of perception.  
 36 On the contrary, with Delaroche, we know that we are only looking at  
 37 a performance, so that perception remains separate from sensation. We  
 38 identify with the spectators of a play at the theater, while an invisible  
 39 fourth wall separating stage from life, stands in front of us. Neither  
 40 of these approaches applies to *The Card Players* who are absorbed  
 41 into themselves, although theatrically displayed by Cézanne.<sup>14</sup> Busy  
 in thinking about their cards, these two enigmatic figures are indifferent

1 to the presence of potential viewers nearby. Even if they are peasants  
2 posing for the painter, they are so inexpressive that they become as  
3 important as the table or the bottle between them.

4 Gardner's comparison between Gérôme and Delaroche suggests that  
5 the increased realism spurred by animal motion studies sets in place an  
6 optical mode based on seeing things as if they are "really there," to the  
7 extent of being tangible or touchable. Besides the impact of Muybridge's  
8 galloping horses on Gérôme's realism, a cross-Atlantic business race  
9 among inventors was going on: in 1891 the American Thomas A. Edison  
10 patented the peep show or "cinescope" using Eastman Kodak film.<sup>15</sup> In  
11 contrast to the Lumières' hosting of a group viewing in 1895, Edison's  
12 nickelodeon allowed only one single viewer at a time. But Edison was not  
13 the one and only rival of the Lumières. In attendance at the Salon Indien  
14 of the Grand Café during the Lumières' famous evening was also Georges  
15 Méliès, a man of the theater and a magician, trained originally as an aca-  
16 demic painter at the Ecole des Beaux Arts.<sup>16</sup> Méliès immediately offered  
17 10,000 francs to the Lumières with the intention of buying the cinemato-  
18 graph, but Antoine, who had planned the whole event, refused. It seems  
19 that Antoine told Méliès: "Young man, you are lucky I am not selling you  
20 my invention because it is only a scientific curiosity and any commercial  
21 profit in the future is so unlikely that you would go bankrupt."<sup>17</sup>

22 Thus, Méliès purchased another kind of gadget, called a "bioscope,"  
23 from William Paul in London and, in 1896, he started making his first  
24 films imitating the Lumières' home-movie, outdoor documentary-like  
25 approach, with *Une Partie de Cartes*.<sup>18</sup> For this production, Méliès cast his  
26 brother Gaston and a couple of friends. The use of the newspaper during  
27 this vignette of heavy smoking, drinking, and leisure time reminds the  
28 viewer that cinema is not only about entertainment and consumption,  
29 but it also deals in randomness and contingency. For this reason, the  
30 cinema is comparable to news reports which are so sensational for a day,  
31 and so forgotten a day later. Méliès' title in French corresponds word for  
32 word to the English translation: "a game of cards". But this is not the  
33 case with the Lumières' linguistic pun in their title: *Partie d'Écarté*. In  
34 fact, they are staging an old French card game called *Écarté*. Most impor-  
35 tantly, the French verb *écarter* means "to separate", so this game of cards  
36 might indeed be about something else rather than just playing for fun.

37 In contrast to Antoine's pessimistic forecast, Méliès' fantastic cinema  
38 became a powerful rival of the Lumières' documentary-like approach.  
39 This competition of magic with daily life did not prevent the Lumière  
40 brothers from befriending another magician, Félicien Trewey, who  
41 sits opposite Antoine in *Partie d'Écarté*.<sup>19</sup> Trewey's inclusion in Louis'  
short film, can be linked to the theme of alcoholic hallucination in the

1 iconography of card-playing and also to the bottle and glasses brought  
2 in by Antoine Féraud, the Lumières' waiter. Alcohol, by contrast, does  
3 not seem to play much of a role in Cézanne's *Card Players*, where there  
4 are no glasses next to a lonely bottle. To be sure, the waiter's movement  
5 from background to foreground enables Louis Lumière to underline spa-  
6 tial depth according to the realist approach of Renaissance perspective.  
7 Later on, Méliès will further differentiate himself from the Lumières'  
8 style, and will specialize in much flatter backgrounds.<sup>20</sup> He will under-  
9 line the magical appearance and disappearance of the human figure.  
10 Or, he will play with the body's fragmentation into separate pieces, or  
11 their grotesque re-assemblies, which, for art historian Natasha Staller,  
12 anticipate Picasso's disjointed Cubist images.<sup>21</sup> In 1897 Méliès will build  
13 a very expensive theater on his property in Montreuil and, in this new  
14 context, he will shoot *The Living Playing Cards* (1904), a spoof based on  
15 magic tricks or special effects for the sake of animation.

16 The fact that Gérôme became interested in Muybridge's photographic  
17 findings about horses is no isolated encounter between art and  
18 mechanical reproduction. Cézanne, for example, used photography as  
19 a mnemonic aid for his work in the studio. In her chronology, Isabelle  
20 Cahn reports that in 1905 some visitors noticed a photograph of  
21 Poussin's *Arcadian Shepherds* on Cézanne's wall.<sup>22</sup> Despite this expedient  
22 approach, Cézanne subscribed to the widely held view that photographs  
23 looked cold and phantom-like. According to Ricciotto Canudo, an  
24 Italian film critic based in Paris, Cézanne spoke with disdain of the  
25 photographic eye as something nonhuman.<sup>23</sup> Well aware that the  
26 relations between viewing subject and viewed objects were changing,  
27 the painter became famous for asking his models to sit still like apples  
28 on a table, while in his still-lives objects look as if they were about to fall  
29 off the table and acquire motion. But there is more about Cézanne's con-  
30 tradictory relationship to photography that has to do with his interest  
31 in physical sensations, as if optical perception alone was not enough to  
32 penetrate the secrets of the natural landscape.<sup>24</sup> From Jonathan Crary's  
33 *Suspensions of Perception*, we learn that Cézanne used his own body in  
34 the outdoors as if it were a sensitive photographic plate. After spending  
35 hours and hours in the countryside, the painter would return to his  
36 studio. There, he was so filled with a sort of corporeal resonance from  
37 the sun, the leaves, the grass, the water, and the trees, that his hand  
38 alone could automatically paint what he had felt and stored through his  
39 body by underplaying the analytical side of perception.<sup>25</sup>

40 The everlasting power of *The Card Players* depends on how Cézanne  
41 depicts human figures with no feet.<sup>26</sup> This is exactly what shadows look



1 like, by doubling their sources so well that they can move without walk-  
2 ing, or better, they do walk but without using their own feet. Cézanne's  
3 corporeal shadows are only one stage away from the ephemeral shad-  
4 ows of early photography, thus they become the missing link between  
5 the crisis painting and the rise of early cinema. Yet, at the same time,  
6 the painter is taking a crucial step in his journey from genre painting, a  
7 human still-life, toward his favorite elements for abstraction: the cube,  
8 the sphere, the cone, and the cylinder, with the *CardPlayers'* massive  
9 bodily shapes looking somewhat cylindrical and slightly disjointed in  
10 the same way the limbs of Cézanne's bathers appear to be one on top of  
11 the other within an odd anatomical geometry.

12 The earliest experiments with photography amounted to temporary  
13 traces left by the light modeling an object, to the point that the latter's  
14 contours would linger on a receptive surface only for a limited amount  
15 of time.<sup>27</sup> It is this awareness that time is passing and things are chang-  
16 ing that Cézanne builds into *The Card Players*. He endows his peasants  
17 with the transient appearance of the fourth dimension. Finally, since  
18 time is invisible and therefore abstract, he also simplifies their bodies  
19 into two cylinders of concentration on the game at hand. Shadows are  
20 also about loss. Still recognizable and well between the human shape  
21 and the geometrical form, the peasants echo an historical transition.  
22 Put another way, by painting two peasants playing cards, Cézanne  
23 decries the loss of regional crafts such as the local printing and coloring  
24 of cards in Provence. Likewise, he was annoyed by too much industrializa-  
25 tion altering the terrain around his beloved Mont Sainte-Victoire.<sup>28</sup>

26 Besides looking like two giant figures made of wood and cloth,  
27 Cézanne's peasants look alike. The invention of photography and the  
28 cinema brought about a blurring of boundaries between the organic and  
29 the inorganic, self and other. The moving image also raised questions  
30 about the difference between the fleeting moment and the enduring  
31 duplicate. To make things even worse, with the cinema, the dimension  
32 of the copy or of the double could simultaneously refer to the moving  
33 shadows on the screen and/or to the living viewers in the audience.  
34 No wonder the age of photography and the cinema is highlighted by  
35 some famous literary and proto-psychoanalytic doubles, all of them,  
36 involved in narratives about death: for instance, Edgar Allan Poe's  
37 short story *William Wilson* (1839) and Otto Rank's *Der Doppelgänger*  
38 (*The Double*) (1914). By 1937, at the height of the surrealist period,  
39 in *L'Amour Fou*, André Breton stated that Cézanne was the artist of  
40 death.<sup>29</sup> To make his point, Breton cites *The House of the Hanged Man*  
41 (1873), *The Murder* (1868), and, of course, *The Card Players*. Cézanne's

1 two male figures flaunt an Egyptianate, mummy-like monumentality.  
2 Photographs, shadows, and mummies remind us of our longing for and  
3 fear of our own double, and, according to French film theorist André  
4 Bazin, photography is about embalming time.<sup>30</sup>

5 To follow up on this theme of death and playing cards, each of  
6 Cézanne's *Card Players* is immersed in deep thought. Hence Cézanne's  
7 figures seem to engage in a confrontation that goes beyond the casual  
8 card game. The eventful atmosphere, the use of colors and objects  
9 suggest that any element is about to turn into its opposite. To be sure,  
10 the whole painting is about life and death in the same way in which  
11 photographs, shadows, and mummies remind us of our desires and fears  
12 of doubles. But if Cézanne held photography in contempt, how is it  
13 possible for his peasants, so attached to tradition, to look like modern  
14 images circulating through mechanical reproduction? Is Cézanne paint-  
15 ing the past, the present, or the future? Although painting is usually  
16 considered an art of space, Cézanne was painting the corrosive power  
17 of time through the changing body, the human form secretly and subtly  
18 dissolving itself into death. And photography, of course, the medium  
19 of realism in contrast to painting, is all about death and absence. While  
20 preserving memory through an absent presence, photography requires  
21 an irrational belief in a present absence. Cézanne's concern with time  
22 and change at the level of appearances challenged the idea of a time-  
23 less, stable, and exclusively mental vision. In order to insert the fourth  
24 dimension of temporality into a static space, Cézanne had to attach a  
25 transient body to a rational eye.

26 But how does the theme of temporality play itself out in the Lumières'  
27 *Partie d'Écarté*? This little home movie was shot at La Ciotat, a small  
28 village in Provence where the family owned a luxurious mansion near  
29 Clos-de-Plages. The film consists of no more than one long static shot.  
30 Clearly the atmosphere of this game is much more relaxed and enjoyable  
31 than the one in Cézanne's somber painting. *Partie d'Écarté*, however, is  
32 not only leisure time, but it is also a gathering of businessmen. In 1896,  
33 Félicien Trewey was able to bring the Lumière brothers to the Egyptian  
34 Hall in London for a presentation of their cinematograph. Trewey made  
35 his reputation as a skillful performer with a shadow play made of hands,  
36 renamed the *shadowgraph* (Figure 3.4). By arranging his five fingers,  
37 he produced different faces of people and animals, always in profile.  
38 Trewey's tricks, with the hand replacing the face, threatened the tradi-  
39 tional subordination of touch to sight in optical perception. Through  
40 his shadowgraph, Trewey was playing with the dialectic of seeing and  
41 touching, producing little faces in profile that were not faces at all but  
only fingers touching each other. The public praised Trewey's shadow-like

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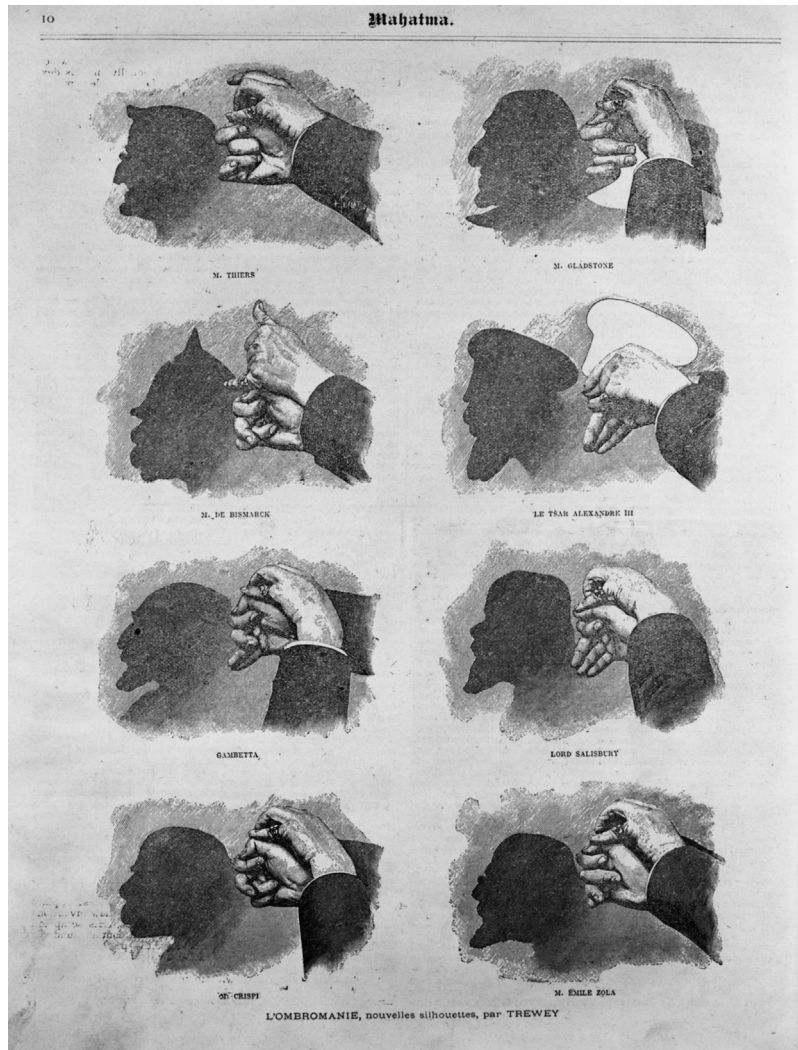


Figure 3.4 Page of eight shadow silhouette hand portraits by Trewey: Thiers, Gladstone, Bismarck, Alexander III, Gambretta, Salisbury, Crispi, and Zola, 1895. Photo courtesy Library of Congress

profiles by saying that they looked as if they had been made “by nature.” The three separate categories of the natural, the mechanical, and the real were quickly becoming intertwined and interchangeable thanks to optical toys, fairground shows, and new forms of entertainment such as the cinema with all its ancestors in the worlds of magicians and scientists.

1 Before explaining further why the Lumières included Trewey in *Partie*  
2 *d'Écarté*, I want to explore a bit more the relationship between Trewey's  
3 proto-cinematic shadowgraph and Cézanne's *Card Players*. A sort of  
4 situational intimacy, interlaced with the anonymity of a public space,  
5 characterizes Cézanne's two card players. They sit facing each other  
6 with the same combination of togetherness and indifference, isola-  
7 tion of interest and promiscuity of exchange typical of the dark movie  
8 theater. And it is precisely this double network of relations between  
9 audience and screen, spectator next to spectator, which film viewers  
10 like to experience over and over again. Such a comparison between  
11 Cézanne's two figures and the activity of film viewing finds support in  
12 the way the boundary between public leisure and mental privacy was  
13 well on its way to becoming blurred. Cézanne couldn't care less about the  
14 cinema; yet his card players do have a proto-cinematic quality, because  
15 the mental exchange between the two figures is analogous to the situ-  
16 ation of a filmic audience looking at a duplicate world go by on the  
17 screen as if nobody was there watching.

18 As it became apparent through Antoine's answer to Georges Méliès,  
19 the Lumières feared going bankrupt by making a mistake with the  
20 cinema. The two brothers were hungry for success, but cautious too.  
21 Their ambiguous stance about the hallucinatory yet realistic nature of  
22 the cinema comes through in more details about the casting, accidental  
23 or otherwise, of their card players for *Partie d'Écarté*. In the middle,  
24 we see the Lumières' father-in-law, Alphonse Winkler, the owner of  
25 a prosperous beer-making business and a very rich, jovial, powerful  
26 fellow.<sup>31</sup> By 1895, Winkler's daughters Marguerite and Rose were already  
27 married to Auguste and Louis respectively. As if this first round of double  
28 marriage was not enough between the two families, Antoine Lumière's  
29 daughters, Juliette and France, married Jules and Charles Winkler, the  
30 sons of the beer mogul. As a result, the whole set up of *Partie d'Écarté*  
31 seems to include magic, beer, cinema; or family dynasties, business, and  
32 a financial gamble with the future.

33 But again, if Cézanne conveyed a loss of individuality in mass society  
34 through his card players, how did the Lumières handle the problem  
35 of the human figure in their film? In *Partie d'Écarté*, the identities of  
36 the three card players signal themselves through the choice of hats.<sup>32</sup>  
37 Sitting in the middle, Alphonse Winkler, just like Félicien Trewey on  
38 the right, sports business-like attire, thanks to his bowler hat. On  
39 the contrary, Antoine Lumière, on the left, wears a wide-brimmed hat  
40 mostly suited for the sunny countryside and his activities as a painter  
41 of the outdoors.

1 The emphasis on prosperity in the Lumières' film strikes a note of  
2 contrast with the low-class, gloomy environment of Cézanne's tavern.  
3 Just like the Lumières, Cézanne too relies on hats to endow each player  
4 with a residue of individuality. Perhaps to compensate for a weakening  
5 sense of the self, the painter also differentiated the posture and the size  
6 of each player. The man on the left wears a more rigid hat than the  
7 man on the right, whose shirt has also a bigger collar than that of his  
8 companion. The latter, in turn, is smoking a pipe and his face is smaller  
9 and bonier. Both hats do not cover the ear, perhaps because each player  
10 is silently listening to his opponent's thoughts. It is difficult to imagine  
11 these two players exchanging a look across the table, but they are clearly  
12 taking their game most seriously, despite the fact that they seem to be  
13 drooping a bit on their respective hands of cards.

14 Regardless of Cézanne's contradictory stance about photography and,  
15 most likely, total indifference to the cinema, one could say that *The Card*  
16 *Players* stands out for its juxtaposition of hats, and it is ready to dissolve  
17 into the proto-filmic shadow play practiced by Félicien Trewéy and called  
18 *chapeaugraphie*, a more specialized development of the *shadowgraph*.  
19 Indeed the connection between the use of hats and the importance of  
20 black silhouettes in profile with hats is relevant to the history of early  
21 photography. Silhouettes and photographs share a similar origin in the  
22 cast shadow.<sup>33</sup> And Trewéy's *chapeaugraphie* worked with cast, rather than  
23 projected, shadows. Before cinema, tracing a person's shadow created  
24 a silhouette portrait that served as an enduring reminder of a fleeting  
25 presence. *Chapeaugraphie* refers to an obscure kind of performance art  
26 transported into shadow play. The result would be that the fairground  
27 crowds would recognize famous historical characters or social types  
28 thanks to the different hats they were wearing.

29 As a specialist of *chapeaugraphie*, Trewéy shaped little pieces of felt  
30 into different kinds of hats for famous historical characters. The hat is  
31 about identifying someone and being recognized. Thus the hat involves  
32 perception and the idea of the self. Again, there is absolutely no evi-  
33 dence of any contact or mutual awareness between Trewéy and Cézanne  
34 or between Cézanne and the Lumières; but painters, mountebanks, and  
35 engineers at this point in time, perhaps unknowingly, all had one thing  
36 in common: they were all asking questions about technological changes  
37 impacting perception, producing new sensations, and questioning the  
38 human figure.

39 It is well known that Cézanne's father was a hat maker whose business  
40 became so prosperous that, between 1825 and 1828, he was able to  
41 become a successful banker in Aix-en-Provence. Apparently Cézanne

1 had a very difficult relationship with his father for many years, so that  
2 one wonders whether hats and paternal origins might be considered  
3 in contrast to the absent feet of shadows stretching into an unknown  
4 future. In her book *Cézanne and Provence*, Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer  
5 documents the painter's obsession with hats. She links a few portraits  
6 and self-portraits by Cézanne to a whole chart of different hats.<sup>34</sup>  
7 From an illustrated magazine of the period, a typological grid of hats  
8 looks only a few steps away from Trewey's silhouetted portraiture of  
9 historical characters in his *chapeaugraphie*. More specifically, in the  
10 Lumières' *Partie d'Écarté*, the hat becomes also the equivalent of the  
11 playing card or *image d'Épinal* itself as the simultaneous replacement  
12 of portraiture and stereotype, high painting and low-level illustration,  
13 photograph and shadow. As an element of fashion in daily life, the hat  
14 is like a glyph or a marker that anyone can figure out—as with shop  
15 signs and with playing cards. By decrying the loss of portraiture and  
16 by individualizing the stereotype, in *chapeaugraphie*, the hat is like an  
17 abbreviation spelling out a famous name, a social type, a profession, or  
18 an historical period.

19 To summarize, the seminal confusion of faces, pieces of felt, and  
20 fingers at the heart of Trewey's *chapeaugraphie* is also part of a larger  
21 confusion between card players and family relations, between the  
22 financial calculations of businessmen, the reveries of drinking buddies,  
23 not to mention the ambiguities between family relations and profes-  
24 sional colleagues in *Partie d'Écarté*. Even the title of the Lumières' film  
25 underlines the struggle to keep things separate, to tell the forest from  
26 the trees. With their strange title, the Lumières tell the viewer that their  
27 game is based on discarding cards from a deck on the table between the  
28 two players.

29 To make the links among early cinema, photography, magic, alcohol,  
30 business, and painting richer, and in consideration of André Breton's interest  
31 in Cézanne and death, it is also worth pointing out the possibility of  
32 proto-surrealist language play in the Lumières' title. The linguistic pun  
33 of the title is about trying to separate what is impossible to sort out,  
34 that is, the business from the family. Yet this proto-surrealist joke is  
35 not so much about an old generation unable to predict the choices  
36 and the actions of future descendants. Indeed *Partie d'Écarté* is the  
37 Lumières' self-conscious admission that, even though they are advoca-  
38 ting the cinema, they are also unable to fully control how this medium  
39 will develop in the future. Although *écarter* means "to separate", the  
40 cautious Lumières and their supporters knew that the opposite is true:  
41 some of these options may merge together and others may disappear.

1 In 1895, everyone would agree it was too early to know .... The rest is  
2 history.

3 In the meantime, genre painting dissolves itself into shadows, whereas  
4 cinema begins with little clichés based on hats. Through this intermedial  
5 micro-history, the standard version which links painting to abstraction  
6 and photography to realism expands into a study of visual culture. In  
7 fact, after the Lumieres, the cinema will grow up and, over a few decades,  
8 it will show how rigid clichés can transform themselves into complex  
9 and thoughtful figures, while generating different points of view among  
10 the viewers. Should we then conclude that Cézanne's *Card Players* is  
11 a memento mori? I think so, but Louis Lumière's short film is both a  
12 family business card and a home movie about the unknown future, so  
13 that the cinema, as a whole, is a combination of shadows reinventing  
14 themselves into our own most unpredictable others.

## 15 Notes

- 16 1. P. Galassi, *Before Photography: Painting and the Invention of Photography*  
17 (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1981).
- 18 2. N. Ireson and B. Wright, eds., *Cézanne's Card Players* (London: The Courtauld  
19 Gallery and Paul Holberton Publishing, 2010).
- 20 3. This unique genre painting by Cézanne is so famous and mysterious that  
21 Philippe Sollers wrote a short monograph about it: *Le Paradis de Cézanne*  
22 (Paris: Gallimard, 1995).
- 23 4. In *Suspensions of Perception*, Crary writes: "Of course, there is no historical  
24 link between Cézanne and the cinema, but their historical adjacency stands  
25 as a far more important problem than, for example, his relation to cubism."  
26 (p. 344). On the origins of the cinema in relation to optical toys and stereos-  
27 copy, see also: J. Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in*  
28 *the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990).
- 29 5. I. Cahn, "Chronology," *Paul Cézanne: A Life in Art* (London: Cassell, 1995;  
30 Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1996, pp. 528–69).
- 31 6. On Cézanne and the Lumières, see H. Dilly, *Ging Cézanne Ins Kino?*  
32 (Ostfildern: Edition Tertium, 1996). I am grateful to Trond Lundemo for  
33 having brought this book to my attention. Dilly argues for the impossibility  
34 of establishing any influence or intentionality between the Lumières and  
35 Cézanne.
- 36 7. L. Mannoni, "Part 4: The labourers of the eleventh hour," in *The Great Art:*  
37 *Archeology of the Cinema*, trans. and ed. R. Crangle. Introduction by Tom  
38 Gunning and Preface by David Robinson (Exeter: The University of Exeter  
39 Press, 2000, p. 315). In *Les Frères Lumière* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1938, p. 41),  
40 Henri Kubnick argues that *Partie d'Écarté* was shown at the Salon Indien  
41 as number seven of various shorts. This is the only source I found where  
this argument is put forth. The Salon Indien screening was unprecedented  
because the 33 people in attendance paid to have a seat. For a detailed  
account of all the various projection evenings organized by the Lumières in

- 1 La Ciotat, Lyon, Paris, and Brussels, see M. Sicard, "Mille huit cent quatre-  
 2 vingt-quinze ou les bascules du regard," in *Le Cinéma et la Science*, edited by  
 3 Alexis Martinet (Paris: CNRS Editions, 1994, p. 30).
- 4 8. B. Chardère with G. Borgé and M. Borgé, *I Lumière: L'Invenzione del Cinema*  
 5 (Venice: Marsilio, 1986, p. 28).
- 6 9. The British Library in London has some fine examples of *images d'Épinal*.  
 7 See, for instance, H. George, *La Belle Histoire des Images d'Épinal*, Preface by  
 8 Philippe Séguin, Collection "Documents" (Paris: Cherche Midi, 1996).
- 9 10. K. Badt, *The Art of Cézanne*, translated by Sheila Ann Ogilvie (Berkeley, CA:  
 10 University of California Press, 1965, p. 115).
- 11 11. C. Musser, "A Cornucopia of Images: Comparison and Judgement across  
 12 Theater, Film, and the Visual Arts during the Late Nineteenth Century," in  
 13 *Moving Pictures: American Art and Early Film 1880–1910*, eds N. M. Mathews  
 14 with C. Musser (Manchester, VT: Hudson Hills Press, 2005, pp. 5–37).
- 15 12. M. Goupil, *Gérôme and Goupil: Art et Entreprise* (Paris: Réunion des Musées  
 16 Nationaux, 1999).
- 17 13. H. Gardner, *Gardner's Art through the Ages*, revised by H. de la Croix and R. G.  
 18 Tansey (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1980, 7th edn, p. 748).
- 19 14. Art historians feel that Chardin's *House of Cards* is the most important  
 20 influence on Cézanne's intense atmosphere of concentration for *The Card  
 21 Players*. On this combination of an inward-bound state of mind and a sense  
 22 of unintentional display, see M. Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting  
 23 and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (1980) (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago  
 24 Press, 1980).
- 25 15. For a fictional sense of Edison's competitive and entrepreneurial personality,  
 26 see A. V. de L'Isle-Adam, *Eve of the Future Eden: L'Eve future*, trans. M. G. Rose  
 27 (Lawrence, KS: Coronado Press, 1981).
- 28 16. E. Ezra, *Georges Méliès: The Birth of the Auteur* (Manchester: Manchester  
 29 University Press; New York: St Martin's Press, 2000); M. Bessy, G. M. Lo Duca,  
 30 G. Méliès, *Mage: Mes Mémoires par Georges Méliès* (Paris: Jean-Jacques Pauvert,  
 31 1961) (pp. 79–80); J. Malthête, *L'Oeuvre de Georges Méliès* (Paris: Éditions  
 32 de la Martinière, 2008) (p. 89); and L. Chiavarelli, ed. *La Belle Époque* (Rome:  
 33 Gherardo Casini, 1966) (p. 328).
- 34 17. B. Chardère, pp. 138–48, op. cit.
- 35 18. M. Bessy and G. M. Lo Duca, pp. 79–80.
- 36 19. E. Barnouw, *The Magician and the Cinema* (New York: Oxford University Press,  
 37 1981).
- 38 20. R. Schiff, "Cézanne's Physicality and the Politics of Touch," in *The Language  
 39 of Art History*, ed. S. Kenal and I. Gaskell (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge  
 40 University Press, 1991, pp. 129–80). The term "haptic" is from A. Riegl,  
 41 *Late Roman Art Industry* (1901), trans. from the original Viennese edition by  
 R. Winkes (Rome: G. Bretschneider, 1985). On hapticity and the cinema  
 of Georges Méliès, a useful essay is: A. Lant, "Haptical Cinema", *October* 74  
 (1995), 45–73. For an overview of Riegl's categories in the dialogue between  
 classical film theory and art history, see A. Dalle Vacche, ed., *The Visual Turn:  
 Classical Film Theory and Art History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University  
 Press, 2003). On Cézanne and temporality, see G. H. Hamilton, "Cézanne,  
 Bergson, and the Image of Time," *College Art Journal* 16 (Fall 1956), 2–12.  
 On Bergson, Cézanne, and time, see also L. Venturi, *Cézanne*, Preface by



- 1 G. C. Argan (New York: Rizzoli, 1978) (pp. 115–19). In contrast to George  
 2 Heard Hamilton, Meyer Schapiro refutes all connections between Cézanne  
 3 and philosophy. On this point, see “Cézanne and the Philosophers,” in  
 4 *Worldview in Painting: Art and Society*, by M. Schapiro (New York: George  
 5 Braziller, 1999); also “The Card Players,” in *Paul Cézanne*, by M. Schapiro  
 6 (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1952, p. 88).
- 7 21. N. Staller, “Méliès’ Fantastic Cinema and the Origins of Cubism,” *Art History*  
 8 12: 2 (June 1989), 202–32; S. Z. Levine, “Monet, Lumière, and Cinematic  
 9 Time,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 36:4 (Summer 1978), 441–7.
- 10 22. I. Cahn, 561.
- 11 23. On Canudo and Cézanne, see A. Dalle Vacche, *Diva: Defiance and Passion*  
 12 *in Early Italian Cinema* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2008)  
 13 (pp. 97–8).
- 14 24. On Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Cézanne, see W. Forrest, “Cézanne and  
 15 French Phenomenology,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 12:4 (1954),  
 16 481–92.
- 17 25. In *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle and Modern Culture* (Cambridge,  
 18 MA: MIT Press, 1999), Crary explains: “Cézanne’s work could not have  
 19 been more removed from the hodgepodge of effects associated with early  
 20 cinema, which he likely never saw or thought about (except to excoriate it  
 21 as a ‘hideous’ sign of ‘progress’ like the electric lights on the waterfront at  
 22 L’Estaque, which so appalled him in 1902.” (p. 343).
- 23 26. V. I. Stoichita, *A Short History of the Shadow*, trans. A.-M. Glasheen (London:  
 24 Reaktion Books, 1999). For my use of the term “Egyptianate”, see É. Faure,  
 25 *Cézanne* (Paris: Braun & Co., 1936) (p. 8).
- 26 27. D. Auzel, *Georges Rouquier: de “Farrebique” à “Biquefarre,”* Preface by J.-C.  
 27 Carrière (Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma, 2002): “Cézanne, peintre pur, compose  
 28 sur une surface. Rouquier, cinéaste, voit dans l’espace. Ayant à peindre des  
 29 personnages autour d’une table dans *Les Jouers de cartes*, Cézanne les voit à la  
 30 ligne d’horizon, Rouquier en panoramique: tous deux prennent la bouteille  
 31 comme génératrice de leur composition, mais chez le peintre, elle est un  
 32 axe de symétrie, tandis que chez le cinéaste elle est un pivot de rotation.”  
 33 (pp. 177–8).
- 34 28. J. Crary, *Suspensions of Perception* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press)  
 35 (pp. 343–4).
- 36 29. A. Breton, *Mad Love (L’Amour Fou)*, trans. M. A. Caws (Lincoln, NB: University  
 37 of Nebraska Press, 1987).
- 38 30. On the mummy complex in the plastic arts, see A. Bazin, “The Ontology of  
 39 the Photographic Image,” in *What is Cinema? vol. 1* (Berkeley, CA: University  
 40 of California Press, 2004, p. 9).
- 41 31. For all this crucial information about *Partie d’Écarté*, I am indebted to  
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*The Lumière Brothers’ First Films: Landmarks of Early Film* (New York: Kino  
 International, 1996, vol. 1).
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 Cambi, 2004).
- 33 V. Stoichita, *A Short History of the Shadow* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997);  
 L. M. Zotti, ed., *Il Rigore del Nero: Silhouettes e Teatri d’Ombra* (Porcari:  
 Matteoni, 2007).

- 1 34. J.-L. Comolli, "Historical Fiction: A Body Too Much," *Screen* 19:2 (Summer  
2 1978), 41–54. N. Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, *Cézanne and Provence: The Painter  
3 and His Culture* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 2003, p. 207). For more  
4 on Cézanne and French film, see P. L. Doebler, "Going beyond Cézanne: The  
5 Development of Robert Bresson's Film Style in Response to the Painting of  
6 Paul Cézanne," <http://www.sensesofcinema.com/2007/43/bresson-cezanne/>  
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