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	A Return to Classical Film Theory?
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	Selections From Early German Film Theory
Annette Michelson	*A Review of* Jean Epstein
Noël Carroll	*Béla Balázs: The Face of Cinema*
Richard Allen	*A Review of* Opening Bazin
Malcolm Turvey	*Vertov, the View from Nowhere, and the Expanding Circle*
Dominique Chateau and Martin Lefebvre	*Phenomenology and Metz's Epistemological Shift*
Benjamin H. D. Buchloh	*Remembering Allan Sekula*

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Back cover: Allan Sekula. From Meat Mass. *1972.*

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Introduction: A Return to Classical Film Theory?

MALCOLM TURVEY

When cinema studies was institutionalized in the Anglo-American academy starting in the late 1960s, film scholars for the most part turned away from preexisting traditions of film theorizing in favor of new theories then becoming fashionable in the humanities, principally semiotics and psychoanalysis. Earlier, so-called "classical" film theories—by which I mean, very broadly, film theories produced before the advent of psychoanalytic-semiotic film theorizing in the late '60s—were either ignored or rejected as naive and outmoded. Due to the influence of the Left on the first generation of film academics, some were even dismissed as "idealist" or in other ways politically compromised. There were, of course, some exceptions. The work of pre-WWII left-wing thinkers and filmmakers such as Benjamin, Kracauer, the Russian Formalists, Bakhtin, Vertov, and Eisenstein continued to be translated and debated, and, due principally to the efforts of Dudley Andrew, André Bazin's film theory remained central to the discipline, if only, for many, as something to be overcome rather than built upon. Translations of texts by Jean Epstein appeared in *October* and elsewhere in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and Richard Abel's two-volume anthology, *French Film Theory and Criticism 1907–1939* (1988), generated interest in French film theory before Bazin. But on the whole, classical film theory was rejected as a foundation for contemporary film theorizing, even by film theorists like Noël Carroll with no allegiance to semiotics and psychoanalysis.

Recently, this situation appears to have changed. Since 2000, new translations of writings by Münsterberg, Balázs, Bazin, Epstein, Lukács, and others have appeared, often accompanied by commentaries arguing for their contemporary relevance. Anthologies of essays devoted wholly or in part to Arnheim and other classical film theorists have been published. Bazin is once again considered a theorist to be reckoned with, as evidenced by many of the contributions to Andrew's anthology *Opening Bazin* (2011). And theorists have defended some of the claims of other classical film theorists, including the analytical philosopher of film Berys Gaut, who has recently built upon Arnheim's theory of film art and resurrected the classical film-theoretical doctrine of medium specificity in his *A Philosophy of Cinematic Art* (2011).

Is there a return to classical film theory occurring? If so, why? And why now?

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And even if there isn't, what is the significance and value of classical film theory today? Does it offer modes of theorizing, if not ideas and arguments, that are lacking in so-called contemporary film theory, or that in some other way remain relevant?

These are just some of the questions this cluster is intended to address. The roundtable brings together leading scholars of classical film theory who have been instrumental in generating renewed interest in it. We are delighted to be publishing a short excerpt from Anton Kaes, Nicholas Baer, and Michael Cowan's forthcoming anthology, *The Promise of Cinema: German Film Theory, 1907–1933.* Three essays review recent anthologies of writings by and about the major classical film theorists Béla Balázs, Jean Epstein, and André Bazin. And in my essay, I argue that Dziga Vertov's concern to establish a "bond" between the viewers of his films and the workers depicted in them has theoretical and practical, not merely historical, relevance today.

I thank all the contributors to this cluster, as well as Adam Lehner for his meticulous editing.

Roundtable on the Return to Classical Film Theory

Stuart Liebman: I want to take up several issues in Malcolm's introduction in order to amplify, and perhaps to qualify, some of his remarks.[1] He rightly notes that we are presently living through a period of scholarly engagement with early film theory. Malcolm implies that the current interest is somehow larger and more extensive than it used to be, and there is some truth in that. In addition to those texts he mentions, one must cite Richard Taylor's massive efforts to reclaim through retranslation vast amounts of Eisenstein's writings, including a great deal of new material. He has also done the same for many of Pudovkin's texts. Taylor's efforts built on his joint project with Ian Christie to substantially expand the texts available by lesser-known Soviet figures in their excellent anthology *The Film Factory*, published in 1988, the same year that Abel's anthology on French cinema was released.

But I think Malcolm underestimates the extent and range of the passion with which an earlier generation of film scholars attempted to excavate the past of film theory, even while they were becoming engaged with more contemporary ideas—Metz's early semiotic explorations of cinema, as well as psychoanalytic theories, both of which, as he notes, either implicitly or explicitly claimed to render classical film theory irrelevant. The 1970s represent, of course, the real emergence of the film-studies discipline in the United States and England. That period also witnessed the reemergence of Brecht and his writings about cinema, especially in *Screen*, and of Epstein in *October*, but also slightly later in the British film magazine *Afterimage*, edited by Ian Christie and Simon Field, as well as in *Millennium Film Journal*, then edited by a group that included Noël Carroll. Dulac, too, began to appear in translation in 1973, as did Alexander Dovzhenko's notebooks and Luda and Jean Schnitzer's volume of texts by early Soviet filmmakers. Obviously those who read European languages had access to many French translations of early theorists, and one must also mention Tony Kaes's important compendium of early German writers on film, *Kino-Debatte*, which was released in 1978. Finally, one must note that the publication of P. Adam Sitney's anthol-

1. See the introduction, pp. 3–4 of this issue. *Ed.*

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ogy *Film Culture Reader* in 1970 also reestablished links between contemporary avant-garde practice and earlier vanguard film-theoretical traditions.

These works might be classified as a kind of "cultural archaeology." The authors were motivated by several concerns that may still be present today. As is almost certainly true of every new discipline, those of us who were engaged in these efforts were interested in establishing a kind of artistic pedigree for a medium quite different from the one that had been promoted by the champions of Hollywood cinema. Critics like Andrew Sarris had borrowed from French *Cahiers du cinéma* discourse the notion of the auteur to sort the vast array of American movies in order to isolate those directors they deemed artists. They almost totally ignored the pre–World War II European film-theoretical past that came into being out of a concern to establish film as an independent art form, though one with roots in the broader cultural realm of modernist art. Those early film scholars who sidestepped the emerging dominant critical mode, or fashion, of auteurism were guided by the principle of medium specificity, the articulation of what was supposedly uniquely cinematic. They wished to buttress, and perhaps to burnish, these ideas from the earlier days of film theorizing in order to place them in the service of an emerging discipline. Early articles by Richard Abel, and David Bordwell's dissertation on French Impressionist theory and practice [1974], and my own dissertation on the early film theory of Jean Epstein [1980], and Ronald Levaco's anthology of Kuleshov's writings [1975], among others, brought new understandings of how ideas about film emerged from and in turn influenced a generation of modernist writers and painters. The ideas surrounding such ventures proposed often radical alternative visions of what films could be. Such theoretical—or pre-theoretical, if you prefer—notions served as a kind of speculative instrument goading filmmakers, driving on practice. That is, we inserted the cinema into the modernist canon we admired in the hope of developing an appreciation of cinema as a part of the broader modernist artistic and cultural project.

At NYU and beyond, Annette Michelson's teaching, editorial work, and publications were key texts. In addition to her own critical rereading and reassessments of classical theorists—most importantly of Vertov and Eisenstein—she also introduced classes in early French and Russian cinemas, and in her editor's role she helped to publish several key texts in English.

One last point: Intrigued as early scholars were by what they found, they were aware that early theorists had not developed fully adequate, systematic theories of film, which had become the goal of the contemporary theorists they also wished to assimilate. Even as they struggled to establish a heritage for cinema and its theorizations, they were quite aware of early film theory's limitations. One only has to read Dudley Andrew's pioneering early book on film theory, *The Major Film Theories* [1976], or Bordwell's often caustic comments in his dissertation on French "Impressionist" cinema, to know that.

Malcolm Turvey: You are absolutely right that even during the period of the high-water mark of semiotic and psychoanalytical film theorizing, there was an interest among some film scholars in classical film theory, as I believe I acknowledged. But you mentioned the attempt to assimilate classical film theory with what was happening in film theory in the '70s and '80s. That I find much harder to see.

Liebman: I did not quite mean to suggest that. What they were trying to do was to assimilate contemporary theories, on the one hand, but they did not—with perhaps the exception of the Bazinian premises underlying some of Metz—necessarily try to reconcile traditional, classical film theory with contemporary theoretical works. Rather, two separate enterprises with different functions existed in the emerging discipline. That the cinema had a theoretical past of great sophistication and range was gratifying to those of us who had embarked on careers in the field. The contemporary theories provided perspectives on the early theoretical enterprises and helped to inform some of our critical comments about them. Bringing them into a more complete alignment was, however, not really part of the project at the time. But a counter-movement to push back at some of the perceived inadequacies of the more recent theoretical work also came out of the effort to explore earlier theorists.

Turvey: I see. But then you seem to be confirming what I said in my introduction, which is not that there was no interest in classical film theory among film scholars in the '70s and '80s, but that film theorists of that period rejected classical film theory as a foundation for contemporary film theorizing. Let me put it this way. Can anyone think of an example of a film theorist working in the '70s and '80s who tried to build on the work of a classical film theorist, or who attempted to defend a classical film-theoretical notion like medium specificity? If you take a book like *Philosophical Problems of Classical Film Theory* [1988] by Noël Carroll, there's very little in the work of Arnheim, Bazin, and Victor Perkins that Noël sees as theoretically defensible, even though he acknowledges, like you do, Stuart, that these and other film theorists performed the historically important task of legitimizing cinema as an art with their theories. So no doubt there is a historical interest in classical film theory among some in the '70s and '80s, but is there a theoretical interest? Is there a film theorist during this period who is actually drawing on and, in some way, trying to extend or defend the arguments of one or more classical film theorists, in other words to use classical film theory as a foundation for contemporary film theorizing?

Liebman: That's a very difficult question to answer. I think that for a person like Noël, who is a systematic thinker, there could be no question that even the most systematic of the early film theorists were not adequate. There was no one who said or could say that Epstein's ideas or Vertov's ideas were exactly

right, but that's to misconstrue the purpose of many of the investigations that were going on. There was an effort—archaeological, as I called it—simply to relocate texts. One aspect was to find them in the archives, going through those old magazines one by one, as Tony [Kaes] has been doing for a long time. The second was to relocate and resituate them in the artistic context of modernism, which we felt film had influenced and been, in part, shaped by. That was the principal thrust of what people were trying to do.

Dudley Andrew: There were also the dissertations, but I don't know that those played very deeply outside of the universities where they were written. Bordwell's was the first dissertation that I oversaw at Iowa, but before his, Don Fredericksen, who subsequently went to Cornell, wrote on Münsterberg in 1973 or so, in which he delved into Münsterberg's Neo-Kantism. In the '60s there had also been at Iowa a dissertation by Peter Dart on Pudovkin and one on Eisenstein by the man who ran the Library of Congress for so long . . .

Liebman: John Kuiper!

Andrew: Those were on the shelves before I got there, so there was kind of a tradition of these dissertations at Iowa, but I don't find that they made much difference to the discipline until Bordwell's. Another one that did make a difference—to me anyways—was Brian Lewis's dissertation called *Jean Mitry and the Aesthetics of the Cinema*, from 1980. It examined Mitry's rapport with Symbolism above all. Lewis filtered Mitry's texts for an aesthetic system that he found still valuable. Lewis understood that French grand theory dominated the '70s and he wanted to help Mitry defend himself against the purely linguistic realm by looking at his Symbolist underpinnings. But I don't know if Mitry represents classicism; this is a key moment, Metz taking over from Mitry.

Anton Kaes: How do we actually define classical film theory? Is it really a unified, coherent body of texts that can be set against contemporary film theory? Are the theories of Kracauer, Benjamin, Balázs, Arnheim, and Bazin "classical film theory"? Kracauer, for instance, published about seven hundred film reviews during the Weimar era that are a far cry from systematic theory. (His *Theory of Film* was not published until 1960.) Balázs also began as a film critic for a daily paper and published a couple hundred film reviews before his first book of film theory, *Visible Man*, appeared in 1924. In the preface to this book he defines "theory" not as a system but as a "road map" that indicates "pathways and opportunities," so that what appeared as "iron necessity" can be shown as just "one random route" among many others. In this sense, film theory for him reveals alternatives, possibilities, promises, "roads not taken." I believe the same is true for theorists like Epstein and Bazin, who were also active film critics. So I wonder whether there is such a thing as a definable

classical film theory, or whether the period of so-called "classical theory" was in fact as amorphous and explorative as our "post-theoretical" situation is right now. One reason for the new interest in early film theory may well be that the period was driven by a sense of inquiry and curiosity about the future of the emerging medium and thus articulated issues that are present today. It seems that we have a similarly open media landscape again and are also far from a coherent "theory." So we might ask in what sense we can speak of "classical film theory" and its return.

Andrew: Metz does use the term "classical" in the late '60s and early '70s in writing about Mitry. He asks: What was classical film theory? So the word is already there. I think he may be asking: What was pre-university discourse on film? I received David Rodowick's new book, *Elegy for Theory*, yesterday. He would say that the classical could probably be assimilated into the aesthetic, while another wave of film theory would attempt to unify things through structuration and language.

Annette Michelson: I simply want to point out one fact that is drawn from my personal experience. I became, in the period that we are all talking largely about, an adviser for the publication of film books for Praeger, a publishing firm that has since disappeared. I was able to have Praeger publish a volume of Eisenstein's theoretical essays and, at the same time, to have Oxford University Press publish the first book of Christian [Metz]'s on semiology and the semiology of film. There seemed at the time to be an opening for parallel considerations of historically disparate contributions to film theory. There was in that early period some kind of coexistence, if you like, within the film-theoretical community, at least here. There was nothing like a totalization of any particular current of film theory.

Kaes: So a coexistence between the systematic and . . . ?

Michelson: I think there appeared at that time an opening—because the sales of those two books were very good, by the way—of possible discourse between these two, the old and the new.

Sarah Keller: If we talk about the first classical film theory being interested in the question of film as an art form, and the second kind of theory in structuration, then maybe it would be useful to define not just what is classical film theory but the nature of the engagement with that theory that we are perceiving right now. Is it just a looking back to classical film theory, or is there some special spin on that look back that is attempting to either grapple with both of those things—aesthetics and structure—or something else entirely? I think that the historical turn happening right now, as well as the earlier theoretical turn, which I think is a kind of historical turn actually, is an attempt to not just make sense of similar issues, which is what I think Tony is

pointing to, but also other issues. For example, current major technological changes in the industry can parallel something like the coming of sound for people like Epstein, Eisenstein, and many others. It might be useful to think about what the parallels and differences are between the issues that the classical film theorists were talking about and that film theory is trying to account for now.

Andrew: By the way, after the aesthetic and structural, Rodowick says the third direction, the subsequent one, is cultural discourse (mainly psychoanalytic and medialogical analysis), which ends around 1998. And then he says that now we are in a situation where all these approaches are available to us and we must decide what to do with them. That's our question.

Keller: Right.

Andrew: He [Rodowick] thinks our situation in the university today is quite different from that during the semiotic and structural period, which he links back to the filmology movement, indeed to the Russian formalists; so these eras and approaches overlap, but I think the question is absolutely pertinent. What is it today that concerns us about the classical? When my book *The Major Film Theories* was translated last year into Chinese, they called it "Classical Film Theory." I applauded that. They understood, at least, that it was about pre-university writers on film. If we are asking: Where has classical film theory been? Well, a lot of students were buying that book—it sold a lot of copies and has a digital half-life, as surprising and ridiculous as that seems to me. So some students have been and still are studying and reading classical film-theoretical texts, but I don't think anybody at the forefront of the field was particularly interested in what was in that book even when it came out in 1976. It appeared already belated, in a way.

Turvey: Right, that's always been my sense.

Andrew: There were so many students starting to take film courses in the late '70s, and they needed things to read just to have discussions in class. Take my old colleague Richard Dyer MacCann. His *Film: A Montage of Theories* made him a fortune. You should look at its table of contents some time. That was what was available in '68. I don't know when he put it together. It's got Pudovkin in it, among lots of really interesting writings, but it's a hodgepodge of a collection without much perspective.

Liebman: But also things that we hardly remember now.

Andrew: Yeah.

Turvey: One reason, perhaps, that scholars are increasingly looking back, if indeed they are, to classical film theory very broadly construed is that the advent of digital technologies has reopened—this is hardly an original observation, and it echoes Sarah's point about sound—ontological questions about film. Because so much film theory of the '70s and '80s is totally silent about these ontological questions, scholars go back to Arnheim, Bazin, and others to try to formulate definitions of film that they can then use to talk about how digi-

tal technologies have impacted, or not, film as a medium and/or as an art. That seems to me to be one impetus perhaps.

Michelson: Sarah, could I ask you for one example of the kind of situation you are talking about?

Keller: Which?

Michelson: That is to say, the present recourse to old texts and classical theories, which, by the way, was generally taken to be pre-Bazin. Could you give us an example of this kind of recourse to classical theory that you now see taking place?

Keller: The first thing that comes to my mind is the indexicality debate about whether digital cinema has a kind of relationship to the world that is different from the photochemical process of making films. I mean that some scholars have turned to Bazin for exactly this reason because Bazin apparently—and Dudley can talk about this much more eloquently than I can—makes a kind of claim for there being a strong relationship between the world filmed and the film itself. How do we go from there in order to account for this sort of apparent divorce? (I refuse to put myself on either side of that debate, although I am very interested in it, but not in resolving it, especially here.) This is one example. People constantly turn to Bazin for this type of question. Maybe less so to others, but I've seen it happen with Epstein as well.

Andrew: Even the conference just staged by André Gaudreault, Martin Lefebvre, and Viva Paci in Montreal on special effects featured both ends of things. It was brilliant. At one end everything can be termed a special effect in the age of the digital, but at the other end film archaeologists like Gaudreault and Tom Gunning talked about special effects in the very first years. So the current notion that everything is a special effect, something I believe Sean Cubitt and others might hold, runs up against the actual meaning of the word "special." In Montreal that did bring up specific issues of specificity, if I can say it that way. There is a norm, and something is special when it breaks the norm—"special" and "specificity" are surely related as words.

Kaes: Here's a "specific" example: If you go to the archive for the year 1910, you find an essay about a meeting between the German and the Austrian emperor in Vienna that was documented on film. In the evening, the two kaisers watched this newsreel in a public movie theater. Berthold Viertel, who wrote about it, found it quite remarkable to watch the two kaisers watching themselves on the screen. Also, the audience that applauded the monarchs in the movie also applauded itself in the theater. Everything is doubled. Then Viertel goes on to ask: What does it mean that the film suddenly ripped? Did the rip also go through the real persons? Would the rip also go through the real persons? He asked this in 1910, thus raising a fundamental question about the ontology of filmic images. It is a question that,

three years later, in 1913, also animates one of Germany's first art films, *Der Student von Prag*. Can this early debate about film's uncanny doppelgänger effect be called "theory"? The anecdote allowed the writer in 1910 to address a theoretical issue that resonates no less in our own media environment. I think that's the potential and power of archival work—you see theory residing in these anecdotes, observations, reflections, meditations, and ruminations. That's where theory hides, where it lies dormant, waiting for us to awaken it and make it speak to us. I would argue that even a short, journalistic text like Viertel's would allow us to extrapolate larger questions about the ontological status of the image that go beyond the historical moment and that contribute to "theory." Do film images shadow the lived world, and how threatening is the mechanical proliferation of images for the aura of the monarchy or of sovereignty in general? (Can you have more than one kaiser?) These are big philosophical and political issues that can be extracted from a small, subjective observation from 1910.

Keller: That example is fascinating. He calls it the "true image" of themselves versus the "real body" of the kaiser. And he very interestingly lays out this subtle difference but really close proximity between the body and the image that is fascinating for thinking through issues of cinematic ontology.

Liebman: I think Tony is absolutely right in several ways. One is that when you look back at all those little articles and *feuilletons* that appeared—I know the French examples better than the German ones—you find precisely that. In an article of 500 words, you will pick out two or three sentences at most that contain a germ of an idea or insight that is sometimes quite stunning. That is really what I was referring to before when I described early film-theoretical texts as "speculative instruments." They offered—and in some cases still offer—perceptions that may have been largely occluded, but can still be provocative. They may not ever be incorporated in some systematic theory, though many were incorporated in what I still regard as the initial master discourse about cinema as an independent art form. That certainly was the main thrust of early writing in French cinema. You could read a short text by Pierre Reverdy published in a small magazine remarking on the marvels of editing and the way it brought together different sorts of imagery perhaps to tell a story, perhaps simply for poetic effect. Suddenly you realize that these early thinkers regarded the hold of narrative as not necessarily so strong that film could do something else. Insights like that produced a great deal of superb independent avant-garde cinema in the 1920s. The early writing was thus not only a speculative instrument but had a more directly productive purpose as well.

Andrew: We should probably not give up too fast on the idea that some of these thinkers may have had an overarching idea of what it all meant. Whether those thinkers and those ideas should be the ones to be focused on, refuted,

or extended is another question. I know that in the case of Bazin, in 1943—he is very young, he barely knows what he is going to do yet—he has an idea to write four volumes on cinema. He says, I want a history of cinema, I want an overriding theory, I need sociology and I need technology, etc. He's got something total in mind, all figured out. This is before the "Ontology" essay. He has written only three pieces so far, but he has already planned out what he calls a "full theory" would be like. I think you could probably say the same thing about Arnheim. You could say something similar about Balázs. One of the things in Rodowick's book, which is quite helpful, is that he examines what happens in filmmaking schools. You would know a lot about this, Annette. Rodowick points to the importance of the film schools, where Eisenstein is teaching, where Balázs is teaching, when Centro Sperimentale starts in '35 or '36. He thinks if you go to Russia, to Prague, to Rome, you find a curriculum worth examining. This concerns genuine aesthetics because it's for actual, practical filmmaking. Filmmakers need something to talk about. Whether this comes down to the specificity of the art form or something more routine is not clear, but it was especially in the context of a school that you might glimpse overviews of what film is and how style ought to be used. Mitry, who comes out of the practice of filmmaking and the avant-garde world of the twenties and thirties, starts teaching at IDHEC (Institut des hautes études cinématographiques) in 1945 or '46, and only later becomes a university professor, though not quite fully vested. Anyway, he had learned to think as a filmmaker working with Gance in the heroic age, and then he transfers that to an academic subject later on. So something close to practical aesthetics is another area where some systematicity might be found in classical thinking, though, as with Eisenstein, Mitry's anecdotes from his filmmaking and film teaching are so interesting and fun that I emphasize these too much in my classes. The anecdotes may be what can get students studying his ideas, I suppose. But the ideas should be shown to be coherent. Within the context of studying film as an art, practical aesthetic issues can lead to thinking about Mitry's summary of classical theory, especially his ideas that necessarily tie film art to the apparatus. Or do practical aesthetic issues about editing or sound or camera movement have more to do with what Francesco Casetti would call "experience," which is another dimension of what we are talking about?

Kaes: I believe that most critics used experiential, often autobiographical approaches to movies at that time. For instance, Arnheim wrote his first film review in 1925, at the age of 21. He published a playful, personal account about the first public showing of avant-garde film in Berlin. It was strictly his impression of that famous matinee of absolute film in 1925. On the face of it, this flippant review makes no theoretical claims at all, it's anecdotal, and yet I think it's possible to tease out the theoretical project that inheres in

such nonsystematic writings. In Arnheim's case, the review obliquely addresses medium-specific questions of abstraction, movement, and perception. (He writes that on his way home he came across a parade that he suddenly saw through the lens of Francis Picabia and René Clair's *Entr'acte* [1924], which he had just watched. The avant-garde film's comical depiction of a funeral procession deflated for him the political pomp of the parade and suggested a different vision of social reality.) I think it's important to expose students to these unsystematic writings and have them realize their hidden theoretical purchase. Arnheim was creatively thinking about and alongside cinema and its unrealized possibilities, not constructing a systematic theory.

Andrew: But he wanted to do this himself later on.

Kaes: Yes, that's right, of course, in 1932 with *Film as Art*. But in the 1920s, as a practicing film critic, Arnheim was one of the myriad intellectuals who contributed to what only later became known as classical film theory. I would argue that besides the well-known representatives (Balázs, Kracauer, Benjamin, Arnheim), there was a whole army of lesser-known film critics, literary writers, editors, film directors, scientists, psychologists, ministers, educators, and anonymous authors (often unsigned or with pen names) who were engaged in shaping the future of film through their writings. Their thoughts and discussions are still mostly in trade journals (one estimate speaks of 160 film periodicals in the Weimar Republic, some of them appearing daily!), newspapers (Berlin alone boasted 60 daily papers and tabloids), and literary and lifestyle magazines. Microfilm, digital scanning, and online sources are increasingly giving us access to some of the rich archival materials, including manifestos, editorials, interviews, film reviews, and passionate debates about film's artistic value, its relationship to older media, and its political power in manipulating the masses. I believe that a broader material base will bring forth new questions and new areas of research that go beyond a narrowly defined classical film theory and include nonfictional and educational uses of cinema, not least as a cultural archive.

Andrew: I completely agree that this is a fertile direction we could take. Casetti, Jane Gaines, and Vinzenz Hediger run that Permanent Seminar on Histories of Film Theories, which has really done a lot of this. For example, we can move away from the West to Japan, let's say, where there is far more serious film writing that has been collected than we ever knew. There is a huge Japanese text from 1914, "The Principles and Applications of the Moving Pictures"—it must be over 400 pages—that Aaron Gerow presented to the Permanent Seminar some time ago. And we just had a dissertation at Yale on realism in Japanese film discussion from 1895 to 1945, and its 250 pages are full of all kinds of material. There was a lot of Marxism in Japan (more than I had realized). Then there's also Chinese film theory. The Permanent Seminar met in Ann Arbor in 2012 and some 85 papers were delivered on

Asian film theory, most concerned with early ideas. So there's a lot of new material now coming to feed the archaeological, scholarly impulse in our field. I think this is fabulous and we should follow it out, but I don't think that this is the same as a full return to classical film theory. Archeology is just what academics do. We get our students interested in what life was like in an earlier time or a different place, whether in terms of media or in some other sphere. This is marvelous; it's what the humanities do, but as for classical film theory, I think you, Malcolm, want something more . . .

Turvey: Yes. There are two kinds of interest in classical or early film theory, right? There's the historical interest, which you were just talking about, Dudley, that is motivated by the desire to know about what people thought, felt, and wrote about film in its first decades. All of this archaeological research gives us a more and more complete and fine-grained view of this. But I guess I have always been interested in film theory before semiology and psychoanalysis for another reason, namely, that there might actually be some ideas and arguments in classical film theory that are true, or almost true in some way. In other words, I believe our interest in classical film theory shouldn't simply be historical, as important as knowing what people thought and wrote about film back then is, but also theoretical. For example, it seems to me that your wonderful anthology on Epstein, Sarah, is not just a work of film history that clarifies what Epstein thought about film and other matters, as important as that is. It seems to me that there is also an attempt in several of the essays and in your introduction to argue that Epstein is making claims that, while not completely right, are nevertheless partially right and therefore we should be paying attention to him for theoretical reasons, not just historical reasons.

Keller: I hesitate to make this comparison, but I think that Miriam Hansen's book *Cinema and Experience* [2011] is a similar attempt to demonstrate the relevance—the absolutely exciting relevance—of a particular set of ideas and arguments. I would also love to hear your thoughts, Malcolm, about Epstein, because I know you have some hesitations, particularly in your book *Doubting Vision* [2008], about this thing that you keep saying about being almost right or maybe right. First of all, is it absolutely necessary that they be right—that certain theories be right? Or can they simply shed a certain strange light, light that comes at a slant but that illuminates something differently than any other thing might? You could point to almost any aspect of Epstein's theory for exactly this kind of light, something like his thoughts about fatigue and the modern subject, for example, or the relationship of the real to what's being filmed in his encounter in Brittany and how that shifts his thoughts. I would love to hear whether the kind of doubts you harbor about the truth of these kinds of claims in some ways undercut their relevance.

Turvey: People tend to focus on the first part of *Doubting Vision*, which is critical,

but at the end, I try to say that Epstein and other early film theorists' notion of film as a revelatory medium is right, if reconstructed in a certain way.

Keller: Talk about that "if" a little bit.

Turvey: Well, the "if" is that Epstein conceives of revelation in a somewhat mystical manner. One has to wade through that and get to the other side, but I think that the core, the intuition, is correct. But even if it isn't, my point is that if we are interested in film theory and not just film history, then part of what we should be doing is working through the theoretical claims of someone like Epstein and pulling out what we think is defensible, while also acknowledging what is not so defensible. I guess—and perhaps I am in the minority in this respect—that I am interested in truth and whether or not classical film theorists are saying anything that's true about film. I think that the notion of film as a revelatory medium is defensible, but it has to be articulated very carefully.

Keller: I agree with that.

Andrew: Does this then mean for you that we should reestablish what was true in Epstein's theory about the cinema situation in the '20s and '30s so that we can see what parts of that theory remain valuable today?

Turvey: Yes.

Andrew: Not that you want to preserve in amber a kind of cinema experience that perhaps has since dissolved, but you want to see what was there that could have dissolved. Is it the cinema of his own time that you are concerned with, trying to see if he got it right? Or do you really care about cinema more timelessly . . . ?

Turvey: Both of those things. I think one can say that he accurately pointed to certain things about the cinema of his time, but one can also say that he, like other classical film theorists, was trying to articulate something about the powers and capacities of film in general. I think what he says about revelation is in some sense true, even though it has to be qualified, nuanced . . .

Andrew: In that period or . . .

Turvey: Potentially today too.

Kaes: What you are really saying is that there's no conflict or disjunction between theory and history. In other words, our job is really to historicize theory in many ways and then to ask what is the critical purchase of that historical writing for us today.

Turvey: Not quite, because I think there are a number of classical film theorists who aren't right, theoretically speaking, about anything. [*Laughter.*] But we should still know about them for historical reasons. To return to Sarah's question, no, I don't think classical film theorists must be right for us to be interested in them. But I think we should at least entertain the possibility that some of them were right, or nearly right, about certain things, and,

where that is the case, use their theories to build better theories today. In other words, our interest in them should be theoretical as well as historical.

Kaes: That's likely to be in the eye of the beholder. I would argue that there's a theoretical project buried in each and every text that waits to be unearthed and raised to consciousness. I see it as our task to emphasize a text's historicity and to penetrate its various historical layers, its internal temporal dimensions. I therefore don't see how one would go about separating theory, history, and textual analysis. I think anything we do has tacit theoretical assumptions. The advantage of expanding the canon and including, for instance, Chinese film theory is that it would not only tell us something about early Chinese film theory (as an archaeological project), but would also imply a theoretical project: Reading it may help us rethink our own assumptions. But this is also true for Sarah's Epstein project . . .

Turvey: I think with Bazin too.

Kaes: Definitely also Bazin. You can read these writers, canonical or unknown, in the light of the present. Not by way of appropriating them, but by seeing ourselves in dialogue with them, in a constellation, as Benjamin put it, between the past and present moments. These constantly shifting, unpredictable interrelations are fascinating for teaching and keeping the field attuned to the present. I think it can be done in two ways: either by repeatedly revisiting canonical texts, as Miriam Hansen so admirably did, or by excavating unknown texts from the archive. In either case, the constellations will afford productive moments of recognition and flashes of insight in which past and present illuminate each other. Thus, maybe the new interest in earlier film theory is itself historically motivated: It may help us comprehend the present moment of an equally profound media transition.

Liebman: I would like to qualify something I said earlier. We've been using the term "archaeological," but I want to make sure that we understand that this is not simply an antiquarian project. When we go back to the archive to find these texts, we did so to locate them in the period in which they were done. But what Tony said a moment ago is certainly also true: They also often offer suggestive insights that, to use your language, Sarah, throw a kind of light, if perhaps only a faint beam, on contemporary concerns. But it is for us to pick up on those little points and to extract from them things that we can in fact develop today in a more systematic way, in a way that we might hold to be true by our present lights, until twenty five years from now, when some group of cinema scholars meets somewhere to comment on the limitations of our thinking. [*Laughter.*]

Andrew: There are these wonderful texts by Bazin that I have just finished compiling into an anthology. Hopefully, by next week we will have secured the rights, and the texts will come out in October of 2014 under the title *André Bazin's New Media*. The anthology is about television, 3-D, Cinerama, and

CinemaScope. It concludes with this amazingly prescient text he wrote called "Le Cinéma est-il mortel?" He's writing this in 1953 and he says that maybe in 20 years, there'll be all kinds of new entertainments replacing cinema. People will be looking back at our little proclamations in 1953 and they will show how vacuous they are, just as we (meaning himself and his *Cahiers* pals) looked back 20 years before and thought how insignificant were many of the doubts about sound expressed by theorists of that day. So in 1953 he is saying let's look back to 1931 and look forward to 1974. And he's right about that. He ends by suggesting that we stop worrying about media evolution. "Meanwhile all we can do is go to the cinema and treat it as an art." To him, that's his job and that's his pleasure, so he should do just what he's doing. I feel the same.

Maybe this will slightly redirect things. I want to go back to the issue of art and even bring up the question of beauty, which I think could be where things are most pointed today. In comparing Epstein (via Sarah's efforts and Stuart's) to the Frankfurt School through Miriam's book, one sees a crucial difference, and I can see why contemporary writers and scholars have gravitated in such numbers to the Frankfurt School. But as anybody will note about Miriam's book, there are no film analyses included. None. She is writing about what the cinema means globally and generally, about how media work. That's mainly what we are doing today in the forefront of film and media studies. There's been a loss of interest in close analysis of the text and exploring individual films in the kind of depth that occurred even in the '70s during the reign of apparatus theory. By reading some of the classical theorists like Epstein, Arnheim, as well as Kracauer in some of his instances, we can not only savor but also really learn something about an object that we consider valuable. I don't know if that impulse will come back at all. That is one reason for trying to recover and return to classical theory, because it tries to discover the operations and values of complex cultural objects; I think we must recover this for our period when students have stopped being interested in particular objects and are interested in long series, flows of television shows, and YouTube. The field seems to be concerned with processes rather than objects. I don't know if beauty is the right word, but sometimes that word deserves to come up.

Kaes: I agree but wonder why this emphasis on a film's aesthetic features is often seen in opposition to its history. Kracauer's work with individual films, for instance, tends to blur the lines between analysis, theory, and history. He frequently reads films and their specific formal features as responses (and contributions) to larger theoretical and historical debates. The individual film thus becomes part and parcel of a particular theoretical-historical project to be worked through and brought into constellation to our present moment. To use an example, a stylistic device like the close-up has its own

genealogy—how did it come about and how did it evolve over time? What theories did it engender, what kind of work did it do for film theorists like Balázs or directors like Griffith? I strongly believe that knowledge of the history as well as the "theoretical" possibilities of a stylistic feature (or of a genre, a narrative convention, etc.) would animate and enrich our aesthetic reading of an individual film; such knowledge would also engage and complicate the necessarily abstract claims of film theory.

Andrew: I'm reminded of Metz's approach through the Rodowick book again. Metz's discovery of film theory produced a twist, which Rodowick suggests is apparently a major addition if not improvement to the aesthetic approach. He [Metz] says that we must finally get away from the discussion of filmmakers and the concerns of critics. He doesn't want either. He wants a system, whereas someone like Kracauer or Bazin was paid by newspapers to write. They didn't even have to like the movie they took up in such-and-such an article that we now read with relish. Kracauer didn't like all seven hundred films that Tony tells us he reviewed—he just had to write about them. But underneath it, in order to do that continuously, if you were smart, you did have a system of some sort. Sometimes you explained your system and sometimes you didn't. Kracauer explained it toward the end of his life.

We could begin to think about the issue of specificity as being more central to the question of the return to classical theory by thinking about it in relation either to apparatus, to experience, or to object. I mention this because when I was in France, Roger Odin tried to point out the huge differences between his view of cinema and mine. He said, "You, like Jacques Aumont, believe in cinema as a kind of literature, and I believe it more as a kind of writing system. Cinema for me is whatever anyone has ever done with a camera, anything we can collect. You think cinema is a particularly refined use of that writing." He said, "You don't need apparatus to be central; you just need the objects that a certain apparatus made possible over a long period of time, but that could be made today by other possible means." I think what Odin said is true. I will tell you two things about the Bazin work I've been doing. He wrote a wonderful little essay with a great title, "À bas le huitième art: Vive le Radio" ["Down with the Eighth Art, but Long Live Radio"]. It's his only essay on radio. I don't want a seventh art or an eighth art, he says—I just want radio. [*Laughter.*] He believes it to be mainly a transmission system and he is happy to have it work that way. When radio producers start thinking of themselves as having an art, it's going to become unnatural and overblown. [*Laughter.*] He says the same about television sometimes as well. He is worried that the apparatus will become self-conscious enough that it will turn itself into an art form of its own instead of serving its crucial function as a transmission device. In another piece, he says cinema is not theater. There will always be theater—it is not mortal—

because there will always be kids miming and playing games in the street and people putting on shows for each other. Cinema is totally different from this, since it's a mechanical art. Therefore, it's got a birthdate and an evolution and it's going to die, so let's not worry so much about the apparatus enduring as it is. This is in the '50s and he's already historicizing. He notes that in the '20s, critics were very concerned about whether film is an art and what its relation to theater should be, but cinema has its own specific evolution, and therefore we should be looking at it in that way. In any case, we are not the first people to start thinking about a classical period. He thought that he had already seen one in the '20s and '30s, while he believed that he belonged to a new modern era where cinema was a lot more versatile—it had certain distinct properties, even if these might evolve and die. He was glad to see what cinema performed in culture and what kind of experiences it made available. Even after spending my career reading him, I'm not ready to say what Bazin finally thought of cinema. I'm not so sure I would list him as a classical theorist—I might list him as the first modernist theorist, but not among those that Rodowick groups as concerned with cinema's rapport with language. I think he'd be interested in our views today. He was certainly interested in the views of those people who thought that cinema had to have a certain set of procedures that were specific only to it. He was quite concerned with, and generally against, issues of pure cinema. That was already a debate in the '50s, so it's not just ours.

I continue to return to those three overarching topics: about apparatus, about the objects that have been produced, and about the kinds of experience they have delivered. This last concern is paramount now, especially given Tony's remarks, which are part of the tendency most visible in Germany to treat what the cinema lets us see and experience.

Turvey: In terms of experience, Casetti's new work is very interesting because he returns to classical film theory to define an experience that can be thought of as specific to cinema. He then argues that as long as you have that experience, you have cinema. His claim is that although that experience is often attenuated in certain contexts of reception now, it is still there, and so we still have cinema. Whether you agree with this argument or not, Casetti is an example of somebody who is not just returning to classical film theory because of a historical interest in it but is actually trying to take a certain idea embedded in classical film theory and use it in a contemporary theoretical debate about cinema. That seems very interesting and important to me, and I admire him greatly for it. He's not just ventriloquizing past theorists, as happens ad nauseam in the humanities today, with the endless citations and quotations of Benjamin et al. He's actually critically engaging with past theorists, distilling an idea from their work and using it to construct his own theory, one that has considerable relevance today.

Andrew: I would like to raise one name that has yet to come up but may be important here, though I'm not the best person to speak about him: Jacques Rancière. He's the most visible of current philosophers who are looking at some of the issues that the classical film theorists were up against. Rancière objects to Deleuze on periodization and other issues. Here's a guy who is coming out of the Althusserian tradition, but he is giving far more weight to the aesthetic. This could be another direction by which to return to classical concerns from a very up-to-date standpoint, but I don't know how much we are talking about this in our American film discourse. I find they're talking more about classical film issues in France and, it seems, in Italy and Germany too. There are certain people who don't want to give it up. Maybe we have been more ready to give it up here given our hyper-concern with new-media issues; wouldn't our field profit from the return to classical film theory that you are trying to create, Malcolm?

Keller: I'm thinking about the two-years-ago version of the conference on special effects that you just mentioned: the impact conference ["The Impact of Technological Innovations on the Historiography and Theory of Cinema," Montreal, November 1–6, 2011] in which apparatus theory was very strangely dominant across papers and in roundtables. The conference ran with both a French component and an English component; I attended both, and people were talking about the same kinds of issues having to do with apparatus theory. I wonder if we are at a moment that's just mining whatever we can to make sense of a really rapidly changing field, for all the reasons we've already mentioned. I'm not sure it's just classical film theory that people are turning to to make sense of this moment. I think it's grasping for whatever might work. I am currently teaching a class that is drawing a lot on feminist film theory, and it's surprising to me that there is somewhat of a dearth of a third wave of feminist film theory. There's sort of a loss—people are at a loss for what to do next. Psychoanalysis is not satisfying and the response to psychoanalysis is not quite satisfying, so what will be satisfying for getting at what we think about with women in film now, for example?

Michelson: In a way, there's a certain interest in the fact that a lot of theorization and the various movements in theorization here had their theoretical basis imported from France to begin with. The first movement for the legitimation of cinema studies within the academic environment was structuralism and then psychoanalysis (Lacanian), which fed the women's movement, among other tendencies. There's Bazin, of course. There is a way in which that has ceased. I went to France in 1950, and that was a time of extraordinary artistic production in almost any field you could imagine, except perhaps in painting (America had the lead on that). But the basic impetus to the theorization of the possibilities of film here came from France in these successive movements, and that, of course, has stopped. It's as if the kind of energy for the production of theorization has stopped here with the stopped

importation from France. My feeling, by the way, throughout the '60s and the '70s was a feeling of regret that French cultural production generally had become so fixated on theory at the expense of artistic practice, although I was the first to recommend the publication of Barthes, whom I admired greatly. Nonetheless, I felt there was a kind of imbalance, restored by the weight on the other side of the scale. That is maybe something one could consider in terms of the intellectual politics and strategies and developments within, about, or without this tremendous emphasis on theory and recourse to history. I'm not sure. It is based on observation over a long period of time and also has been implicated, in a sense, in the international exchange. I've been wondering if anyone else sees this as perhaps involved in something we have been discussing or may be discussing in the future.

Keller: I think so.

Andrew: Rancière has drawn our attention to what the aesthetic does in culture that precedes or corresponds with a politics. He takes a very long view of things as he situates the entire history of cinema into aesthetic and political processes that go back to 1800. But he also deals with individual films, reads them pretty intensely. He is most famous here for having gotten into this through his dispute with Deleuze's work, while Deleuze, for his part, recruited important earlier theorists, not to mention films. I don't mean to turn this into a discussion about Rancière, but maybe the visibility of the Deleuze-Rancière issues in France has allowed classic questions and films and theorists to arise in a way that happens less here.

Turvey: One of the reasons I always feel drawn to earlier writing on film is that I think the hold of Deleuze, and thinkers like him, on contemporary film theory is very unfortunate. This is for many reasons, but one is because Deleuze's is yet another grand theory. Deleuze offers both a grand theory and a grand history of cinema, and one of the most refreshing things about earlier writing on film, in contrast to the grand theorizing that has tended to come from France since the '60s and dominate things here, is that although it can be systematic—certainly Arnheim is systematic, at least by *Film as Art*—it's not a grand theory in the sense wherein you have a philosophical or metaphysical doctrine, which you then apply to everything about cinema, as is the case with Deleuze and the Lacanians before him. Classical film theory tends to be much more piecemeal. Tony gave a talk the other night at Columbia University, and one crucial point he made about early German film theory is that it is not theoretical in the grand sense, but theoretical in a much more pragmatic way. Early film theorists are focused on contemporary issues, and they're not, for the most part, trying to route claims about cinema in some larger metaphysical or sociological doctrine. The problem with grand theory is that if you object to the doctrine that's being applied—as one might, say, to the Bergsonian metaphysics upon which so much of

Deleuze's film theory rests—then the whole apparatus just crumbles. That seems to me a real virtue of earlier writing on film.

Kaes: It is a fact that early film theory simply did not possess a dominant framework for thinking about film in the way semiotics and psychoanalysis later provided. Instead it brought various epistemological frameworks to bear on film: aesthetic philosophy, mass psychology, political theory, physiology, and phenomenology, among others. This mode of theorizing was speculative, experimental, and mobile as it reacted to new technologies, changing audience expectations, and economic and political pressures. It was mostly a kind of theory on the go, and thus the opposite of rigorous "Theory," as represented by Kracauer's famous (and much-criticized) *Theory of Film*. Early film theory was not systematic but provisional, often naive and polemical, aimed at more active participation in debates than self-conscious "theory." Knowing about this *Umfeld* and its many unrealized possibilities might lend a different depth to canonical theories, which in the past we may have isolated too much, to their detriment. Reading Arnheim, Kracauer, and Benjamin within the "force field" of the '20s would show that many of their original ideas are part of a larger network of discourses that saw film as a medium not only of art and entertainment but also of education and science. To reinsert their theories into the debates of the times would, in my opinion, not reduce their originality but place them in sharper relief against competing ideas. In this way, we might discover alternative routes of thinking—the roads that were available but not taken. I wonder whether the so-called grand theories would also gain new resonances and nuances by radically recontextualizing them: What were the questions to which these theories were the answer? Are these questions really unrelated to earlier theories?

Liebman: I want to reverse my course a bit. Was something about cinema and its theorization occluded by what I think was the main line of theorization in the early period, namely, the discourse of cinema as an art form, purportedly with its own special nature and strategies? Was the comprehension of the important implications of the new forms of cinema of, say, the '10s and '20s, which were then barely in their infancy—scientific movies, documentary or ethnographic movies, for example—somehow blocked by the dominant forms of thinking about cinema of the time? Is there something that we can look back to in the earlier period that would be useful in thinking through these problems those kinds of film pose now?

I'll give you a concrete example. Epstein, among many others, used to call attention to what new ideas could be derived from scientific films such as the time-lapse recording of the growth of a plant or crystals, or the examination of ballistic trajectories in slow motion. These were not art in the way it was thought of at the time. Yet, Epstein, more than most, highlighted their potential for thinking. They transformed notions of temporality, and they provoked—indeed, they required—new kinds of metaphors to describe

them. Beyond Epstein, there were other writers outside those we still regularly read today who raised and offered insights into such issues. Might not such early speculations be of interest today as we think through other moving-image-related media?

Andrew: As for scientific films, I once wrote about the passion that the Surrealist gang had for a little-known genre of surgical films they went out of their way to experience. They were not systematic thinkers of cinema, to be sure, but some of them wrote about films a great deal. There are actually a couple of issues of film magazines in the late '20s that include graphic discussions of surgical films. These Surrealists used to go see films looking for the most grotesque things, like bodies being sliced open. Twenty-five years later, Bazin would be quite interested in the same kinds of movies, but from a different point of view. He wasn't interested in the science that you could learn from it. Instead, he does a medium-specificity-type analysis. He writes about a TV program in 1956 that consisted of a camera's trip into a diseased lung, and his essay is called "Maintenant on peut descendre en soi-même," quoting Pierre Corneille: Discover yourself, go into your depths. [*Laughter.*] Anyway, he says this TV show was excruciating because it was live—it was live television. You were seeing a live TV show of an operation. He says we used to see these things in film, but if there were a surgical mistake, they would edit it out. On live TV this patient could die in front of us. He juxtaposes the specificity of the liveness of television with what you could do with cinema—you could show more views, you could intercut prerecorded sections to explain the pathology or technology, etc. His TV review is really a short essay about medium specificity. He thought the only really specific thing about television was its liveness. This gave it a kick that cinema could never match. What, then, might be cinema's most unique possibility? It could be, in relation to live TV, the ability to render heterogeneous perspectives to provide a stronger, multilayered view.

Anyway, those medical films are peculiar; not art films, they can still be recruited by the Surrealists for an aesthetic experience or by Bazin for meditating on the media. With such things in mind I've been on the hunt lately for exploration films. What does it mean for a filmmaker to go into a dense forest, and how much does he set up what he discovers there? Bazin's close analysis of one such film caught a filmmaker delivering a striking image taken from above a cobra's head, effectively a POV shot from a cobra just before he is going to attack the unsuspecting anthropologists. He [Bazin] says anybody in 1951 should be able to recognize that this was a fabricated shot. I think he was wrong there. I think most people would still be taken in by it. He has a theory of growing spectatorial sophistication. The spectator by 1951 will not accept the same kinds of shot changes that would have been acceptable in 1925 and 1926. That's why he doesn't quite have a specificity

theory, because he thinks the audiences are changing even while the apparatus remains unchanged. Hence you can't expect the same editing strategies or special effects today that worked some years ago; so it's more complicated than just studying the apparatus. Perhaps we always understood this, when you think of the interest in early film that the Dadaists displayed in the 1920s. What did they think of the actual spectators of those Méliès films? Did they expect their experiences to be the same or quite distinct when they were showing them [Méliès films] to the more sophisticated audiences of the '20s? They were effectively relying on an idea of what cinema had been earlier. This is why the apparatus issue is complicated for me, because it is the same apparatus, even the same object, placed in different exhibition contexts. This is surely the reason we employ the notion of "*dispositif*" as distinct from "apparatus," since the former can include the exhibition context, etc. But both terms raise the issue of specificity.

Kaes: This might be the moment when media-archaeological research becomes useful. It is quite possible to find out how the apparatus was discussed in 1903 or 1923 or 1943. If you were to go to the historical debates, you would discover lively discussions about medium specificity, technologies, and exhibition practices. You would find, for instance, early discussions about portable screens or television, which Arnheim called "radio-film" in 1932. Pursuing an interest in the historical dimension of theory we would not only imbue canonized theory with the symbolic power it once possessed (but lost by its very canonization and decontexualization); we would also explore the media history of the present. There are many treasures lying in the archives that will allow us not only to broaden the base of classical film theory but also to see the future of the past—what were thoughts that resonate only now? These moments of mutual illumination have plenty of analytical power and may explain our current interest in early film theory, classical or not.

Andrew: There is one tactic I use to make the link between the classical period and the current media issues that concern our students and our moment. I divide things into related categories of questions. Is it too naive to separate the issues of cinema into recording, construction/manipulation/montage, and projection? That's one way I teach the relevance of classical theory to aspiring image-makers. I challenge them to talk about new issues and methods of recording images and sounds; how do these compare to recording in the days of classical cinema? What about the position of animation today versus then? And so forth. Then comes the montage issue that new machinery and techniques have made much more interesting to me than it ever was before. I used to treat this as a simple debate between Eisenstein and Bazin,

but now I recognize additional issues in new forms of digital work. There are so many distinct ways a film or video can be constructed, especially with long takes being as long as you like, or the way editing can occur in space as well as in time, and how things can unfold in underlying layers as in hypertext, etc. Lots of new ways of construction have emerged, and the old issues of cutting need to be re-discussed. I think classical theorists had much more subtle views in the older days than our students recognize or than we teach. As for projection, that's what Casetti has been especially interested in—well, he's not alone. As Godard lamented, what changed most was: who is in control of projection, who controls your time, how large is the image, and what is its duration. What seem to be sociological issues about watching films in theaters or at home or on a personal device in fact are also deeply aesthetic issues. I believe we could use a roundtable on each of those three concerns [the issues of recording, of manipulation, and of projection]. Let's see what classical film theory brings to such concerns today.

Keller: It would be exciting to grapple with these issues one by one. Why reinvent the wheel when we have this trove of very fine thinkers thinking about exactly these kinds of issues? I think you're right that in the present moment, technological changes and certain changes in aesthetic interests have introduced new questions that are very well served by looking back at how and why the wheel was invented in the first place.

The Cinematographic Archive: Selections from Early German Film Theory

Over a century ago, at a time when Henri Bergson deployed the cinematograph as a metaphor for "the mechanism of our ordinary knowledge" in *Creative Evolution* (1907), other, lesser-known theorists envisaged the medium's potential to offer unique modes of perception and cognition. For these thinkers, the cinematograph did not signify a mechanical, spatialized temporality pervasive within industrial modernity, but instead provided a novel means of experiencing time and history. Just one year after the publication of Bergson's book, Ludwig Brauner wrote an article for *Der Kinematograph*, Germany's first film trade journal, calling for the creation of "cinematographic archives" in the country's municipalities. Brauner juxtaposed film with traditional sources of historical reconstruction, distinguishing the new medium not only for its lucid, impartial recording of past events but also for its effortlessly lifelike form of documentation. Imagining that the cinematograph had been invented a hundred years prior, Brauner stated, "A single filmstrip would offer us the possibility of capturing the spirit of that time in living form" (p. 29 below).

In this dossier, we present Brauner's 1908 text alongside contemporaneous writings by Berthold Viertel, Joseph Landau, and Franz Goerke. First published in the cultural journal *März*, Viertel's "In the Cinematographic Theater" (1910) evokes the uncanny temporality and doppelgänger-like quality of cinematic representation, particularly in its obfuscation of the boundaries between past and present and between ghostlike images and palpable reality—themes that would also haunt German films such as *The Student of Prague*, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, and *The Golem*. With a similar interest in the confounding of basic ontological distinctions, Joseph Landau's "Mechanized Immortality" (1912) heralds cinema as a "genial method for preserving and storing life and movement for all time" (p. 33 below), well beyond the finite existence of the actors depicted onscreen. Printed alongside Landau's text in *Der Deutsche Kaiser im Film* (1912), Franz Goerke's "Proposal for the Establishment of an Archive for Cinema-Films" recognizes the significance of films as cultural-historical documents. Whereas Brauner had looked to the cinematograph for recording current events, Goerke now sought to ensure the preservation of film prints themselves for future generations.

Translated into English for the first time, these four texts anticipate some of

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the primary concerns of later, more canonized writings on photographic media—from early-to-mid-twentieth-century essays by Siegfried Kracauer ("Photography," 1927), Walter Benjamin ("The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility," 1936), and André Bazin ("The Ontology of the Photographic Image," 1945) to the later books of Roland Barthes, Stanley Cavell, and Gilles Deleuze. Moreover, the writings provide prescient, compelling insights into concepts of movement, temporality, historicity, and the archive—concepts discussed extensively over the past decades, especially in the fields of early cinema, media archaeology, and digital media. Placing the cinematograph in relation to both traditional arts and other nineteenth-century inventions (e.g., still photography, the phonograph), the selections also exemplify the intermedial understandings of film that have returned to the fore in recent years. Finally, in their emphasis on alternative applications of film, especially in the realms of scientific research and education, they resonate with current scholarship on cinema's institutional, non-theatrical uses.

Notably, while early German film theorists were often highly critical of actual, entertainment-based uses of the cinematograph, they maintained a wondrous, utopian sense of the *potentiality* of moving pictures, not least in unsettling or transcending the rigid economic and political structures of imperial Germany. Even Goerke, who associated contemporary cinema with the "mental decline and brutalization" of mass audiences, envisioned the medium's capacity to "bring education and entertainment in the noblest sense of the word to people of all classes in thousands and thousands of theaters." In this way, the early theorists reveal a fundamental investment in the medium's promise—hence the title of our forthcoming sourcebook from which these selections are drawn, *The Promise of Cinema: German Film Theory, 1907–1933.*

—Anton Kaes, Nicholas Baer, and Michael Cowan

"Cinematographic Archives"[1]

Ludwig Brauner

Among the most reliable sources of historical scholarship are certainly those collections of papers, accrued through official means and preserved for official purposes, to which historical significance should be ascribed as testimonies of the past. But in these collections, which are called archives, only charters and files find admission, i.e., dry documents from which a vivid picture of a particular past era must be laboriously reconstructed with the help of a keen combination and with the assistance of records and descriptions of contemporaries stored in libraries. But even the nicest descriptions of past conditions do not provide a fully clear image of the vanished period, because their restorers customarily regard them from their personal, not always unbiased point of view, such that unclarities creep in time and again.

1. First published as "Kinematographische Archive," *Der Kinematograph* 97 (November 4, 1908), pp. 1–2.

Let us imagine the possibility that the cinematograph today did not boast an age of slightly more than ten years, but rather one of a hundred years, and that motion pictures of the so-called good old days were handed down to us. What a vivid picture these unretouched, truthful documents would offer us of a past era! A single filmstrip would be able to reveal more to us than two dozen books created through laborious research and protracted study. Let us take only a street scene. What information would it offer about the life and goings-on in a small city back then? It would show us not only clothing and shoes, but also the way of walking, the salutations, the social forms, the types of movement on the street, the traffic on the street, in short, everything that we currently have to first imagine on the basis of surviving paintings, engravings, and descriptions. A single filmstrip would give us information about a thousand little things that we no longer know and that therefore appear unfamiliar and strange. A single filmstrip would offer us the possibility of capturing the spirit of that time in living form, it could serve as an infallible model for costume designs, for theatrical figures and scenery, for applied arts, and so on. Such images would be of inestimable value for cultural history and thereby the best and most welcome study material.

The phonograph, Edison's ingenious invention that first appeared in usable form in 1877, has been placed in the service of scientific research for around a decade, and it finds particular use as a linguist and conservator of voices and modes of speech of famous contemporaries. In several countries there are already phonographic archives, in which not only the voices of many great people are preserved for posterity, but also, in those with a profession in the sciences, work is directed towards conserving the differences in dialect of a smaller local linguistic region on cylinders or records for future generations. Because of these archives, our descendants will thus always be able to hear the voices of long-dead national heroes or to discern how the dialect of a particular region has changed through better public education, immigration of foreigners, or other circumstances.

How much more interesting and, above all, how much more significant it would be for science if, through the cinematograph, one would preserve in living form particular moments from the developmental history of our cultural sites for the coming generations. Systematically recorded images of the current condition of our street, our squares, our games, our social forms, our means of transportation would have to be material of practically infinite value for the generation that, in the year 2000, will probably rule not only the solid earth, but also the air. Would it not be wonderful if this very generation had a well-made image of that historical moment when Count Zeppelin completed his grand, long-distance journey and, for a moment, had to emerge defeated in the struggle with the natural elements?[2]

If the phonograph, the conservator of the sound perceivable by the ear, can only give us a complete picture of a particular occurrence, e.g., the approach of

2. The author references the first successful zeppelin flight of 12 hours over Switzerland on July 1, 1908, as well as the devastating setback on August 5, 1908, when a sudden storm tore the airship from its moorings and caused it to crash and explode. In sympathy for the national project, the German public collected 6 million marks for the construction of a new airship.

the fire brigade, with the help of fantasy, fantasy is entirely unnecessary with the cinematograph, the conservator of the real event. It gives a surprisingly clear, completely lucid image and places the researcher in the position of making each individual little picture into an object of thorough investigation with the help of a magnifying lens or the projection. The cinematograph fixes the event, so to speak, into occurrences of hundredths of seconds, and is thus infinitely more valuable than the phonograph.

But entirely separate from scientific research, the larger cities and municipalities must also be intent on the establishment of cinematographic archives. In all larger cities, and especially those with historic pasts, there are folk festivals and pageants that recur every year in different variations, or parades on the occasion of some anniversary that are staged at not insignificant cost, receptions of foreign deputations, visits of monarchs, or other events that involve a festive or commemorative day for the city in question. They will surely be neatly registered in the so-called city chronicle and preserved through photographic records, but they are indeed just descriptions, nothing alive. However, if cinematographic films, in which important and interesting events are recorded in living motion, are incorporated into the archive, then a considerable advantage can emerge from it not only for posterity, but also now and again for contemporaries. How pleasant it would have been, for example, for the arrangers of the Imperial Tribute Parade in Vienna if they could have visualized the famous Makart Parade of 1879 in its palpable vitality![3] From the entire splendor of this unsurpassed parade, nothing is still on hand besides the models of the parade groups and floats and miscellaneous photographic records. From the occasional arrangements of other cities, not even that is often on hand, and yet no dynastic or patriotic festival, no city anniversary, no commemorative festival of a momentous historical event goes by without a parade. The ceremonial laying of the first stone of municipal buildings, the unveilings of monuments, dedications of bridges or churches, and countless other occasions that represent a milestone in communal development for the township in question should prompt every municipal area to record such moments on film and to incorporate them into the municipal cinematographic archive.

If even these occasional recordings would constitute an inestimable enrichment and improvement of the current archives, the value of such collections is still yet considerably increasable. Systematically recorded images, which would be replicated every ten years, could track the entire developmental history of a city in living pictures; they could later provide precise information about important

3. The Imperial Tribute Parade (*Kaiserhuldigungsfestzug*) refers to a pageant on May 21, 1908, in honor of the Austrian kaiser Franz Joseph, who reigned from 1848 until his death in 1916. The Makart Parade of 1879 (the first of many to follow) refers to a legendary pageant in honor of the "silver" wedding anniversary of Franz Joseph and his wife, Elisabeth of Bavaria. Hans Makart, a painter and designer, promoted (like his friend Richard Wagner) the total work of art comprising music, dance, and spectacle. The pageant consisted mainly of theatrically decorated floats and hundreds of participants dressed in historical costume.

details of our entire contemporary traffic system, our business life, our industry, our political life, etc. Once municipal cinematographic archives exist, it is only a step towards state cinematographic archives and an imperial archive, which would need to have their particular spheres of influence.

Unfortunately, apart from the recognition that it has already received in some cases in the realm of foreign ethnology and of scientific and especially medical cinematography, the cinematograph is still too often regarded as a toy or curious device whose potency one can well marvel or laugh at in varieties or in a specially built theater, but which one does not yet think properly capable of a serious cultural mission. And yet, for the realm of a cinematographic archive, there are no limits at all, and its benefit is so obvious that one is surprised not to see it introduced yet, at least in Germany. Already in 1905, the city council of Paris passed the praiseworthy resolution to set up a cinematographic archive and, through separate municipal operators, to have systematic pictures of notable public events and images of urban and folk life recorded.

Cinematography must now show gratifying progress in Germany as well, and our cinematographic manufacturers would do well to interest the administrations of the major German cities in the establishment of municipal cinematographic archives. In many cases, it will generally require only the proposal to win over city councils for this purpose, and once it becomes known that this or that magistrate has authorized the establishment of a municipal cinematographic archive, then there is a sure chance that smaller cities will also follow and take an interest in the establishment of cinematographic archives for the benefit of the domestic cinematographic industry.

—Translated by Alex H. Bush

"In the Cinematographic Theater"[4]
Berthold Viertel

Weeks have already passed since then, and the instant can now be safely seen as long gone, but that blessed moment had such pure symbolism, such vivid power, that the imagination never tires of conjuring up its wondrous presence again and again. Anyone who understands what it means to have memories will confirm that the raw, material abundance of events, for all its nourishing liveliness, tends to evaporate in an all too ghostly way, while certain shadow-play-like observations, which render our existence abstract and metaphorical, somehow persist with strange tenacity. Ordinarily, perspective has the practical value of orientation. One uses perspective without even noticing it. Yet sometimes a perspective creates an irony of the eye. One blinks and looks away, instead of looking on. The effects can be bizarre and sublime, exhilarating and shocking, comical and horrifying, depending on the situation. The pompously gesturing

4. First published as "Im Kinematographentheater," *März* 4 (1910), pp. 173–74.

person becomes a marionette; the living heart perceives itself a bloodless doppelgänger. But it is precisely this ghost of life that persists in the soul, as if it were life's essential meaning.

That joyous time, when our great ally, the German Kaiser, made a symbolic visit to Vienna, has also passed. Much good was done in those few days, many things worthy of eternal memory. Our city hall, otherwise home to the ugly heartlessness of petty bourgeois politics, kindly opened its doors to better, more dignified sentiments. The keeper of the cellar stood there in traditional German garb and offered a ceremonial drink. An homage painting was unveiled in all the wonder of its virginal newness. Gentlemen were introduced and deemed worthy of symbolic conversation. Heartfelt words about brotherhood, truly cordial words of love, were spoken and promptly transcribed in shorthand. The photographer was granted permission to shoot, and people posed for him in the court. And at five o'clock in the afternoon, the government business was moved to the hunting exhibition quarters.

Yet all this seems to have passed once again. Not even the historical certainty that the Park Ring is no longer the old Park Ring can stop the irreverent flow of time. Soon I will have forgotten why the street has been renamed. But not this moment, when the two monarchs sat together in the movie theater . . . and watched themselves. They saw a true likeness of themselves, one that appeared to speak, salute, and laugh. And the audience in the picture applauded. And the audience in the theater also applauded. And the monarchs in the picture showed their appreciation. And the real monarchs showed their appreciation in reality. But then, all of a sudden, one of the films ripped, and the theater went dark. At that very moment, shivers went down my spine. What?! Did that tear also go through the real people? Horrified, I asked myself: Who here is the real one?

I cannot get it out of my mind, this terrifying doubleness [*Doppelgängertum*] of representation. The Chosen One, who ought to authenticate the existence of whole peoples simply by walking, talking, and saluting, indeed walking, talking, and saluting as typically as possible—doubled?! Is one allowed to copy majesty so wantonly? Is it not too much for one moment to have two, no, four kings? Up there, on the screen, one of them fulfills his high duty, while below, in the theater, the same one sits as a mere mortal, taking human pleasure in the likeness of his dignity? Or does he merely fulfill his duty once again? Where does representation begin? Where does it end? And the people, twice present here, and therefore doubly delighted, cheering at their own cheers, hailing their naive existence in the mirror: Is that not dangerous? Could they not become frightened, as if they had seen their own ghost? Could they not instinctively react and go mad?

No, they cheer. If the film rips, it will be fixed. The danger exists only in the minds of those brooding thinkers and tinkerers, who are not part of the naive mind-set of the people anyway. And, ultimately, even they must admit that the gestures of politics are especially well suited for the cinematograph. Everything else is a ghostly apparition that vanishes in the light of His Majesty's sun.

—Translated by Eric Ames

"Mechanized Immortality"[5]
Joseph Landau

"Are you not opposed to the cinematograph?" a zealot recently asked me, hoping that I would testify against the living picture theater.

"Opposed to the cinematograph? What a strange question! Should I be opposed to the train just because it occasionally runs off the tracks? Should I become an enemy of the telephone just because I sometimes receive an annoying call?"

The magnificent invention, the ingenious and often brilliant perfection of motion photography, has doubtless had to endure serious misuse. Later, I will offer some examples of such blasphemous abuse of this genial method for preserving and storing life and movement for all time. But what great invention has ever escaped misuse? Chloroform and morphine, those means of relieving all bodily pain, can also become deadly poisons, and every well-intended new creation carries within it the seeds of noxious corruption. This is a rule almost without exception.

From this perspective, cinematography's degeneration ceases to be frightening. Indeed, it pales in comparison to cinematography's surprising advantages—not to mention its blessings—and their potential for development. With the cinematograph and the gramophone we have in effect realized the *mechanization of immortality.* What theology could never quite clearly or persuasively teach us, technology allows us to experience in all its visible, audible, tangible reality. Once recorded, human speech and human song survive the speaker or the singer. Long after he has departed this life, he speaks to all future generations. The warm breath of sensation drifts out to us from his speech; the joy, the sorrow that inhabited the sound takes hold of us long after he who once felt and expressed this joy, this sorrow, has departed from our world of pain. To the same extent, instantaneous photography and its means of storage, film, preserve every agitation of mind and soul that expresses itself through movement. Portraiture, in every form and degree of perfection—whether made by an immortal artist who is able to render character and peculiarity through expression, by a sculptor who gives life to stone, or by a photographer who at the height of his powers shows us every line, every trace, every nuance of light on his photographic plate—portraiture can only present us with a single static moment. But every day and every hour, the cinematograph renews that Pygmalion-Galatea sense of wonder for our spoiled senses, which have almost forgotten how to be astonished in this heyday of technology. The image has lost its rigidity; it is no longer fixed in a single, unchanging pose as determined by the painter, the sculptor, or the photographer. It obtains soul, life, and movement. It shows us the hero in the epic, passionate actions that characterize him in moments of heightened existence. For recording banal activities of everyday life is surely not the task of instantaneous photography.

5. First published as "Mechanisierte Unsterblichkeit," in *Der Deutsche Kaiser im Film* (Berlin: Paul Klebinder, 1912), pp. 18–22.

Theater history, inasmuch as it was previously possible, has suffered from a certain lack. It was able to preserve the fame of a great actor, but not his essence. At best, it could transmit the description of a contemporary artist, which reflected his personal observations, his impressions. When perfected, such a description, based on the impression of a dramatic performance, can itself become a significant work of art. One can even think of accounts that are aesthetically more important than the artistic productions they describe. A critical piece by Lessing or Börne, for example, may be more significant than the drama they were discussing. Yet such descriptions, such critiques give us not the artwork itself, but only a reflex of an impression that it evoked within a certain, sophisticated soul. In its everyday, inartistic form, such a depiction compares to the artwork as the report of a good lunch would compare to the tasty, aromatic, nutritious, and satisfying meal itself. The description of an impression of an artwork relates to artistic perfection as a song of spring relates to spring itself. A poem by Lenau or Eichendorff depicting the smell of a rose or the song of a nightingale may be a poetic creation of charming appeal, yet it is neither the smell of the rose nor the song of the nightingale, but rather the beautiful reflection of the impression that the artist's mind received from them. The cinematograph, by contrast, enables us to immediately preserve the very life, movement, gesture, gaze, and expression of a great actor for all eternity.

What an invaluable gain it would be if we could use the phonograph and the cinematograph to capture Joseph Kainz in all his leading roles and possess them for all time![6] And to think that if the cinematograph had existed earlier like the phonograph, then Schröder-Devrient, Catalani, Henriette Sontag, Döring, Devrient, Dessoir, Dawison, Haase, Marie Seebach, and Niemann-Raabe—all could have lived not only in their time, but forever! Then we would continue to possess not only their names, but also their lives and their essences. The immortality of fame would be replaced by the immortality of their art! Just as the gramophone forever captures every sound of Caruso, the very magic and melodiousness of his soft, sensitive voice; just as the gramophone takes the rare artist and multiplies him a thousandfold, transmitting the unparalleled pleasure of his song to the entire world, to all countries and all cities simultaneously; just as the gramophone made Caruso beloved and famous long before he actually came to us; and just as it will preserve him at the peak of his abilities, long after he has retreated from the stage, long after he has retreated from life—so instantaneous photography, perfected as it is in the cinematograph, will capture the performance of the great artist in all its exquisite nuances and enable it to endure for all eternity. That would be more than just a gain for the history of art, which would see its dry work transformed into blossoming life. It would be more than just an invaluable benefit for the maturing youth, who would always and everywhere have before him a liter-

6. Joseph Kainz was one the most famous actors in Austria and Germany for more than 30 years. He died of cancer in 1910, just two years prior to Landau's article.

ally "illuminating" example. No, it would mean nothing less than robbing death of its spoils. From then on, death could only snatch the body away from us. The souls of artists would endure in their creations, in all their forms and magnificent effects, and they would endure *in this world*, visible and tangible to us all. What the great artist accomplished would benefit not only his countrymen and contemporaries, but all countries and all ages.

We leave it to the experts to show what the cinematograph can achieve as a sharp observer of nature and what it can contribute toward solving the great questions of biology. Here we can only hint at its potential. So what does it mean when, in spite of all this potential, back-alley movie theaters show miserable horror stories and undiscriminating audiences delight in foolishness or dirty jokes? It is sad and lamentable, to be sure, but it is merely an unavoidable side effect.

To condemn the cinematograph because of certain crude and bloodthirsty shows, which attract the connoisseurs of trash, would be tantamount to condemning our entire literary tradition, with all its classical treasures, simply because cheap and racy novels are also published and widely read.

Perhaps another time we will discuss the cinematograph as an educator.

—Translated by Eric Ames

"Proposal for the Establishment of an Archive for Cinema-Films"[7]
Franz Goerke

If Jules Verne—with all his inventiveness, his spirit, his imagination—had ever used his enormously successful novelistic form to recount the miracle of a lifeless photograph suddenly able to attain life and movement, and even to speak and sing with the aid of a gramophone, we would have followed him into the wonderland of his flourishing fantasy, shaking our heads, just as we gladly accompanied him on the paths of his famous fanciful-scientific novels, which took us on adventurous but always physically motivated journeys, e.g., to the moon, to the center of the Earth, to the North Pole, over the surface of the sun, or 20,000 miles under the sea in a submarine.

Have not his boldest hypotheses been outstripped by reality? Do we not live in a time when we have nearly forgotten how to be astonished in the face of new scientific discoveries? Do we not live in an age when the realm of things that seemed impossible has grown much smaller, in an era when science and technology are solving incredible problems?

This era has also seen the invention of moving photography.

Where should we look to explain why the cinematographic apparatus and film have taken over the world, made countless millions, stirred the emotions of the aristocrat and working man, fired them up, taken their breath away—for better and for worse?

It is not my task to go into detail here on potential applications of moving pictures, nor to show how, as an inferior exhibition form, they serve to entertain

7. Originally published as "Vorschlag zur Einrichtung eines Archivs für Kino-Films," in *Der Deutsche Kaiser im Film* (Berlin: Verlag Paul Klebinder, 1912), pp. 62–68.

the undiscriminating masses, thereby contributing to their mental decline and brutalization by pushing their desire for sensation in dangerous directions, whose consequences can only be controlled through strict containment by the government and police. Neither do I want to speak about the constantly increasing significance of film for education and research; there is hardly an area of knowledge that film has not impressively supported, thus rapidly gaining the sympathies of every scholarly circle—I will merely mention the names Commandon, Marey, and Kearton.[8] Every day brings new surprises in the arena of scientific film. Every day, hundreds, even thousands of meters of new film are "thrown onto the market" (if I may use this phrase) with alarming speed; the films come and go as fast as they appear on and disappear from the screen, and if we try to find out what has happened to them just a few weeks later, we find the film in a more or less worn condition in some film distribution house—that is, if we are lucky; but usually, the film cannot be found again, the negatives have gone missing; the information that we get from the film manufacturer is insufficient as can be, because new subjects already "dominate the market." Thus, it is often nearly impossible for an academic institute like Urania[9] to obtain films for scholarly presentations whose existence we know about, but which have meanwhile been forgotten or even destroyed.

Does it not stand to reason, then, that we need a central office, a collection point, a state archive for films, in order to save them from ruin?

Museums are collection sites for visual artworks, just as all sciences, regional geographies, and ethnographies have their collections; libraries keep humanity's intellectual achievements as enduring, immortal goods; and state archives preserve documents and files, which later scholars must put together in clever combinations to reconstruct a vivid picture of earlier eras; a state archive for cinematic film is equally important.

Historical and cultural events rush by us. Photographic and cinematic cameras have captured them for all time. Won't people one day ask, where did the documents go? Why have they been wasted, lost, destroyed? Isn't it thus high time to collect films across all areas of scholarship and cultural history, and preserve them for eternity?

Just as the law requires that the publisher of any new work donate a copy to the royal library, we must pass a law that requisitions a copy of any scholarly, historical, or cultural film for a national archive that will be established. The constitution, administration, and film-selection process for such an archive are issues of secondary importance, as is the question of cost for this kind of facility.

8. Jean Commandon, a microbiologist and pioneer in early micro-cinematographic film; Étienne-Jules Marey, a pioneer of chronophotography; Cherry Kearton, a nature and travel photographer who experimented with aerial photography.

9. Urania, a scientific society founded in Berlin in 1888 (and still operating), offers lectures to introduce the latest scientific discoveries to the broader public. The author was Urania's director from 1897 to 1930.

Let us now think about the films that we are *knowingly* allowing to decay.

In 1897, when I suggested that a governmental office be established for the collection of projected images from all academic areas, which would be available on loan to all kinds of educational institutes at no charge, my proposal fell on deaf ears. The educational significance of such a collection was wildly underestimated in those days. Ten years later, I returned to this idea, and once again its execution met with insurmountable obstacles; nevertheless, I never lost hope that it might one day be realized, and this is why I am appearing again today with my exhortation to the general public.

It is not yet too late, for the film industry is still relatively young. Some part of the cultural value it has created can still be saved and preserved for posterity. Whether consciously or unconsciously, only a small part of what we do and create is for ourselves. If we lay the groundwork now for such a broadly conceived collection, our descendants will thank us. . . .

Film has a greater cultural mission to carry out than "still photography." To be sure, the preservation of the written and printed word is admirable and necessary, but let us remember that only narrowly defined classes can make use of it. Images have a more concrete, instructive effect; they affect the senses in visual instruction, and in lectures they provide the most essential and effective support for the spoken word—and now we have the moving picture, which, if its dissemination is properly handled, could bring education and entertainment in the noblest sense of the word to people of all classes in thousands and thousands of theaters. And this threatens to perish with us, to disappear, because we are too selfish and shortsighted to realize that by preserving these pictures for coming generations, we preserve ourselves. We say to them: Look, this is how we lived and thrived, this is how we worked, invented and discovered, struggled, suffered and fought, this is how we celebrated, etc.

Companies that make millions from films, as well as more modest institutes of this kind, are therefore called upon to lend a hand in realizing my proposal, and I am convinced that they will be happy to do it, once they see that there is a strong, decisive, and serious desire for the creation of a film archive. Admittedly, this problem must be handled generously from the outset.

Does not the Kaiser himself, to whom this book is dedicated, provide the inspiration to preserve the present for posterity through film as well as thousands of photographs![10] He does so through the lively interest he brings to all arts and sciences, including photography (after all, the Empress herself is a practicing

10. Goerke refers to the book *Der deutsche Kaiser im Film*, which appeared in 1912 on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of Wilhelm II's emperorship. Underwritten by film studios, including Deutsche Mutoscop und Biograph-Gesellschaft, Edison, Léon Gaumont, Pathé frères & Co., and Vitascope, this richly illustrated book contains numerous photographs of the kaiser, poems, articles, and a musical score ("Heil Kaiser Dir"). Wilhelm II, German kaiser and king of Prussia, was widely known for his interest in film and was eager to pose for the camera at public events and on his many travels across Europe. He was called the first media star.

artist), through his very personality and through his travels. I still remember the days when color photography entered a phase of vital new discovery. The Emperor immediately wanted a report on the current state of this invention and visited Urania to this end on April 9, 1902. According to his wishes, he was accompanied not only by his family, but also by the Minister of Culture, high-level ministerial employees, and many representatives of art and science, proof of his great interest in significant developments in photography.

There is an excellent staff photographer, Herr Jürgensen, aboard the imperial yacht *Hohenzollern*, who stacks folders upon folders full of photographic documentation of everything that occurs on imperial voyages; as of recently, acting on a direct order from the Kaiser, he is also making cinematic recordings, which are shown not only to the Kaiser himself, but also here and there in public screenings. These recordings will certainly be kept in a house archive, but one day, when our generation is no more, our descendants will have the right to learn how the Kaiser traveled, and how he lived on his voyages.

This is just one example—in this case and in relation to this book the most obvious one—among the innumerable others that I could mention in order to support the case for establishing a national archive for cinematographic recordings.

They want to build an archive like this in Hamburg; Paris built one using collective means as early as 1905; London and Copenhagen already have film archives too—only our imperial capital refuses to budge. As far as I know, we currently only have a national phonogram archive, which, however, is exclusively available for music research. It is by far the most important one of its kind, and its publications are widely recognized as groundbreaking.

It is not yet too late. We can still make up for much lost time. Just as we are intent on collecting specimens from the natural world, preserving endangered species for posterity, at least in pictures, and caring for plant and animal life in nature reserves, we should preserve the image of our life and pursuits, our deeds and activities, as well as our enduring creative works, for distant generations. The task is that much more urgent now that moving images have provided the means to leave the future world a more faithful record than documents can generate.

—Translated by Alex H. Bush

Epstein Revealed:
A Review of *Jean Epstein*

ANNETTE MICHELSON

Long-awaited, too long delayed, the writings of Jean Epstein (1897–1953) are now available to English-language readers in a generous selection of excerpts from his theoretical work. Well chosen by the co-editors, Sarah Keller and Jason N. Paul, and decently if somewhat unevenly translated, they are complemented by a series of lively essays on Epstein's various interests, which ranged widely.[1]

That it has taken so long for these texts to appear is curious, given the intense interest generated by the few fragments that had been translated from the French. Several factors apparently dictated the judgment that the time had come for the present volume. Most prominent among them are the intrinsic and lasting interest of Epstein's work and its important implications for current debates on issues such as spectatorship, vision, and sight and their hegemonic status within Western thought; the present interest among film scholars and students in revising and refining the historiography of cinema and in so doing to reassess the larger cultural context within which the interaction between film theory and practice developed; and the existence of a publishing house willing and able to undertake publication of the writings of a filmmaker the circulation of whose work was limited to six mostly silent films, available only via rental, and that only with difficulty, and his papers, which were largely inaccessible to researchers for a half-century after his death.

The importance of this volume's emergence is such that any assessment of the theoretical literature of his period would appear to require a fresh investigation of Epstein's contribution.

The author of a dozen volumes and dozens more of reviews and essays, Epstein was also the director of forty-one films. He was, in addition, a member of the generation of filmmakers who, coming to maturity in the period following World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution, assumed through both practice and theory the task of revealing to colleagues, and to the larger public, the nature and potential of cinema. Epstein, as one may now see him, appears in the company of Eisenstein, Vertov, and Moholy-Nagy—his exact contemporaries—as a figure of

1. *Jean Epstein: Critical Essays and New Translations*, ed. Sarah Keller and Jason N. Paul (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2012). Hereafter cited in the text.

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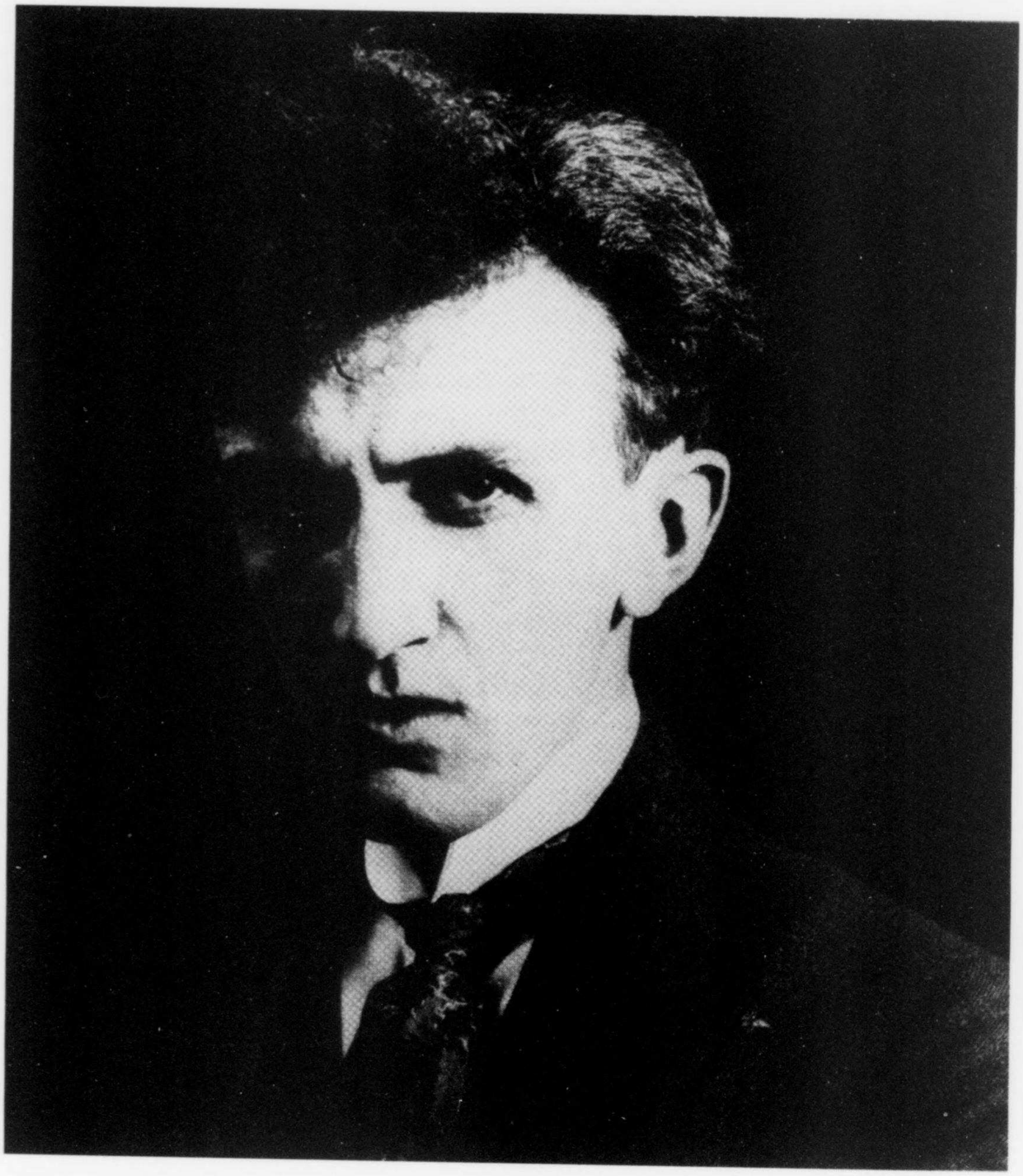

Jean Epstein at age 20.

interest in a line of theoretically productive filmmakers. The intersections of his thought with theirs surely offer a field of investigation that should be explored, but this substantial presentation of his writings should allow us now to map somewhat more fully and accurately the diversity of intellectual climates within which that generation flourished. Like them, Epstein as theorist posed questions that seem to sustain inquiry and animate debate on questions that concern film scholars, especially those already stimulated by Richard Abel's excellent volumes on early French cinema, criticism, and theory and Stuart Liebman's superb, pioneering study of Epstein's early theoretical writings, which together have provided much of what one knows of this extraordinary figure (and the frequent references to their work in the present volume testify to its quality).[2]

In one particular way, however, Epstein is unique. He is unquestionably the most gifted, original, and skilled writer in the history of film theory. An avid reader of philosophical texts and scientific news, trained in medicine and deeply, personally engaged in modernist poetics, he brought to his work as theorist a brilliance of rhetoric and style, a flair for the telling image, and a rich and rhythmic prose that are nowhere else to be found in the theoretical literature of the field. Epstein was a poet when he arrived in Paris as a young man, and a poet he remained throughout his career as filmmaker and theoretician. An early volume of verse, published under the friendly if somewhat episodic sponsorship of Blaise Cendrars, announces straightaway his will to join the poetic with the cinematic and to celebrate the issue of their union: *The Control of Time through Slow Motion.*

From his early poetry and essays to his major, late text *L'intelligence d'une machine* (1946), control of time is a central, animating theme. Other aspects of cinema—a new theory of spectatorship among them—are addressed, although they are largely, as might be expected, contingent upon the medium's new temporal regime, an important, animating theme for the collaborators in this book.

In her excellent, wide-ranging introduction to the volume, Sarah Keller provides passages from the early verse, which are already animated by a vision of cinema's potentiality, and the theoretical texts that follow are charged with its energetic lyricism. In her presentation of the first of Epstein's volumes of poetry, *Poésie d'aujourd'hui: un nouvel état d'intelligence* (1921), Keller makes clear that what is expressed is followed by an address to cinema, quoting the following lines: "The poem: a cavalcade of metaphors that rear up. . . . / The principle of the visual metaphor is adaptable in dreams and normal life; on the screen, it is a fixed given" (p. 30). Epstein goes on (responding to a sequence of images in a poem by Apollinaire):

> I immediately imagine a superimposition that emerges from the fade-in, then jumps into focus and stops abruptly . . .

2. Stuart Liebman, "Jean Epstein's Early Film Theory, 1920–1922," Ph.D. diss. (New York University, 1980); Richard Abel, *French Cinema: The First Wave, 1915–1929* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984); *French Film Theory and Criticism: A History/Anthology, 1907–1939,* ed. Richard Abel, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

Cover for Bonjour, Cinéma. *1921.*
Paris, Editions de la Sirène.

Spread from Bonjour, Cinéma. *1921.*

> Within five years we will write cinematographic poems: 150 meters of film with a string of 100 images that minds will follow. (p. 20)

The programmatic tone recalls that of Mayakovski's "productivist" verse of the postrevolutionary period of the early 1920s. Such would appear to be the tendency of transformational rhetoric.

Keller goes on to trace the place of Epstein's films in history, offering an account of his production, with particular stress on some of its important formal and technical features. She provides, most impressively, a reading of Epstein's early joyous book *Bonjour, Cinéma*, also published in 1921, which she presents as an introduction by a very young writer to the cinema's present-day grab bag and its expanding future, through an extraordinary series of juxtapositions of text and image, idea and design, and image and typography, all involving the use of collage, the variation and switching of fonts, the lingo of marketing, and above all great wit and playfulness.

One notices, however, in the extensive text interspersed with the introductory collage—including a succession of generous tributes to performers such as Alla Nazimova and, of course, Charlot—the promise made to the reader of a glorious extension of human sensibility and knowledge to be created by the cinematic close-up of the still object or the human face. Elsewhere, on Hayakawa, the great Japanese actor, for instance, Epstein writes:

> Other actors . . . begin from nothing, he from a repose that is already at the point of revealing everything. So much so that if he speaks, his words simply contribute to the breakdown of an immobility that is itself expressive. Tragic, and like the symmetry of snow crystals, this eloquent stillness yields to the thawing of an emotion that then becomes surprise, excess, relief from expectations: spring in the midst of ice. He hasn't performed yet and he has already dispensed with grand gestures. With this spontaneous expression, a blank check for unlimited amounts of sadness, he appears among extras who are suddenly swept away by his violent, forlorn silhouette. And he cannot shoot some pool or walk across a bedroom without our being deeply moved. (p. 307)

One notices that the description of the actor's face is effected through the gradual "thawing," a verbal rendition of the breakdown of a mobility, in stages ("surprise, excess, relief") rather like those of an image in slow motion, then recaptured as a whole in a newly striking poetic image such as "spring in the midst of ice."

It seems to me that an account of Epstein's writings might well profit from consideration of the terminology of his analytic and theoretical texts as received by the authors of this volume. I shall be offering in no strict order accounts of certain of their views through consideration of some concepts whose recurrence and development in Epstein's texts over the years acquire the force of structural principles to which he remained faithful—in his fashion. Among the terms in Epstein's vocabulary to be considered are *photogénie, lyrosophie, le Nick Carterisme, kaleidoscope,* and *grossissement.*

*

For Epstein, it is through the cinema that Man enriches and reconceives his experience of the world, doing so in a manner different from that provided through language. The cinema is the means through which a massive revolt against over-rationalized ways of being, understanding, and communicating is provided—an over-rationalization that can be immediately associated with the technological nature of the medium. But the cinema, in sharpening our sense of life and death, actually works toward the destruction of the frontier that divides them. Although death is not greatly elaborated upon, life is both analyzed and linked to the intensive celebration of the cinema's power of renewal. For although

in Epstein's view Descartes's proud slogan *la raison a toujours raison* (reason is always right) has unfortunately made Cartesians of us all, one still might entertain the notion, derived from a conversation Epstein had with Louis Lumière, that the gods created the charms that lure us to the cinema, eventually to discover for ourselves its real strength.

This, however, is a very mild version of the myth of cinema's origins; Epstein's version (developed and redeveloped over several texts) celebrates its rejection of the excessive rationalism of the medium and the society in which it is experienced and its sudden embrace of perfect instability—of the anarchic and the unintelligible. Through this we gain entrance to a different dream, to a nightmare or fluid universe in whose inconstancy the barriers posed by classifications give way and our rules dissolve. It is this version of Epstein's view of the cinema, as an evasion of rational controls, that we will encounter in an even stronger version in the essay "*Grossissement*" (*Enlargement*).

> Little or no attention has been paid until now to the many unique qualities film can give to the representation of things. Hardly anyone has realized that the cinematic image carries a warning of something monstrous, that it bears a subtle venom which could corrupt the entire rational order so painstakingly imagined in the destiny of the universe.[3]

Among film's unique qualities it is, however, the discernment and projection of truth, the "revelationist" dimension of slow motion, upon which Epstein will insist throughout his texts, indeed throughout his life.[4] Its supreme function, perhaps, would be its application in cases of moral or judicial decision, as when he cites the effect produced by "the shooting of both face and voice in slow motion, as in the case of an American judge who, confronting two women—each claiming to be the mother of an abandoned little girl—filmed the child's first reactions to each of the women, arriving at a verdict only after two viewings of the film material." Slow motion as the guarantor of the Solomonic judgment!

Epstein goes on to develop an analysis of the dynamics of spectatorship that is dependent on his postulation of a reception of film involving a "subconscious," the basis of which is actually a rejection of psychoanalysis. Let us say that his subconscious, to begin with, is not Freud's, for within the general structure laid out in "La Lyrosophie" (a text published in 1922 whose very name is compounded of poetry and wisdom) one sees his rejection of Freudian psychoanalysis as a deformation of the very notion of the subconscious insofar as it is based on an acceptance of—is, in fact, identical in form with—the logical determinism that governs cause and effect in the outside world.Katie Kirkland notes that Epstein to

3. Jean Epstein, "Magnification and Other Writings," *October* 3 (Spring 1977), p. 21.
4. See Malcolm Turvey, *Doubting Vision: Film and the Revelationist Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

some extent cloaks his dissent or attack in humor, citing Freud as the detective, the "Nick Carter" of current science (borrowing the name of a popular pulp-fiction detective), an inventive and ingenious investigator.

In her excellent essay, Kirtland asserts that "La Lyrosophie" represents Epstein's most expansive description of the transformation of subjectivity in modernity and one might add that it joins reason and the subconscious, the two antithetical modes of subjectivity in modern life. It is the balancing, through continual readjustments, of these two modes of consciousness that induces the state of *lyrosophie.* And similarly, it is the fatigue induced by the swift pace of industrialized society that offers a degree of access, as it were, to some degree of the lyrosophical state insofar as it also provides access to the effect, the desired, receptive effect, of cinema, relaxing or reducing an all too general and pervasive rationalizing effect on human consciousness. Might one not, however, find the receptiveness of the fatigued state of the overstimulated, hyper-rational spectator uncomfortably close to the figure of the contemporary "tired businessman," or the exhausted worker, male or female?

*

Responding to a remark on "pure" or "abstract" cinema, Epstein takes a stand against films without arguments or plots. Citing work by Eggeling and Dudley Murphy, Léger's *Ballet Mécanique,* and even the much-admired *La Roue* by Gance, he claims that the time has passed for their well-intended efforts. Epstein's purpose is the celebration of the camera lens as "an inhuman eye, without memory, without thought," capable of "escaping the tyrannical egocentrism of our personal visions" (p. 93). This entails the "subjective camera," until then predominant among the strategies of the avant-garde.

Alluding to the mistaken reaction of some followers of that movement and to a developing interest in his film *Coeur Fidèle* (1923), the brilliantly directed narrative of a young woman's betrayal by her lover, he had found their reaction "unbalanced," the film not understood as he desired. The climactic sequence, shot on a carnival ride in action, had—through the complexity of its motion and the skill of its direction, the counterpoint of speed and pathos—struck and continues to strike spectators with its brilliance and its pathos. He then refers to the kaleidoscope, a toy for a second childhood or for those with a taste for abstraction, capable of rotation at the speed desired, regular and variable at will. "As for me, I believe that the age of the cinema-kaleidoscope has passed" (p. 95).

Epstein had already declared his yearning "for a drama aboard a merry-go-round, or, more modern still, on airplanes. The fair below and its surroundings would be progressively confused. Centrifuged in this way, and with the addition of vertigo and rotation to it, the tragedy would increase its photogenic quality ten-

fold" (ibid.). And it is said that Epstein, when making his very first film, a biopic commissioned in celebration of the centennial of Pasteur's birth, had keenly regretted his inability to invent for Pasteur a sequence placing him on such a revolving structure.

This taste for cinematic effects and for slow or accelerated motion is found, as Kirtland reminds us, in writings by artists of the time—she cites, in addition to Picasso and Max Ernst, Léger with his "*La couleur dans la vie: fragment d'une étude sur les valeurs plastiques nouvelles*," in which the artist advocates an intensification of volume and color. As Epstein puts it, "to conceive the popular fête in all its brilliance, to save it from current decadence. To conceive it on the scale of surprise" (p. 96).

Kirtland follows this with a good close analysis of *Coeur Fidèle*'s major sequence of interest, an illustration of Epstein's insistence on the traditional components of narrative film. For as she notes, the function of all literature is, for Epstein, to serve as a cathartic device when the flood of sentiment—as physiological as a glandular secretion—exceeds the capacity of one's available object of desire to embody it. The melodrama provides the perfect foil to more elevated forms of literature, insofar as it privileges the rational structure that, to Epstein, the modern poet disrupts. And she proceeds to offer a different, interesting redefinition of kaleidoscopic motion and its function within Epstein's own filmic work, buttressed by research into the now-forgotten experimental work on vision and fatigue published in 1914 by Edouard Abramowski. The value of Katie Kirtland's contribution to this volume of essays is thus considerable, for it involves the analytic introduction of several terms listed in Epstein's vocabulary, and deals with some of the early, vital aspects of his texts.

Like Kirtland's essay, Trund Lundemo's "A Temporal Perspective: Jean Epstein's Writings on Technology and Subjectivity" will open a relatively clear path of access to some of the complexity of Epstein's poetic prose, not all of which can be clarified within a review of what amounts to two books in one volume: a collection of important fragments by Epstein and a second collection of scholarly essays by a group of scholars. Lundemo's work, which deals with a number of Epstein's principal concepts, refining and clarifying definitions elsewhere in the volume, demonstrates, as well, a broad and attentive familiarity with the scholarship of the past and present.

With the arrival, toward the end of the 1920s, of sound production, Epstein demonstrates, like Eisenstein and his colleagues Pudovkin and Alexandrov, a certain reticence with respect to the introduction of sound. Reading the Russians' manifesto on sound within the broader political temper of the times, one has the distinct impression of fear that sound's arrival will (like another invading expeditionary force from the U.S.) fight the system of montage, so brilliantly invented and employed by the members of the immediately postrevolutionary generation of which the above committee of three and Vertov were the most accomplished

exponents. (The official purpose of Eisenstein's voyage to Europe and the U.S. was, one remembers, to study the effects of sound within film production.)

Epstein did share a certain anxiety over the introduction of sound, but he was able to surmount it through a reconciliation pact with the image track in work done on location, in documentary and semi-documentary films. The first attempts in 1930 begin to dominate, but do not wholly replace, his production of feature-length fiction films. For most of those interested in Epstein's work, the resolution of the problem did not come as a surprise, for Epstein extended the marriage of slow motion and cinema to sound (a problematic move, in my own view, and ripe for discussion in the context of Epsteinian research), and one result is to be seen in the documentary or semi-documentary films shot in Brittany from 1930 on.

By the move to Brittany, an extremely interesting and productive one, Epstein shared some of the purpose and accomplishments of the British and American filmmakers of that time and of times to come. A comparative study of Epstein's work with that of Basil Wright, Grierson, Rotha, Joris Ivens, Pare Lorentz, Flaherty, and others might have interest for historians, technicians, and anthropologists.

*

Nicole Brenez opens her essay "Ultra-Modern: Jean Epstein, or Cinema 'Serving the Forces of Transgression and Revolt'" by reminding us that although Epstein disappeared more than a half-century ago, "few filmmakers are as alive today." One wants to know the basis of that claim, to see what it is that she wishes us to know. Surely not that Epstein's films are drawing new crowds to screenings, nor that no other film theorist is as widely and deeply studied. It may, however, be that the unprecedented enthusiasm for and stimulation by his theoretical work, as manifested in this volume of essays, represents a critical avant-garde working within the contemporary return to what is termed the "classical" period of film theory, generally understood as lasting until its culmination in the work of André Bazin (bearing in mind, nonetheless, that there's nothing classical about Epstein's writing itself).

Brenez also takes up the history of Epstein's indictment of the art film, the film of abstract plasticity ("like any abstraction, they create weariness" [p. 231]). Denouncing the work of the Futurists—the Surrealists' "unfortunate cousins"—as well as the Surrealists themselves, unaware of the cinema's capacity for what Brenez terms its "inherent surrealism" in its fight "against the 'surrationalism' of the social system" (p. 232), Epstein, in clearing the path for his radical renewal of practice and theory, thus dismissed the full, existing spectrum of a filmic avant-garde—from Eggeling to Buñuel—in preparation for a new, transforming direction in cinematic theory and practice.

Berenz's central concern is Epstein's conception, organization, and establishment of an antithetical cinema through substitution of the descriptive for the abstract and the adoption of a scientific method of reasoning—actually "a poet-

ics" of science, or "a poetically expressed scientific approach," terms to which we shall return. And it is the analytic power of cinema that "shatters" the phenomenal, betraying, "anatomizing," and providing, as it were, access to the real which we do not otherwise have. Cinema is presumed to be more exact, providing a mode of perception that human physiology does not offer. This is what we have come to know as cinema's reality effect.

For Epstein, the camera lens—wonderfully mindless, innocent of the defects and trickery of the human eye—in "shattering, anatomizing," serializing the image, produces what we may term The Epstein Effect, for it is at this point that Brenez brings to the analysis of his work her view of its source and its essence as well as its power of assimilation or penetration. For her, the master category of the cinema effect is that of "real presence," a term first offered by Epstein in a brief excerpt from a poem and then applied by Brenez to the great variety of filmmakers, who thus appear to form a personally constructed pantheon. Although I find Brenez's list of candidates for an honors list of some sort almost impeccable and approve of her inclusion of what might be termed "modern kaleidoscopists," her grouping all the filmmakers under a single roof in an imaginary pantheon, and the terms of admission applied to these filmmakers, appear highly questionable. She posits a group so varied that only some far broader category (such as "working in the twentieth century") could accommodate them all. Van Sant, Bresson, Godard, Jim Jarmusch, Tony Conrad, Paul Sharits . . . and the list goes on, with the inclusion of Ken Jacobs (for his *Tom, Tom, the Piper's Son*, no doubt for its use of the analytic projector and the extraordinary beauty of the image thus achieved).

What does, apparently, work to link them for Brenez is, surprisingly, "real presence," a concept of religious origin that abides, presumably, in the work of all these men. And the meaning and effect of this singularly religious signifier, its character and sanctimonious temper, are thus borrowed from that Dweller in the Pantheon who is, at the same time, lauded as the celebrant of transgression in the essay's title.

*

There are, in this anthology of critical approaches to Epstein's work, a number of other interesting approaches and expositions. Among them I would cite the following, while stipulating that there are a good many more whose texts deserve consideration.

Laurent Guido, writing on Epstein's conceptions of rhythm, considers the manner in which this was a major preoccupation of artists of the early twentieth century, among them the filmmakers concerned with rhythm's specifically filmic character. Considering Epstein's work, he discusses the specificity of his approach in contradistinction to those of some contemporaries.

Érik Bullot, a distinguished filmmaker and theorist, contributes "Thoughts on Photogénie Plastique," which considers the fascination with volcanic eruption from the seventeenth century through the twentieth. Its specific intensity of inter-

est for Epstein (one of his most frequently quoted essays recounts his ascent of Etna) would have derived from the plasticity of eruption. "Just as lava fuses different states of matter, the cinematic image produces dissimilarity without rupturing its resemblance to its referent," Bullot argues (p. 246). The further, elaborate development of this contribution to the volume deserves its own individual response, together with the consideration of the more problematic role of slow motion in producing similarity within dissimilarity in sound.

Jennifer Wild traces the history of significant interest in the volcano from Poe and Villiers de L'Isle-Adam (the latter cited as the volcano's first modernist fan) to support her account of Epstein's interest in what had been stimulating to so many before himself. This account is rich with many proposed investigative byways—not all, perhaps, essential for development of the subject—thereby adding an impressive 101 footnotes to a text of 20 ½ pages.

One finds, in addition to the above sampling, much more of interest in this volume. And there is, of course, the lyric grandeur of Epstein's mature prose, the magisterial use of metaphor in argument, the breadth of reference and elaboration of positions sustained over more than three decades by ever-changing imagery, a lifelong appeal to both the scientific method and the steadily accompanying campaign against *l'esprit de géometrie*, their virtuosic enhancement, through variation or reports of supporting evidence.

*

Epstein, not the only one to invoke the Eleatics in regard to cinema, insists on the following: the transmutation of the discontinuous into the continuous, negated by Zeno, but accomplished by the cinematograph; continuity supplied by the spectator; bad eyesight, the source of the metaphysics of the continuous. He then goes on to claim that:

> All film provides us with the obvious demonstration of continuous movement, which is formed at what we could call a deeper level, by immobile discontinuities. Zeno was therefore correct to suggest that the analysis of movement results in a series of still images; his only error was to deny the possibility of this bizarre synthesis which actually reconstitutes movement through the addition of pauses and which the filmmaker creates by virtue of our feeble vision. (p. 161)

The interest of these essays is enhanced by what was suggested earlier in this review regarding the development of filmmaking within the European and Soviet economies as a powerful stimulus to theoretical inquiry and production and regarding, as well, the place of Epstein within it. This is the period in which the filmmaker, recruited largely from the intelligentsia of the European bourgeoisie, assumed the task of legitimizing the cinematic project. This work, involving differences of culture, method, and aim, was driven and sustained by a widely shared

underlying hypothesis: Western man now disposed of a new and powerful cognitive instrument that gave him access to a clearer and fuller understanding of existence in the world. Such was the hypothesis, and it allows us to see Epstein—although differing profoundly from Eisenstein, Moholy-Nagy, and Vertov in his avoidance of political commitment or expression—not merely as a lone, detached, though resonant voice sustaining a high note over the music of an internationally composed chorus of the avant-garde.

It is perhaps another area of the larger world within which we can locate the source of accord. It is perhaps in the fascination with the theory of relativity that we may locate an intimate link, the ground of a certain euphoria.

In his Tarner lectures of 1956, Erwin Schrödinger attempted to account for the intensity of interest and attraction that the theory of relativity awakened in both the general public and philosophers. To that list we may add artists and filmmakers.

> It meant the dethronement of time as a rigid tyrant imposed on us from the outside, a liberation from the unbreakable rule of "before and after," the existence of each of us reduced to narrow limits—seventy or eighty years, as the Pentateuch has it. To be allowed to play about with such a master program, believed unassailable until then, to play about with it, albeit in a small way, seems to be a great relief. It seems to encourage the thought that the whole "time table" is probably not as serious as it appears at first sight.[5]

And Schrödinger concludes with the remark that "this thought is a religious thought."

Epstein was, of course, a member of the generation that received in 1919 the universally exhilarating confirmation of Einstein's special theory of relativity. He appears to have remained throughout his life an eager consumer of scientific news, on the lookout for new developments of scientific experimentation and theory that promised, as it seemed to him, to confirm and amplify his own observations and conclusions. Thus in *L'intelligence d'une machine*, he invokes a long list of researchers and recent research in his projections of the future; life and presumably art will, he exclaims, be transformed by research into the quantum mechanics of Dirac, Pauli, Heisenberg.

The limits of that transformation as envisioned by Epstein are perhaps best demonstrated by consideration of the problematic complexities and limits of visualization, or rather the question of the possibility of quantum mechanics, developed out of Dirac's remarkable work, as inaccessible to visualization. An ongoing discussion of this question develops into the somewhat feverish interna-

5. The reverberations of the theory of relativity among the general public as well as artists and filmmakers are discussed in my introduction to *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, ed. Annette Michelson, trans. Kevin O'Brien (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. xli–xlv.

tional exchanges that continued throughout the rest of Epstein's life. The strangeness of this area of debate was disconcerting enough to sustain an international polyphony of views to which Epstein appears to have been deaf. He seems rather to have commandeered, as he so often did, the literature of or about scientific research for the interesting, visionary sense of what is known as his theorization of cinema. However, the beauty of his finest films, the enchantment of his prose, instructs us that he began as a poet and remained one. The "theorization" is, rather, the elaboration of a poetic vision of cinematic power, ardently and inventively sustained throughout a lifetime of artistic production.

It was, Christophe Wall-Romana tells us, Epstein's desire to reinvigorate the historically complex subject of the "photogenic," to clarify its emergence through successive redefinitions and to restore meaning to a term that, in a witty simile, has been "grinded [*sic*] down like a bad tooth" (p. 51). In Epstein's attempt to convey the durable and multiform presence of this central concept, he cites a variety of sources and possible influences, for when one traces its presence through both work and biography, it does seem to vary considerably. Thus, an early definition first cited is found in the volume *The Cinema Seen from Aetna* (1926): "I shall term photogenic any aspect of things, beings and souls that enhances its moral quality through cinematic reproduction" (p. 53). At a later date, however, we encounter Epstein's puzzling but alluring insistence that "*photogénie* is to be conjugated in the future and imperative. It is never a state" (ibid.).

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Postscript: Writing in 1946, Maya Deren says of the motion-picture camera that it "introduced the dimension of time into photography, opened to exploration the vast province of movement . . . (so that) the explorations by slow-motion photography, the agony of its analysis, reveals . . . in an ostensibly casual situation, a profound human complex." She goes on to say:

> I have just received from France a book entitled *L'intelligence d'une Machine* by Jean Epstein. I have not yet read it, but the approach implied in the title and the poetic, inspired tone of the style in which Mr. Epstein writes of a subject usually treated in pedestrian, historical terms leads me to believe that it is at least interesting reading for those who share, with me, a profound respect for the magical complexities of the film instrument.

Béla Balázs: The Face of Cinema*

NOËL CARROLL

Herbert Bauer, known to the world as Béla Balázs (1894–1949), led the sort of life about which contemporary intellectuals might fantasize. He knew everyone and he did everything. Born in Hungary, he included György Lukács, Karl Mannheim, Arnold Hauser, Béla Bartók, and Zoltán Kodály in his circle, among others. He knew the filmmakers Alexander Korda and Michael Curtiz before their names were Anglicized. He studied with Georg Simmel and met Max Weber. As time went on, he came, so it seems, to know virtually every major European intellectual—Stefan Zweig, Robert Musil, Walter Benjamin, Sergei Eisenstein, Erwin Piscator, and on and on. He lived in the midst of a universe of conversation that dazzles us as we look back enviously upon it.[1]

And he contributed to it, writing poetry, novels, fairy tales, pantomimes, librettos, innumerable newspaper articles of every variety, children's stories, plays—dramas, farces, as well as agitprop exercises for workers—and, of course, film scenarios, including his adaptation of G.W. Pabst's version of *The Threepenny Opera*, whose producers Brecht sued, and *The Blue Light*, which starred Leni Riefenstahl and brought her to Hitler's attention. His rejection rate was high, but his productivity rate was breathtaking. Reading Joseph Zsuffa's comprehensive biography of Balázs, one is constantly taken by surprise, learning suddenly that Balázs is submitting a new novel for publication or play for production that we had no idea he was even writing.[2] Where did he find the time?

As a young man, as this prodigious literary production proceeded apace, Balázs was also involved in multiple love affairs. And when World War I came to an end, he participated in the formation of a revolutionary government in Hungary. Indeed, his political career, as a communist fellow traveler and then a party member between the world wars, was eventful enough that it makes us realize that sometimes he actually stopped writing.

Despite Balázs's staggering output, he is not much remembered today. He

* I am grateful for the help that I received from Malcolm Turvey, Annette Michelson, and Richard Eldridge in the preparation of this article, although they are not responsible for its flaws. I am.

1. Needless to say, before we romanticize Balázs's career too enthusiastically, it pays to recall that he was also the victim of political envy and setbacks both in the Soviet Union and in Hungary.

2. Joseph Zsuffa, *Béla Balázs: The Man and the Artist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

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wrote the librettos for Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle* and *The Miraculous Mandarin*, which still remain in the opera and ballet repertoires, respectively. But, in a development that would perhaps have been to his chagrin, his vast literary efforts have been forgotten in favor of his work in film theory, some of which constitutes among the earliest systematic attempts in this genre.

A prolific movie reviewer and then a film scenarist and script doctor, Balázs published his first treatise on the cinema, entitled *Visible Man*, in 1924, and followed it in 1930 with *The Spirit of Film* in an effort expand his account of film in the aftermath of the technological innovations of sound and color. Recently, these two books have been translated and reissued under the title *Béla Balázs: Early Film Theory*, evidence of a growing rekindling of interest in what is sometimes referred to as classical film theory, that is, film theory before the advent of semiotics and poststructuralism.[3]

This rebirth of interest in classical film theory seems to have a number of sources.

The first is a reemergence of the philosophy of motion pictures, a topic that, though initially instrumental to the process of legitimating cinema studies in the 1960s, was then eclipsed as the cinema-studies institution took its cultural turn decisively in the late 1970s and beyond, leaving questions of metaphysics on the back burner, if on the stove at all. Philosophers, both of the analytic and Continental brands, have lately stepped into the breach, reopening the ontological questions central to classical film theorists like Balázs concerning such issues as the art status of photographic media and the relevance of medium specificity.[4] The importance of the classical tradition for Continental philosophers is clearly evident in the writing of Gilles Deleuze, whose work is arguably a reconceptualization of classical film theory.[5] And, though it may be less apparent in the theories of analytic philosophers, given their tendency to argue ahistorically, their choice of topics, such as photographic transparency and medium specificity, also bear testament to the lingering influence of classical film theory.

3. Béla Balázs, *Béla Balázs: Early Film Theory: Visible Man and The Spirit of Film*, ed. Erica Carter, trans. Rodney Livingston (New York: Berghahn, 2010). This volume also contains an informative and insightful introduction by Erica Carter.

4. Although for theorists of the fine arts it is commonplace to assume that we have entered a post-medium epoch, among philosophers of art, flirtation with medium specificity is reemerging. See, for example: Dominic McIver Lopes, "The Aesthetics of Photographic Transparency," *Mind* 112 (July 2003), pp. 433–48; Murray Smith, "My Dinner with Noël; or, Can We Forget the Medium?," *Film Studies: An International Review* 8 (2006), pp. 140–48; Berys Gaut, *A Philosophy of Cinematic Art*, ch. 7 (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2007). The question of medium specificity seems to be especially pressing historically in moments when some developing technology arrives on the scene claiming the status of art. At present, the possibility of computer art—i.e., of *unique* computer art—poses such a challenge. The attempt to secure artistic enfranchisement is already afoot. See, for instance, Dominic McIver Lopes, *A Philosophy of Computer Art* (New York: Routledge, 2010). Moreover, at such historical junctures, past efforts at artistic enfranchisement by means of medium-specificity arguments—as exemplified by the case of cinema—gain renewed philosophical interest.

5. See Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1989).

Motivation for renewed interest in classical film theory, in addition, comes from within the cinema-studies institution. As the field became increasingly professionalized, one of its major growth areas was film history. Work in every facet of past film production and film culture has become immensely sophisticated over the short life of this field of academic inquiry. Moreover, an investigation of film culture, it almost goes without saying, leads unavoidably to the study of film theorists like Balázs, who not only shaped that culture but defended it against the skeptics who alleged that film could not be an art form.

One place where philosophical and historical interests converge is the thriving study of the relation of film to the so-called emergence of modernity, particularly as seen through the lens of thinkers like Walter Benjamin. This is undoubtedly especially significant with respect to Balázs, since his early film theory shares themes with not only Benjamin but also with Theodor Adorno and Siegfried Kracauer.

In his *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics* (LXXIII–LXXV), G.F.W. Hegel underscores the abstractness of modern life and proposes that the end of art—in the sense of purpose rather than finality—is to reaffirm the dimension of particularity and sensuousness in human life.[6] Art is supposed to reconcile us to the abstraction of modern life. It is in light of this conviction that Hegel, for instance, grounds his admiration of Dutch genre painting.

Hegel's influence surfaces in both Adorno and Balázs in that both (in different ways from Hegel and from each other) plot the function of art in response to modern abstraction. Adorno generalizes something like Hegel's view of a need to respond to modern abstraction to art *tout court*, while Balázs instantiates a version of this construal of the mission of art in terms of his account of the task of film, which he understands to be the restoration of bodily expressiveness and of our capacity to recognize it, which capacity had been putatively diminished by the ascendency of print/the word/the concept—in short, abstraction.[7]

Balázs writes: "Cinematography represented the transformation from a conceptual to a visual culture. Its popularity is rooted in the same yearning that has created a need in recent years for the art of dance, pantomime, and decorative art of every kind. The yearning is the painful need felt by human beings belonging to an over-intellectualized and over-abstract culture to experience an immediate, concrete reality that has not been filtered through the sieve of words and concepts."[8] (If

6. A parallel claim on behalf of cinema in terms of its capacity *qua* art to put us in touch with the particular (in contrast to science with its generalizations) can be found in Hugo Münsterberg's 1916 treatise, *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study*. But Münsterberg, it would appear, owes more to Kant than to Hegel in his opposition of the general to the particular in that Münsterberg does not ground the contrast historically.

7. Of course, Adorno and Balázs locate the source of modern abstraction differently, Adorno underlining the domination of exchange value and Balázs, the word. As Adorno calls for the artwork to provide an image beyond exchange, Balázs heralds cinema as the reclamation of the expressive behavioral gesture.

8. Balázs, *Visible Man*, p. 83.

one hears echoes of Kracauer's "redemption of physical reality" here, that is not surprising, since Kracauer knew of Balázs theorizing, having reviewed *Visible Man.*)[9]

Balázs assigns a world-historical role to cinema. It will restore concrete bodily expressiveness and our apprehension of it, relieving the abstraction of the age of print. It will educate audiences in bodily expressiveness, in terms of our sensitivity to it, thereby forging an international means of communication (he calls it a language),[10] which will dissolve the loneliness that comes with the curse of the Tower of Babel—i.e., the age of the dominance of the written word. Via cinema, "Man will become visible once again," Balázs sloganizes.[11] Moreover, this will retrain viewers in learning to look closely at the expressiveness of faces and bodily gestures, thus extending our perceptual resources, perhaps recalling Benjamin's suggestion that film educates us in the psychopathology of everyday life.

Balázs's theory of film has a very recognizable format. It is designed primarily to answer two questions that taxed silent-film theorists: Can film be an art form? and, if it can, can it be a unique art form (and not merely theater in a can)? Balázs answers these questions affirmatively, reviewing various cinematic structures—the close-up, variable framing (or montage), dissolves, fades, etc.—and selected film genres, showing the ways in which they exemplify or fail to exemplify artistic properties in a manner that is medium specific.

The best-known aspect of Balázs's theory of film is his emphasis on the close-up, especially in terms of close-ups of the face. "The close-up is the technical precondition for the art of facial expression and hence of the higher art of film in general," Balázs maintains. This concern with the face is key to understanding Balázs's conception of the possibility of film art. For it is the expressiveness of the human face and the way in which film, via the close-up, makes that expressivity available that suggests, to Balázs, how film can be art. To skeptics who denied that photography—and then film—could be art on the grounds that they merely reproduced or recorded reality, Balázs, in effect, responds that film can be art because it is expressive.

For Balázs, the close-up of the human face is emblematic of the capacity of film to be expressive. His leading metaphor throughout is that of physiognomy.[12] The transformative camera lens, for example, discovers the *physiognomy* of landscapes and of masses of people. That is, long shots as well as close-ups deal in faces, if not the countenances of people then the faces of things, things represented in such a way that their characters, or *souls*, or, more mundanely, expressive profiles show forth.[13]

The charge of silent film theorists like Balázs was to establish the possibility of film art in the teeth of skeptical arguments that cinema is nothing but a mere recording machine, as dumb and uncreative as Plato's mirror in Book X of his *Republic.* To

9. Kracauer's review is reproduced in *Béla Balázs: Early Film Theory*, pp. 231–32.
10. By "language," here, I presume that Balázs means no more than a communicative medium. He could not mean something with a semantics and syntax without contradicting himself.
11. Balázs, *Visible Man*, p. 10.
12. This point is also made by Gertrud Koch in her "Béla Balázs: The Physiognomy of Things," *New German Critique* 40, special issue on Weimar film theory (1987), pp. 167–77.
13. To be expressive in this context means to project anthropomorphic qualities, as when we say "The lake was *serene.*"

meet this objection, the silent-film theorist had to show that cinema possessed properties widely acknowledged to be artistically relevant. Like many silent-film theorists, Balázs connects film to expressive properties, building up from the expressive potential of the close-up of the face (and of human gestures) metaphorically to the "*physiognomic*" potentials of further cinematic devices and their rendition of recurring cinematic subjects (like landscapes and cityscapes).

In the literature devoted to Balázs's film theory, there is a debate about whether he was a formalist,[14] a realist, a modernist, or a revelationist.[15] I think that Balázs's early theoretical texts make it clear that he is, first and foremost, some kind of expression theorist.[16]

Expression theories of art began to take their modern shape in the eighteenth century, possibly as a result of the rediscovery of Longinus's *On the Sublime.* Early versions of the view were proposed by Thomas Reid and Jean-Baptiste Dubos. Romanticism reinforced this viewpoint, which probably represented the dominant answer to the question "What is art?" in the early twentieth century, voiced by authors like Leo Tolstoy and R. G. Collingwood.

Silent-film theorists like Arnheim and Eisenstein proposed their own spins on the kind of expression they believed was pertinent to film art. And even though Balázs does not make explicit reference to the expression theory of art, this is obviously where his philosophical commitments lie. Clearly it is because the close-up of the face is expressive that he uses it as a figure for every other form of cinematic articulation in his effort to establish the possibility of film art.

Other views of Balázs's film theory undoubtedly capture aspects of his endeavor. He is a realist inasmuch as he thinks film makes us aware of features of the world. But what features? The expressiveness of the human face and, by extension, the physiognomy of things. For the same reason, Balázs can be analogized to the Russian Formalists. But, again, he shatters the glass armor in order to foreground expressive profiles; he is not in favor of barring the device for its own sake. He may be called a modernist in that he eschews mere mimetic recording; he thinks the camera lens is productive or creative or transformative; but, like Arnheim, he advocates transformation for the sake of expression.[17]

14. Dudley Andrew, *The Major Film Theories: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1976).

15. Malcolm Turvey, "Balázs: Realist or Modernist?," *October* 115 (Winter 2006), pp. 77–87. See also Malcolm Turvey, *Doubting Vision: Film and the Revelationist Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2008).

16. Much of this debate appears based on Balázs's *Theory of the Film*, a book composed shortly before his death that includes not only selections from his early film theory but also views developed under the influence of Soviet film theory during his tenure in the USSR during World War II. In this article, I am concerned only with Balázs's earlier texts.

17. Arnheim, perhaps belying an anxiety of influence, tendered a snarky review of *The Spirit of Film*, in which he commended Balázs, saying, "The book he has not written is outstanding." Perhaps that was the book Arnheim would write, profiting from Balázs and the latter's expressionist bias. Arnheim's review is included in *Béla Balázs: Early Film Theory* (pp. 233–34). Also, it should be noted that, unlike Vertov and Epstein, Balázs does not prize cinematic devices such as time-lapse photography simply because they are revelatory. Cinematic techniques are to be deployed in the service of projecting expression—i.e., physiognomy. Nor is the camera eye hailed because it is superior to the human eye, but rather it is lauded because it tutors the human eye in a sensitivity historically suppressed in the age of print/writing/abstraction. For Balázs, cinema recovers something neglected rather than replacing the human eye with something superior, like Vertov's kino-eye.

Lastly, he is a revelationist insofar as he proclaims that ordinary perception, *at least* in the age of abstraction and under the regime of print, can be rejuvenated through the tutelage of motion pictures, yet what people are being re-sensitized towards is the expressiveness of human gesture and the physiognomy of the world. That is, what is right about the aforesaid rival views of Balázs can all be assimilated without remainder by recognizing that Balázs's deepest commitment is to some sort of expression theory of art.

Exactly what sort of expression theory might be more difficult to pinpoint. He does not seem to place much emphasis on the expression of authorial emotion or the arousal of audience emotion. Instead he stresses the potential of the cinematic articulations that he deems worthy of attention to show the expressive contour of things—their emotively charged character. And, of course, it is in virtue of their capacity to be expressive in this way that cinema, as an ensemble of these devices, can be art.

But even if cinema can be art, the question remains: Is it an art form in its own right? Or is film just a convenient system for delivering theater to the masses? Balázs feels the pressure to differentiate cinema from the other arts—to show that it, in virtue of its medium, achieves something of aesthetic value distinct from what is available in the other arts.

Balázs locates the important distinction between theater and cinema in the relation of the audience to the spectacle. In theater, typically, the audience's relationship to the actors is fixed. If you are in seat G105, that's where you'll stay for the duration of the performance. However, although the relation of the movie viewer to the screen is fixed, her relation to the onscreen action is not. Due to cutting, camera movement, and lens movement—fundamental elements of the cinematic medium—the audience's perspective on the action is variable. A close-shot can be followed by a long shot; the camera can zoom out or pan laterally.

Through variable framing, the audience is immersed in the action in a way that shapes its significance.[18] This enables the filmmaker to articulate the action with greater penetration than is available in the theater, which is why Balázs maintains that theater is primarily about the word whereas cinema is about expressive gesture. That is, it is in virtue of its medium—its distinguishing devices, such as montage—that cinema is suited to explore a unique content: expressive behavior.

Because of his relentless attention to gesture, Balázs is able to suggest a solution to one of the greatest mysteries of film viewing, specifically: How is it that we are able to tolerate in movies hackneyed stories the likes of which we would toss into the trash if we encountered them in the form of a novel? Indeed, it is not just a matter of tolerating them! Often we find the most sketchy and formulaic stories

18. Unfortunately, Balázs connects this immersion to the unlikely psychological hypothesis that viewers identify with the camera position. But how likely is this? Don't I notice that I am oddly not on fire when the camera is situated in Baron Frankenstein's blazing hearth or that I am not in harm's way amidst the shoot-out at the O.K. Corral? In any event, it seems to me that Balázs's point about varying camera positions can be made sans reference to any dubious claims about camera identification.

enthralling in a movie, whereas they could not hold our interest for a moment in the medium of print.

Balázs can explain this apparent anomaly by reference to the richness of the expressive information that the camera, including its variable framing, makes available to the viewer. It is not the plot that absorbs us so much as the images—such as "Lillian Gish's shattering play of expressions [in *Way Down East*]."[19] This is why schematic and simpleminded plots—what we might otherwise dismiss as rubbish—can nevertheless strike us as great cinema.

The star's face and deportment reveal a "story" all of their own—a dimension of significance—no matter how ridiculous or even nonexistent the plot. Charlie Chaplin's waddle and his sailboat turns pack an abundant level of expression into his otherwise simple, melodramatic tales, as does Asta Nielsen's face-—to cite two of Balázs's favorites. Likewise, John Wayne's gait, Jean Gabin's smoldering gaze, Marilyn Monroe's confidence in her own body, Bogart's twitch, Jean Arthur's sincere assertiveness, Bruce Lee's coiled intensity, Buster Keaton's deadpan, and so on, "speak" volumes.[20] Flesh fills out the story. This is a way in which cinematic narration, based on the image, differs from written narration, and this difference also serves to demarcate the domain of cinema as an art form in its own right as distinct from literature.

Balázs rehearses the theme of the artistic uniqueness of cinema by repeatedly demonstrating how it is able in virtue of its mediumistic access to the physiognomy of things to achieve expressiveness in terms of its characterization of its recurring subjects.[21] The systematic cast of Balázs's project is most evident in the structure of *The Spirit of Film.* Starting from the ground up, so to speak, he begins with a discussion of the close-up, elucidating its expressive potential; then he moves to the setup—what we would call the "shot"—explaining its transformative potential and even claiming at times what he alleges is its unavoidable subjectivity.[22]

From there he discusses montage, arguing that editing completes or gives direction to the significance latent in the shot.[23] Next he treats montage-in-the-

19. Balázs, *Visible Man*, p. 19. This is also what I think Balázs is getting at when he says, "The story may be idiotic but the images are beautiful," in *The Spirit of Film*, p. 192.

20. This feature of cinema is demonstrated neatly by Leo Carax's *Mauvais Sang* (1986). It is virtually an experiment in this regard. We remain fixated on the faces of Michel Piccoli, Denis Lavant, Juliette Binoche, Julie Delpy, and Hans Meyer and their incessant lighting of cigarettes to the extent that we virtually forget the plot. The heist theme becomes little more than a pretext for exploring the onscreen faces and gestures, every one of which appears to have been chosen for its irresistible fascination.

21. This is a common strategy in classical film theory. Either after or in the course of establishing the determinant characteristic of cinema, the theorist goes on to show how it is instantiated—case by case—in film's various articulatory channels. For an account of this approach, see Noël Carroll, *Philosophical Problems of Classical Film Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1988).

22. Surely this generalization is excessive. Automatic surveillance-camera setups, for example, are not subjective.

23. Contra Eisenstein, Balázs did not forget the scissors. He thought of editing as an essential feature of film, although that did not encourage him to demote other factors, as Eisenstein, with his youthful vehemence, tended to do. For Eisenstein's criticisms of Balázs, see his "Béla Forgets the

shot, by which he has in mind fades, dissolves, and other effects, all of which can serve as vehicles of expressiveness. In addition, he also reviews various film genres, including documentaries, comedies, what he calls absolute films (films without stories or causal linkages, including surrealist films), and abstract films (films of abstract forms such as *Symphonie Diagonale*), commenting upon their potential or lack thereof for the sort of expressiveness that Balázs champions.

Although he defends abstract films as justifiable experiments, as sources of ideas, and as (unintentional) discoveries of artistic dead ends, he is less confident in the value of abstract films, which he suspects on political grounds for their supposed detachment from society. Nevertheless, with respect to emerging film forms, Balázs is very accepting of the nascent sound film.

Interestingly, he models his defense of sound film on his earlier celebration of the close-up. Sound film will teach viewers to listen more attentively, just as the close-up allegedly taught us to see man (human gesture). Sound film will uncover, Balázs affirms, everything the acoustic environment has to *say* above dialogue.[24] Balázs analogizes the microphone to the camera, suggesting that it affords sound close-ups that will school our ears, revealing heretofore unheeded dimensions of reality. Although Balázs wholeheartedly endorses the use of sound, he recommends that it add to rather than merely recapitulate what is expressed in the image. Thus, sound film will lay bare features of lived reality to which we are no longer attuned (such as the expressive pitch and timbre of voices), not because of an innate deficiency but through acculturation.[25] In this regard, sound film is, just as the earlier silent film was, progressive, putatively putting "people of the world" in touch with their human potential to apprehend the physiognomy of things, most notably that of other people.[26]

Balázs concludes *The Spirit of Film* on a universalistic note: "If one day we are able to speak of the people of the world, then we shall find that the film will be there ready and waiting to provide the universal spirit with its correspond-

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Scissors," in *The Film Factory*, ed. Richard Taylor and Ian Christie (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 145–49. This text was originally published in Russian in 1926. Balázs, for his part, chides Eisenstein's dream of intellectual cinema (dismissed as hieroglyphic ideograms) and his privileging of asynchronous sound.

24. Balázs, *The Spirit of Film*, p. 185. Here Balázs sounds as though he might be prophesying the cinema of Jacques Tati.

25. Although one can grasp how sound will alert us to the expressive qualities of human vocalizations, it is less apparent how it will disclose the expressiveness of nonhuman noise. The expansive metaphor of physiognomy does not, it seems to me, fit nonhuman sound as effectively as it does nonhuman visuals.

26. Contemporary film theorists may bridle at the idea that motion pictures have the capacity to make contact with something universal across cultures, just because they doubt there are such universals. However, psychologists like Paul Ekman have established that with respect to basic emotions, the case can be made that certain facial expressions are recognizable cross-culturally. Consequently, Balázs's prognostications for cinema are not altogether implausible. With reference to cinema, see Carl Plantinga, "The Scene of Empathy and the Human Face," in *Passionate Views*, ed. Carl Plantinga and Gregg Smith (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1999).

ing technique of expression."[27] That is, film, in virtue of its revelatory features, is suited to perform an emancipatory role as a global art by supplying the means of addressing and reviving our culturally suppressed (although universally possessed) capacities to apprehend the manifest expressivity of the physical world—its people, places, and the faces of things in general.

Despite his triumphant tone, I think that Balázs intends this speculation less as an ironclad prediction and more as a fervent desire. He was very aware of the ways in which film can serve non-universalistic, ideological interests, as is evident in his analyses of the bourgeois bias of the leading commercial movie genres of his day. And in *Visible Man*, he explicitly states his conviction that film will not realize its full potential until capitalism is eclipsed.[28] Thus, a charitable reading of Balázs's early film theorizing should acknowledge his recognition that the apotheosis of film at the end of *The Spirit of Film* is contingent, not inevitable. Balázs is not naive, but hopeful.

Another complaint that one might level at Balázs's early film theory is about his use of the notion of physiognomy. He moves from a literal application of the concept to faces to a metaphorical application of it to everything else—from crowds to clouds. Can this equivocation stand? Actually, I think it can, when one realizes that what Balázs intends by *physiognomy* can be replaced without strain with the notion of expressive quality. When Balázs says that a landscape has a physiognomy, he means no more than that it has an expressive profile—for instance, that it is joyful or gloomy.

Needless to say, Balázs's implicit presumption of an expression theory of art is indefensible.[29] However, in context, it was at least strategic, since, as I indicated earlier, this was probably the most widely held theory of art back in the day (and maybe still is, statistically). Rhetorically, Balázs's line of attack could not have been more astute.

Moreover, by accentuating the expressive capabilities of cinema, Balázs was meeting the relevant skeptics head-on. For in stressing that film (as an extension of photography) was a mere recording of reality, the skeptics were primarily denying that cinema had an expressive dimension, which argued against the possibility of film art. Thus, one may read Balázs's preoccupation with expressive qualities as precisely targeted at the main source of skepticism regarding film as art. His emphasis on expression, in other words, might be reinterpreted as argumentative rather than ontological.

Of course, Balázs's great contribution to the philosophy of the moving image was his unwavering attention to the gestural expressiveness that cinema affords. In this, he pointed to one of the most crucial ways in which cinema is not

27. Balázs, *The Spirit of Film*, p. 230.
28. Balázs, *Visible Man*, p. 84.
29. Consider how much modern art, such as Yvonne Rainer's *Trio A*, is designed to defy expressive interest. For philosophical objections to expression theories of art, see Noël Carroll, *Philosophy of Art* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

reducible to literature. This is something that "everyone knows," but which is so frequently forgotten when commentators attempt to tell us the "meaning" of this or that motion picture. Too often movies are still approached as if they were literary artifacts—as if one could derive their significance from something akin to a plot treatment.

But Balázs knew otherwise from the beginning.[30]

30. Balázs's grounds here rest on contestable assumptions about medium specificity. Surely he is wrong in identifying cinema as the gestural art par excellence, in contrast with the theater, conceived as the realm of the word. The intimate *Kammerspiele* theater of Max Reinhardt was equally a theater of gesture, while the theater of Antonin Artaud and his followers rebelled against the word in Balázs's sense. Nevertheless, Balázs would still be right that movies cannot be identified for aesthetic purposes on the basis of mere plot summaries, since dense gestural expressiveness is such a recurring, although hardly unique, feature of motion pictures.

"There Is Not One Realism, But Several Realisms": A Review of *Opening Bazin**

RICHARD ALLEN

There was a period when André Bazin was considered by some to be a simplistic, naive thinker whose writings were only of historic interest.[1] In 1974, *Screen* regular Colin MacCabe, in a widely influential article, characterized Bazin as "a theoretically naive empiricist, a kind of idiot of the family."[2] How times have changed. In a new essay, MacCabe writes that Bazin realized that cinema creates a "complicated series of relationships between camera and setting" and concludes that Bazin was really a modernist, and so on the right side of history after all.[3] Bazin, a modernist? I am not so sure. However, the sea change evidenced by MacCabe is symptomatic of the state of cinema studies as a whole: Bazin is back! This must be deeply gratifying to Bazin scholar and editor of *Opening Bazin*: *Postwar Theory and Its Afterlife*[4] Dudley Andrew, who has been Bazin's leading advocate on the American side of the Atlantic for more than three decades.[5]

Opening Bazin is clearly a labor of love. Here are no fewer than thirty-three scholarly essays on Bazin, probably more than the total number previously published in English. The book is large format and small type but still runs to 350 pages. It is sensibly organized into four sections: on Bazin's film theory ("Lineage"); on his aesthetics; on the contexts of Bazin's writing and the contexts he addresses in it ("Historical Moment"); and finally an interesting if brief section on his worldwide influence. There is substantial emphasis on Bazin's theory, and

* Thanks to Malcolm Turvey for his comments and suggestions.

1. It must be emphasized, however, that Bazin's influence was felt and acknowledged on both sides of the Atlantic both before and after the publication of Hugh Gray's translations of *What Is Cinema?*, by writers as diverse as Charles Barr, Peter Wollen, Victor Perkins, Andrew Sarris, Richard Roud, and Stanley Cavell. See Charles Barr, "Rethinking Film History: Bazin's Impact in England," *Paragraph* 36:1 (2013), pp. 133–52. Thomas Elsaesser wrote a summary appreciation of Bazin's importance in "Two Decades in Another Country," in *Superculture: American Popular Culture and Europe*, Chris Bigsby ed. (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1975), pp. 202–15.

2. Colin MacCabe, "Bazin as Modernist," in *Opening Bazin: Postwar Film Theory and Its Afterlife*, ed. Dudley Andrew with Hervé Joubert-Laurencin in (New York: Oxford University, 2011), p. 66. MacCabe's original article was "Realism and the Cinema: Notes on Some Brechtian Thesis," *Screen* 15, no. 2 (Summer 1974), pp. 7–27.

3. Ibid., p. 71.

4. *Opening Bazin: Postwar Film Theory and Its Afterlife*, ed. Dudley Andrew with Hervé Joubert-Laurencin (New York: Oxford University, 2011).

5. Andrew's modest, elegant monograph *André Bazin* (New York: Oxford University, 1978) came out just at the moment when anti-Bazinian rhetoric was at its zenith.

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some essays are theoretically weighty. The best contributions explore less well-trodden paths: Ludovic Cortade's historical excavation of Bazin's geological metaphors, Andrew's own essay on Bazin and painting, Philip Watt's elegant essay on Bazin's rhetoric, and Antoine de Baecque's deconstruction of Bazin's authorial legend.

The publication of this book, for me at least, provides an occasion to think again about the question of realism in the cinema that Bazin probes in so many fertile but often elusive and contradictory ways. Tom Gunning, voicing a sentiment I share, writes that Bazin, in his famous essay "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," makes a distinction that has troubled him for years "between true realism, the need that is to give significant expression to the world both concretely and in its essence, and the pseudo-realism of a deception aimed at fooling the eye (or for that matter the mind); a pseudo-realism content in other words with illusory appearances."[6] This distinction between true realism and pseudo-realism emerges in the context of a second distinction drawn by Bazin between the "primarily aesthetic, namely the expression of a spiritual reality wherein the symbol transcended its model" and the "purely psychological, namely the duplication of the world outside."[7] For Bazin, at the origin of art there is a psychological need to preserve life through the representation of life, which he dubs the "mummy complex." This finds its expression in the search to create artworks that compel our belief in the reality that they depict. He argues that the invention of perspective in painting represented a decisive shift in the history of representational art towards fulfilling humankind's search for lifelike representation by creating "the illusion of three-dimensional space within which things appeared to exist as our eyes in reality see them."[8]

In contrast, it seems, true realism answers not this psychological need but the aesthetic impulse, or at least emerges only where the need is balanced by the aesthetic impulse. Bazin defines that impulse in terms of the pursuit of a spiritual reality wherein the symbol transcends its model. Medieval art provides Bazin's privileged pre-cinematic example, where psychological need is reconciled with aesthetic impulse to create true realism. Medieval art did not experience the conflict between spiritual-aesthetic expression and psychological need because it lacked the technical means to create illusionistic representation. Instead, it managed to be "vividly realistic" while at the same time "highly spiritual."[9] One assumes, too, that it was authentically realistic, for Bazin, because it resembled what it depicted without being illusionist, thereby tempering representation with symbolic, spiritual expression.

Photography offers a new way of "satisfying our appetite for illusion."

6. André Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," in *What is Cinema?*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California, 2005), p. 12; cited in Tom Gunning, "The World in Its Own Image: The Myth of Total Cinema," in *Opening Bazin*, p. 123.
7. Ibid., p. 11.
8. Ibid., p. 12.
9. Ibid., p. 12.

Paintings and drawings, however lifelike, are handmade. Photographic realism, in contrast, issues from the causal relationship that exists between the photographic image and the object or event photographed, where "for the first time an image of the world is formed automatically, without the creative intervention of man."[10] This "objective nature of photography," Bazin concludes, "confers on it a credibility absent from all other picture making. In spite of any objections our critical spirit may offer, we are forced to accept as real the existence of the object reproduced."[11] In addition, Bazin sometimes seems to claim that the causal basis of the photographic image confers credibility on photographic representation not only in virtue of the causal basis of the photographic image but by creating a seeming identity between the image and what it represents. "A photograph" he claims, is not simply a representation of something but rather a "re-presentation" of it, in which there is "a transfer of reality from the thing to its reproduction."[12] He famously writes, in Hugh Gray's translation, "No matter how fuzzy, distorted, or discolored, no matter how lacking in documentary value the image may be, it shares, by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which it is the reproduction: it *is* the model."[13] However, as a number of writers have argued, passages such as this one are open to interpretation, and I will return to the strong claim about an identity or quasi-identity between photographic reproduction and its model at the end of this essay.

For Bazin, at least at first sight, it seems that in the new medium of cinema, the tension between authentic aesthetic expression and the artifice of illusion no longer exists, but this absence of conflict obtains for a different reason in cinema than in medieval art. For, in cinema, the creation of lifelikeness has been satisfied once and for all by mechanical means. Cinema seems to satisfy our appetite for illusion without recourse to illusion and thus overcomes, once and for all, the opposition between the psychological need, which has forced pseudo-realism or illusion upon art, and the spiritual impulse from which authentic art emerges. However, as we shall see, illusion does turn out to have a central role in Bazin's conception of cinema, and thus Bazin's argument, more cautiously formulated, is that cinema satisfies our appetite for illusion in a manner that is fundamentally different from handmade images because of its mechanical base. Tension may emerge between authentic expression and illusion, but this tension manifests itself in a different way from previous art forms.

There is a great deal of ambiguity in Bazin's arguments here. There are three terms in play: resemblance, illusion, and "*re*-presentation," and these are mapped onto distinctions between painting and photography and an as yet not fully clarified distinction between photography and cinema. The key questions are these: Is Bazin claiming that the contrast between painting and photography

10. Ibid., p. 13.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., p. 14.
13. Ibid.

is between the representational medium of painting, where the image refers to a thing that it represents either by resemblance or by illusion, and the nonrepresentational medium of cinema, where the image *is* in some sense the thing it refers to? And what could Bazin mean by this? Or is Bazin's claim of an identity between "being and model" merely an exaggerated way of drawing a contrast between different forms of representation with different properties, one based on causality, one not? Furthermore, in what ways do the distinctions that Bazin develops between painting and photography explain the capacities of cinema?

Finally, what is the role of the central, but critically neglected, concept of "illusion" in his argument? The "Ontology" essay is founded on a broad rhetorical contrast between the illusion of painting, based on perspective, and the putative "identity" between image and object in photographic realism. The quotation that worries Gunning calls pictorial illusion a "pseudo-realism," and Bazin refers to perspective as the "original sin of western painting."[14] Yet Bazin also makes clear that pictorial illusion itself is merely a special species of resemblance in which "things appear to exist as our eyes in reality see them."[15] He also speaks of perspective in ways that recall cinema as "the first scientific and already, in a sense, mechanical reproduction," as if painting might anticipate, through perspective, certain properties of cinematic realism.[16]

Bazin also applies the category of resemblance to photography and by extension to cinema. The masses, he writes, "identify resemblance on the one hand with photography and on the other with the kind of painting which is related to photography."[17] Bazin further claims that the basic realism of photography from which its distinctive aesthetic character derives is based upon resemblance: "Those categories of *resemblance* which determine the species *photographic* image, likewise, then, determine the character of its aesthetic as distinct from that of painting."[18] Finally, in order to justify certain cases of the deep-space aesthetic he admires in cinema, Bazin has recourse to the criteria of resemblance. Thus he writes that "Wyler obtains (and wants) on the screen only a picture that resembles as closely as possible, despite the inevitable formal elements required to create it, the spectacle that an eye could see if it looked at reality through an empty framing device [like a window]."[19]

If, for the time being, we understand illusion as a neutral category, as simply a cognate for lifelike resemblance, rather than an inauthentic mode of resemblance, I think we can reasonably claim that the distinction in Bazin's essay that is rhetorically drawn as a contrast between handmade and photographic pictorial

14. Ibid., p. 12.
15. Ibid., p. 11.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., p. 13.
18. Ibid., p. 15.
19. Bazin, "William Wyler, or the Jansenist of Directing," in *Bazin at Work: Major Essays and Reviews from the Forties and Fifties*, ed. Bert Cardullo, trans. Alain Piette and Bert Cardullo (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 10.

representation actually describes two different kinds of representation that can be found, differently weighted, in both handmade and photographic representation. Photography and cinema add to the "illusionism" of representational painting—which itself, at least once upon a time, had the capacity to "bear away our faith"—a distinctive kind of photographic realism based on the causal connection between the image and what the image refers to. This photographic realism is commonly described, following Peter Wollen, using the vocabulary of C. S. Pierce, as "indexical realism."[20] This terminology is somewhat confusing since an index, for Pierce, is a broad category of signs that point to something, whereas the photograph is a specific kind of index that points to something through a causal connection with it. Nevertheless, given this caveat, I will follow standard usage.

The existence of a causal connection between image and object in photography bestows upon the image an evidentiary status like that of a fingerprint that registers causally the trace of an actual finger, to borrow Bazin's own analogy. In this spirit, Bazin writes poetically:

> The aesthetic qualities of photography are to be sought in its power to lay bare the realities. It is not for me to separate off, in the complex fabric of the objective world, here a reflection on a damp sidewalk, there the gesture of a child. Only the impassive lens, stripping the object of all those ways of seeing it, those piled-up preconceptions, that spiritual dust and grime with which my eyes have covered it, is able to present it in all its virginal purity to my attention and consequently to my love.[21]

The "impassive lens" refers to the objective qualities of photography, which the causal basis of the photographic image automatically bestows upon cinematic representation.

Indexical realism serves to explain certain aspects of the aesthetics of film that Bazin valorizes. For example, he values de Sica and Rossellini for the way in which they use location shooting to embed human beings in the natural and social world. Thus, in *Paisà* (1946), "in the admirable final episode of the partisans surrounded in the marshlands, the muddy waters of the Po Delta, the reeds stretching away to the horizon, just sufficiently tall to hide the man crouching down in the little flat bottomed boat, the lapping of the waves against the wood, all occupy a place of equal importance with the men."[22] More generally, he writes that the "unit of cinematic narrative" in the film is not "'the shot,' an abstract view of a reality being analyzed, but the 'fact.' A fragment of concrete reality in itself, multiple and full of ambiguity."[23]

20. Peter Wollen, *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* (London: BFI, 1998), p. 86. In this book, first published in 1969, Wollen is notably unpatronizing towards Bazin, calling him "the most forceful and intelligent protagonist of 'realism' in the cinema" (p. 85).
21. Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," p. 15.
22. Bazin, "An Aesthetic of Reality," in *What Is Cinema?*, vol. 2, ed. and trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California, 2005), p. 37.
23. Bazin, "An Aesthetic of Reality," p. 37.

Equally, in a way that seems to evoke Siegfried Kracauer, Bazin values moments of contingency and chance in cinema. Thus, in celebrating the realism of Georges Rouquier's *Farrebique* (1947), Bazin writes that "the grandfather's fire is a real fire, whose flames rise on their own and not on the command of a special-effects man, which every one knows because the logs are still green and huff and puff as they bleed all their sap."[24] This "natural," uncontrolled process, presented to the spectator in cinema, may be intentionally mobilized by the director but is not actually created by him or her. It arises instead out of the "facts" being photographed. These "facts" are valued, Bazin suggests, in the uniqueness of their occurrence: "The frosted telegraph wires, the dog running in the snow, the ice in the rut cracked by the man's clog, are mere facts, no doubt trite and multiple, but not at all general: Rouquier preserves their total singularity."[25]

Indexical realism also elicits emotional responses that are specific to cinema, especially where death is observed or is risked in footage of documentary "actuality" in a manner that highlights the nature of contingency and chance. Thus he writes: "In the film about Manolete . . . we are present at the actual death of the famous matador and while our emotion may not be as deep as if we were actually present in the arena at that historic moment, its nature is the same."[26] In certain documentaries we become aware of how the filmmaker's own life is at risk in the encounter with reality. In the encounter with a killer whale in the film *Kon Tiki*, the very making of the film becomes part of the aspect of the adventure, "when a capricious movement of the monster might well have annihilated the raft and sent camera and cameraman . . . into the deep."[27]

However, indexical realism alone will not suffice to explain the realism of photography and cinema. Bazin explicitly disparages the power of drawing to compel our belief: "A very faithful drawing may actually tell us more about the model but despite the promptings of our critical intelligence it will never have the irrational power of the photograph to bear away our faith."[28] As Jonathan Friday has argued, it is hard to think how a fuzzy and illegible image is really going to do the work that is required to enable us to respond to an image as if it were lifelike and bear away our belief or faith.[29] It would seem that resemblance, or what has been called, after Pierce, "iconic" realism, is also required; that is, we must surely be able to recognize what the image is of in order for us to respond to it, in certain respects, in the way we might respond to something that is present to our senses. Indeed, as Wollen notes, Pierce has already commented on this dual nature of the photographic image as icon and index:

> Photographs, especially instantaneous photographs, are very instructive, because we know that in certain respects they are exactly like the objects

24. Bazin, "*Farrebique*, or the Paradox of Realism," in *Bazin at Work*, p. 107.
25. Ibid.
26. Bazin, "Theater and Cinema: Part Two," in *What Is Cinema?*, vol. 1, p. 98.
27. Bazin, "Cinema and Exploration," in *What Is Cinema?*, vol. 1, p. 161.
28. Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," p. 14.
29. Jonathan Friday, "André Bazin's Ontology of Photographic and Film Imagery," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 63, no. 4 (Fall 2005), p. 348.

> they represent. But this resemblance is due to the photographs having been produced under such circumstances that they were physically forced to correspond point by point to nature. In that aspect, then, they belong to the second class of signs, those by physical connection.[30]

It is surely, for Bazin, the combined properties of indexicality and iconicity in the photograph that bear away our faith. As Friday summarizes, photographs "are a special kind of index that points to its cause iconically, or by picturing that cause."[31]

The ambiguity in Bazin's essay with respect to the way in which the distinction between media is dramatized may be partly explained by the rhetoric of Bazin's writing, which is influenced on the one hand by a dialectical mode of argumentation in which opposites are integrated and transcended and, on the other hand, by the geological, evolutionary metaphors explored by Cortade, which serve to illustrate the dialectical mode as a natural process.[32] This kind of rhetoric is most prominent in Bazin's essay "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema," but it is arguably also present in the essay on ontology. The invention of cinema creates a geological upheaval in the history of art that brings about a new equilibrium in the landscape of representation where the relationship between the iconic and indexical aspects of the image are reconfigured and indexicality, because of the causal properties of photography, comes into prominence and iconicity recedes in significance.

However, Bazin is not mainly interested in photography; he is interested in cinema, and the capacities he so precisely delineates in photography, though they are part of what he valorizes in cinematic realism, prove insufficient to encompass the forms of realism that he finds there. The key issue here is the addition of time, whose perceptible criteria are physical change or movement and, in addition, the sound that provides an aural criterion of duration. Movement and sound are qualities that expand the iconic and indexical properties of the medium of film over photography: Film has the capacity to represent events as they unfold in time. However, they also arguably give rise to a form of realism that is distinct from both indexical and iconic realism. This realism arises from the fact that cinema has the capacity to represent our perceptual experience of space and time by means of space and time.[33] This kind of realism emerges out of Bazin's aesthetic of deep focus and the long take. It is predicated on the idea that the aesthetic interest of this style resides above all not in the indexical properties of the shot—the fact that the image is causally connected to this particular object or spatial array, or the fact that it resembles or looks like this particular object or spatial array—but through the fact that, as Bazin puts it, "independently of the contents of the image, its structure is more realistic."[34] In the sequence shot we perceive events as

30. Pierce, quoted in Wollen, *Signs and Meaning*, p. 84.
31. Friday, "André Bazin's Ontology of Photographic and Film Imagery," p. 343.
32. Ludovic Cortade, "Cinema Across Fault Lines: Bazin and the French School of Geography," in *Opening Bazin*, pp. 13–31.
33. See Gregory Currie, *Image and Mind: Film, Philosophy, and Cognitive Science* (New York: Cambridge University, 1995), pp. 106–08.
34. Bazin, "Evolution of the Language of Film," in *What Is Cinema?*, vol. 1, p. 35.

they unfold uninterrupted in space and time, and this bestows upon it a quality of realism absent in montage, which we may call "perceptual realism" or, after Bazin, "psychological realism."

As Daniel Morgan has noted, the distinctive character of this kind of realism can be pinpointed through the example of Welles.[35] Bazin lauds the spatial construction in depth of Susan's suicide scene in *Citizen Kane* (1941), which is emphasized and dramatized by two sound planes: Susan breathing in the foreground and the sound of the knock outside the door "made even more distant by the lens's false perspective."[36] Because of its self-evident artifice, the realism of this scene can scarcely be grasped in terms of indexicality, though certain qualities of the scene may be attributable to this, for example the performance of the actors. Furthermore, the scene is not distinguished by its iconic realism. In fact, it distorts the representation of space, though of course the image remains thoroughly legible. However, while Welles stretches space, as Bazin says, like a "rubber band,"[37] he nonetheless respects the integrity of events as they unfold in space and time. In this respect, the realism of Welles's style, like that of Wyler, can be explained in terms of "psychological realism," that is, by the manner in which it represents to us an event unfolding in space and time that corresponds to the way that we perceive events unfolding in space and time. The scene "brings the spectator back to the real conditions of perception, a perception which is never completely determined *a priori*."[38] Bazin's own gloss on psychological realism is that it allows the spectator, as in actual perception, freedom of choice about what to observe: "Obliged to exercise his liberty and his intelligence, the spectator perceives the ontological ambivalence of reality directly, in the very structure of its appearances."[39]

Thus far, I have delineated three kinds of realism deemed important for the aesthetics of cinema by Bazin: indexical realism, iconic realism, and perceptual realism. I will now return to the concept of illusion, where there is unfinished business. For the sake of argument, I suspended consideration of the term "illusion" in favor of "resemblance," but this is ultimately an inadequate response to Bazin's theory, because the term "illusion" has an independent conceptual status in his theory of cinematic realism. Bazin deploys the vocabulary of illusion extensively in his writings to speak of the nature of realism in cinema. For example, he speaks of the guiding myth of total cinema, in which the *idea* of cinema existed before it had been invented, as "the reconstruction of a perfect illusion of the outside world in sound, color and relief." It seems to me that "illusion," for Bazin, is built into cinematic representation for two essential reasons. The first hearkens back to his characterization of perspectival painting as an illusion in the sense that it is an image that substitutes a representa-

35. Daniel Morgan, "Rethinking Bazin: Ontology and Realist Aesthetics," *Critical Inquiry* 32, no. 3 (Spring 2006), p. 456.
36. Bazin, *Orson Welles: A Critical View* (Venice, CA: Acrobat Books, 1991), pp. 77–78.
37. Bazin, "William Wyler," p. 9.
38. Bazin, *Orson Welles*, p. 80.
39. Ibid.

tion, however lifelike, for the thing represented. A similar substitution takes place in the cinema. Whatever its indexical properties, the image in the cinema is an "abstraction." It may be black and white or a certain kind of color; it is a composite construction of sound and image; it embodies a choice of lighting, framing, and so on. Now, one may quibble with the term "illusion," but Bazin's point is not simply that the image has iconic properties in cinema, but that it has iconic properties that are distinct from those that are disposed upon it in virtue of an indexical relationship with the object photographed.

Secondly, in cinema, our perception of the image is subject to organization through editing. Bazin is very attuned to the trickery or deception wrought by editing and how this visual deception can contribute in a positive way to the experience of a film. In *Opening Bazin*, Seung-hoon Jeong explores Bazin's fascination with the manipulation of natural reality in animal films, where Bazin contrasts the effect of continuous takes, in which the confrontation between human and animal is presented uncut, with the illusory synthesis of the shot of many different animals to represent one animal through editing.[40] Referring to *La Course de taureaux* (*Bullfight*; 1951), Bazin writes: "The linkage of two bulls in a single movement does not symbolize the bull's strength; it surreptitiously replaces the photo of the nonexistent bull we believe we are seeing. The editor makes sense of her editing just as the director of his decoupage, based solely on this kind of realism."[41]

In his essay "The Virtues and Limitations of Montage," Bazin contrasts an animal fiction by Tourane, *Une Fée pas comme les autres* (*The Secret of Magic Island*; 1957), with Lamorrise's *Le ballon rouge* (*The Red Balloon*; 1956). Tourane's animal fiction succeeds because it anthropomorphizes animals through montage. If the animals had been trained to perform like humans within any given shot, the film would have turned into a documentary about their skill, rather than being a fiction. In contrast, our conviction that there is a balloon following the boy protagonist in *Le ballon rouge* is sustained by the substitution of many balloons in editing in a manner that allows the "documentary" integrity of each shot, in which the balloon appears to follow the boy, to be maintained. Bazin concludes: "If the film is to fulfill itself aesthetically we need to believe in the reality of what is happening while knowing it to be tricked."[42]

However, Bazin's argument about the illusory effects of editing is a quite general one. Continuity editing creates an "illusion" that "involves a fundamental deceit," for "reality exists in continuous space," whereas "the screen in fact presents us with a succession of shots." We tolerate these "ruptures" because they "allow an impression to remain of continuous and homogenous reality," but this is just an impression or illusion.[43] Again, these arguments about classical decoupage

40. Seung-hoon Jeong, "Animals: An Adventure in Bazin's Ontology," in *Opening Bazin*, pp. 177–85.
41. Bazin, "Death Every Afternoon," in *Rites of Realism: Essays on Corporeal Cinema*, ed. Ivone Margulies (Durham: Duke University, 2003), p. 28; cited in Jeong, "Animals," p. 179.
42. Bazin, "The Virtues and Limitations of Montage," in *What Is Cinema?*, vol. 1, p. 48.
43. Bazin, *Orson Welles*, p. 77.

seem to echo his claim about illusion in painting. Just as perspective in painting creates an illusory sense of space as a substitute for actual space, so classical editing "insidiously" substitutes "mental and abstract time" for actual duration.[44] Bazin summarizes his position thusly:

> The same event, the same object, can be represented in different ways. Each representation discards or retains various of the qualities that permit us to recognize the object on the screen. Each introduces, for didactic or aesthetic reasons, abstractions that operate more or less corrosively and thus do not permit the original to subsist in its entirety. At the conclusion of this inevitable and necessary "chemical" action, for the initial reality there has been substituted an illusion of reality composed of a complex abstraction (black and white, plane surface), of conventions (the rules of montage, for example), and of authentic reality.[45]

Where for Bazin "authentic reality" refers to "indexical realism," as, for example, when he characterizes the "realist" element of a neorealist director such as Rosselini, realist style consists not simply in referencing "reality" indexically but in the strategies of "abstraction" in the image and the organization of images and sounds through editing that enhance rather than detract from our recognition of authentic reality and the credibility it bestows upon the image. Thus our understanding of the relationship between man and nature in the Po River scene from *Paisá* is only made possible by the manner in which the horizon line is organized and maintained in the shot series. While the "unit of cinematic narrative" is a "fragment of reality," the context of the image sequence turns it into a fact "whose meaning only emerges after the fact, thanks to other imposed facts between which the mind establishes certain relationships."[46] Similarly, our apprehension of contingency and chance in cinema, for Bazin, is made possible by a very careful organization of narrative that attenuates causality and gives weight to ordinary and circumstantial incidents. This "verisimilitude" or narrative realism is one of the signal characteristics of neorealism. In his review of *Farrebique*, Bazin rhetorically contrasts narrative realism with the presentation of "actual reality," but the presentation of "actual reality" is in fact always mediated by shot selection and editing, which has been organized by narrative.

In a similar fashion, the "authentic realism" of the long take is both relative to the context of editing in which it occurs and also itself an abstraction. It is relative to context in the sense that "so far from wiping out once and for all the conquests of montage, this reborn realism gives them a body of reference and meaning." The context of this quotation is one emphasizes how montage technique gains its credibility for audiences in relation to longer takes, in a manner that creates the integrated style of a filmmaker like Hitchcock (admittedly not Bazin's favorite). But it could equally be said that the long-take sequence also gains its sig-

44. Bazin, "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema," p. 39.
45. Ibid., p. 27.
46. Bazin, "An Aesthetic of Reality," p. 37.

nificance in relation to the context of editing—as, for example, the cut in *Citizen Kane* that takes us abruptly from outside the Kane boarding house to the celebrated sequence shot in which he is signed away to Walter Parks Thatcher. Bazin asserts that the realism of the long take is "no less abstract" than decoupage, and that it is the integration of the sequence shot into the abstraction of the framed image and the orchestrated image sequence that gives it meaning.[47] As a result, "the image—its plastic composition and the way it is set in time, because it is founded upon a much higher degree of realism—has at its disposal more means of manipulating reality and modifying it from within."[48]

Thus the film aesthetics that Bazin favors consist of narrative forms that can incorporate the uniquely indexical qualities of the cinema, such as the episodic, aleatory narration of neorealism, and visual styles that respond to cinema's expanded field of representation; that is, the capacity of cinema to inscribe duration. These aesthetic strategies work within the acceptable boundaries of cinematic illusion to enhance rather than undermine realism. Precisely what the acceptable boundaries are for Bazin is not altogether clear, but in general he dislikes cinema in which the image appears constructed and artificial or where editing is imposed and overt. His pet peeves are Expressionist cinema, which "did every kind of violence to the plastics of the image by way of sets and lighting," and Soviet montage, in which images are juxtaposed in order to create a meaning.[49] The problem for Bazin in Expressionism is that it distorts the harmony between the photographic index and the "abstraction" of the image by drawing attention to that abstraction. Bazin opposes Soviet montage because he believes that in montage "meaning is not in the image, it is the shadow of the image projected by montage onto the field of consciousness of the spectator."[50] Montage imposes meaning upon the image in a manner that occludes rather than enables meaning to emerge from the image, as in ordinary decoupage. Both are thus anti-illusionist techniques of artifice that undermine realism. In these respects MacCabe seems hard-pressed indeed to defend Bazin as a modernist, in spite of Bazin's extraordinarily rich sense of the creative possibilities of the medium.

Bazin thus envisions four distinctive kinds of realism in the cinema. The first kind is iconicity. Photography and cinema are, like representational paintings, pictures of what they represent ("illusions," in Bazin's terminology). These images can be wholly fabricated or not, and they can enhance or detract from realism according to how they are used. The second kind of realism, indexicality, lies in the fact that photography and cinema are based upon a causal link between image and object. This indexical capacity is enhanced, or not, by iconicity. Cinema is a medium that also has the capacity to inscribe duration through the unedited moving image. This perceptual realism relies to some

47. Bazin, *Orson Welles*, p. 80.
48. Bazin, "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema," p. 40.
49. Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," p. 26.
50. Ibid.

extent on the iconic properties of the image, but it is not dependent upon the indexical properties of the image, for space and time in cinema can be wholly fabricated. Bazin is not explicit about this fact, but it is not inconsistent with his thought. Finally, cinema is an illusionistic medium, not simply in Bazin's idiosyncratic sense of a representation that substitutes for the thing, but also in the manner that editing can be orchestrated and manipulated to create an "impression of reality" in the spectator's mind. The "invisible" cuts of continuity editing are in this respect the default mode of cinematic realism; they render the spectator, attuned only to the unfolding of the drama, unaware of style at all. This is not a stylistic mode detested by Bazin; it is just not very interesting.

These four basic kinds of realism in Bazin's writings are supplemented by two further kinds of realism. The first, which we might call "realist style," is the style of the deep-focus long-take shot privileged by Bazin, which serves to articulate—in different ways in the hands of different directors—the basic capacity of the cinema to represent duration or the property of perceptual realism. The second supplemental realism is that of verisimilitude or narrative realism, which tells everyday stories in a manner that respects the role of contingency and chance. This describes an approach to story telling in general, but for Bazin it is a narrative form that is particularly congenial to exploiting the "natural" capacities of cinematic representation to inscribe duration and command our belief in what it represents through the indexical properties of the image.

Even though critics have perceived digital cinema to be a challenge to a Bazinian conception of cinema, this seems to be profoundly mistaken, even when that theory is narrowly conceived in terms of "indexical realism," given the extent to which the digital image can still be created by a camera, a recording machine that instantiates a causal connection between the photographic image and the object or event that is represented in the photograph. After all, you still consider the digital snapshots of your last family holiday with Grandma to be a reliable and moving record of your final moments with her. It is even more misleading once you take an expansive, pluralistic view of Bazin's theory and consider the fundamental continuities in the iconic properties of the moving image, regardless of how it is produced, and the way in which digital image production expands the range of what films can represent. The sense of expanded representational capacity is equally true of perceptual realism, where digital representation, no longer restricted by the length constraints of analogue film or video reels, enhances the capacity of moving images to represent a spatio-temporal continuum. Digital cinema is thus a medium in which the realistic properties of the image collude beyond anything Bazin could have imagined to create a radically expanded field of cinematic representation.[51]

Oddly, Bazin is not very attuned to the central role of special effects in creating an illusory space. To my knowledge he does not discuss, because he was probably not

51. See Stephen Prince, *Digital Visual Effects in Cinema: The Seduction of Reality* (New York: Rutgers University, 2011).

aware of it, the way in which the scene of Susan's suicide in *Citizen Kane*, like many other scenes of "deep space cinematography," were constructed out of mattes. However, Bazin would not have been unduly worried by these aspects of Welles's aesthetic because, as I have argued, his primary concern in the long take is with the spatio-temporal duration of the shot, not with its indexical properties. Bazin accepts illusion as part and parcel of cinematic realism. Thus I believe he would have enthusiastically embraced the technological developments afforded by the digital image, just as he embraced all other technological developments for expanding the repertoire of moving-image representation and expression.

This pluralistic interpretation of Bazin's theory of cinematic realism, which I believe "opens" Bazin in a fertile way, does fly in the face of some of his overt statements, if we take him at his word. In the remarks I have already quoted he speaks of "modifying reality from within," and of the cinema-fact in *Paisà* as a "fragment of concrete reality." In the "Ontology" essay he writes that "the photograph is the object itself freed from the conditions of space and time that govern it," and further that "photography actually contributes something to the order of natural creation instead of providing a substitute for it."[52] These assertions do not support the claim that the realism of the cinematic image resides in the manner in which it refers causally or indexically to something in the world, nor do they support the idea that the image resembles reality or how we perceive reality. They suggest something much more radical whose meaning is thoroughly obscure. I will briefly discuss three different ways in which this claim has been defended, in the order that I consider from most to least convincing.

The first interpretation of Bazin's identity claim arises from the psychological attitude that photographs prompt in the spectator. As Philip Rosen reminds us, the point of Bazin's whole argument about the ontology of the photographic image is that photographs provide a unique way of satisfying our irrational psychological need to believe in the reality of the representations that we create.[53] While we may characterize the property in photography and, by extension, cinema that satisfies this need as the causal relationship between a photographic representation and the object photographed, the attitude that the photograph thereby prompts in the spectator is naturally one in which, in certain respects, we take the photographic or cinematographic image for what it depicts. This is an idea expressed by Jean-Paul Sartre, in a formulation from his monograph on imagination that likely influenced Bazin. When I see a photograph, I say, "That is the Portrait of Pierre, or more simply, 'This is Pierre.'"[54] Thus, as Friday suggests, Bazin's hyperbolic identity thesis can be plausibly interpreted as a manifestation or enactment of our inclination to regard the cinematic image as what it depicts, or as a statement of the power of the cinematic image to irrationally bear away our faith.

52. Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," p. 14; ibid., p. 15.
53. Philip Rosen, "Belief in Bazin," in *Opening Bazin*, pp. 107–118. See also Rosen, *Change Mummified: Cinema, Historicity, Theory* (Minneapolis, Minnesota University, 2001), pp. 3–41.
54. Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Imaginary: A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination*, trans. Jonathan Webber (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 22. See also Dudley Andrew, "Forward to the 2004 Edition," in Bazin, *What Is Cinema?*, vol. 1, p. xiii.

Daniel Morgan makes a stronger claim for the identity argument. Any reader of Bazin is faced with the interpretive conundrum of how to square a theory of realism in cinema with the sheer variety of filmmaking practices that he valorizes in the name of realism. Thus, for example, Bazin describes the symbol of a black cross on an abstract white background that concludes Robert Bresson's film *Diary of a Country Priest* as "the triumph of cinematographic realism."[55] Yet this realism cannot obviously be accounted for in iconic terms; it does not seem to be exhibiting the distinctive iconic properties of cinema. Nor does it exhibit an obvious indexical power. On the contrary, it would seem close to everything Bazin dislikes in foregrounding the plastics of the image.

Morgan argues that we can only avoid the conclusion that examples like this are an anomaly through a twofold argument. First, we must take Bazin's cinematic ontology literally: The moving image does not refer to reality; rather, it is the reality it partakes of. Therefore a film can in principle be realistic without referring to anything outside itself. In this sense we must reject Bazin's apparent claim that the photographic index provides a foundation for an argument about cinema—cinema is not photography's indexical image plus movement. Secondly, whether a film is realistic depends upon whether it embodies an attitude or stance towards the reality of the photographic image. Borrowing the concept of "acknowledgment" from Stanley Cavell (via Michael Fried), Morgan writes: "A film, if it is to be realist, must construct a style that counts as an 'acknowledgment' of the reality conveyed through its photographic base."[56] In the case of Bresson, such an "acknowledgment" appears through negation, which expresses the priest's state of grace.

Unfortunately, Morgan does not provide a persuasive account of what the identity thesis consists in, other than citing the possible application of Bazin's various metaphors (mummy, mold, death mask, mirror, equivalent, substitute, asymptote) to various cases. So his argument rests squarely on the hypothesis that such an identity is required by the acknowledgment argument. The idea that a realist film in some way recognizes its relationship to the underlying capacities of cinematic representation is a plausible way of interpreting Bazin's claim that the properties of cinematic resemblance "determine" style in cinema. However, I do not see why the truth of this thesis commits us to an identity interpretation of Bazin's "ontological" thesis. The recognition Morgan describes could readily be cast as the negation of indexical or iconic realism; it does not require us to hypothesize that the cinematographic image is reality.

It is Gilles Deleuze who, alas, has revived Bazin's identity thesis most fully in contemporary film theory and placed his ontological thesis at the center of a metaphysics of cinema. Deleuze writes:

> The movement-image is not analogical in the sense of resemblance: it does not resemble an object that it would represent. If movement is taken from the moving body, there is no longer any

55. Bazin, "The Stylistics of Robert Bresson," in *What Is Cinema?*, vol. 1, p. 141; cited in Daniel Morgan, "The Afterlife of Superimposition," in *Opening Bazin*, p. 131.
56. Morgan, "Rethinking Bazin," p. 471.

> distinction between image and object, because the distinction is valid only through the immobilization of the object [as in photography]. The movement-image is the object; the thing itself caught in movement as a continuous function. The movement image is the modulation of the object itself.[57]

Cinema is thus fundamentally different from photography: Photography points to the object outside itself like an index, whereas cinema is of the object. Shots in cinema are "mobile sections of duration," which is the stuff out of which cinema is made.

Deleuze also essays a sweeping historical distinction between a cinema that shapes "these mobile sections of duration" into the objective-action-based causality of classical narrative and a modern cinema in which the image-object no longer embodies something objective and spatial but something mental and temporal, in which, *per impossibile*, time and thought are "perceptible."[58] We might recall here Bazin's argument at the end of the "Ontology" essay where he suggests that the Surrealists had an inkling of how cinema could contribute to natural creation because for them the "logical distinction between what is imaginary and what is real tends to disappear. Every image is to be seen as an object and every object as an image."[59] Deleuze's name for the cinema that effaces this distinction is the time-image. The time-image is the movement-image liberated from the constraints of a cinema organized around perceptual point of view and action, where, as in thought, past, present, and future coexist and interact. The structure of Deleuze's argument here recalls Bazin's dialectical argumentation about the evolution of film style, and, as Diane Arnaud indicates, Deleuze actually conceives of depth of field and the sequence shot in Welles, in contrast to classical narration, however implausibly, as one modality of the time-image.[60]

This is not the place to undertake a full-scale critique of Deleuze's theory, though such a critique, while a thankless task, is badly needed.[61] So I will return again to Bazin for some final thoughts. I have discussed the relationship between four forms of realism that are central to Bazin's thinking, and arguably central to any understanding of cinema. However, they only form a part of Bazin's thinking about film, even about realism in film. Although a cineast par excellence, Bazin was also a critic centrally concerned with the relationship between art and life. Realism—realist properties of the medium, and realist modes of narration or styles that might exploit these properties—is not simply a formal or aesthetic preoccupation for Bazin; he is also concerned to appreciate and promote a kind of filmmaking that makes reference to the social world and engages with questions of social justice. Neorealism has a canonical status in Bazin's thought because it is

57. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1989), p. 27.
58. Ibid., p. 18.
59. Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," pp. 15–16.
60. Diane Arnaud, "From Bazin to Deleuze: A Matter of Depth," in *Opening Bazin*, pp. 85–94.
61. For a pithy, incisive, summary critique, see Malcolm Turvey, *Doubting Vision: Film and the Revelationist Tradition* (New York: Oxford University, 2008), pp. 93–98.

more than a style; it directly engages social history. Of *The Bicycle Thief* he writes: "Without the haunting specter of unemployment, which places the event in the Italian society of 1948, it would be an utterly banal misadventure. Likewise the choice of a bicycle as the key object in the drama is characteristic both of Italian urban life and of a period when mechanical means of transportation were still rare and expensive."[62]

Bazin's conviction that film, if it is to be important, should refer meaningfully to the lives lived by its spectators is what sets him apart from his acolytes, the Hitchcocko-Hawksians, who led the auteurist revolution in *Cahiers du cinéma.* As Antoine de Baecque shows, Bazin looked upon the Young Turks of *Cahiers* with a fatherly indulgence. They were excessively formalist for Bazin's taste, like the director they admired, Hitchcock, whose "realism," for Bazin, rarely extended beyond maximizing the possibilities of the narrative scenario.[63] This volume of essays also allows us to begin to appreciate the ways in which Bazin's interest in the context in which films were made, and the ways in which they referred to that context, also extended to the sociology of cinema and viewership, including the significance of television, both in relationship to film and on its own terms.[64] The volume of *What Is Cinema?* on the sociology of film, like so much of Bazin's writing, remains untranslated. *Screen* theory thus doubly misunderstood Bazin: It not only reduced his conception of cinematic realism to a naive transparency thesis and thus failed to appreciate his complex articulation of medium and style, it equally misconceived, or was otherwise simply ignorant of, his complex articulation of the relationship between films, audience, and society. As James Tweedie argues, it is in this respect, as well as in his more orthodox guise, that Bazin is the founder of modern film and media studies.[65]

Opening Bazin does a great deal to reestablish the case for Bazin's seminal importance as a theorist, critic, and sociologist of cinema. I would have liked to have seen more dialectical argumentation; more weighing up of theories, positions, and points of view; and a more sustained engagement with Bazin's contribution to the history of film style, including the work of different auteurs, which is largely overlooked, perhaps because it is so familiar.[66] However, no film scholar can fail to be inspired by Dudley Andrew's judicious selection and oversight of the contributions to this volume. Together with his colleague Hervé Joubert-Laurencin, he has assembled an anthology of enduring substance, and it is in no small measure because of Dudley Andrew that we will all reopen Bazin in the years to come. The moment of Bazin Studies has arrived.

62. Bazin, "*The Bicycle Thief*," in *What Is Cinema?*, vol. 2, p. 50.
63. Antoine du Baecque, "Bazin in Combat," in *Opening Bazin*, pp. 225–33.
64. See Michael Cramer, "Television and the Auteur in the Late '50s," in *Opening Bazin*, pp. 268–74.
65. James Tweedie, "André Bazin's Bad Taste," in *Opening Bazin*, pp. 275–87.
66. However, see David Bordwell's comprehensive chapter on Bazin in *The History of Film Style* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1997), pp. 46–82.

Vertov, the View from Nowhere, and the Expanding Circle*

MALCOLM TURVEY

It is reason, principle, conscience, the inhabitant of the breast, the man within, the great judge and arbiter of our conduct . . . who, whenever we are about to act so as to affect the happiness of others, calls to us, with a voice capable of astonishing the most presumptuous of our passions, that we are but one of the multitude, in no respect better than any other in it. . . . It is from him only that we learn the real littleness of ourselves, and of whatever relates to ourselves, and the natural misrepresentations of self-love can be corrected only by the eye of this impartial spectator.

—Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*

Classical film theorists are commonly divided into two opposing camps. In one are placed those, such as Rudolf Arnheim and V. I. Pudovkin, who "put their faith in the image," to borrow André Bazin's phrase, arguing that "the most aesthetically significant feature of the film medium is its capacity to manipulate reality, that is, to rearrange and thereby reconstitute the profilmic event (the event that transpires in front of the camera)."[1] In the other belong realists, like Bazin and Siegfried Kracauer, who "put their faith in reality," believing that "the truly cinematic film stays as close to recording as possible, eschewing the interpretation, recreation, or reconstitution of reality."[2] One of the many unusual things about the films and writings of Dziga Vertov is that they appear to straddle both camps at once.

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1. Noël Carroll, *Philosophical Problems of Classical Film Theory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1988), p. 7. Bazin's phrase is, of course, from "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema," *What Is Cinema?*, vol. 1, trans. and ed. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California, 1967), p. 24.
2. Carroll, *Philosophical Problems*, p. 96.

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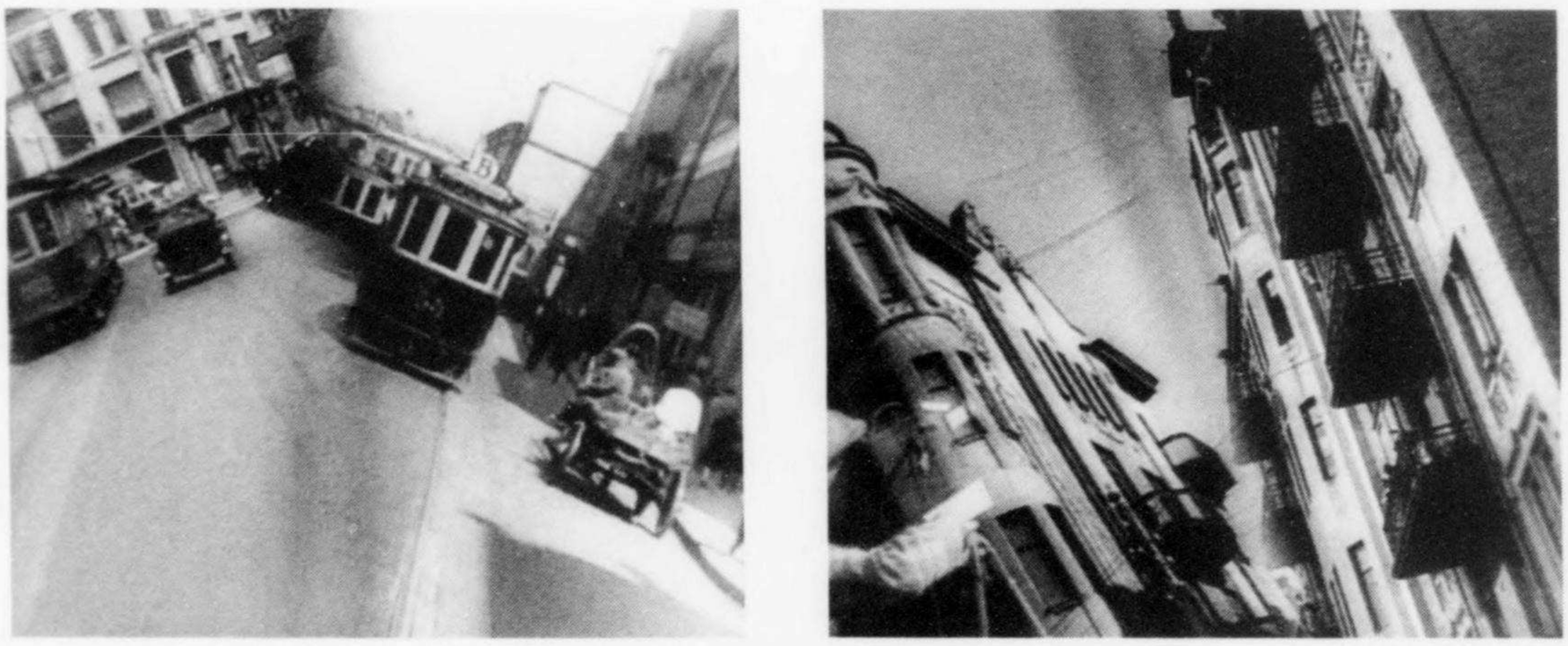
In his 1923 essay "Kinoks: A Revolution," Vertov revels in the filmmaker's power to create something on film that has no existence in reality:

> I am kino-eye. I am a builder. I have placed you, whom I've created today, in an extraordinary room, which did not exist until just now when I also created it. In this room there are twelve walls shot by me in various parts of the world. In bringing together shots of walls and details, I've managed to arrange them in an order that is pleasing and to construct with intervals, correctly, a film-phrase, which is the room.[3]

Yet, elsewhere in the same text, Vertov insists that "the main and essential thing" filmmakers should undertake is "the sensory exploration of the world";[4] and a year later, in writing about his newsreel *Kinopravda*, he proclaims that "*Kinopravda* doesn't order life to proceed according to a writer's scenario, but observes and records life *as it is*."[5] Vertov's mature films appear similarly split. *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), remarks Jean-André Fieschi, "contains an astonishing play (back and forth) between document (testimony, evidence) and reconstruction."[6] Fieschi may well have in mind techniques such as the distinctive use of split-screen in the film. Vertov sometimes combines two different shots of the same thing—a street, a building, trams—so that part of each shot appears in a different section of the image, the split between them accentuated by tilting the shots away from each other. Such split-screen images document details of city life in the Soviet Union in the late 1920s, as does the film as a whole, but they also reconstitute these details to create a visual experience of something that does not exist in reality. It is not surprising, therefore, that Vertov's work has been described as "one foundation

3. Dziga Vertov, "Kinoks: A Revolution," *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, ed. Annette Michelson, trans. Kevin O'Brien (Berkeley: University of California, 1984), p. 17.
4. Ibid., p. 14.
5. Vertov, "On *Kinopravda*," *Kino-Eye*, p. 45.
6. Jean-André Fieschi, "Dziga Vertov," *Cinema: A Critical Dictionary; The Major Filmmakers*, vol. 2, ed. Richard Roud (New York: Viking, 1980), p. 1024.



Dziga Vertov. Man with a Movie Camera. *1929.*

for realist cinema" while also being acclaimed as a model of anti-realist, political modernist filmmaking by Jean-Luc Godard and others.[7] Nor is it surprising that, as David Bordwell has noted, Vertov's critics have "tended, rather inconsistently, to dismiss [him] either as a Russian Lumière, passively recording reality, or as a monomaniacal formalist."[8]

How was Vertov able to hold that the cinema should be used to record "life *as it is*" while seemingly celebrating and exploiting its capacity to rearrange reality? Some have suggested that he was attempting to combine the objectivity of scientific observation with the subjectivity of artistic creation. Bordwell detects a "tension between mechanical objectivity and artist shaping" in Vertov's films and writings, and claims that the "lyrical cine-poet and -composer" increasingly won out over "the dispassionate film technician."[9] Vlada Petrić argues that

> Vertov differed with most of the other Soviet futurist and constructivist artists, who insisted on the absolute dominance of "facts" in art, and sought to eliminate any subjective interpretation. Vertov was less inclined to restrict his filmmaking to such a factual approach and instead strove to achieve a balance between an authentic representation and "aesthetic" reconstruction of the external world.[10]

In fact, as Bordwell notes, others in Vertov's milieu associated with the Left Front of the Arts (Lef) were also seeking to reconcile the representation of facts with artistic creation by 1925. Having abandoned abstract easel painting in the early 1920s in favor of producing three-dimensional constructions and modern, socially useful objects using industrial methods, the Lef group was now advocating factography, the "fixing of fact" through a representational, documentary practice. Cinema and photography were valorized over painting and drawing as "a more accurate, rapid and objective means of fixing fact"[11] along with nonfictional, often first-person forms of writing such as letters, memoirs, biographies, diaries, travel sketches, and journalism. As Leah Dickerman points out, the artist's role, according to the factographic model, was a "self-consciously restrained" one consisting of the discovery, collection, and organization of facts rather than their creation.[12] Nevertheless, artists were still enjoined to revivify the public's perception of facts, "to see things as they have not been described," as Viktor Shklovsky put it in the first issue of *Novyi lef* in 1927, reiterating his well-known theory of *ostranenie* or "making-it-strange."[13] In praising Esfir Shub's newsreel compilation

7. Richard Barsam, *Nonfiction Film: A Critical History*, revised and expanded edition (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1992), p. 67.
8. David Bordwell, "Dziga Vertov: An Introduction," *Film Comment* 8, no. 1 (Spring 1972), p. 38.
9. Ibid., pp. 40 and 41.
10. Vlada Petric, *Constructivism in Film; The Man with the Movie Camera: A Cinematic Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1987), p. 8.
11. Unsigned editorial, "We are Searching," *Screen* 12, no. 4 (Winter 1971), p. 67; quoted in Leah Dickerman, "The Fact and the Photograph," *October* 118 (Fall 2006), p. 139.
12. Dickerman, "The Fact and the Photograph," p. 144.
13. Quoted in ibid.

film *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (1927) in *Novyi lef*, for example, Lev Kuleshov insisted that "events must be convincingly combined; that is, the material must be revealed to a maximum degree by the montage, served to a maximum degree by the montage, and presented expressively," which, he believed, Shub had largely managed to do.[14] Similarly, Osip Brik argued that

> Shub's work demonstrated that newsreel work is not a mechanical task of gluing strips together, but a significantly creative one. It required, first of all, the ability to choose from all available material those frames that were important in three ways: for their factual value, for their effect on the spectator, and for their ideological direction. There were many of Nicholas; the task was to choose precisely those that showed Nicholas in an environment characteristic of him and of the monarchy—and in a way that was both visually interesting and representative of our attitude toward him.[15]

Thus, Lef artists still conceived of themselves as playing a creative role, but this now consisted of enabling "the frank perception of contemporary life" through the effective selection, organization, and presentation of facts.[16]

Vertov was certainly influenced by factography. In 1926, he called for a centralized "film-factory of facts"—an archive–cum–production facility devoted exclusively to nonfiction filmmaking[17]—and as early as 1923 he was emphasizing the necessity of organizing documentary footage for the sake of clarity.

> A day of visual impressions has passed. How is one to construct the impressions of the day into an effective whole, a visual study? If one films everything the eye has seen, the result, of course, will be a jumble. If one skillfully edits what's been photographed, the result will be clearer. If one scraps bothersome waste, it will be better still. One obtains an organized memo of the ordinary eye's impressions.[18]

As is well known, Vertov railed against fiction, and he modeled some of his films on the nonfictional, first-person forms popular among factographic writers. *A Sixth Part of the World* (1926) is, in part, a travel documentary that sometimes uses the first-person in the inter-titles ("I see you / the Black Sea / and you, the sea frozen at the Baltic coasts . . . ");[19] and *Man with a Movie Camera* is subtitled "Excerpt from the Diary of a Cameraman."[20]

14. Lev Kuleshov, "The Screen Today," *Lines of Resistance: Dziga Vertov and the Twenties*, ed. Yuri Tsivian (Sacile/Pordenone: Le Giornate del Cinema Muto, 2004), p. 272.
15. Osip Brik, "Victory of Fact," *October* 134 (Fall 2010), p. 96.
16. Dickerman, "The Fact and the Photograph," p. 144.
17. See Vertov, "The Factory of Facts," *Kino-Eye*, pp. 58–60.
18. Vertov, "Kinoks: A Revolution," pp. 18–19.
19. On *A Sixth Part of the World* as a travel documentary, see Oksana Sarkisova, "Across One Sixth of the World: Dziga Vertov, Travel Cinema, and Soviet Patriotism," *October* 121 (Summer 2007), pp. 19–40.
20. Dickerman, "The Fact and the Photograph," p. 140.

Yet, as Mikhail Yampolsky has noted, it is evident from the increasingly hostile reaction to his work among proponents of factography in the second half of the 1920s—and their lavish praise of Shub's newsreel compilation films—that they perceived Vertov to be violating the factographic model.[21] Most famously, in 1926 Shklovsky started accusing Vertov of depriving newsreel of "its soul—its documentary quality." "The whole meaning of newsreel lies in the date, the time, and the place," Shklovksy argued, and it was this concrete specificity that was lost through Vertov's editing, he claimed.[22] By 1927, Brik agreed, adding that Vertov "had turned real footage in a real genre into a conventional cinematic sign. . . . Instead of a real deer, we get a deer as a symbolic sign with a vague conventional meaning."[23] Even Tret'iakov, who "always felt that there is every justification for the fact that the Lef cover bears two names: Eisenstein and Vertov,"[24] complained in 1928 that the "reorientation away from specificity and toward the schematic is evident in Vertov's recent works," for which he blamed "excessive pressures of the market."[25] Vertov's manipulation of documentary footage, in other words, was too pronounced for the factographers. Rather than serving "the material in the cause of its best possible presentation," as in Shub's films, "subjective-artistic montage" predominated, concluded Kuleshov, remaining "an individual creative element of the work of the editor" and resulting in "a combination of gaudy shots or a succession of symbolic images."[26]

Why did Vertov continue to practice what Kuleshov and others derided as "subjective-artistic montage" even though, like the factographers who criticized him, he claimed to be documenting "life *as it is*"? The answer, I think, is that he did not conceive of his use of editing, or for that matter any other stylistic technique, as a subjective artistic rearrangement of reality. Rather, he saw such techniques as transforming his audiences' *visual experience* of reality—as creating a "fresh perception of the world," as he put it.[27] Moreover, far from being subjective, for Vertov this "fresh perception" enabled "the truth" to be presented objectively "on the screen,"[28] although Vertov conceived of truth and objectivity very differently from the factographers.

The word "objective" has a number of different meanings, but the sense in which it informs Vertov's work has been defined by the philosopher Thomas Nagel as follows:

> A view or form of thought is more objective than another if it relies less on the specifics of the individual's makeup or position in the world or on the character of the particular type of creature he is. The wider the

21. Mikhail Yampolsky, "Reality at Second Hand," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and TV* 11, no. 2 (1991), pp. 161–62.
22. Viktor Shklovsky, "Where Is Dziga Vertov Striding?," *Lines of Resistance*, p. 170.
23. Osip Brik, "Against Genre Pictures," *Lines of Resistance*, p. 277.
24. "Lef and Film: Notes of Discussion" (extracts), *Screen* 12, no. 4 (Winter 1971), p. 74.
25. Sergei Tret'iakov, "Our Cinema," *October* 118 (Fall 2006), p. 39.
26. Kuleshov, "The Screen Today," p. 273.
27. Vertov, "Kinoks: A Revolution," p. 18.
28. Vertov, "The Birth of Kino-Eye," *Kino-Eye*, p. 42.

> range of subjective types to which a form of understanding is accessible—the less it depends on specific subjective capacities—the more objective it is. . . . Thus objectivity allows us to transcend our particular viewpoint and develop an expanded consciousness that takes in the world more fully.[29]

As Nagel points out, this conception of objectivity has proved particularly fruitful in the natural sciences, which have "expanded enormously" our "understanding of the physical world . . . with the aid of theories and explanations that use concepts not tied to a specifically human perceptual viewpoint."

> The development goes in stages, each of which gives a more objective picture than the one before. The first step is to see that our perceptions are caused by the action of things on us, through their effects on our bodies, which are themselves parts of the physical world. The next step is to realize that since the same physical properties that cause perceptions in us through our bodies also produce different effects on other physical things and can exist without causing any perceptions at all, their true nature must be detachable from their perceptual appearance and need not resemble it. The third step is to try and form a conception of that true nature independent of its appearance either to us or to other types of perceivers. This means not only not thinking of the physical world from our own particular point of view, but not thinking of it from a more general human perceptual point of view either: not thinking of how it looks, feels, smells, tastes, or sounds. These secondary qualities then drop out of our picture of the external world, and the underlying primary qualities such as shape, size, weight, and motion are thought of structurally.[30]

Vertov studied the natural sciences at the Psychoneurological Institute in Petrograd before the revolution, where he reportedly concentrated on human perception. He later described his film practice as the "union of science with newsreel," comparing the movie camera to other optical scientific instruments such as telescopes, microscopes, and X-rays because of its ability to reveal "that which the eye doesn't see."[31] Rather than secondary qualities, he privileged the primary quality of movement, which he claimed to analyze mathematically, to connect shots—"The geometrical extract of movement through an exciting succession of images is what's required of montage"[32]—and in general he aimed to instill in his viewers the "expanded consciousness" described by Nagel, in which reality is viewed independently of a subjective, human, perceptual viewpoint. This is one reason Vertov denigrated human sight and castigated films that "copy the

29. Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (New York: Oxford University, 1986), p. 5.
30. Ibid., p. 14.
31. Vertov, "The Birth of Kino-Eye," p. 41.
32. Vertov, "We—Variant of a Manifesto," *Kino-Eye*, p. 8.

work of our eye," that reduce the camera "to a state of pitiable slavery, of subordination to the imperfections and the shortsightedness of the human eye."[33] It is also why Vertov exalted the camera as "more perfect than the human eye."[34] Because it is a "mechanical eye," it can record and show the world independently of the particularities of human perception, he believed.

Moreover, it is for this reason that Vertov did not see the manipulation of newsreel footage as incompatible with documenting "life *as it is*." Because he aspired to a more objective perception than is possible through human sight alone, Vertov altered recordings of reality (through fast, slow, and reverse motion; superimposition; split screen; stop-motion; and other techniques) to create a perceptual experience of the world as different as possible from our ordinary human one. This perceptual experience is, above all, "centerless"—what Nagel calls "the view from nowhere"—in which reality is "seen from no particular perspective, no privileged point of view—as simply there, and hence apprehensible from various points of view."[35] More than anything else about the cinema, Vertov prized and exploited its spatial and temporal "mobility," its capacity to combine footage shot in different periods and places and thereby traverse great distances in space and time instantaneously. This "mobility," he argued, allowed for the "possibility of seeing without limits and distances."[36] In the second section of *A Sixth Part of the World*, which is devoted to displaying to the diverse peoples of the recently formed Soviet Union the "immense wealth" they now "hold" in their "hands," the narration purports to move from the Kremlin to the Chinese border (approximately 2,500 miles); the Matochkin Strait in the Arctic Ocean in Russia's north to Bukhara in Uzbekistan to its south (approximately 4,000 miles); and from the port of Novorossiysk on the Black Sea to Leningrad (approximately 1,300 miles)—all within six shots that, together with the inter-titles, last just over a minute! Moreover, the final shot of Leningrad is a split screen that combines a shot of a city street taken from a moving vehicle in its top half with an aerial shot of the city in its bottom. By contrast, Vertov claimed, human perception is "immobile," because it is confined to a single point in time and space: "The position of our bodies while observing or our perception of a certain number of features of a visual phenomenon in a given instant are by

Vertov. A Sixth Part of the World. *1926.*

33. Vertov, "Kinoks: A Revolution," p. 16.
34. Ibid., p. 15.
35. Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*, p. 56.
36. Vertov, "The Birth of Kino-Eye," p. 41.

no means obligatory limitations for the camera."[37] Thus, in abandoning the immobility of human perception by combining spatially and temporally discontinuous recordings as in the split-screen shots in *Man with a Movie Camera* and *A Sixth Part of the World*, Vertov did not think of himself as reconstructing reality according to his own subjective-artistic interpretation of it. Rather, he saw his films as transforming his viewers' perceptual experience by enabling them to escape the temporal and spatial limitations of the subjective human viewpoint and attain a more "centerless" and therefore objective view of the world than is possible through human perception alone. "Gradually," he argued, "through comparison of various parts of the globe, various bits of life, the visible world is being explored. Each succeeding part will further clarify the understanding of reality."[38]

Vertov's aspiration to perceptual objectivity in the sense defined by Nagel also explains the much commented upon reflexivity in his films, especially *Man with a Movie Camera*.[39] Some have suggested that the primary purpose of this reflexivity is to reveal to the viewer that a documentary is a subjective "construct or representation" and to thereby "demonstrate how we construct our knowledge of the world."[40] Certainly, Vertov wished to make his viewers aware of his filmmaking techniques. However, what is often not acknowledged is that such reflexivity imparts greater objectivity to his films, not less. Nagel has noted:

> To acquire a more objective understanding of some aspect of life or the world, we step back from our initial view of it and form a new conception, which has that view and its relation to the world as its object. In other words, we place ourselves in the world that is to be understood. The old view then comes to be regarded as an appearance, more subjective than the new view, and correctable or confirmable by reference to it. The process can be repeated, yielding a still more objective conception.[41]

By reflexively documenting its own production and exhibition, *Man with a Movie Camera* includes its "centerless" view of reality within itself, thereby detaching itself from that view and objectifying it, much like an "eye seeing, apprehending itself," to use Annette Michelson's words.[42] In the process, this view is shown to contain subjective appearances that are unmasked as such from a more objective perspective, as in the well-known scene in which Elizaveta Svilova, Vertov's wife and collaborator, is shown working at an editing table. A close-up of a strip of celluloid containing still frames of a boy laughing is followed by a shot consisting of these frames, now ani-

37. Vertov, "Kinoks: A Revolution," p. 15.
38. Vertov, "Kinoglaz," *Kino-Eye*, p. 39.
39. I stress that it is in the specifically *perceptual* sense defined by Nagel that Vertov aspired to objectivity because in other senses, of course, Vertov was not objective. In his films he did not, for example, compare and contrast Marxism with other theories of history in order to allow his viewers to make up their own minds about which is the most plausible.
40. Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 2001), pp. 125 and 128.
41. Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*, p. 4.
42. Annette Michelson, "From Magician to Epistemologist: Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*," in *The Essential Cinema*, ed. P. Adams Sitney (New York: New York University, 1975), p. 98.

Vertov. Man with a Movie Camera. *1929.*

mated, so that the boy moves as he laughs. The impression of motion created by cinematic technology is thereby revealed to be a subjective appearance caused in part by the perceptual limitations of the human eye.

In the natural sciences, the pursuit of perceptual objectivity in the Nagelian sense is motivated by the epistemic desire to understand physical reality as it is and not as it appears to human perception. In Vertov's case, as many commentators have noted, it was inspired, in part, by the equally epistemic wish to comprehend the social world, to "open the eyes of the masses to the connection . . . between the social and visual phenomena interpreted by the cinema."[43] Vertov believed that Marxism had already revealed the true nature of society, but that, as with physical reality, human beings are incapable of perceiving "the connection . . . between the social and visual phenomena" because of the limitations of human perception, especially its "immobility." It is here that we can locate the source of the disagreement between Vertov and factographers such as Shklovsky. As we have seen, Shklovsky and others criticized Vertov for robbing the subjects of newsreel footage of their concrete specificity in time and space. "Mussolini talking interests me," Shklovsky complained. "But just a fat and bald man talking—let him talk off-screen. The whole meaning of newsreel lies in the date, the time, and the place. Newsreel without that is a card catalogue in a gutter."[44] This, however, is to assume that facts consist only of visible entities or events that can be recorded or otherwise documented. For Vertov, "the invisible connections between things," to use Yuri Tsivian's words, were just as much facts as visible things, and he aimed in his films to disclose them.[45] Because he conceived of such relations—principally economic relations of interdependence—as invisible to the human eye, Shklovsky's theory of *ostranenie* was not adequate to his task. This theory argues that, because of routinization, real per-

43. Vertov, "On the Film Known as *Kinoglaz*," *Kino-Eye*, p. 35.
44. Viktor Shklovsky, "Where Is Dziga Vertov Striding?," *Lines of Resistance*, p. 170.
45. Yuri Tsivian, "Dziga Vertov and His Time," *Lines of Resistance*, p. 13.

ception and comprehension cease. We no longer see or think about objects because we become used to them. For Vertov, it was not that viewers had become habituated to social relations and therefore no longer perceived or understood them, but rather that they had never been able to see them in the first place because of the immobility of human perception. Hence, in utilizing the spatial and temporal "mobility" of the movie camera to compare "various parts of the globe, various bits of life," the social world as it really is would be revealed to his viewers *for the first time*: "The eyes of children and adults, the educated as well as the uneducated, are opening, as it were, for the first time," he wrote.[46]

It is by no means clear that Vertov was right to apply a model of objectivity employed, with such stunning results, in the context of the natural sciences and their pursuit of knowledge of physical reality to the social world of human beings. The philosopher John Searle calls the kinds of social phenomena Vertov wished to reveal to his viewers "intentionality-relative."[47] While such phenomena—money, for example, or institutions such as governments—are "epistemically objective" in that it is not a matter of subjective opinion that, say, a particular piece of paper is worth twenty dollars, or that Barack Obama is president of the United States, they are nevertheless "ontologically subjective" in that they depend for their existence on peoples' attitudes. "Money is money because the actual participants in the institution regard it as money," Searle states, and the same is true of things like governments.[48] In this way, intentionality-relative phenomena are unlike physical phenomena such as "mountains, molecules, and tectonic plates," which are both epistemically objective—it is not a matter of subjective opinion whether molecules exist—and ontologically objective in that they exist independently of human beings and their attitudes.[49] Thus, while it makes sense to view ontologically objective phenomena such as molecules independently of human perception—using a microscope, for instance, to reveal the nature and behavior of molecules—given that intentionality-relative phenomena are dependent on the attitudes of human beings for their existence, it is to human beings and their attitudes that one must turn in order to understand them. Such attitudes are not invisible in the sense that the molecular structure of physical objects is invisible and needs to be revealed by a microscope.[50] Nor are the norms that govern them law-like in the way that the laws governing the physical universe are.

Rather than dwell on logical flaws in Vertov's project, however, I turn instead to one of its more defensible aspirations, which continues to have great relevance today. In aiming for perceptual objectivity in the Nagelian sense in his films,

46. Vertov, "*Kinoglaz*," p. 39.
47. John R. Searle, *Making the Social World: The Structure of Human Civilization* (New York: Oxford University, 2010), p. 17.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid., pp. 17–18.
50. For further arguments along these lines, see my *Doubting Vision: Film and the Revelationist Tradition* (New York: Oxford University, 2008), chapter 2.

Vertov was pursuing not just the epistemic goal of revealing the social relations that obtain between human beings but the ethical one of fostering what he called a "bond" between them, especially between his viewers and the workers he depicted.[51] Because of its temporal and spatial mobility, he argued, the cinema enables audiences to perceive recordings of strangers working in other times and places whom they could never meet in person, and thereby feel solidarity with them based, in part, on a shared antipathy toward the bourgeoisie and capitalism. "We want to . . . give everyone working behind a plow or a machine the opportunity to see his brothers at work with him simultaneously in different parts of the world and to see all his enemies, the exploiters," he announced in 1926;[52] and in 1929, anticipating what he called "radio-eye," i.e., synchronized sound cinema, he asserted that radio-eye eliminates "distance between people, as the opportunity for workers throughout the world not only to see, but also, simultaneously, to hear one another."[53]

While most of Vertov's films exhibit this concern to varying degrees, it is central to *A Sixth Part of the World*, which was commissioned by Gostorg, the state trade organization, to advertise its role in the Soviet and world economy. The film is not merely an advertisement for Gostorg, however. It also, in the words of Emma Widdis, offers a "radical vision of interconnection" between the diverse, geographically dispersed peoples of the recently formed Soviet Union.[54] According to Francine Hirsch, the Soviet regime viewed clan and tribal identities as remnants of the feudal era, and in the 1920s pursued a policy of what Hirsch calls "state-sponsored evolutionism," which conceived of "the amalgamation and consolidation of clans and tribes into nationalities" as "the requisite next step on the road to socialism" that would lead ultimately to the merging of nations under communism.[55] The regime therefore sought from the second half of the 1920s onward to foster a new national and ultimately international consciousness among the Soviet Union's inhabitants, to transform their identities by enjoining them to think of themselves as belonging to an "empire of nations," and the First All-Union Census of 1926 was, in part, a state-building technique that divided the approximately 147 million people living within the Soviet Union's borders into 180 or so nationalities speaking roughly 150 different languages.[56]

A Sixth Part of the World, released the same year as the census took place, par-

51. For a discussion of Vertov's use of the word "bond," see Devin Fore, "The Metabiotic State: Dziga Vertov's *The Eleventh Year*," *October* 145 (Summer 2013), pp. 3–5. As Fore astutely notes, Vertov wished to establish a bond between workers separated not only spatially but also temporally, which he attempts to do between workers in the present and their deceased forbears in *The Eleventh Year* (1928).
52. Vertov, "Kino-Eye," *Kino-Eye*, pp. 73–74.
53. Vertov, "From Kino-Eye to Radio-Eye," *Kino-Eye*, p. 91.
54. Emma Widdis, *Visions of a New Land: Soviet Film from the Revolution to the Second World War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2003), p. 111.
55. See Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 2005), pp. 8–9.
56. On the census, see ibid., chapter 3.

ticipates in this project of identity transformation and state-building by acknowledging the diversity of the Soviet peoples—some of whom, to be sure, it deems "backward," especially in their religiosity—while asserting that they are all, as Widdis puts it, part of a single, "unified Soviet 'body.'"[57] The film aims, in other words, to contribute to what the moral philosopher Peter Singer has called the "tremendous change" that has occurred in human history since ancient times, namely, the expansion of the circle of ethical concern for others beyond those to whom we are related and live with in a group.[58] As W. E. H. Lecky, the historian who coined the phrase "expanding circle," described this change, "At one time the benevolent affections embrace merely the family, soon the circle expanding includes first a class, then a nation, then a coalition of nations, then all humanity."[59] Given his class politics, Vertov, of course, does not attempt to extend his viewers' allegiances to include humanity in general, but he does try to enlarge them beyond cultural, linguistic, ethnic, racial, and national boundaries to encompass the diverse peoples of the Soviet Union. How does he do this? What techniques does he use? At least one of Vertov's solutions to the problem of getting people to care about others, I hope to show, has considerable significance for contemporary theoretical debates about the ethical effects of film and art.

One tradition in moral philosophy argues that, as David Hume famously put it, "there is no such passion in human minds, as the love of mankind."[60] Instead, we become concerned about the well-being of strangers when we are educated about the benefits of cooperating with them and come to realize than these advantages make us "more satisfied and happy" than if we lived in a "savage and solitary condition."[61] We discover, for example, that through trade we have access to many more goods than we could ever produce alone because of the division of labor, the law of comparative advantage, and the geographical distribution of natural resources. Hence we are interested in the welfare of strangers, if only because if some calamity befell them and they were unable to produce the goods that benefit us, we would suffer too. This is why trade has so often been credited as a major civilizing force that increases peace and cooperation between countries.[62]

It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that much of *A Sixth Part of the World* is devoted to educating its audiences about the mutual benefits of trade between the Soviet peoples. The film begins outside the Soviet Union in "the land of the capital,"

57. Widdis, *Visions of a New Land*, p. 107.

58. Peter Singer, *The Expanding Circle: Ethics and Sociobiology* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1981), p. 113.

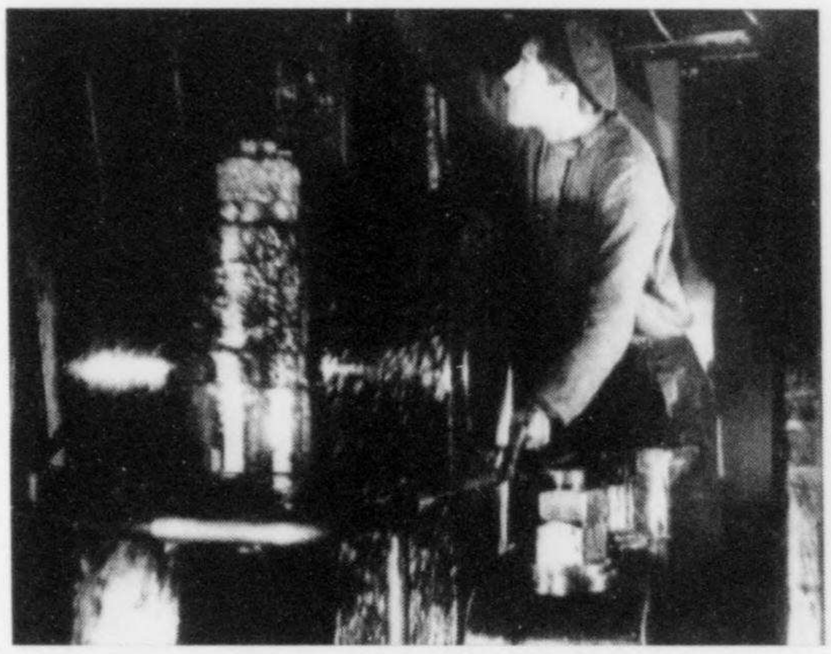
59. Quoted in ibid., p. vii. For evolutionary psychologists, this is a change that needs explaining because of our innate and powerful tendency to care for our children and relatives over strangers, which evolved because it increases the likelihood of our genes surviving. As Singer notes acerbically, "The proposal that we might risk lessening the happiness or prospects of our own children, to however slight a degree, in order to save strangers from starvation strikes many people as not merely idealistic but positively wrong" (ibid., p. 32).

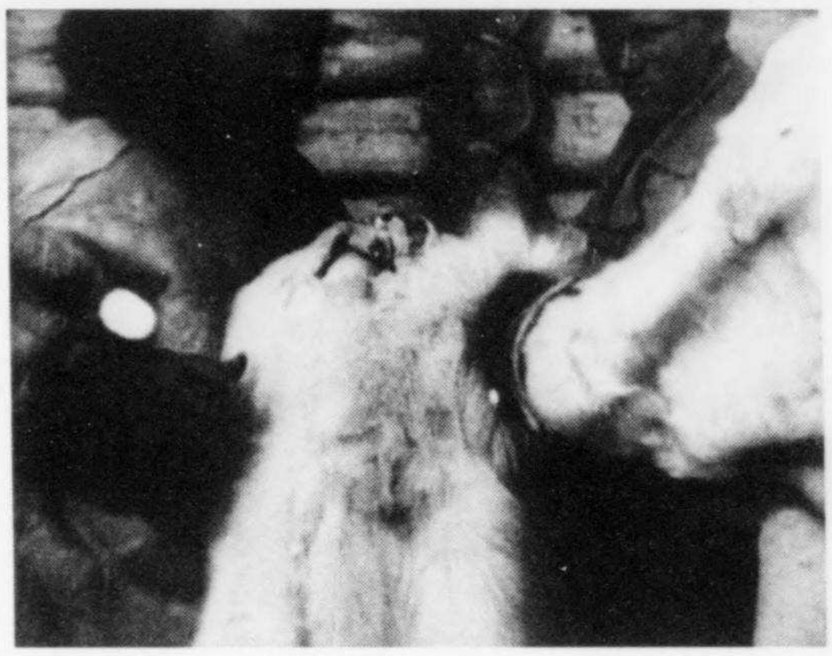
60. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (London: Penguin, 1969), p. 533.

61. Ibid., p. 537.

62. See, for example, Matt Ridley, *The Origins of Virtue: Human Instincts and the Evolution of Human Cooperation* (London: Penguin, 1996), chapter 10.

with shots of Western bourgeois men and women dining, smoking, dancing, and in other ways relaxing, intercut with shots of heavy industrial machinery being operated by workers "in the service of the capital." At one moment, a bourgeois man helps a woman put on a fur coat, and she briefly caresses the fur of a stuffed dog as they depart. Much later, inside the Soviet Union, a ship from the state trade organization is shown transporting wood, flour, dogs, and other goods to a trading post in Novaya Zemlya, an archipelago in the Arctic Ocean in the far north of Russia. These goods, we are informed, are exchanged for furs caught and prepared by the Samoyede people, and the same ship then takes the furs to "the land of the capital," where they are displayed, along with stuffed dogs and other animals, at the Leipzig fair before being "traded for machines for the Soviet Union." Shots from the film's first section of the Western bourgeoisie relaxing are briefly repeated and intercut with shots of a Soviet worker operating a machine and the Samoyedes with their furs. The message is clear: Goods desired by the Western bourgeoisie that are available in remote regions of the Soviet Union, such as furs, can be exchanged for goods from other regions within the Soviet Union and then traded for machines from the West. Furthermore, because these are "machines that make machines," they will allow Soviet workers to build their own machines, such as tractors, thereby enabling the Soviet Union to industrialize and become more economically self-sufficient. The peoples of the Soviet Union should therefore be concerned about each other's welfare because their economic prosperity depends on their cooperation.





Vertov. A Sixth Part of the World. *1926.*

Yet, to care about strangers because of the benefits for oneself of cooperating with them is ultimately a form of self-interest, Hume believed.[63] Does Vertov in *A Sixth Part of the World* try to promote a more genuinely altruistic concern among his viewers for the diverse inhabitants of the Soviet Union, one that does not appeal merely to their self-interest? Hume also argued that "there is no human, and indeed no sensible, creature, whose happiness or misery does not, in some measure, affect us when brought near to us and represented in lively colours: But this proceeds merely from sympathy."[64] For Hume, sympathy was what we today tend to call empathy in the sense of feeling what others feel, and it can lead to altruism. When we witness the suffering of others, for example, we can feel their pain and wish to help them even if doing so brings no benefit to ourselves.[65] Adam Smith agreed with Hume that sympathy is at the root of our altruistic "interest . . . in the fortune of others," but he expanded Hume's definition of sympathy, contending that it consists not simply of feeling what others feel but imagining ourselves in their situations.[66] It is sympathy in this sense (which we also today tend to call empathy) that, according to Martha Nussbaum and a number of other contemporary philosophers and theorists of art, is the major source of art's power to widen the circle of our ethical concern for others. Nussbaum has suggested that human compassion, and the attendant desire to help others, is dependent on an "ability to imagine what it is like to be in [a] person's place (what we usually call *empathy*)."[67] Literature and other narrative arts, because of the "intense concern with the fate of characters" they promote through their vivid depiction of individual suffering,[68] "cultivate" our capacity for "compassionate imagination" and are therefore "essential for civic participation and awareness."[69] Richard Rorty has also argued that narratives, both fictional and nonfictional, play a crucial role in what he calls a "sentimental education" that promotes human "solidarity." This sentimental education consists of making "people of different kinds sufficiently well acquainted with one another that they are less tempted to think of those different from themselves as only quasi-human. The goal of this sort of manipulation of sentiment is to expand the reference of the terms 'our kind of people' and 'people like us.'"[70] One kind of narrative that enlarges human community is:

> the sort of long, sad, sentimental story that begins, "Because this is what it is like to be in her situation—to be far from home, among strangers," or

63. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, p. 547.
64. Ibid., p. 533.
65. For an overview of the empirical evidence in support of the "empathy-altruism hypothesis"—the view that empathetic emotion can produce the altruistic motivation to benefit the person for whom empathy is felt—see C. Daniel Batson, *The Altruism Question: Toward a Social-Psychological Answer* (Hillside, NJ: Erlbaum, 1991).
66. Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (New York: Penguin, 2010), p. 13.
67. Martha Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1997), p. 91.
68. Ibid., p. 90.
69. Ibid., p. 97.
70. Richard Rorty, "Human Rights, Rationality, and Sentimentality," in Rorty, *Truth and Progress*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1998), p. 176.

> "Because she might become your daughter-in-law," or "Because her mother would grieve for her." Such stories, repeated and varied over the centuries, have induced us, the rich, safe, powerful people, to tolerate and even to cherish powerless people—people whose appearance or habits or beliefs at first seemed an insult to our moral identity, our sense of the limits of permissible human variation.[71]

Rorty's claim that the moral power of sentimental stories lies in their ability to make us "see the similarities between ourselves and people very unlike us as outweighing the differences"[72] contrasts with Nussbaum's emphasis on the capacity of fictional narrative to "cultivate" our "compassionate imagination," but both see sympathy and empathy as key to the ethical function of art. Our moral concern for the well-being of others is essentially a feeling of sympathy or compassion for them, which art elicits through vividly depicting their misfortunes and offering an occasion to empathize with them.[73] Indeed, Rorty explicitly acknowledges his debt to Hume, who is widely viewed as the first modern philosopher to argue that morals consist of feelings or sentiments rather than being derived from reason.[74] Does Vertov perhaps try to induce some variant of sympathy or empathy in his viewers for the peoples of the Soviet Union in order to engender a genuinely altruistic concern for them?

Murray Smith has claimed that viewers' "responses of sympathy or empathy" toward characters in a fiction film are "triggered—if not wholly determined—by the moral structure of the film. Most basically, the moral structure of a film works in terms of whether characters are presented as 'good' or 'bad.'"[75] At its most extreme, such a moral structure can be Manichaean, as in the Soviet montage fiction films of Vertov's contemporaries. In Eisenstein's *Strike* (1925), for example, there is an "absolute moral opposition" between the striking workers, who "seek to improve the conditions of the proletariat," and the "factory bosses and military," who "seek to suppress the uprising and continue exploiting the workers."[76] Because the workers incarnate positive moral values and suffer at the hands of their oppressors, viewers sympathize with them and condemn their antagonists. Nonfiction filmmakers also frequently employ the Manichaean moral structure to elicit sympathy. In *Roger & Me* (1989), Michael Moore attempts to arouse the viewer's sympathetic concern for unemployed former autoworkers in Flint, Michigan, along with moral outrage at the mass layoffs and other policies of

71. Ibid., p. 185.
72. Ibid., p. 181.
73. Sarah Kozloff has recently extended some of these arguments to film. See her "Empathy and the Cinema of Engagement: Reevaluating the Politics of Film," *Projections: The Journal for Movies and Mind* 7, no. 2 (Winter 2013).
74. Rorty, "Human Rights, Rationality, and Sentimentality," p. 180.
75. Murray Smith, "Gangsters, Cannibals, Aesthetes, or Apparently Perverse Allegiances," *Passionate Views: Film, Cognition, and Emotion*, ed. Carl Plantinga and Greg M. Smith (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), pp. 218 and 220.
76. Murray Smith, *Engaging Characters: Fiction, Emotion and the Cinema* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), p. 198.

General Motors, their former employer. He does this, in part, by contrasting, in a Dickensian fashion, the poverty and loss of dignity workers experience once made redundant with the frivolous leisure activities and inept attempts at urban regeneration on the part of the town's bourgeoisie, many of whom, we are to understand, are selfishly profiting from General Motors' downsizing and outsourcing. In one famous example, ladies playing golf at a country club are juxtaposed with an impoverished African-American family, including young children, being evicted from a run-down apartment. The moral structure of contrast is effective at promoting a concern for others not only because it elicits sympathy for their suffering but also because it clearly and unambiguously identifies an enemy that causes it. As psychologists have long noted, "an external enemy helps group cohesion" because, when it is threatened, there is safety for the group in numbers.[77] Not only does bonding with others in a group reduce the odds of any one individual becoming a victim of the enemy, but it increases the likelihood that the enemy will be defeated, which is one reason the structure of moral contrast in its Manichaean form is so often used in political propaganda.

Michael Moore. Roger & Me. *1989.*

Vertov was certainly aware of the power of the moral structure of contrast to elicit sympathy, empathy, and group solidarity. However, he expressed ambivalence about the technique because of its overuse in the melodramatic fiction films he professed to detest so much. "There's a film drama on the screen," he wrote in 1926. "The Whites and the Reds. The Whites drink, dance, kiss half-naked women; during the interludes they shoot Red prisoners. The Reds underground. The Reds at the front. The Reds fighting. The Reds win and put all the drunken Whites and their women in prison. The content's good, but why should anyone want to show film-drama based on the same old cliché used five years ago?"[78] This did not prevent him from resorting to this technique, as when he contrasts the Western

77. Ridley, *The Origins of Virtue*, p. 174.
78. Vertov, "Kino-Eye," p. 61.

bourgeoisie enjoying themselves with workers laboring, including slaves in colonies, at the beginning of *A Sixth Part of the World.* Moreover, the film as a whole employs the moral structure of contrast between the "land of the capital" depicted in the first section, where only the bourgeoisie appear to benefit from the labor of workers and colonized peoples of color, and the Soviet Union represented in the rest of the film, where workers, including minority populations such as the Samoyedes, are shown laboring freely and benefiting from trade.

By the standards of Soviet montage fiction filmmaking, however, Vertov's use of this technique is restrained. Certainly, the first section of *A Sixth Part of the World* depicts the economic *exploitation* of workers by the Western bourgeoisie, suggesting that the former's toil enables the latter's indolence, and therefore it might be expected to elicit a feeling of moral disapproval on the part of its viewers toward capital. Yet unlike, say, the massacre of workers in *Strike* or the Odessa Steps sequence in *Battleship Potemkin*—scenes that are designed to morally enrage us—it refrains almost entirely from representing the direct, physical *victimization* of workers at the hands of the ruling classes. As is true in Vertov's films in general, the connections established between capital and labor are largely impersonal and abstract, consisting primarily of economic relations of exploitation. Not only don't the bourgeoisie and the workers for the most part physically interact in this sequence, since they are filmed in different times and places—Vertov often uses false eye-line matches to connect them, much as the American avant-garde filmmaker Bruce Conner will later do in his found-footage films—but Vertov rarely represents personal suffering in his films in order to elicit moral disapproval for the bourgeoisie and sympathetic concern for the working class. This is not surprising given Vertov's belief that emotion and drama "cloud the eye and the brain with a sweet fog."[79] Moreover, the ideological project of *A Sixth Part of the World* is to contrast the nonexploitative

Vertov. A Sixth Part of the World. *1926.*

79. Vertov, "Artistic Drama and Kino-Eye," p. 48.

economic relations that exist inside the Soviet Union with the exploitative ones that obtain outside it in the capitalist world. Hence, in depicting the Soviet Union itself, the use of the structure of moral contrast to elicit sympathy for workers because of their suffering is not an option for Vertov because class warfare and economic exploitation of the sort shown in the first section are no longer supposed to exist inside the Soviet Union's borders. Finally, as thinkers from Hume onward have pointed out, sympathy and empathy are "partial." We tend to sympathize most with those to whom we are related, or who are like us or live near us,[80] and we find it much harder to empathize with abstract entities such as groups than we do with concrete individuals.[81] Vertov aimed to establish a bond between all workers throughout the Soviet Union and beyond, not just individuals or those who resembled or lived near each other. How did he hope to do this?

He did, I suggest, precisely by way of "the view from nowhere." Arguing against the Humean claim that moral evaluations and acts are derived from feelings of approval and disapproval rather than reason, Singer contends that "altruistic impulses once limited to one's kin and one's own group might be extended to a wider circle by reasoning creatures who can see that they and their kin are one group among others, and from an impartial point-of-view no more important than others."[82] Similarly, Nagel argues that altruism, which he defines as "a willingness to act in consideration of the interests of other persons, without the need of ulterior motives," depends on objectivity in the sense defined earlier, which in the context of ethics consists of the rational capacity to transcend the individual subjective viewpoint and "regard oneself as merely one individual among many."[83] Nagel claims that human beings have the ability to adopt an external perspective on themselves, to view themselves objectively as "merely a person among others equally real,"[84] as both an "'I' and as *someone*—an impersonally specifiable individual,"[85] and that it is this ability that enables us to act for objective reasons and promote objectively valuable ends. In his later work, following Derek Parfit, Nagel abandons the terminology of subjective and objective for

80. "Easy sympathy and correspondent emotions are alone common to *relation*, *acquaintance*, and *resemblance*" (Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, p. 404). "We sympathize more with persons contiguous to us, than with persons remote from us: With our acquaintance, than with strangers; With our countrymen than with foreigners" (Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, p. 631). As Christopher Voparil notes, Rorty overlooks Hume's emphasis on the ethical limitations of sympathy in proposing his theory of sentimental education (see Voparil, *Rorty: Politics and Vision* [Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006], chapter 4, titled "The Limits of Sympathy").

81. C. Daniel Batson, Nadia Ahmad, and E. L. Stocks, "Benefits and Liabilities of Empathy-Induced Altruism," in *The Social Psychology of Good and Evil*, ed. Arthur G. Miller (New York: Guilford Press, 2004), p. 372. See pp. 371–79 for an overview of the empirical evidence for the ethical limitations of empathy.

82. Singer, *The Expanding Circle*, p. 134.

83. Nagel, *The Possibility of Altruism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 79 and 3.

84. Ibid., p. 14.

85. Ibid., p. 19.

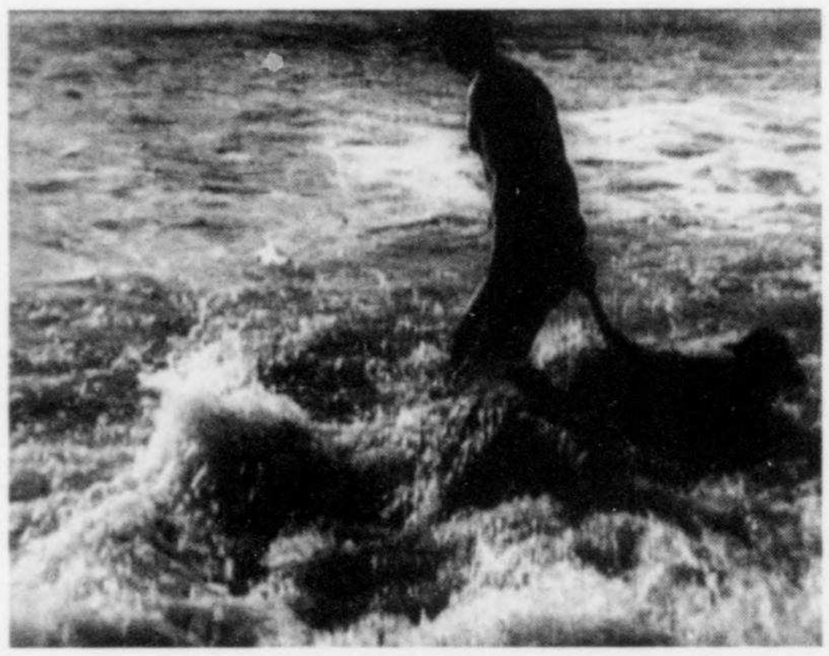
the terms *agent-relative* versus *agent-neutral*.[86] Nevertheless, his fundamental point remains the same: we can act altruistically because we have the capacity to detach ourselves from our own perspectives and adopt the "view from nowhere" of ourselves and others. Nor is this just philosophical speculation. On the basis of his experiments comparing cooperation among chimpanzees with young children, the psychologist Michael Tomasello has shown that "from a young age, children also possess a kind of social rationality along the lines of what the philosopher Thomas Nagel proposes in *The Possibility of Altruism*, what we might call a 'he is me' attitude of identification with others and a conception of the self as one among many, leading to the 'view from nowhere.'"[87] In one experiment, adult researchers participated in a collaborative group activity with young children around 18 months in age. They then repeated the activity but forced the children to change roles, which they readily did, suggesting that they had understood the different perspectives of the other participants the first time the activity was performed. They understood, in other words, that these roles are "agent-neutral," that any individual might perform them. Chimpanzees, however, could not reverse roles in the same way. "Our interpretation," concludes Tomasello, "is that this role reversal signals that the human infants understood the joint activity from a 'bird's eye view' . . . (similar to Nagel's 'view from nowhere'). . . . Human collaborative activities are performed through generalized roles potentially filled by anyone, including the self. Some philosophers call these 'agent-neutral' roles."[88]

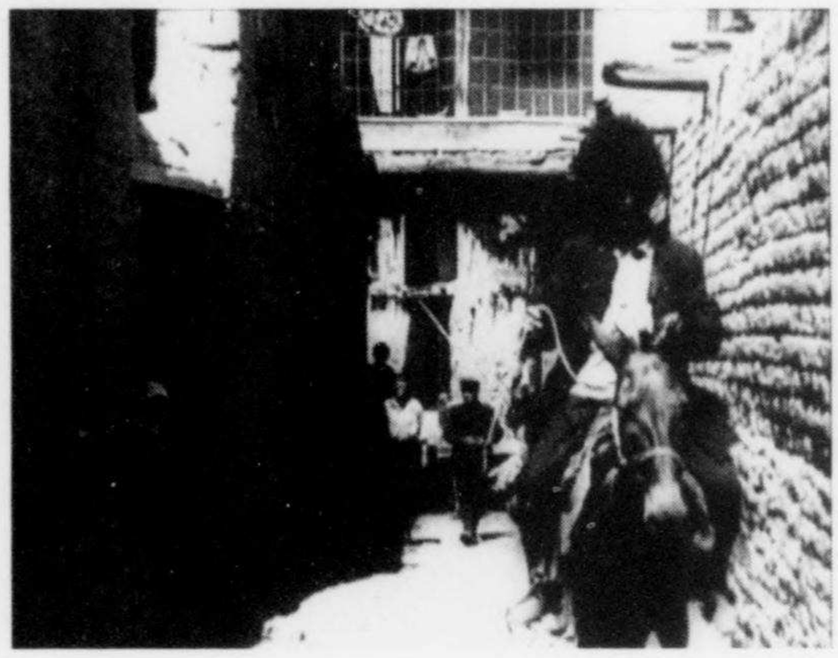
In departing from subjective human perception and adopting the "view from nowhere," Vertov was attempting, I am claiming, to expand the viewer's consciousness not just epistemically but ethically. He desired the viewer of his films to transcend his or her subjective, personal interests, to view him- or herself objectively as one among many throughout space and time, and in *A Sixth Part of the World*, he employs at least three techniques for achieving this. First, his approach is impersonal, foregrounding what Nagel calls the "agent-neutral" roles performed by people throughout the diverse regions of the Soviet Union rather than the individuals performing them. Once we leave the "land of the capital," we see, first, men bathing sheep in the sea in one part of the Soviet Union, and then others bathing sheep in a stream in another. While there are obvious differences between their dress and geographical locations, they are doing the same job. Next, people walking and riding through a snow-covered forest in Siberia follow people walking and riding through a sun-drenched town in Dagestan; two men rowing a boat on the Pechora River precede a man rowing a boat in the ocean;

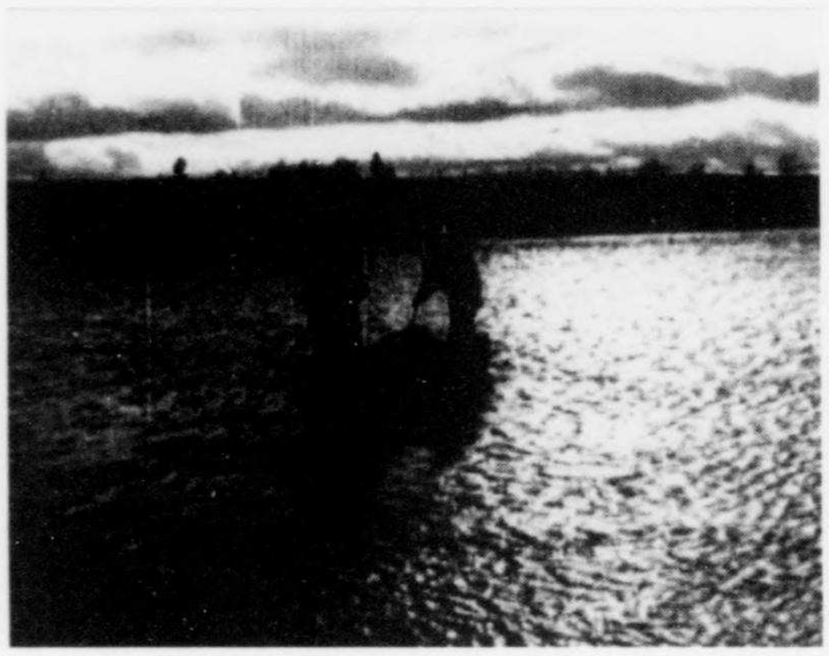
86. "If a reason can be given a general form which does not include an essential reference to the person who has it, it is an *agent-neutral* reason. For example, if it is a reason for anyone to do or want something that it would reduce the amount of wretchedness in the world, then that is a neutral reason. If on the other hand the general form of a reason does include an essential reference to the person who has it, it is an *agent-relative* reason. For example, if it is a reason for anyone to do or want something that it would be in *his* interest, then that is a relative reason" (Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*, pp. 152–53).

87. Michael Tomasello, *Why We Cooperate* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), p. 40.

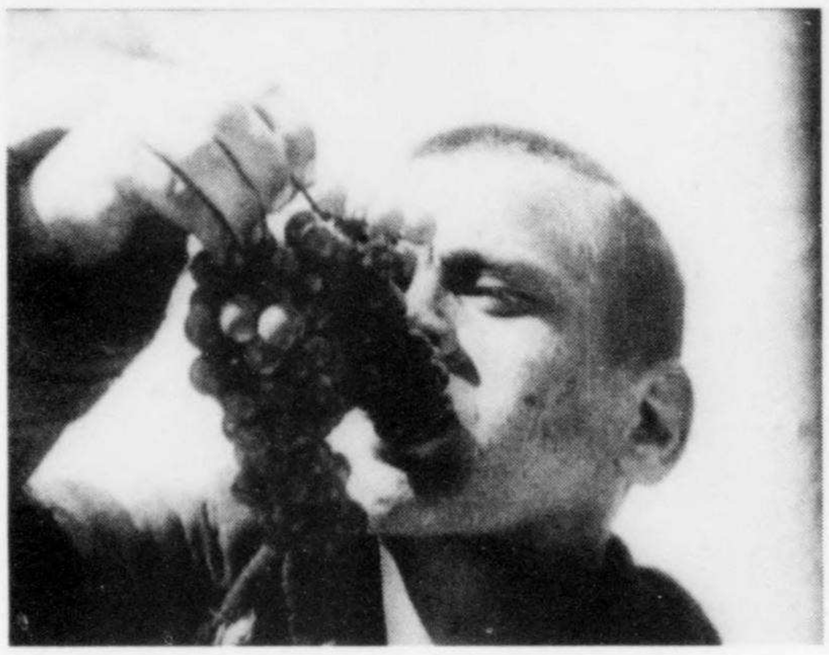
88. Ibid., p. 68.







Vertov. A Sixth Part of the World. *1926.*



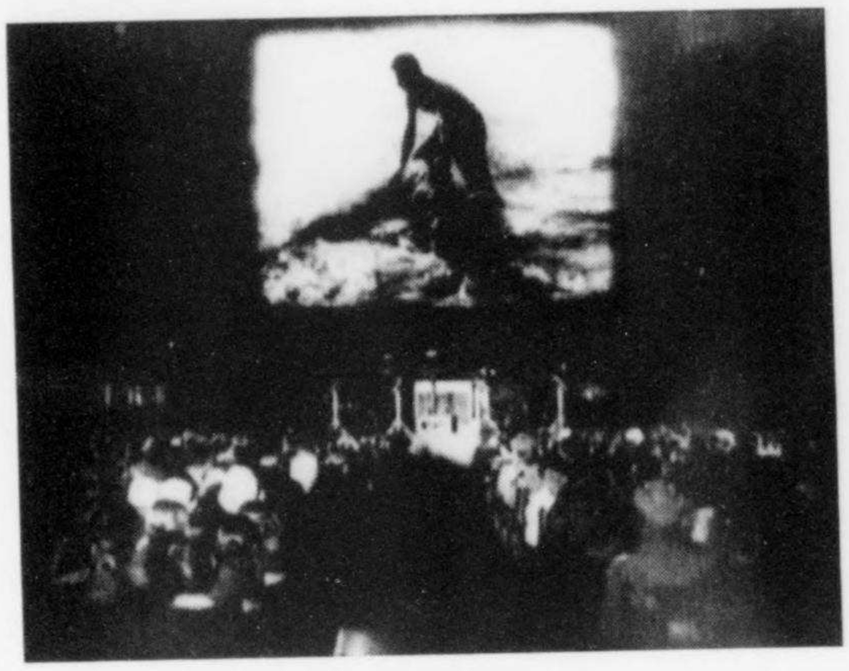
those who eat rice and raw reindeer meat come after people who eat grapes. As always, there are clear dissimilarities between these people, yet they undertake the same activities. Moreover, these activities are delineated independently of the individuals performing them, who remain anonymous and largely unknown because of the use of long shots, the absence of personalizing information such as names or ascriptions of mental states in the inter-titles, the focus on group activities, and the little time spent on each group. While short close-ups of individuals are sometimes used, they are nearly always combined with long shots of the groups to which they belong, and we never return to them. Throughout much of the film, Vertov's strategy is to compare and contrast people in different parts of the Soviet Union doing similar things—those who spin flax while sitting versus those who spin wool in the mountains; those who transport goods for export along dirt roads versus those who transport them along mountain paths. He does so, I am suggesting, in order to impart to his viewers something like the "bird's-eye view" discussed by Tomasello, the detachment from subjective perspective and objective recognition that any individual, including the viewer him- or herself, is one among a multitude who can perform the same "agent-neutral" role.

Second, the film's "centerless" style—what Widdis calls its "decentered vision of the Soviet space"[89]—enables Vertov to create a visual representation

89. Widdis, *Visions of a New Land*, p. 108.

of Singer's "impartial point-of-view" from which each group is "no more important than others." As we have seen, the film moves quickly across vast distances, depicting a wide variety of peoples living within the Soviet Union's borders, and it does so without, for the most part, privileging one nationality or location by devoting more screen time to it. The rhythm of the editing is particularly crucial to this leveling effect. In the sequence that surveys those who collectively own the "immense wealth" of the Soviet Union, we are shown five ethnic groups in quick succession: Tartars, Buriats, Uzbeks, Kalmyks, and Khakkass. Each group is given around thirteen seconds of screen time, including an inter-title that identifies them, and the shot structure used to depict each one is, with the exception of the single shot of Kalmyks, remarkably similar, consisting of three or four shots that alternate between close-ups of one or two members of the group and longer shots of the group itself. The editing in the rest of the film is not, for the most part, as precise as this, and the length of time spent on each subject is varied according to its complexity, or in order to achieve expressive effects, or to emphasize something of particular importance. In the section on progress, between twenty and thirty seconds are devoted to liberated women, the reading of newspapers, children joining the Young Pioneers, the polar laboratory, irrigation, and electrification before ten seconds is spent on a reading hut, a minute on radio and telecommunications, and a minute and a half on an electric plant. What is striking, however, is how rarely the film deviates from this range. In its third section, which inventories the "immense wealth" now collectively owned by the Soviet peoples, the screen time devoted to each possession extends from seven seconds for the Matochkin Shar to around thirty-five seconds for industrial plants. The one exception is the minute spent on sheep, in which the inter-title repeats the word "wool" three times as if intoxicated at the sheer abundance of wool made available through collective ownership. Similarly, the second section ranges from six seconds for the hundred-year-old man to a minute for those who have "discarded capital's authority." Due, no doubt, to the centrality of trading to the film's ideological project, the only group given more than a minute or two in the film are the Samoyedes, who are shown waiting for and then interacting with their trading partners in a three-and-a-half-minute sequence. Overall, however, the impression created by the editing is of the Soviet Union as containing an enormously rich and diverse abundance of peoples and places, all of which are equally important. Furthermore, included between footage of those who use their "feet to do the laundry" and those who are up to their "knees in grain" is the film's audience, which is shown viewing the shot of a man bathing a sheep in the ocean that begins the film's second section. The viewers, therefore, also become one among the many groups depicted in the film, no more privileged than any other.

The "view from nowhere" is also crucial to another of Vertov's ethical techniques, which was first pointed out by Annette Michelson. I have already noted how, in *A Sixth Part of the World*, Vertov attempts to educate the peoples of the Soviet Union about their economic interdependence by demonstrating that commodities available in one region, such as furs, can be exchanged for goods from another and then traded for vitally necessary machines from the West. Hume thought that caring



Vertov. A Sixth Part of the World. *1926.*

about strangers because of the benefits for oneself of cooperating with them is ultimately a form of self-interest, but this arguably changes when people collaborate in order to achieve a joint goal. As Michelson astutely notes about *Man with a Movie Camera*, the film connects filmmaking with "mining, steel production, communications, postal service, construction, hydroelectric power installation, and the textile industry" through "strategies of visual analogy and rhyme, rhythmic patterning, parallel editing, superimposition, accelerated and decelerated motion, camera movement—in short, the use of every optical device and filming strategy then available to film technology."[90] It does so in order to "signify a general and organic unity, a common implication within the movement of industry, the euphoric and intensified sense of a shared end."[91] Key, here, is the notion of a "shared end," for as social psychologists have argued, cooperating in order to realize a joint or "superordinate" goal "creates an interdependence among us—indeed creates an 'us.'"[92] This is because in order to take part in a cooperative venture that achieves a shared end, participants must be capable of adopting "the view from nowhere" in which they see, first, that they share a goal with others and, second, how the tasks performed by the participants contribute to bringing about this goal. They must, in other words, be able to detach themselves from their own perspectives and take into consideration the perspectives of others in order to understand their roles in the collaboration, which is why Tomasello believes that cooperative activities give rise to altruism and not the other way around.[93] Furthermore, collaborating in order to complete a joint task imposes mutual expectations and obligations. In order to get the job done, each must do his or her bit. If one fails, the task will not be finished and others will suffer.

This is doubtless why Vertov goes to great lengths in *A Sixth Part of the World* to demonstrate that the Soviet peoples aren't just economically interdependent, as would be true in a capitalist economy, but that their economic activities help achieve joint rather than individual goals. For example, in the sequence following the one about furs being traded with the West, shots of factory workers are combined with footage of ethnic minorities "living in patriarchy" and farmers delivering grain to the cooperative. All, we are told by the inter-titles, are "as one" in helping to "build socialism." And in the section on trading routes, we are shown people all over the Soviet

90. Annette Michelson, "Introduction," *Kino-Eye*, p. xxxvii.
91. Ibid., p. xl.
92. Tomasello, *Why We Cooperate*, p. 41.
93. Ibid., p. 53. This is why collaborative activities are often used in conflict resolution. See Batson et al. "Benefits and Liabilities of Empathy-Induced Altruism," pp. 367–68.

Union bringing goods, sometimes in adverse conditions, to be loaded onto ships to be exported abroad. All, in other words, are working toward the shared goal of trading goods with the West for the machines that will enable the Soviet Union to become more industrially and economically self-sufficient. While Vertov does not use visual rhyming to the degree he does in *Man with a Movie Camera* to bind these activities into an "organic unity," he employs another technique to join the peoples and places depicted in the film, namely, the "you" of the direct address of the inter-titles, which is sometimes accompanied by "I see": "I see you / the Black sea / and you, the sea frozen at the Baltic coasts / the ships stuck in the ice / and you / the ice-breaker Lenin." Everything depicted in the film, in other words, is unified as the object of the kino-eye's vision, which, in its all-seeing omnipresence, emphasizes once again its centerless "view from nowhere." It is everywhere at once, and therefore nowhere in particular, providing a visual representation of the transcendence of individual perspective, both ethical and epistemic, that Vertov wished to encourage in his viewers.

In his recent, enormously important book on the precipitous decline of violence in human history, Stephen Pinker argues that sympathy has played a major role in expanding the circle of ethical allegiance to others beyond kith and kin. Various modernizing forces, in particular literacy, urbanization, mobility, and mass media, have vastly expanded our awareness of the lives of strangers in modernity, and vivid portrayals of the suffering of others, from slaves in the 18th century to homosexuals in the 20th, have induced sympathy for these and other persecuted groups and the desire to extend to them basic rights and freedoms. Yet, Pinker observes, sympathy for strangers has its limits. As empirical investigations have shown, "it can be switched on and off, or thrown into reverse, by our construal of the relationship we have with a person. Its head is turned by cuteness, good looks, kinship, friendship, similarity, and communal solidarity." It is ultimately "too parochial," Pinker suggests, "to serve as a force for a universal consideration of people's interests."[94] Instead, he concludes, it is reason, the ability to ascend to the "view from nowhere" and weigh one's interests objectively in relation to the concerns of others, that has been just as important, if not more so, in reducing violence and expanding the circle. This is because, as Singer also argues, "reasoning is inherently expansionist. It seeks universal application."[95] Hence, once we begin to take the interests of family and group members into consideration and balance them against our own, reason eventually compels us to also weigh the concerns of other groups and eventually people in general. Reason is like an escalator that, once stepped onto, cannot be exited until you have reached the top. Vertov, so prescient in many respects, was one of the first filmmakers to understand the limitations of sympathy and the power of cinema to instill in the viewer the rational recognition that he or she is "one of the multitude, in no respect better than any other in it."[96] In *A Sixth Part of the World*, he uses this power to its full.

94. Stephen Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* (New York: Viking, 2011), p. 591.
95. Singer, *The Expanding Circle*, p. 99; Pinker, *The Better Angels*, pp. 668–69.
96. Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 136.

Dance and Fetish: Phenomenology and Metz's Epistemological Shift

DOMINIQUE CHATEAU AND MARTIN LEFEBVRE

> *There is . . . something unique in the cinema, it combines two things that no one had combined up to now: the brute presence of the world and the subtleties and refinements of human speech. The cinema is the world having finally acquired speech* [le cinéma c'est le monde devenu enfin parlant].
>
> —Christian Metz[1]

Christian Metz is remembered today as having almost single-handedly transformed the culture of film studies. This widely held view was summarized by one commentator, who wrote that "with Metz a new research paradigm is born, as well as a new generation of scholars. The ontological theories are followed by methodological theories."[2] According to another, "Metz exemplified a new kind of film theorist, one who came to the field already 'armed' with the analytic instruments of a specific discipline, who was unapologetically academic and unconnected to the world of film criticism."[3] Of course, Metz didn't just surge like a meteor on the scene of film studies. His arrival was "prepared" by the *filmologie* movement spearheaded in Paris by Gilbert Cohen-Séat and by two early film semiology essays published by Roland Barthes in *La Revue internationale de filmologie*.[4] Yet it is Metz who is rightly remembered as the figurehead of film semiology.

1. From an undated manuscript (most likely from the mid- or late 1960s) entitled "Exposé-conférence de caractère très général sur le cinéma comme moyen d'expression." Ms. CM1412. All manuscripts cited in this article come from the Fonds Christian Metz of the Bibliothèque du film in Paris. Reference to them will use the current manuscript number. English translations are ours. The Fonds has not been catalogued and was not available to the public at the time of writing this essay. Martin Lefebvre wishes to thank the estate of Christian Metz for granting him access to archival materials and to acknowledge the support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, which made it possible to consult the Fonds.

2. Francesco Casetti, *Theories of Cinema*, trans. Francesca Chiostri and Elizabeth Bartolini-Salimbeni, with Thomas Kelso (Austin: University of Texas, 1999), p. 91.

3. Robert Stam, *Film Theory. An Introduction* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000), p. 108.

4. Roland Barthes, "Le problème de la signification au cinéma," *Revue internationale de filmologie* 32–33 (1960); and "Les 'unités traumatiques' au cinéma. Principes de recherche," *Revue internationale de filmologie* 34 (1960). On the *filmologie* movement, see the special issue of *CINéMAS*, "La filmologie de nouveau," ed. François Albera and Martin Lefebvre, 19, nos. 2–3 (2009).

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In examining the role played by phenomenology in Metz's work it is important to begin by noting that he did not train formally as a philosopher. Enrolled at the École normale supérieure (rue d'Ulm) from 1951 to 1955, Metz elected to pass examinations for a *licence* in German studies (in 1953) and for an *agrégation* in *lettres classiques* (1955) at the Sorbonne. These were followed by a *diplôme d'études supérieures* in ancient Greek (1954) and, in 1971, by a *thèse d'état* in general linguistics, defended at the newly created Université Paris V—René-Descartes, on the grounds of prior publications.[5] And yet it was difficult in Paris in the mid-'50s and early '60s not to come into contact with phenomenology. Sartre and Merleau-Ponty had been giants dominating the intellectual stage in the aftermath of the war until the arrival of Lévi-Strauss and the rise of structuralism. Moreover, whoever was interested in the cinema would equally face strands of phenomenology in the writings of critics and theorists as diverse as André Bazin, Marcel Martin, Amédée Ayfre, Albert Laffay, Jean Mitry, and several *filmologues*, including Etienne Souriau, René and Bianka Zazzo, Albert Michotte Van den Berck, and Henri Wallon. Indeed, inasmuch as film critics and theorists as far back as Hugo Münsterberg and Rudolf Arnheim had concerned themselves with problems such as the psychology of film perception, cinema's "impression of reality," or its ability to "reveal" reality, they would inevitably come into contact with phenomenology or phenomenologically inclined psychology.

Metz, of course, championed structuralism and semiology. His early contributions are altogether closer to linguistics than to philosophy, and his "filmolinguistic" work, as he sometimes referred to it, is for the most part devoid of overt philosophizing. Regarding his *thèse d'état* in 1961, for which he filed a project entitled "Cinéma et langage," Metz explained in an annual report to his initial *rapporteur*, Georges Blin, that he sought to provide a juncture between *filmologie* and Saussurean linguistics.[6] Now, neither structural linguistics nor semiology can be said to be natural allies of phenomenology. In fact, for many, the rise of structuralism in the 1960s marked a rejection of any type of "philosophy of the subject" and thus explicitly signaled the waning of phenomenology and of its dominion over much of the humanities. Both discourses have been associated with different—some would say unbreachable—epistemic "attitudes," semiology being primarily positivistic and relying on a descriptivist scientific attitude, while phenomenology—in several of its incarnations—showing itself to be resolutely speculative and non-positivistic, more concerned with "comprehension" or "understanding" than "explanation," and more interested in diachrony and the role of the subject (as conscious subject of knowledge) than in synchronic structures and immanent objects. But as different as structuralism and phenomenology could be in theory, in practice there nonetheless

5. The subject for his *diplôme d'études supérieures* (or master's thesis) was "Isocrates and Pan-Hellenic Politics in Fifth and Fourth Century B.C. Greece."

6. Blin was a professor of literature at the Sorbonne. He joined the Collège de France in 1965 and held the chair in modern French literature until 1988. Metz dedicated the first volume of his *Essais* to him. By the time Metz defended his *doctorat d'état* in 1971, Blin had been replaced as *rapporteur* by the linguist André Martinet.

existed certain points of contact through the works of several individuals. Some phenomenologists, such as Merleau-Ponty or Mikel Dufrenne, carefully read Saussure and sought to incorporate aspects of structuralism into their work, while phenomenological themes sometimes surfaced in the work of structuralists like Jakobson or Lévi-Strauss even though the latter, for example, clearly rejected phenomenology's involvement with individual experience and consciousness and with the intentionality of the subject.[7]

In the case of Metz, phenomenology and structuralist semiology openly coexisted in his first publications, and, as we shall see, this coexistence continued—though in a more muted and paradoxical (or inverted) form—well into his later, psychoanalytic period. This paper proceeds through three chronological sections, examining in turn Metz's early "filmolinguistic" period (1964–1967), his middle or *pan-semiological* period (1967–1975), and his late psychoanalytic period (1975–1985). In all three of these periods phenomenology plays an important and sometimes pivotal role.

I. Early works: Semiology as Phenomenology or Phenomenology as Semiology

At least three of Metz's early key essays—"Le cinéma: langue ou langage?," a programmatic piece, initially published in 1964 in *Communications 4*, announcing the project of filmolinguistics, or film semiology, which would lead to the development of the "*grande syntagmatique*" and culminate in the publication of *Langage et cinéma* in 1971; "A propos de l'impression de réalité au cinéma" from 1965; and "Remarques pour une phénoménologie du Narratif," published the following year—are important for grasping the initial phenomenological strand in his work. These last two essays were in fact compiled in the opening section of the first volume of *Essais sur la signification au cinéma* (1968) under the heading "Approches phénoménologiques du film."

Interestingly, this first volume of Metz's writings was published at Klincksieck in a collection edited by Mikel Dufrenne, an influential phenomenologist whose own work centered on aesthetics. In fact, just a few years after the release of that first volume, Dufrenne presided over the jury at Metz's doctoral defense, alongside linguist André Martinet and literary scholars Georges Blin and Roland Barthes. Dufrenne's influence on Metz's early articles can best be seen in the copious manuscript notes Metz took while reading Dufrenne's two-volume *Phénoménologie de l'expérience esthétique*, first published in 1953.[8] Indeed, several passages from these notes found their way into "Le cinéma: langue ou langage?" These passages, as we shall see, concern the problem of "cinematic expressivity."

7. See especially Claude Lévi-Strauss, *La Pensée sauvage* (Paris: Plon, 1962). This was an all-out attack on Sartre, phenomenology, and the *cogito*—though the book was dedicated to the memory of Merleau-Ponty. For an excellent account of debates in French philosophy since the 1930s and of how Merleau-Ponty managed to ally himself with those who would, after his death, become the enemies of phenomenology, see Vincent Descombes, *Le Même et l'autre* (Paris: Minuit, 1979).
8. Mikel Dufrenne, *Phénoménologie de l'expérience esthétique*, 2 vols. (Paris: PUF, 1953).

"Le cinéma: langue ou langage?" is a rather long and somewhat sprawling essay that moves uneasily at times between aesthetics, linguistics, and phenomenology, seeking nonetheless to set forth the project of a semiology of cinema. Metz begins by synthesizing the existing literature on the theme of "language and cinema"—a literature he had been reading since 1961, when he began work on his doctorate—and then moves on to consider various issues that a Saussure-inspired structuralist investigation of cinema would have to face. One of these issues concerns the distinction between *expression* as the phenomenological order of meaning and *signification* as the linguistic or semiological order of meaning. Metz, as we shall see, carefully considered this distinction in his handwritten notes on Dufrenne's book. For the moment, however, we may simply note its first occurrence at the outset of "Le cinéma: langue ou langage?," where he rehearses the Bazinian opposition between Eisenstein and Rossellini. Metz writes:

> From the point of view of expressive mechanisms we can distinguish between the "natural" meaning of things and of beings (continuous, global, without any distinct signifier: thus the joy that can be read on the face of a child)—and deliberate signification. The latter would be inconceivable if we didn't already live in a world of meaning, yet it is conceivable only as a distinct organizational act by which meaning is redistributed: signification loves to sharply delineate discontinuous signifieds that belong to an equal number of signifiers. Its task, by definition, is to give form to an amorphous semanticism.[9]

But while Bazin uses the two filmmakers for the purpose of aesthetic criticism, Metz dispels the prescriptive aesthetic opposition and redeploys the terms of the debate with regard to what he conceives to be the distinct domains of concern of phenomenology (especially the phenomenology of art) and semiology with respect to meaning. This leads him to define "cinematic specificity" on two levels: that of *filmic discourse*—which is the phenomenological level of artistic expressivity—and that of *image discourse*—which, in principle at least, corresponds to the semiological level. It is this distinction that is first mapped out in Metz's notes on Dufrenne.

As a phenomenologist investigating the nature of aesthetic experience (which includes the experience of art but is not limited to it), Dufrenne developed a whole section of his argument by distinguishing between *expression* on the one hand and *signification* or *representation* on the other. Dufrenne's point is simple enough, though: According to him, art—even verbal art—becomes aesthetic through expression, never through signification or representation. That is to say that an art object—a poem, a painting—may signify or represent something, but

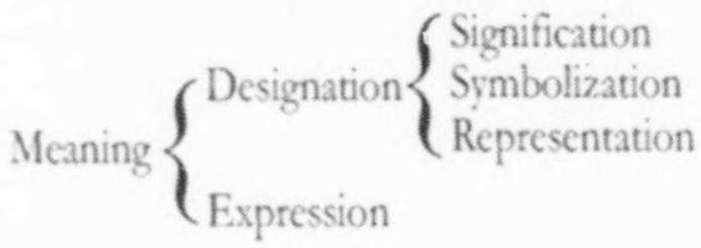
9. Christian Metz, "Le cinéma: langue ou langage?," *Essais sur la signification au cinéma*, vol. 1 (Paris: Klincksieck, 1968), p. 45; our translation. (It is well known in the film-studies community that Metz's essays, at least up to *The Imaginary Signifier*, are not always adequately translated with regards to technical terms. Therefore we have opted to use our own translations.)

not in its identity as *aesthetic object* or *work of art*. Whereas signification or representation may count as a facet of the work, only expression is commensurate with the work *qua* work of art (i.e., the work in its specifically aesthetic aspect). Dufrenne defines expressivity in art as the meaningful correlate of sensual form and subject matter, which transcends or exceeds any signification or representation—any use of *codes*.[10] But as Metz indicates in his notes on Dufrenne, two forms of expression must be distinguished: *natural expression* and *aesthetic expression*. He writes: "Natural expression is the fact that things have meaning. Aesthetic expression is the fact that *certain* things (works of art) have a *certain* meaning (a style)."[11] But such meaning is distinct from that of signification or representation. In his notes, Metz illustrates Dufrenne's idea of expression as well as the division of natural and aesthetic expression with a shot taken from Eisenstein's unfinished *¡Que viva Mexico!*, an example that returns almost verbatim in "Le cinema: langue ou langage?":

> Let's consider Eisenstein's famous image (*¡Que viva Mexico!*) representing in triangular form three *peons* being trampled by horses. Where does its natural expression lie? It is in the fact that the faces of the peons express horror (or terror, or suffering). . . . [B]ecause it is the hallmark of the real—here the human face—to have the power to express things, the analogical reproduction of this human face will express the same things. In this same "shot" of the film, where does the aesthetic expression lie? It is elsewhere, it is in this triangular construction—which has nothing natural about it—a construction that has a *form* and that expresses something like majesty, *grandeur*, which expresses *not horror or terror*, but the fact that this horror and this terror merge with the struggle of the Mexican people, with the beauty of the landscape, with the revolutionary *grandeur* of a history, etc. . . . The aesthetic expression isn't: the face of the peon, but instead: the fact that three peons have been taken and arranged in a specific fashion. To put it differently, aesthetic expression *assimilates* but *exceeds* natural expression. At the level of the *signifiers*: the triangular form assimilates and exceeds the faces of the peons, the landscape, etc. . . . At the level of the signifieds: the painful *grandeur* of Mexican history assimilates and exceeds the pain of the peons. Both are nonetheless expressions since painful *grandeur* can be read onto the triangular form itself—and pain can be read onto the faces of the peons themselves. In both cases, the signified can be read on the totality of the signifier—or, better yet, in both cases there is no signifier and no signified but a thing-having-meaning. But *it is not the same thing and it is not the same meaning*.[12]

10. Of course, not all art forms have a subject matter: For Dufrenne, abstract painting, music, architecture, dance are often expressive without signifying or representing anything.
11. Christian Metz, undated manuscript notes on *Phénoménologie de l'expérience esthétique*, ms. CM872 B8, p. 27a.
12. Christian Metz, undated manuscript notes on *Phénoménologie de l'expérience esthétique*, ms. CM872 B8, p. 27a/b-28a/b.

It is precisely this train of thought that leads Metz in "Le cinéma: langue ou langage?" to declare the cinema—like verbal art—to be an *art of connotation.* More specifically, it is an art form whose aesthetic expressivity builds upon (i.e., assimilates and exceeds) what it *designates* (or represents) in great measure through analogy.[13] We see Metz here grappling with the various ways cinema can come to stand for something and trying to account for both the phenomenological and semiological conceptions of meaning. In an attempt to clarify the problem at hand he offers the following diagram; the upper part pertains to semiological meaning and the lower part to phenomenological meaning:



The early Metz adopted Dufrenne's view according to which the primary difference between signification (now reordered as a subtype of designation by Metz) and expression is that, with the latter, "meaning is immanent to what is perceived."[14] Of course, this was an idea shared by phenomenological approaches to meaning, and to cinema in particular, from Merleau-Ponty to Bazin, all the way to Mitry. Yet, however useful the above diagram may have been for Metz in laying bare the basic opposition between semiological and phenomenological conceptions of meaning, it was obvious for him that it didn't account for the fact that designation in cinema—which for the most part falls under the heading of representation—is also expressive by virtue of the world's natural expressivity, which it reproduces photographically. The problem, in a sense, is that one could account for cinematic designation in two ways: On the one hand, the image and what it shows—the *signifier* and the *signified*—are distinct, as is the case with language (though *unlike* language they are analogous). On the other hand, because of photographic analogy, the expressive qualities of the world are carried over to the image that represents it. And when these expressive qualities are used with *style* (Metz here borrowing Dufrenne's conception of style), a supplementary, aesthetic meaning emerges: aesthetic expressivity. The idea finds its final form in "Le cinema: langue ou langage?" when Metz asserts that "in the cinema connotation is homogeneous with denotation, and is, like it, expressive."[15]

Metz's concern for expressivity in this essay seems to originate from early versions of his project for a doctoral dissertation. In an outline submitted to Georges Blin at the beginning of 1963, he presented his project in two parts. The first section was said to be "historical" and centered on expressivity and verbal language in the cinema, looking at both the silent and sound periods and investigating the issue of "expressive" acting.[16] The second section was presented as "philosophical,

13. Literary art, on the other hand, must develop expressively from what language *signifies.*
14. Christian Metz, "Le cinéma: langue ou langage?," *Essais sur la signification au cinéma,* vol. 1, p. 85.
15. Ibid.
16. Expressive gesture and its relation with language was an important theme in Merleau-Ponty's work starting with *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945).

filmological and linguistic" and concentrated on the relations between art, style, and language, as well as distinguishing "image discourse" and verbal language. Considering his notes on Dufrenne and the subsequent essay of 1964, it is fair to infer that phenomenology likely played a substantial role in thinking through this would-be thesis. However, as we shall see, the phenomenological idea of some meaning wholly *immanent* to perception is not one that would sit well with Metz's later work, though, somewhat paradoxically, he was nonetheless careful not to refute phenomenology entirely.

After 1964, the bulk of Metz's efforts were devoted to investigating cinematic "designation" (or denotation), and he mostly shied away from aesthetic matters and phenomenological considerations.[17] On the rare occasions when aesthetics came into the orbit of an argument, he never gave in to the temptation of some critics to call on phenomenological principles as a basis for a prescriptive poetics. Thus, in "Le cinéma moderne et la narrativité," first published in *Cahiers du cinéma* in 1966, he severely criticizes those who would celebrate the "new cinemas" of the '60s on the grounds that these films offered a more fundamental realism or a new form of objectivity better suited to fulfill the cinema's revelatory "essence." He writes:

> If [by these ideas] one implies some sort of cosmophanic power, some sort of aptitude for all revelations that the cinema carried inside itself from birth, but for which it would have taken a long time to become aware, then one is reverting to a mythology that was justly criticized by Jean Mitry, a mythology that hides behind the frock of phenomenology an essentialist realism whose only accomplishment is to salvage, at the level of the "natural meaning of things," the terrorist univocity of signification which is otherwise being fought against in the name of ambiguity; these are the most disputable aspects of André Bazin's and Roger Munier's theories. . . .
>
> [T]he real lesson of phenomenology . . . isn't by any means in the unilateral triumph of cosmophany, but in the obstinate affirmation of a definitive to-and-fro between the things that are and the person for whom they are, in this insurmountable "adverse spectacle" Valéry speaks of, and which can be found in its entirety in the assertion "there is," the elementary form of existence and equally that of cinema: the "there is," because it implies that there is something and that there is

17. There are at least two exceptions to this. In May 1971, Metz gave two talks at a symposium held at the Château de la Brangélie for the Centre régional de documentation pédagogique de l'Académie de Bordeaux: "Existe-t-il une approche sémiologique de l'esthétique?" and "Didactique et esthétique." The first one was recently published in *1895, Revue d'histoire du cinéma*, no. 70, 2014, pp.154–67, with an introduction by Martin Lefebvre. Moreover, though from a slightly different perspective, it could be argued that all of Metz's work was centrally concerned with aesthetic matters, as argued by Martin Lefebvre in "Metz and Aesthetics," *The Semiotic Paradigm. The Thought of Christian Metz*, ed. Margrit Tröhler, Julia Zutavern, and Guido Kirsten (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, forthcoming).

> someone for whom there is something, summons both the filmed object and the process of filming it.[18]

Such "to and fro" between subject and object is obviously one of the axiomatic ideas of the tradition inaugurated by Husserl and further developed in various guises by the likes of Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty. In Merleau-Ponty's philosophy it is what gives both direction (*sens*) and meaning (*sens*) to embodied experience (or embodied intentionality). And it is precisely to such directionality and meaning that Metz turns his attention in his two most overtly phenomenological essays: "A propos de l'impression de réalité au cinéma" and "Remarques pour une phénoménologie du Narratif."

The first piece comes on the heels of research conducted by *filmologues* such as van den Berck, Edgar Morin, and Henri Wallon. Other thinkers associated with phenomenology are also cited, namely, Bazin, Laffay, and Mitry. Metz here is interested in what he considers the specific form of "empire" that films have on their viewers and their perception. Another way to put it would be to ask how the cinema presents itself to consciousness through perception, i.e., what is its "meaning"? It lies, Metz claims, in the "feeling of directly witnessing a spectacle that is almost real," "a filmic mode of presence that is largely credible," and whose effect "rallies the masses and fills movie theaters."[19] Indeed, even non-realist, fantastic films find the source of their effectiveness in the fact that, in the cinema, even "the unreal *appears* realized and offers itself to the gaze under the guise of a factual efflux (*surgissement événementiel*) and not the plausible illustration of some purely *conceived* extraordinary process."[20] According to Metz, two factors are responsible for the cinema's impression of reality: There is first what cinema as a vehicle for images (and sounds) presents to perception and, secondly, the unreal or imaginary nature of its fictions or diegesis.

As a perceptual vehicle cinema offers a rather intricate configuration of *moving photographs*, and though he is not explicitly cited, Merleau-Ponty's statement about the cinema "as an extremely complex form inside of which a very great number of actions and reactions are taking place at every moment" comes to mind in reading Metz's efforts to describe the gestalt—he speaks of "fixed structures and figures"—commensurate with the impression he seeks to explain.[21] Metz begins by noting that film images, inasmuch as they are "photographic," partake of the *photographic impression of reality* described by Roland Barthes in his "Rhétorique de l'image," an impression grounded in the rendering present for contemplation a reality from the past, a "*having-been-there*" distinct from the here and now of contemplation. As a result, photographic consciousness is restrained from full immersion in the present that characterizes the perception of the actual, for what the photograph depicts—

18. Christian Metz, "Le cinéma moderne et la narrativité," *Essais sur la signification au cinéma*, vol. 1, pp. 193–94.
19. Christian Metz, "A propos de l'impression de réalité au cinéma," *Essais sur la signification au cinéma*, vol. 1, pp. 14–15.
20. Ibid., p. 15.
21. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Le cinéma et la nouvelle psychologie," *Sens et non-sens* (Paris: Nagel, 1948), p. 112.

although highly indexical of reality—stays resolutely in the past. It follows that photography's intentionality—Metz uses the term *visée*, which can be translated as *aiming*[22]—is purely spectatorial and translates into "an attitude of exteriorized contemplation rather than a magical or fictional consciousness."[23] Therefore, although they share a parentage, photographic intentionality must be distinguished from filmic intentionality and its *surgissement événementiel*, which supersedes the purely external contemplation of photography. But it needs also to be distinguished, explains Metz, from another parentage, namely, theatrical consciousness, whose vehicle *is* the real, though what it represents is fictional.

If neither photography nor theater is capable of providing the impression of reality to the same degree as cinema, it is important to consider what it is about the latter that characterizes our consciousness of it. Of course, the key discriminating factor with regard to photography is the advent of motion. Here, Metz reprises some of the arguments made earlier by the *filmologues*: Movement adds the mobility of the world to photographic analogy and therefore adds an extra layer of reality to what it shows us; it also gives corporeality to objects, which are now more likely to appear as detached *figures* on a *ground*.[24] Both aspects *indirectly* bring more reality to film images, i.e., they increase the traces of the real into films. A third aspect, however, one not sufficiently analyzed by the *filmologues*, according to Metz, concerns movement's *direct* contribution to the impression of reality inasmuch as it always appears on the screen as *real* and *actualized*, unlike photographic objects, which are perceived as absent and belonging to the past. So that even though the movement seen on the screen has technically occurred in the past (as the actors or the camera were moving), "the spectator," writes Metz, "always perceives the movement as being present."[25] It is a *presence*, not a representation or a "copy."[26] As a result, "the impression of reality in cinema is also the reality of the impression, the real presence of movement."[27]

Yet this conclusion seemingly introduces a paradox, or at least poses the question: If the impression of reality brought about by film is due to real presence (that of movement), why is it not greater still in the theater, where the entire vehicle is real? Any confusion, explains Metz, comes from not having sufficiently distinguished between the two factors mentioned earlier, that is to say between

22. Etymologically, intentionality is connected to the idea of pointing at something. Indeed, the Latin *intendo* means to "point at," to "aim at," or to "stretch toward" something.

23. Christian Metz, "A propos de l'impression de réalité au cinéma," *Essais sur la signification au cinéma*, vol. 1, p. 16.

24. Especially Edgar Morin in *Le cinéma ou l'homme imaginaire* (Paris: Minuit, 1956) and Albert Michotte van den Berck in "Le caractère de 'réalité' des projections cinématographiques," *Revue internationale de filmologie*, tome I, nos. 2–3 (1948).

25. Christian Metz, "A propos de l'impression de réalité au cinéma," *Essais sur la signification au cinéma*, vol. 1, p. 18.

26. Metz explains why: "Movement is 'immaterial,' it offers itself to sight but never to touch. This is why it will not admit two degrees of phenomenal reality, the 'real' and the copy . . . to reproduce the sight of it is to reproduce its reality. In truth, one cannot even 'reproduce' a movement, one can only re-produce it by way of a second production that, for the spectator, belongs to the same order of reality as the first." Christian Metz, "A propos de l'impression de réalité au cinéma," *Essais sur la signification au cinéma*, vol. 1, pp. 18–19.

27. Ibid., p. 19.

what is represented by each medium—the content, the diegesis—and the vehicle of representation. In the theater the entire vehicle of representation is real; however, and precisely for that reason—as has been shown by writers such as Jean Leirens and Henri Wallon—what is represented, the imaginary diegesis or fiction, does not appear real or believable. In the theater, the *perception of reality* on the side of the vehicle thus outweighs the *impression of reality* on the side of the diegesis. With photography, however, it is the other way around: What is shown, although analogous to reality, is too *removed* from the perception of reality *hic et nunc* to give us the impression that it is really taking place now or to sustain a believable diegetic universe. The cinema, Metz argues, finds a rare point of equilibrium between the two: Its *analogous* and somewhat corporeal images, as well as the *presence* of movement, endow the imaginary, *absent* world of the diegesis with an impression of reality the likes of which have never before been experienced.

Phenomenologically, then, cinema's impression of reality is a *quality* of its fiction, that which the film, as semiological system, *denotes*. It is the phenomenal form that narrative—which otherwise has its own gestalt—expresses in the cinema. It is toward this other gestalt, that of narrative in general, that Metz turns for the last overtly phenomenological piece of his early period, "Pour une phénoménologie du Narratif." Here, explains Metz, *Narratif*, with a capital "N," stands for an expressive *category* akin to those studied by the phenomenological aesthetics of Dufrenne or Etienne Souriau, categories such as "gracefulness," "sublimity," or the "elegiac." Capitalized, Narrative stands for the *quality* of narrative—for "narrativeness"; it offers a substantive for an adjective, in the same way that "gracefulness" stands for whatever possesses "grace." According to both Dufrenne and Souriau, such categories are existential—and therefore presumably anti-idealist—equivalents to Kant's transcendental categories that are active in the to and fro between subject and object, i.e., they make possible experience, perception, and affect and are thus subjective and yet they also objectively belong to the structure of a work. Metz himself describes this constant in-betweenness when he writes that these categories can be seen as both "universal categories of the world as it appears or of man as he apprehends the world."[28] Narrative, that is to say: narrativeness or the *impression of narrative*, thus becomes in Metz's words one of the "great forms of the human imaginary," one that can be described as such: "a closed discourse that proceeds by unrealizing a temporal sequence of events."[29] Both narrativity and the cinema thus appear as "anthropological facts" with the former acquiring an additional quality, namely, the impression of reality, upon meeting the latter.

It is clear to see why "A propos de l'impression de réalité au cinéma" and "Remarques pour une phénoménologie du Narratif" combine to make up a separate section in the first volume of the *Essais*. Less clear perhaps is the overall division of labor that affects phenomenology and semiology in the work of the early Metz. The opening paragraphs of "Remarques pour une phénoménologie du Narratif" are

28. Christian Metz, "Pour une phénoménologie du Narratif," *Essais sur la signification au cinéma*, vol. 1, p. 35.
29. Ibid., p. 28.

especially revealing in this regard. Here Metz addresses himself to his fellow structuralists, who by 1966 had begun the project of the structural analysis of narratives, or structuralist narratology, on the basis of the earlier work done by the Russian Formalists and Vladimir Propp (*Morphology of the Folktale*) and the more recent studies by Lévi-Strauss on the structure of myths. That same year a group of scholars—most of them associated with CECMAS[30] and l'École pratique des hautes études—had published issue No. 8 of the journal *Communications*, which was entirely devoted to structuralist narratology. Included in that group, alongside Barthes, Umberto Eco, A. J. Greimas, Tzvetan Todorov, and former *filmologue* Claude Bremond, was Metz himself, who first published his "Grande syntagmatique du film narratif" in that same issue. The introductory paragraphs of "Remarques pour une phénoménologie du Narratif" are meant to clarify the position of phenomenology with regard to structuralism and semiology. It is summarized very succinctly by Metz: "Structural analysis must always assume, at a prior stage that may be either explicit or implicit, something like a phenomenology of its object; or, again, that *signification* (which is constructed and discontinuous) always makes explicit what could only have first been lived ('*vécu*') as a *meaning* ('*sens*') (which is perceived and global)."[31] In other words, structuralism and semiology's task is to rigorously (or scientifically) analyze and explain what must first strike consciousness—through perception—as a global quality (an indecomposable impression, form, or gestalt) emerging in the constant back-and-forth between object and subject. The goal of structural analysis, then, is to lay bare the object's system, to decompose what was "already there" for consciousness—but not to decompose the impression associated with the object, its gestalt.

Now, inasmuch as Metz turned his attention to various problems of film denotation (especially the signifieds of large chunks of signifier such as the syntagms of the *grande syntagmatique*, which—unlike the single photographic shot—do not represent analogically but clearly signify), he was able to avoid any further phenomenological investigation. Yet this initial division of labor, between discontinuous and constructed *signifieds* and indecomposable or global meaning, would soon become stressed under the growing empire of semiology. By the time Metz republished his early articles in the first volume of *Essais*, he was already critical of the idea of some indecomposable layer of meaning given directly to perception without codification, *without any distinct or special signifier of its own.*

II. Middle Works: The Empire of the Code

Metz's new attitude toward phenomenology was largely influenced by developments in semiology—especially the works of Umberto Eco (whom he met in

30. The Centre d'études des communications de masse, connected to the École pratique des hautes études in Paris. Metz had been invited to join CECMAS by Roland Barthes for the 1963–64 academic year. The Center was founded by philosopher Georges Friedman in 1960. By 1973 it was run jointly under the directorship of Friedman, Edgar Morin and Barthes and became the Centre d'études transdisciplinaires. Sociologie, anthropologie, sémiologie (CETSAS). Since then it has changed its name a few more times and in 2008 became the Centre Edgar Morin.

31. Christian Metz, "Pour une phénoménologie du Narratif," *Essais sur la signification au cinéma*, vol. 1, p. 25.

Pesaro in June 1967) and Emilio Garroni[32]—around the themes of analogy (as a key principle for cinematic denotation) and connotation. Thus, in the 1968 version of "Problèmes de dénotation dans le film de fiction," as published in the first volume of *Essais*, Metz writes: "Contrary to what I believed four years ago, it doesn't seem at all impossible today to surmise that *analogy is itself coded without, however, ceasing to function authentically as analogy in relation to codes of a higher level*, which are brought into play only on the basis of this assumption."[33] He goes on to distinguish between two vast areas of "signifying organizations": "cultural codes" that define the culture of a social group and "specialized codes," which require learning (such as *la langue*, the codes of politeness, the codes of road signs, etc.). Cultural codes, writes Metz, "are so ubiquitous and so well 'assimilated' that their users generally consider them 'natural' and even an intrinsic component of what it is to be human (even though they are clearly *products* since they vary in time and space)."[34] And in a long footnote added the same year to "Le cinéma: langue ou langage?," Metz distances himself from his former phenomenological assumptions, divesting himself from phenomenological idealism and transcendentalism as they might pertain to the viewer's consciousness:

> If the sum of the effects of meaning we call *expressive*, *motivated* or *symbolic*, etc., appear "natural"—and are indeed so, in a certain way, for example for a phenomenology or a psychology of meaning—it is in great measure because they are very deeply rooted in cultures and because they emerge in these cultures at a level that lies far below (*en deçà*) that of the various explicit, specialized and informative codes.[35]

Reprising the example from *¡Que viva Mexico!*, he adds:

> [In "Le cinéma: langue ou langage?"] I gave, among other examples of expressivity, what is known, quite suitably, as "facial expression." However, it is certainly not due to the effects of "cinematic language" (or any other explicitly informative code) that the film spectator manages to decipher the expressions he reads on the face of the film's hero. However, it isn't through the effects of pure nature either, for facial expressions have meanings that vary from one civilization to the other (witness: the extreme difficulty we experience in trying to

32. Both authors published works in 1968 that influenced Metz, Eco's *La struttura assente* (Milano: Bompiani) and Garroni's *Semiotica ed estetica* (Bari: Laterza). Metz's meeting with Eco in Pesaro was decisive in this regard, as he himself recognized in a footnote added in 1968 to "Problèmes de dénotation dans le film de fiction" (p. 115, n. 2, *Essais sur la signification au cinéma*, vol. 1). Eco's contribution to the Pesaro conference was published in 1967 under the title *Appunti per una semiologia delle comunicazioni visive* (Milano: Bompiani) and soon afterward integrated into *La struttura assente*.

33. Christian Metz, "Problèmes de dénotation dans le film de fiction," *Essais sur la signification au cinéma*, vol. 1, p. 114.

34. Ibid.

35. Christian Metz, "Le cinéma: langue ou langage?," *Essais sur la signification au cinéma*, vol. 1, p. 82, n. 2.

> "understand" facial expressions in Japanese films). Nevertheless, it remains true that in French films, we understand them quite "naturally," that is to say, thanks to the effect of a very ancient and very deep knowledge that resides in us, that functions "all by itself," and that—for us—henceforth merges with perception itself.[36]

Several passages in this footnote, including the final sentence, signal that Metz's break with phenomenology was not absolute. And yet, June 1967 was a turning point for him in this regard, as he embraced what can only be considered a form of "pan-semiologism"—understood as a radical critique of naturalism and expressivism—that, as we shall see, literally turned upside-down the initial relation he had assumed prevailed between phenomenological and semiological meanings.

According to the early Metz, "designative" works of art—works of literature or cinema, for instance—must do with *three strata of meaning*. Take the case of verbal art. Composed of language, it is both expressive and designative, though linguistic signification is indebted to expressive meaning—which acts as the lower stratum supporting the entire edifice. Reflecting on this in his notes on Dufrenne, Metz writes:

> [F]or language to *code* significations, the very fact of signification must exist; that it can say things that signify something to the mind, or that it is a distinctive attribute of the mind to grasp significations amounts to the same thing, for it is one of the aspects of the perpetual reversibility of the phenomenological "there is." . . . It is because we soak in a world where everything is *naturally* signifying (expression) that language, by way of codification and *de-naturalization*, both ulterior and secondary to this fundamental expressivity, to this primary signification, has been able to form itself. . . . In short, there are two things: on the one hand, there is the moment of arbitrary codification, the moment that truthfully *establishes* language—and, on the other hand, there is what lies underneath this moment. What words signify is arbitrary, but the fact that they signify is "natural." . . . In the world things have meaning. On that ground man creates words, i.e., artificial things. The word is an object, a tool, a fabricated object. We fabricate it arbitrarily. But once fabricated it becomes a thing in the world, like other things in the world. . . . And like all things in the world the word takes on a natural meaning, which, in a way, is a sort of naturalization after the fact—through habit—of its artificial meaning.[37]

The third stratum, as seen earlier, is the purely aesthetic one, that which concerns

36. Ibid.
37. Christian Metz, undated manuscript notes on *Phénoménologie de l'expérience esthétique*, ms. CM872 B8, pp. 35a/b-36a.

aesthetic expression or connotation and whose meaning is style, genre, or poetic atmosphere and the various impressions that works of art are likely to elicit as we experience them.

Now, we know that in his earliest works, Metz claimed cinematic denotation to be expressive, directly reproducing the expressivity of the world by way of analogy. However, since expression is the domain of phenomenological inquiry into the meaning of the world, there seems to exist an uneasy juxtaposition between phenomenology and semiology at the most "semiological" of levels, namely, that of denotation. In other words, as long as semiology conceives of cinematic denotation as expressive, it runs the risk of either merging with or becoming a subspecies of phenomenology (its linguistic-influenced methodology notwithstanding). Undoubtedly this issue must have had a role to play in the move that led Metz away from the "image" and from the conceptual category of the "sign" and instead toward the study of "large signifying units"—such as those of the *grande syntagmatique*—units that had little if anything to do with analogy in their designative function and seemed therefore unconnected to the phenomenological tradition in film studies. In fact, Metz comes close to saying so himself in 1968 when he writes that:

> The notion of analogy must be handled with care. It is true that for a genuinely cinematic semiology analogy represents a kind of *stumbling block*: at those precise points where it takes charge of filmic signification (notably the meaning of each "motif" taken separately), all specifically cinematic codification fails. This is why, to my mind, filmic codes must be sought on other levels.[38]

By then, of course, Metz had sided with Eco in the debate over analogy (or iconism[39]) and adopted the view that analogy is coded through-and-through and therefore not expressive—i.e., not natural nor direct—except in a sort of *naive*, though no less useful (more on this below), phenomenological way.[40] As a result, the initial distinction posited by Metz between film art and literary art according to which the former is *connotatively homogeneous* (expressive connotation building on expressive denotation) while the latter is *connotatively heterogeneous* (expressive connotation over inexpressive denotation) also dissolves itself at the theoretical

38. Christian Metz, "Problèmes de dénotation dans le film de fiction," *Essais sur la signification au cinéma*, vol. 1, p. 113. This essay predates *Langage et cinéma* and Metz's formal distinction between "filmic" and "cinematic," whence the use here of the less appropriate term.

39. It took over thirty years for Eco to have a change of heart on the matter and, under the influence of Peirce's semiotic theory, retract his early views on iconicity. See "Iconism and Hypoicon" in *Kant and the Platypus. Essays on Language and Cognition* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 2000).

40. Interestingly enough, it could be argued that Merleau-Ponty's own conception of consciousness as embodied is indirectly responsible for the decline of phenomenology at the hands of a pan-semiologism for which (incommensurable) cultural differences only exhibit arbitrariness and, therefore, codification. This seems to be Emmanuel Lévinas's point in his critique of Merleau-Ponty in "La signification et le sens," *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 69, no. 2 (1964). See especially pp. 149–50.

level—though again the idea might be acceptable at a naive, *impressionist*, or *pre-theoretical* level. In short, what appears to be expressive—including the analogical recognition of visual objects—is merely so through *acculturation* (or cultural assimilation) and *blindness*, including in some cases ideological blindness, through force of habit.

If, for the early Metz, phenomenological meaning grounds semiological signification—to the point where, with regard to filmic denotation, they might even seem to overlap—the situation is now clearly inverted: Coded semiological meaning now grounds what appears naively as the directly perceived natural gestalt of phenomenological meaning. Clearly, one implication of the new pan-semiological outlook is the removal of the world from Metzian film theory, thus fulfilling the spirit of Saussureanism, which requires that substance be expelled from the structural (and formal) study of language. Through analogy, therefore, film denotation doesn't *directly* express or deliver the world to perception anymore; rather, it *encodes* it.

Of course, the logical upshot of this theory is the rejection of *perception itself* as being natural and consequently the exclusion of the world not just from visual images but from perception as well. Hence, in 1971, in *Langage et cinéma*, Metz goes one step further in adopting Eco's pan-semiologism by linking the so-called analogical code of figurative images (images that enforce an "impression of resemblance" to the world) to natural perception as being itself a coded process. He writes:

> It isn't unwarranted to recall the partial resemblances between filmic perception and everyday perception (sometimes called "real perception"), resemblances that certain authors (myself included) have sometimes misinterpreted. They are not due to the fact that the first is natural, but to the fact that the second isn't. The first is coded, but its codes are partly the same as those of the second. Analogy, as Umberto Eco has clearly shown, isn't between the effigy and its model, but exists—while remaining partial—between two perceptual situations, between the modes of decipherment which lead to the recognition of an object in a real situation and those that lead to its recognition in an iconic situation, in a highly figurative image such as that of the film.[41]

Metz's distance from phenomenology couldn't be more pronounced. Indeed, whereas the worldly "there is"—the idea that the world is always already there—forms the basic presupposition of either transcendental-idealistic or existential-embodied phenomenology, it is now understood as the mere naturalized result of a deeper process of codification.[42] This process functions as a

41. Christian Metz, *Langage et cinéma* (Paris: Larousse, 1971), pp. 208–09.
42. See, for instance, Merleau-Ponty's insistence on the irreducibility of the world as given, as "being there before any possible analysis I could make of it," *Phénoménologie de la perception*, p. iv.

cultural and empirical equivalent to the Kantian a priori, and its effect is to theoretically shut off both language (i.e., all coded systems) *and* the subject from an independently given world: Nothing now enters perceptual consciousness that is not always already coded.[43]

These developments in Metz's thinking also led him to revise his initial conception of connotation. To be sure, connotation was an especially vague term in early structuralism, comprising all second-order forms of meaning not accounted for by denotation. As we saw earlier, Metz first identified it with a phenomenological theory of *aesthetic meaning* in film. According to this theory, aesthetic qualities or aesthetic meaning compose a third stratum of meaning, one that lies "above" the natural expressivity of the world and "above" denotative meaning in representational or figurative art. In Dufrenne's theory, aesthetic meaning is the outcome of the perception of artworks *as* aesthetic objects. It is what their sensible form reveals to consciousness through aesthetic perception; what Dufrenne also calls style and which for him manifests a *quasi-subject*, namely, an aesthetic world that has an expressivity of its own constituted by the consciousness and seasoned skill of the artist. By the early 1970s, however, Metz's conception of connotation had changed focus—it became unhinged from the outlook provided by Dufrenne's aesthetic—and was as equally denaturalized as denotation.[44] For one thing, as Metz himself admitted, the new purview opened up by Eco and the recognition that a vast array of codes came together in something like a film—and not just those that pertained to the recognition of objects onscreen—created a context where connotation seemed a less urgent problem. Secondly, Metz questioned the idea that connotation was a form of meaning that ought to be "immediately read onto the object" of perception as a whole (as Dufrenne would have it). In an essay devoted to it written in 1971, he claims that one problem with his previous understanding of connotation was that he had failed to consider the existence of a specific signifier of connotation, an entity conceptually or theoretically distinct from the entire denotative code (the conjunction of the signifier and signified of denotation) and capable of marking variations that acquire meaning (become pertinent) only at the connotative level. Here, Metz returned to the work of linguist Louis Hjelmslev, who explained that texts belonging to a given semiotic system were not always homogeneous. For instance, a single text written in a given language (say, a novel written in English) could belong to several styles or use different idioms in different sections. The problem then is to distinguish them semiotically without losing sight of the otherwise homogeneous quality of the language (English) as a first order or denotative plane of meaning. On the basis of

43. Paul Ricoeur once characterized structuralism as "Kantianism without a transcendental subject," in *Le Conflit des interprétations* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), p. 50.

44. Dufrenne recognized the importance of culture for the perception of aesthetic expression, but saw it as an enabling condition, not an a priori condition for it. Expression, he wrote, "ought to and even must be *mediated* by culture," but this doesn't mean that it is created by it or that it exists only relative to it. See "L'art est-il langage?," *Revue d'Esthétique* 19, no. 1 (1966); repr. in *Esthétique et philosophie*, vol. I (Paris: Klincksieck, 1980), p. 107.

that initial plane, a second-order plane of signification is considered that takes into consideration the various stylistic or idiomatic categories to which the variations belong. Thus, what isn't pertinent as a variation at the denotative level becomes pertinent at the connotative level, and connotation acquires a signifier that is conceptually and theoretically distinct from the whole denotative code even though, as Metz explains, they may be materially indistinguishable (connotation still rests on denotation). Concluding his essay on connotation, Metz writes:

> Strictly speaking, it wasn't a falsehood, after all, to assert that connotation is nothing else but the choosing of different ways of establishing denotation. Yet this formulation is awfully incomplete since the very possibility of the process it describes is connected to a condition it fails to notice, namely, that the various ways of filming something (all of which denote, it is true) must be, *on the other hand*—and in relation to a different cultural code—especially imbued with connotative values. Otherwise, the various ways of filming will only produce synonymous denotations.[45]

Finally, by the mid-1970s, Metz's concerns for connotation—which he also referred to as "non-literal" or "symbolic" significations that emerge *after* analogy (i.e., after denotation)—pulled further away from Dufrenne's phenomenological conception of expressivity and centered instead on its production at the intersection of rhetoric and the unconscious's primary and secondary processes through the figures of *metaphor* and *metonymy*.[46]

However, Metz's turn to psychoanalysis during this period signaled a return to preoccupations from his early work, namely, the impression of reality.

III. Late Work: Psychoanalysis and Phenomenology or Negative Complementarity

Le Signifiant imaginaire, whose essays were written between 1973 and 1976, signaled an important change in Metz's work by introducing psychoanalysis into it. In this regard, Metz was following the lead of Jacques Lacan, who, more than anyone else at the time, was responsible for combining psychoanalysis with structural linguistics, Freud with Saussure and Jakobson—albeit with a few adjustments, especially on the side of linguistics.[47] Certainly, though, it was the absence of the world, the absence of substance, that, correlated with the concept of value as differ-

45. Christian Metz, "La connotation, de nouveau," in *Essais sur la signification au cinéma*, vol. 2 (Paris: Klincksieck, 1972), p. 172.

46. For instance, Metz discusses Dr. Smirnov's famous dangling pince-nez in *Battleship Potemkin* as both connotation and metaphor: "The pince-nez connotes the aristocracy: metaphor," in *Le Signifiant imaginaire* (Paris: UGE, coll. 10/18, 1977), p. 241.

47. What immediately comes to mind, of course, is the "inversion" of the relation of signifier to signified as initially diagrammed by Saussure and the emphasis given by Lacan to the signifier as a result of Saussure's insistence on the *separability* and *arbitrariness* of both planes (that of the signifier and that of the signified).

ential, made Saussurean linguistics appealing to Lacan as a model for the unconscious. Once translated into the terms of psychoanalysis and radicalized by Lacan, it's also what caused much incompatibility between Lacan and phenomenologists such as Merleau-Ponty—the latter finding more to agree with in the theories of Freud and Melanie Klein. Given the deep epistemological divergences between Lacan and Merleau-Ponty up to the latter's death in 1961, one might expect phenomenology to disappear completely from Metz's work.[48] This, however, was not quite the case, as references to phenomenology and a qualified endorsement of it are still found in Metz's writings from the mid-1970s.

One such endorsement comes up in sections III and IV of the book's eponymous essay, "Le Signifiant imaginaire," which are concerned with problems of identification and the function of the scopic drive. Section III begins by questioning the specificity of the cinematic signifier, which is said to rest on audiovisual perception. Compared with the signifier of other media, such as literature, painting, or music, writes Metz, "the cinema is *more perceptual*" in that it "mobilizes a larger number of the axes of perception," and yet is "less perceptual" than the theater or the opera once we envisage "the status of these perceptions . . . rather than their number or their diversity."[49] One immediately recognizes here a key phenomenological theme, though its treatment will be largely psychoanalytic. Interestingly, it is also partly a reprise of the phenomenological argument developed a decade earlier in "A propos de l'impression de réalité au cinéma." As was the case in that essay, the specificity of cinema is associated with its perceptual regime, with the fact that the cinematic signifier gives us images of "uncommon perceptual richness" while "registering at an uncommonly deep level, in its very principle," that what is seen is not "really the object" but "its shadow, its double, its replica" appearing in a "new sort of mirror."[50] What follows is one of the most famous and influential pieces of film theorizing ever, with Metz comparing the situation of the film viewer to Lacan's description of the child looking at itself in the mirror, all the while, in an alienating fashion, (mis)identifying itself with its reflection as it moves towards becoming the subject of the unconscious. Especially significant for our purpose is the way Metz characterizes the spectator's identification with the camera in terms that recall Husserl's conception of the transcendental ego of pure consciousness (as distinct from the empirical ego).

48. Lacan, for instance, considered that Merleau-Ponty's openness toward psychoanalysis never managed conceptually to move beyond Freud's idea of the preconscious. See Jacques Lacan, "Merleau-Ponty: *In Memoriam*," *Les temps modernes* 17, nos. 185–86 (1961). See also James Phillips, "Lacan and Merleau-Ponty: The Confrontation of Psychoanalysis and Phenomenology," in *Disseminating Lacan*, ed. David Pettigrew and François Raffoul (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996). It is noteworthy, however, that Metz distanced himself from Lacan and the strict Lacanian school: "You know," he said during an interview, "I am not a Lacanian. There is a misunderstanding about my position, because I borrow some concepts from Lacan's work. I use three or four words taken from Lacan, and I am considered in some places as a Lacanian, but I am not." See "The Cinematic Apparatus as Social Institution—An Interview with Christian Metz," *Discourse* 1 (Fall 1979), p. 8.

49. Christian Metz, *Le Signifiant imaginaire*, pp. 62, 64.

50. Ibid., pp. 65, 64.

"The spectator," writes Metz, "*identifies with himself*, with himself as pure act of perception (as wakefulness, as alertness): as the condition of possibility of what is perceived and therefore as a sort of transcendental subject, prior to any *there is*."[51] In short, what we have here—in the cinematic mirror, if you will—is the spectator *misrecognizing* himself as the transcendental ego of Husserlian phenomenology, of pure perception as apperception. For Metz, in a way, the phenomenological model of spectatorial consciousness becomes the alienating inverted image, the false consciousness or camera obscura of the spectatorial self. And it is on these grounds that Metz proceeds to critique Bazin and the *idealist-phenomenological* tradition in film theory for being blind to the deception it falls prey to, failing as it does to recognize the alienated nature of the spectatorial self as subject of pure perception.

And yet, it follows nonetheless that film phenomenologists are not *entirely* wrong. After all, the mirror stage is a *necessary* passage towards the formation of the subject, and the ego *cannot escape being deluded in front of the mirror.* In like fashion, Metz assures us that primary cinematic identification with the camera's gaze (as I/eye)—and therefore alienation—is essential to *any* film's intelligibility.[52] Accordingly, phenomenological film theory has some legitimacy, if only negatively:

> Cosmophanic conceptions impart rather well the "feeling" experienced by the *deluded self* of the spectator; they provide us with excellent descriptions of this feeling and, to this extent, have something scientific about them and have advanced our knowledge of the cinema. . . . For it is true that the topographical apparatus of the cinema resembles the conceptual apparatus of phenomenology, with the result that the latter can cast a light on the former. . . . The "there is" of phenomenology proper (philosophical phenomenology), as an ontic revelation referring to a perceiving-subject (= "perceptual *cogito*"), to a subject for whom alone there can be anything, has close and definite affinities with the establishment of the self in the cinema signifier. . . . In this regard, cinema truly is a "phenomenological art," as it was so often claimed, and as Merleau-Ponty himself claimed.[53]

There is therefore a certain degree of *complementarity*, in Metz's mind, between psychoanalytic semiology and phenomenology, much like, for Engels, the dialectic always requires the unity and conflict of opposites.

In Metz's own work, this complementarity can be witnessed in the way "Le Signifiant imaginaire" returns to the issues initially raised by his earlier essay on the impression of reality, with the new work still relying on the same basic (phe-

51. Ibid., p. 69.

52. Metz writes: "But *with what* does the spectator identify during the projection of a film? For he certainly has to identify: identification in its primal form [the mirror stage of infancy] has ceased being an actual necessity for him, but in the cinema—under the threat of the film becoming incomprehensible, considerably more so than the most incomprehensible films—he continues to depend on a permanent play of identification without which there would be no social life." *Le Signifiant imaginaire*, p. 66.

53. Ibid., pp. 74–75.

nomenological) premises, *the same fundamental conception of cinema* (or *cinematicity*, the quality of cinema). Indeed, recalling the piece from 1965, Metz writes: "My approach, at that time, was purely phenomenological and didn't owe much to psychoanalysis. However, the latter confirms me in my first opinion."[54] This opinion can be summarized by a few ideas: *Cinema as a medium holds a specific power over its spectators; this power results from a peculiar regime of presence and absence that differentiates it from other media and art forms while enabling spectatorial identification and heightening adhesion to fiction.*[55] In the 1965 essay, these ideas all merge in the cinema's impression of reality. We saw earlier how, for the young Metz, there is, within the *dominion* cinema holds over us ("*l'emprise filmique*"), "the secret of a presence and of a proximity that rallies the masses and fills movie theaters," and how this secret rests on an identification with fiction made possible by the uncanny experience of presence/absence on the screen.[56] It is to this very same dominion of the cinema that Metz returns in "The Imaginary Signifier," reconfiguring it as the outcome of the *scopic* and *invocating drives* that sustain perception and desire—and likewise sustain the institutions of the cinema, including the filling of movie theaters. In explaining how, according to Freud, these drives distinguish themselves from instincts, Metz insists on how they thrive on the absence of their goal, of the objects elected to fulfill them, by the very distance their originating organs (the eye, the ear) must maintain to them. Yet, claims Metz, what characterizes film when compared to other visual or aural media is a *doubling* of this absence, what he calls "a supplementary and specific turn of the screw riveting desire to lack."[57]

Two arguments are presented to support this claim, both of which appeared in the earlier essay on the impression of reality. The first one concerns the amount of detail found in cinema's audiovisual representation. Here, the greater ratio of absence manifests itself superficially in the fact that film, which provides us with an indefinite amount of sights and sounds, lets one perceive more of the world than most other media, and therefore "absents [more] from our grasp."[58]

54. Ibid., p. 92.

55. In an undated handwritten manuscript (likely produced in the mid-1960s) for a talk on the impression of reality in the cinema, Metz wrote: "The fundamental fact that characterizes the psychological attitude of the spectator in front of the screen is that the spectator doesn't see images (he didn't come to the movies for that reason), he sees a story; which is to say that he *follows* and *reads* a narrative as the images flow [*tout au long des images*]. The cinema has given us the habit of longitudinal reading, oriented toward what comes next (to the detriment of a transversal reading that would stop to consider each image). The great idea of Jean Mitry, that cinema is made *from* the image, not *for* the image, is absolutely fundamental." He adds: "The impression of reality is not only a perceptual problem, it is also an affective and aesthetic problem. A good film gives a greater impression of reality than a bad film (where the characters are caricatures, outrageous), even if both are essentially produced according to the same perceptual techniques. That is because we don't believe only in the images, but also in the story; and it is often the story that lends its reality to the images in return. There are therefore two impressions of reality in cinema, and they are in constant dialectical reaction with one another. Emotion counts as much as perception." "Exposé sur l'impression de réalité au cinéma," ms. CM1430.

56. Christian Metz, "A propos de l'impression de réalité au cinéma," *Essais sur la signification au cinéma*, vol. 1, pp. 14–15.

57. Christian Metz, *Le Signifiant imaginaire*, p. 85.

58. Ibid., p. 86.

Secondly, there is the fact that, unlike the theater, film gives to perception objects that, notwithstanding the details they possess, are nonetheless *absent, unreal, imaginary.* On the one hand this implies that voyeurism in the cinema is different, closer in spirit to the "*unauthorized* scopophilia" of the Freudian primal scene, since what is absent cannot truly acknowledge the spectator's gaze.[59] On the other hand, and here we find the phenomenological argument of 1965 yet again, such absence leads to heightened believability and identification or adhesion to the fictional, imaginary world of the film:

> In the cinema as in the theater, the represented is by definition imaginary; this is what characterizes the fiction as such, independently of the signifiers that are in charge of it. But in the theater, representation is fully real, whereas in the cinema it is imaginary, the materials being already a reflection.[60]

In other words, if absence operates doubly in the cinema—at the level of the signified and that of the signifier—so does fiction, according to Metz.[61] Which is why, for him, fiction belongs to a phenomenological account of cinema, or, to put it differently, why the cinematic *includes* the fictional. Therefore, on the *negative* side of phenomenology—the side of alienated spectator consciousness —"every film," writes Metz, "is a fiction film"; whereas on the *positive* side of psychoanalysis every film is doubly imaginary.

What psychoanalysis brings to Metz's phenomenology, moreover, is a more positive explanation of identification (and its alienation) through the analogy of the mirror. Indeed, in the essay on the impression of reality Metz criticizes the

59. Ibid., p. 89.
60. Ibid., pp. 92–93.
61. Interestingly, in "Le Signifiant imaginaire," Metz omits to mention filmic movement, which, in "L'impression de réalité au cinéma," was argued to be a form of *presence.* One has to wait until 1985 to see movement find its way into the psychoanalytic argument. In an essay initially published in English, "Photography and Fetish" (*October* 34 [Autumn 1985], pp. 81–90), Metz returns to the idea first developed in "Le cinéma: langue ou langage?" (and elsewhere in the *Essais*), that cinema is a machine that suppresses film frames (in 1964, this is expressed in the idea that it is the shot—and therefore not the photogram—that is the basic semiological unit of film). But he returns to this idea in a different guise, one better formulated, in a shorter and slightly different French version of this essay that he presented in 1986 at a conference held at the Collège international de philosophie on "Photographie et philosophie": In cinema, writes Metz, "unfolding ["*le déroulement*"] mobilizes the viewer's attention to the detriment of the link that unites each image [each frame] to its referent, at the detriment of indexicality, which, although still intact, becomes less perceptible" (Christian Metz, "Photo, fétiche," in *Pour la photographie*, vol. 3, ed. Ciro Bruni [Sammeron: GERS, 1990], p. 118). For Metz, then, this *felt* waning of indexicality produced by movement, by the film's unfolding, detaches the film image from its anchor in the real world at the phenomenal level, which explains in part why it is perceived as so "intimately fictional" ("*la narrativité bien chevillée au corps*," *Essais sur la signification au cinéma*, tome I, p. 52). The upshot of this conception is a different place for fetishism in the experience of film and that of photography. Though other factors also contribute, in the end Metz concludes that film is a "powerful activator of fetishism" ("Photo, fétiche," p. 123), disseminating disbelief as belief on large quantities of fleeting perceptions, whereas photography, because of its fixity, is "more apt in *becoming* itself a fetish" (ibid.).

accounts given by Wallon and Leirens as being negative.[62] Leirens, for one, claims that presence in the theater hinders identification, while absence makes it possible in the cinema.[63] In manuscript notes on Leirens's book—likely written before completing "L'impression de réalité au cinéma"—Metz sketches his criticism in clear terms:

> There is something truthful about this theory: It is because, among other things, it is too carnal that theater gives an impression of artifice. But it isn't for that reason alone; there is also the artifice of theatrical works (their tone, the style, the situations, the actor's diction, etc. . . .), in short, a diegetic artifice often absent in the cinema (this is one of the causes of the [cinema's] impression of reality).
>
> By contrast, to claim that we identify in the cinema because it is immaterial doesn't really hold. Such reasoning only considers negative processes (it's true that in the cinema the absence of flesh-and-blood humans leads, for the spectator, to the absence of any risks regarding anti-identification. Because the actor is unlikely to start sneezing, there is little risk that the spectator will start laughing. *But it isn't sufficient that the obstacles to identification disappear for identification to effectively come about.* One must still explain the positive process of identification. For this, the cinema's immateriality won't work. On the contrary, we must look among the positive powers of the cinema: How is it that the cinema so much resembles life, [or] that we forget that these are images, etc. . . . [?]
>
> In short, the complete break between the universe of the diegesis and that of the spectator (a break achieved in the cinema, but not in the theater)—or, if one prefers, the principle that "in order to seem real it must be entirely false"—in short, then, this phenomenon only has a role as an *enabling condition* of identification (it neutralizes some possible anti-identificatory processes), but it does not constitute the positive cause, certainly not the sufficient cause, for identification.[64]

And yet, in "Le Signifiant imaginaire," it is precisely *absence*—what Metz calls here "immateriality"—that proves, after all, to be the positive factor in cinematic identification. For it is the *presence of absence* (*as absence of presence*), in Metz's scheme, that nourishes the scopic and invocative drives, ensuring the imaginary functions of

62. A well-known child psychologist (and *filmologue* in the last years of his life), Henri Wallon carried out experimental work on mirror-image recognition in animals and children that was influential on Lacan's formulation of the mirror stage. See Henri Wallon, "Comment se développe chez l'enfant la notion de corps propre," *Journal de psychologie normale et pathologique* (1931), pp. 705–48.

63. Jean Leirens, *Le cinéma et le temps* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1954).

64. Christian Metz, undated manuscript notes on Jean Leirens's *Le Cinéma et le temps*, ms.CM959.

both the signified *and* the signifier. It is absence that—along with photography and movement—*actively* (or *positively*) transforms the spectator's perceptual consciousness into a "false consciousness" and therefore ensures (mis)identification with the camera and adhesion to the fiction (what translates phenomenologically into spectatorial consciousness as cinema's *impression of reality*), without which film would be incomprehensible.[65]

Metz himself, of course, recognized this complementarity between phenomenology and the psychoanalytic semiology of cinema. For instance, in a later section of *Le signifiant imaginaire*, he states that:

> [T]he theoretical contribution of psychology (the study of perception, of consciousness), and its extensions into classical *filmologie*, must therefore be complemented by that of metapsychology, which, like linguistics—which it doesn't supplant—can contribute to renew the study of film.
>
> To the extent that the impression of reality is linked to the perceptual traits of the signifier, it characterizes all films, diegetic or not; but inasmuch as it participates in the *fiction-effect*, it is specific to fiction films and to them alone. It is before such films that the spectator's consciousness adopts a very particular sort of intentionality ["*visée de conscience bien particulière*"] that merges neither with that of the dream, nor with that of the daydream, nor with that of real perception, but partakes of all of them and inserts itself at the center of the triangular figure they draw: a type of gaze whose status is at once hybrid and precise, and that establishes itself

65. See especially Metz's rewording of this phenomenon at the end of the section entitled: "Film/rêve: la perception et l'hallucination" (part II of "Le Film de fiction et son spectateur [Étude métapsychologique]" in *Le Signifiant imaginaire*): "[O]ther than the filmic state, there are few situations in which the subject receives particularly dense and organized external perceptions while being internally predisposed by his immobility to over-perceive ("*sur-recevoir*") them. The classical film plays on this pincer movement, for which it has itself set up both claws. It is the double reinforcement that makes possible the impression of reality, it is thanks to it that the spectator, starting off from the material presented on the screen, the only thing given to him at the outset (spots of light that move upon a rectangle, sounds and speech that come from nowhere), will become capable of achieving a certain degree of belief in the reality of an imaginary the signs of which he is supplied with, *capable of fiction*, in short. Now, the capacity for fiction, as we too often forget, isn't exclusively (or primarily) the capacity—unequally shared and therefore a true source of bliss for aesthetes—to invent fictions, it is above all the existence of a historically constituted and much more widespread socially regulated regime of psychical functioning, called fiction. Before being an art, fiction is a fact (a fact of which certain art forms can take possession). The relation between this fictional capacity and the film of narrative representation is close and bidirectional. [On the one hand] diegetic cinema could not function as an institution . . . if the spectator . . . was incapable of steadfastly adopting and renewing at will the special regime of perception that I am trying to analyze here in Freudian terms. [On the other hand], film, as I have tried to demonstrate elsewhere in a more phenomenological cast, produces an impression of reality much more vivid than that of a novel or a painting, since the intrinsic nature of the cinematic signifier, with the exceptional 'likenesses' of its photographic images, with the real presence of movement and sound, etc., has the effect of inflecting the fiction-phenomenon, albeit so ancient, toward historically more recent and socially specific forms," *Le Signifiant imaginaire*, p. 144–45.

> as the strict correlative of a certain kind of looked-at object. . . . Faced with this cultural object, which the fiction film is, the impression of reality, the impression of dream and the impression of daydream, cease to be contradictory and mutually exclusive, as they usually are, in order to enter into a new set of relations wherein the gap that normally lies between them, while not exactly annulling itself, admits an unprecedented configuration that makes room for overlapping, alternating balance, partial agreement, shuffling, permanent circulation between the three: authorizing, in short, a kind of central moving zone of intersections where all three can "encounter" each other on a singular territory, a confused territory that is common to all three and yet doesn't abolish their distinctness. . . . The fiction film thus holds the strange power of momentarily reconciling three very different regimes of consciousness. . . . [66]

This quote is taken from the book's third part, "Le Film de fiction et son spectateur (Étude métapsychologique)," which is nothing short of an attempt to describe the being of the film (at least in its dominant institutional mode in the West) through the split consciousness of the spectator. Which is to say: *to use psychoanalysis to do the work of phenomenology*. Thus, Metz speaks of the film spectator's *visée de conscience* [intentionality] whose specificity is to merge the impression of reality with the "impression of dream" and the "impression of daydream."

Be that as it may, complementarity between phenomenology and psychoanalysis (or semiology) doesn't translate into *epistemic equality*, however. Indeed, we mentioned earlier that, next to either psychoanalysis or semiology, phenomenology provided a naive, even pre-theoretical form of description. We conclude this essay, then, with what, for Metz, came to constitute an epistemological distinction between these different types of approaches.

At the time he was writing the essays that make up *Le Signifiant imaginaire*, Metz—who never disavowed linguistic-inspired semiology—was asked to contribute a paper for a *Festschrift* in honor of Mikel Dufrenne. The book, *Vers une esthétique sans entrave. Mélanges offerts à Mikel Dufrenne*, was published in 1975 by Union Générale d'Éditions and part of a collection edited by Dufrenne himself. Metz's essay, however, is a somewhat strange contribution in homage to a famous phenomenologist. Indeed, it adopts a very strict semiological approach in dealing with traditional phenomenological themes, in a way, moreover, that might even seem anathema to phenomenology.

This essay, entitled "Le perçu et le nommé," investigates the relation between perception (of both world and images of the world—as well as sound perception) and naming.[67] Refusing to settle the debate as to which, perception

66. Ibid., p. 174.

67. Christian Metz, "Le perçu et le nommé," *Vers une esthétique sans entrave. Mélanges offerts à Mikel Dufrenne* (Paris: UGE, coll. 10/18, 1975), pp. 345–377. The section on sound was translated into English and published as "Aural Objects" in *Film Sound: Theory and Practice*, ed. Elisabeth Weis and John Belton (New York: Columbia University, 1985).

or language, first informs the other—a debate he characterizes as "pointless"—Metz dispenses with the phenomenological account of perception, replacing it with a semiological model borrowed from Eco, according to which perception like language, is arbitrarily shaped by society (and therefore not natural).[68] For Eco, visual perception functions by way of schemas, with consciousness identifying not so much the entire manifold of sense but only certain traits of the *iconic signifier* (shapes, contours, shading, texture, size, orientation, etc.) that social subjects come to deem pertinent in the context of their culture. These traits belong to what Eco, and Metz after him, calls "recognition codes." Thus, for example, with regard to snow, Inuits are said to "perceive ten distinct objects," whereas Frenchmen in 1975 "see a unique object with variable determinations" because their recognition codes are different.[69] The implication is that neither the perceived object nor its qualities belong to the natural world *in itself,* but rather to a socially constructed world—however unaware of its social status or of its categories we may be. What reveals itself to perception, therefore, isn't the world but society or culture. Recognition codes are said to function equally in both everyday perception and in the perception of figurative images with a high degree of likeness to the world (such as film images).

Naming what is perceived through such codes, however, requires that what is recognized or identified from within the manifold—the visual signified—be correlated to a linguistic unit. Metz offers a detailed account of this process that shows how this correlation—or intercoding—is achieved. He begins by noting that a likely candidate for a verbal account of the perceived object is the *word.* However, words are already signs that arbitrarily combine a phonic (or written) signifier with a signified, and there is no code for joining the linguistic signifier with the iconic signified. Instead, the naming of what is recognized must translate the iconic signified of the recognition code into a linguistic signified (conceptual component) of the word, what linguists call a *sememe.* Thus, writes Metz,

> [T]hanks to the pertinent traits of the iconic signifier the [perceiving] subject identifies the object (= he establishes the visual signified); from there, he moves to the corresponding sememe in his mother tongue (= linguistic signified): this is the precise moment of naming, of crossing the inter-codic bridge; once in possession of the sememe he can pronounce the (phonic) signifier of the linguistic code. The cycle is complete.[70]

There is, furthermore, a second level of articulation between the visual and the linguistic. Here, Metz calls on the work of A. J. Greimas, for whom correlations

68. Christian Metz, "Le perçu et le nommé," *Vers une esthétique sans entrave. Mélanges offerts à Mikel Dufrenne,* p. 355.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid., p. 360.

exist between Eco's visual traits (the iconic signifier) and those smaller semantic units that bind together to make up a sememe and are called *semes.* Metz gives the following example:

> [I]f, in an ethnographic film, we see an object that is unknown to us (say, a hunting weapon or a musical instrument), and if the anterior extremity of this object possesses a distinctly shaped rounded part, we will not hesitate to perceive the latter as the "head" of this utensil which is otherwise impossible for us to further identify.[71]

The point here is that those visual traits—"extremity," "distinct or separated extremity," "superior or anterior extremity," "spherical extremity"—are also the semantic makeup (the semes), the pertinent semantic traits, of the sememe "head." Thus, thanks to that relation between semes and visual traits, the linguistic signifier ("head") can come to stand for both of them. According to this theory, then, the perceptual code of recognition parses the otherwise meaningless (or *not yet* meaningful) sensual field into pertinent traits (iconic signifiers) that are said to correspond (*but why?*) to the smallest semantic units of language (semes, linguistic signifieds), thus enabling a verbal description of the world even when objects aren't recognized (and can't be named).

As one can see, little in this account of either perception or language can be deemed truly phenomenological. Rather it is a purely semiological account from which the world—including our lived or embodied experience of it—is carefully kept at bay from both.[72] Recognition codes are considered to offer a more sophisticated construal and a deeper understanding of the world and of perception than phenomenological description.[73] Thus, in the case where objects are actually

71. Ibid., p. 366.

72. As mentioned at the outset of this paper, Merleau-Ponty read Saussure (as early as 1947) and became one of the first exponents of Saussurean linguistics in France. His understanding of Saussure was nevertheless greatly idiosyncratic, to say the least. Though Merleau-Ponty subscribed to Saussure's attempts to both divorce the study of language from the ontological problem of reference and avoid the idealistic conception of language as representation of ideas, he nonetheless considered it incapable of conceiving the relation of language to the world (which, for him, requires consideration of the embodiment of speech) and of attending to the expressivity of language itself (see Merleau-Ponty's later conception of *parole parlante* or "speaking word," developed in contradistinction to what he called *parole parlée* or "spoken word"). Directly addressing the issue of naming in *Phénoménologie de la perception*, Merleau-Ponty refused to distinguish between recognition and verbal designation: "The denomination of objects doesn't follow their recognition, it is the recognition itself" (see *Phénoménologie de la perception*, p. 207).

73. In an entirely revised edition of *La struttura assente* which Eco published in English in 1976 under the title *A Theory of Semiotics*, we find him—unlike Metz—somewhat hesitant as to possible relations between semiotics and phenomenology: "According to Husserl the dynamic act of knowing implies an operation of 'filling up' which is simply an *attribution of sense* to the object of perception. He says that *to name* an object as /red/ and *to recognize* it as red are the same process, or at least that the manifestation of the *name* and the intuition of the *named* are not clearly distinguishable. It would be worth ascertaining to what extent the idea of 'meaning' found in the phenomenology of perception agrees with the semiotic notion of a cultural unit. A rereading in this light of Husserl's discussions might induce us to state that semiotic meaning is simply the socialized codification of a perceptual experience, which the phenomenological *epoché* should restore to us in its original form. And the sig-

recognized and named—like recognizing a "tree" in a photograph and naming it—one must keep in mind that what is named isn't something that belongs to nature (some inalienable presence that is "already there") with which we interact. The correlation, rather, is between something that exists *exclusively* in visual culture (the visual signified as "cultural unit") and something that exists *exclusively* in language (the linguistic signified). But how is this translation possible without referring to the world, to an actual—directly experienced—tree, one free not so much from perception as from linguistic and perceptual *codes*? Metz's answer is that both visual and linguistic signifieds *qua* signifieds necessarily belong to what Hjelmslev called *content purport*, that is, the entire domain of unformed meaning or *semanticism* in general, the amorphous field of whatever may be signified. For that reason, content purport is not something the can be perceived, but it connects all signifying systems and manifests itself in all signifieds. It is the imperceptible horizon or reservoir of meaning, of all that can be signified to human consciousness—*but only through semiotic systems* and therefore not through perception. The question, then, is: What place, if any, is there for phenomenology in this epistemological field?

The answer comes in the short concluding section of "Le perçu et le nommé." Here Metz depicts phenomenology *as both anterior and posterior* to semiological (and psychoanalytic) description. This is nothing short of a hermeneutic circle, with phenomenology (or perception) offering a naive, but required, starting point for a transcendent scientific description that seeks to explain it—thus inverting the early Metz's initial epistemological outlook.

"We are all phenomenologists when the need arises," claims Metz.[74] Thus he regards semiological and psychoanalytic concern for the perceptible signifier of cinema as offering a *continuation* of phenomenology on the grounds that both can only begin their work with regard to what is first perceived, and without which they would have nothing to go on. We saw earlier how Metz made what seems to be a similar claim in "Pour une phénoménologie du Narratif," namely, that structuralism must begin with a phenomenological account of meaning. And, in the final words to his unpublished book manuscript on *witz*, the unconscious, and language—a manuscript completed in 1986—he clearly indicates that he thought of

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nificance of daily perception (before the *epoché* intervenes to refresh it) is simply the attribution of a cultural unit to the field of perceptual stimuli. . . . Phenomenology undertakes to rebuild from the beginning the conditions necessary for the formation of cultural units which semiotics instead accepts as data because communication functions on the basis of them. The phenomenological *epoché* would therefore refer perception back to a stage where referents are no longer confronted as explicit messages but as extremely ambiguous texts akin to aesthetic ones" (*A Theory of Semiotics* [Bloomington: Indiana University, 1976], p. 167). It should be said, however, that what is here perhaps conceivable in Husserlian terms would not be so for Merleau-Ponty, as *epochê*'s movement away from the external world and toward the "immanent" content of inner consciousness is contrary to his phenomenological description of lived perception; a description for which naming, or the attribution of a "cultural unit," to an object of the world doesn't exhaust the variegated—and sometimes even contradictory—meanings that make up our embodied experience of it.

74. Christian Metz, "Le perçu et le nommé," p. 376.

Le Signifiant imaginaire as a work of *psychoanalytic phenomenology.*[75] There is indeed a sentence to that effect in the lead essay of the latter, where he notes—as an aside, in a parenthesis—that "in any domain . . . we must begin with a phenomenology of the object which we seek to understand, with a 'receptive' description of its appearances; only afterward can *critique* go forward; psychoanalysts, it should be remembered, have their own 'phenomenology.'"[76] He is more specific still in "Le perçu et le nommé":

> When I think of my own field of work, that of cinematographic analysis, how could I hide from myself—and what good would that serve?—that an entire domain of cultural knowledge, one without which the first viewing of a film wouldn't even be a *viewing*, nor would the subsequent ones which are more analytical, less descriptive (or at least in a different sense of the word), more "semiological," if we must use the word—that an entire domain of knowledge already present in immediate perception is necessarily mobilized in order that I may begin working? And this knowledge, how could we fail to understand that it is—is and is not—the "perceptual cogito" of phenomenology? The content is the same, though the status we give to it isn't.[77]

And yet, inasmuch as Metz adheres to phenomenology as offering a necessary point of departure for analysis, he parts from it—and from his call to adopt a phenomenological outlook in "Pour une phénoménologie du Narratif"—as soon as he seeks to go *behind* perception, as it were, by way of semiological codes or through the workings of the unconscious in order to "unravel" the "conditions of possibility," the "production structures" and the "objective determinations" of subjective experience. Thus he replaces one form of idealism—that of classical phenomenology—with another form of idealism, one without a (conscious or whole, Cartesian or Husserlian) subject—that of structuralism.

In the end, if phenomenology comes "first" for the later Metz, it is for its experiential value. However, unlike semiology or psychoanalysis, it ultimately fails at delivering anything like the *positive, objective truth* achieved by *theory.*

75. "There are (at least) two sorts of applied psychoanalysis. That which bears on *people* (writers, etc.) or bears on those imaginary people that are the characters of fictional works; and that which concerns itself with processes, mechanisms or apparatuses that have their own (affective) logic, one relatively independent from individuals. In a sense, the latter is a psychoanalysis of anonymity. Psychoanalysis or, most times, psychoanalytically inspired phenomenology." In *L'Esprit et ses mots. Essai sur le Witz*, unpublished book manuscript, CM1512 (1986), pp. 328–29.

76. Christian Metz, *Le Signifiant imaginaire*, p. 74. We have opted to keep the French "*Critique*" instead of the term *criticism* used by Ben Brewster in his translation of the essay in order to underline the Kantian flavor of the relation Metz is developing between phenomenological description (as *explicandum*) and the "scientific" knowledge of semiology and psychoanalysis (as a priori *explicans*).

77. Christian Metz, "Le perçu et le nommé," p. 376.

IV. Conclusion

The movement examined here—for this is what it truly is in the end, namely, a dance of sorts around the problems of experience and perception—shows Metz trying to reconcile two ideas: an idea of what cinema is, what it does, and what it is to experience it—as art, as narrative, as impression of reality, as impression of dream and daydream, as language—and an idea of theory and of its epistemic promises. It is the latter idea that will distinguish him and with which he left his imprint on film studies. This is the Metz who we said at the beginning is now remembered for transforming the culture of film studies, opening the way to "methodological" film studies, and paving the way for "theory."[78] That this is a dance is perhaps best illustrated by the way *Le Signifiant imaginaire* repeats the same steps as those of the early Metz, though this time the dancer has done an about-face. Aesthetic expressivity first understood as connotations resurfaces through the study of metaphors and metonymies in their connection to the work of an unconscious "structured like a language"—thereby repressing aesthetic issues. The impression of reality and narrativity return as the negative points of origin for a study of spectatorial desire, etc. The image of a turning point with Metz's meeting with Eco also belongs to this dance, as it reverses the direction of the work without changing its basic components, what we called earlier Metz's "opinion" of the cinema, which seems "theory free" and yet is that which Metz unwearyingly seeks to justify through theory, through a *discours de la connaissance.*

At the end of his essay on photography, "Photo, fétiche," Metz claims to have used theory—namely, psychoanalysis—as a fetish, which in this case would mean using it as something that "hides away" a traumatic sight or idea of loss, death or absence, one that the subject nonetheless wants to preserve—hence Octave Mannoni's famous "*Je sais bien, mais quand même . . .* "[79] Now, it is clear in reading Metz, especially *Le Signifiant imaginaire*, that what theory hides away as fetish is the film, the object of experience itself, as that through which one experiences the cinema. Let us recall a famous passage from *Le Signifiant imaginaire* where Metz writes that:

> To be a theorist of the cinema, one should ideally stop loving the cinema, and yet still love it: to have loved it a lot and to only have detached oneself from it by the other end, by taking it for the target of the very same scopic drive that made one love it. To have broken up with it, as we break up relationships, not to move on to something else, but to find it again as the spiral turns. . . . [To not] lose sight [of the cinephile that we once were], but to keep him in custody. Finally, to be and not

78. See D. N. Rodowick's recent book, *Elegy for Theory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2014), esp. pp. 152–200. See also the commentary by Warren Buckland in his *Film Theory: Rational Reconstructions* (New York: Routledge, 2012), esp. pp. 73–92.

79. Octave Mannoni, "Je sais bien, mais quand même . . . ," in *Clefs pour l'imaginaire: ou l'Autre scène* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), pp. 9–33.

> to be him, since these are, in the end, the two conditions according to which one can speak of him.[80]

This balancing act, he adds, may seem "acrobatic." Indeed it is. It is precisely the acrobatic dance we have been discussing and around which (or through which) moves theory: phenomenology, semiology, psychoanalysis—though phenomenology is quickly discredited for not being theoretical enough, or perhaps for unveiling itself too readily, if we recall the image of the striptease Metz uses repeatedly throughout *Le Signifiant imaginaire.*

Indeed, for anyone charting the progression of phenomenology in Metz's work, before and after the "epistemological shift" produced by his meeting with Eco in 1967, it seems clear that phenomenology and structuralism conflict with each other epistemologically. They conflict, namely, in the way they emphasize what stands as a source of knowledge—whether, for instance, one goes "behind" perception or not. Thus Metz's final subsumption of phenomenology under semiology and psychoanalysis as a *naive* or *direct* form of knowledge, a *pre-theoretical* form of knowledge. Yet, at the same time, Metz did not feel this change of perspective to be a radical one, one that would actually alter or discredit his earlier work. And he was not ready to dispel phenomenology altogether. Quite the opposite, in fact; in "Le perçu et le nommé," he claims that his current approach "is not a complete rupture of horizon" from phenomenology since it makes experience the starting point of inquiry.[81]

In a way, however, the reason for this compatibility is simple enough, and it lies in the fact that both classical phenomenology and structuralism, as divergent (or even incompatible) as they may be with regard to the role of subjective consciousness, emerge from the same great Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition as inflected toward transcendental idealism by the work of Kant. Thus emerges Husserl, on the one hand, privileging the subject and intentionality, and structuralists, on the other hand, who *displace* idealism onto consciousness-free structures, believing that perception needs to be subsumed by positivistic-objective laws that aren't given to direct observation though they must be rationally *reconstructed* to account for it. *This is the true fetish, of course.* And it is precisely these two forms of idealism—the second one being really a "mock" idealism—that Merleau-Ponty sought to sublate (in the sense of Hegel's *Aufhebung*) in his late and uncompleted works where, unwittingly, he edged toward a different epistemology, one whose strands, we can say in closing, can be felt in philosophers such as the later Wittgenstein (especially in *On Certainty*) and Charles S. Peirce (in his development of an abductive logic of vagueness) though it is yet to be felt decisively in film studies.

80. Christian Metz, *Le Signifiant imaginaire*, p. 24.
81. Christian Metz, "Le perçu et le nommé," p. 376.

Remembering Allan Sekula (1951–2013)*

BENJAMIN H. D. BUCHLOH

Having just recently returned from a rare visit to Los Angeles, and wondering about the city's loss of Michael Asher and Allan Sekula in the past year and a half, I was suddenly struck by the idea that these artists must have made gargantuan efforts in that environment on a daily—if not hourly—basis to sustain their conviction in the viability of their practices. After all, the near-total erasure of any remnant of conventional structures of subjectivity and the dissolution of even the last residual spatial forms of the public sphere could hardly reach a more decisive state.

That visit also made me realize for the first time that Sekula's commitment to critical realism, embodied in his photographic practices as much as in his theoretical and historical reflections on photography's pasts, had not just insisted on innovating radical post-documentary forms after Conceptual art. It had also sought to embody a form of melancholic retrospection on the imminent, if not already manifest, obsolescence of photography itself. For Sekula, the medium had acquired the status of a vanishing disciplinary formation that had once promised a critical realism and been invested with a new political agency, one fundamentally more democratic and activating than all the other practices of modernism. With hindsight it now appears that Sekula wanted to salvage this radical historical nucleus of photographic realism as the subject's and the collective's originary access to self-representation—to have his work transpose photography's archaisms and archaeology like a memento into the present moment of globalized technocratic and proto-totalitarian media regimes.

That he knew how desperate such a project must be is evident in these very early photographs that his wife, Sally Stein, kindly offered to us for a commemoration of Allan. That one of the performances opens onto a fragment of symbolic criminality (or criminal symbolism) only confirms that Sekula anticipated earlier than most the forces that would eventually be necessary to voice even the most elementary forms of opposition to the totalizing corporate control and destruction of experience and environments.[1]

* My more extensive text commemorating Allan was published in *Artforum* (January 2014).

1. The selection of images that follows—early, lesser-known, but no less brilliant because of it—was made by David Joselit, Sally Stein, and Ina Steiner.

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In view of these conditions, it is perhaps less surprising that Sekula's work was once again omitted from a recent exhibition that made the claim to represent the history of the primarily photography-based artistic practices of the 1980s.[2] Neither his obvious generational affiliation nor his even more compelling local geopolitical presence as the most important artist deploying photography in Los Angeles after Douglas Huebler and Ed Ruscha seem to have convinced the curators to include him in their attempts at collecting and comprehending the artistic practices of that decade.[3]

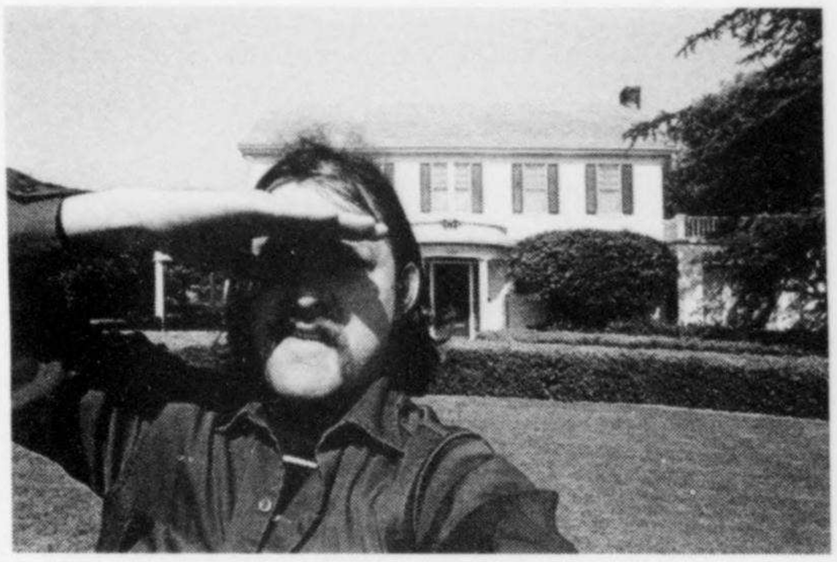
Short of assuming phobias among younger generations of American curators for leftist cultural projects not mediated by seduction or assimilation to spectacle, one is compelled to search for other explanations for these repeated systematic omissions. After all, Sekula, like almost all the other artists of his generation, emerged from the critical dialogues he developed in response to the usages of photography in Pop Art and Conceptualism. Yet he did not take it for granted that photography had long since traded its originary referentiality for a mere simulational semiology, an artistic strategy that provided an apparently seamless transition from the citational relations to photography of Warhol and Ruscha to the work of Barbara Kruger and Richard Prince, Louise Lawler and Sherrie Levine. Sekula, moreover, refrained from accepting either the orders of media culture or the discursive and institutional frameworks of the museum as his primary and singular set of references.

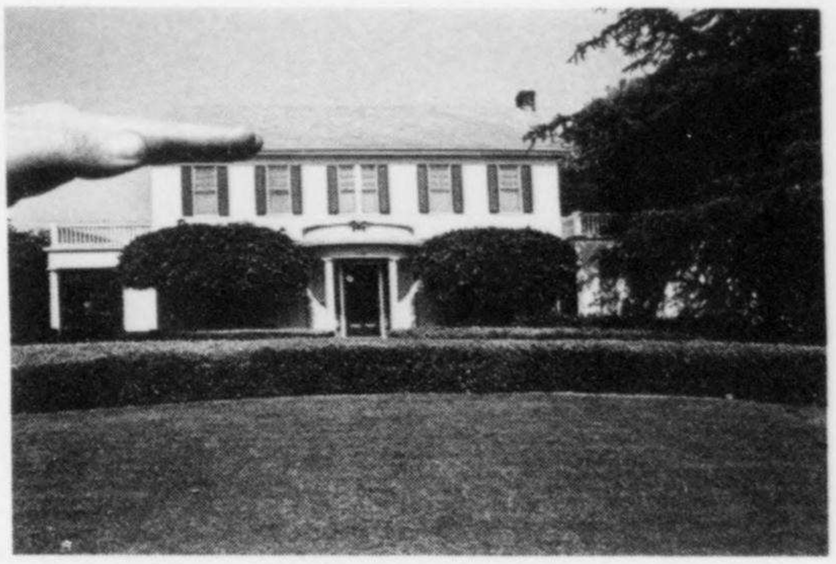
And equally hard, if not in fact even harder, to comprehend was Sekula's strategy of actually investigating photography's own discursive history and its proper social mediations as documentary and to incorporate these reflections within the work itself. Rather than taking photography as a more or less integral—and therefore almost invisible—element of mass-cultural production, Sekula pursued a project of critical realism that first and foremost analyzed photography itself in terms of its proper historical functions and sociopolitical parameters. One such task was precisely the one most manifestly absent from the work of his artistic peers of the '80s: that of representing labor and the everyday life of the collective in the history of modernity.

The imminent, if not already accomplished, disappearance of analog photography as a fundamentally referential medium, now accompanied by the departure of one of photography's greatest activist artists and historians, will hardly free us from the seemingly insurmountable and intricate difficulties involved in the labor of representation, and even less so from those of the representation of labor's perfectly concealed totalities.

2. Anne Ellgood's and Joanna Burton's *Take it or Leave it*, at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, 2014.

3. Sekula was equally absent from a much more carefully conceived and curated exhibition about that same generation of artists at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 2009, *The Pictures Generation 1974–1984*, organized by Douglas Eklund.

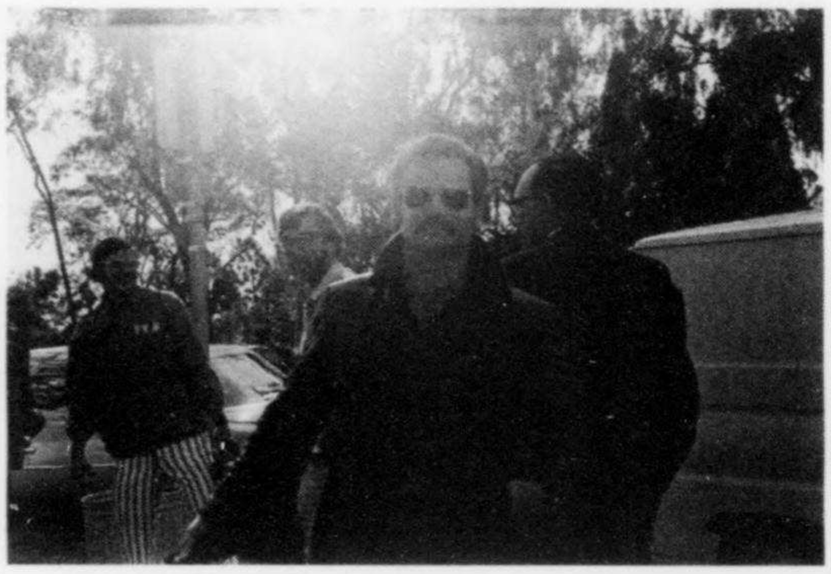
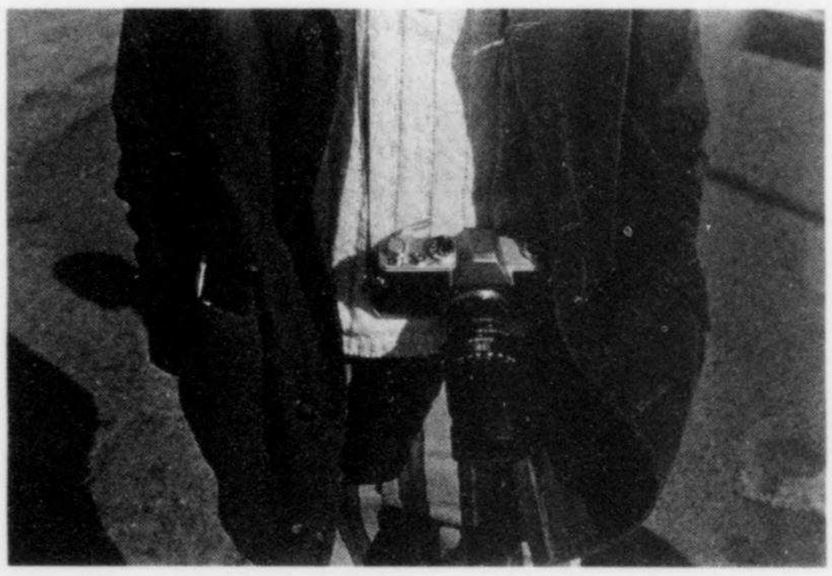
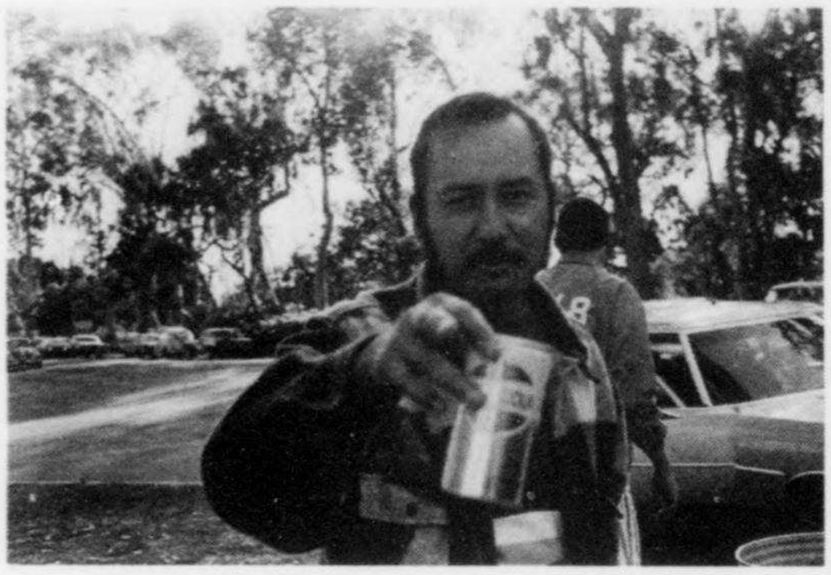
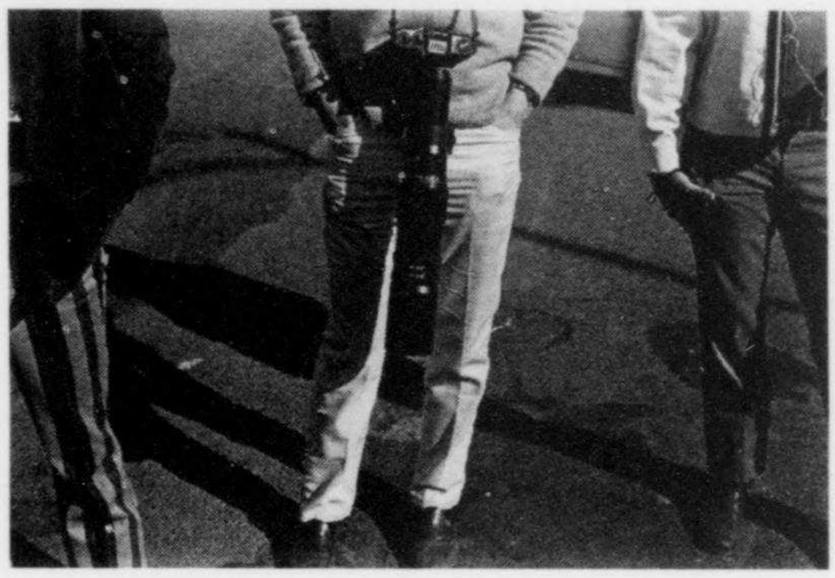




Allan Sekula. From Attempt to Correlate. *1975–2011. All images*
© The Estate of Allan Sekula.

Smoked Meats

Sekula. From Guns and Butter. *1975–2011.*

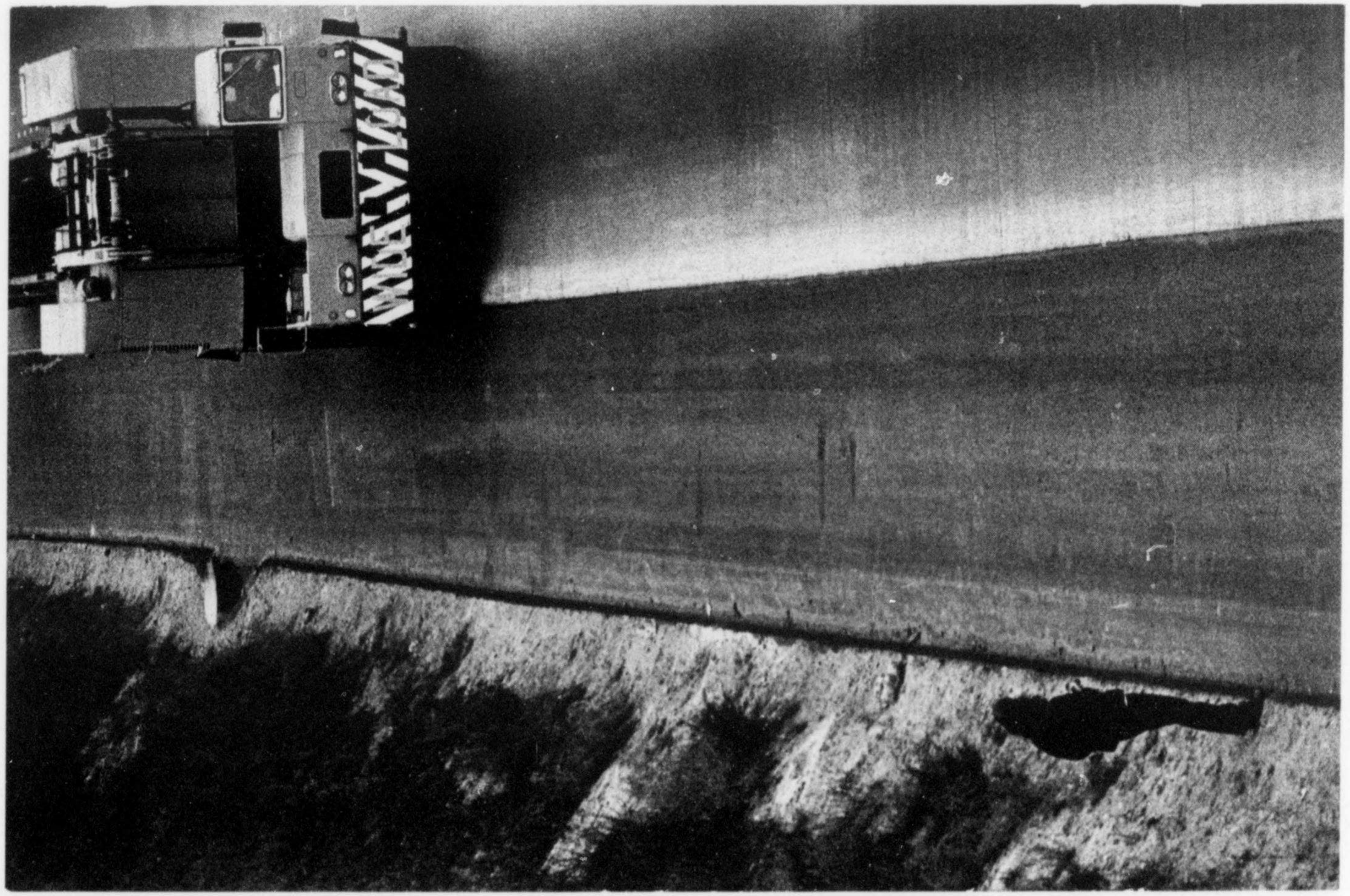
Sekula. From Red Squad (San Diego, 20 January 1973). *1973.*

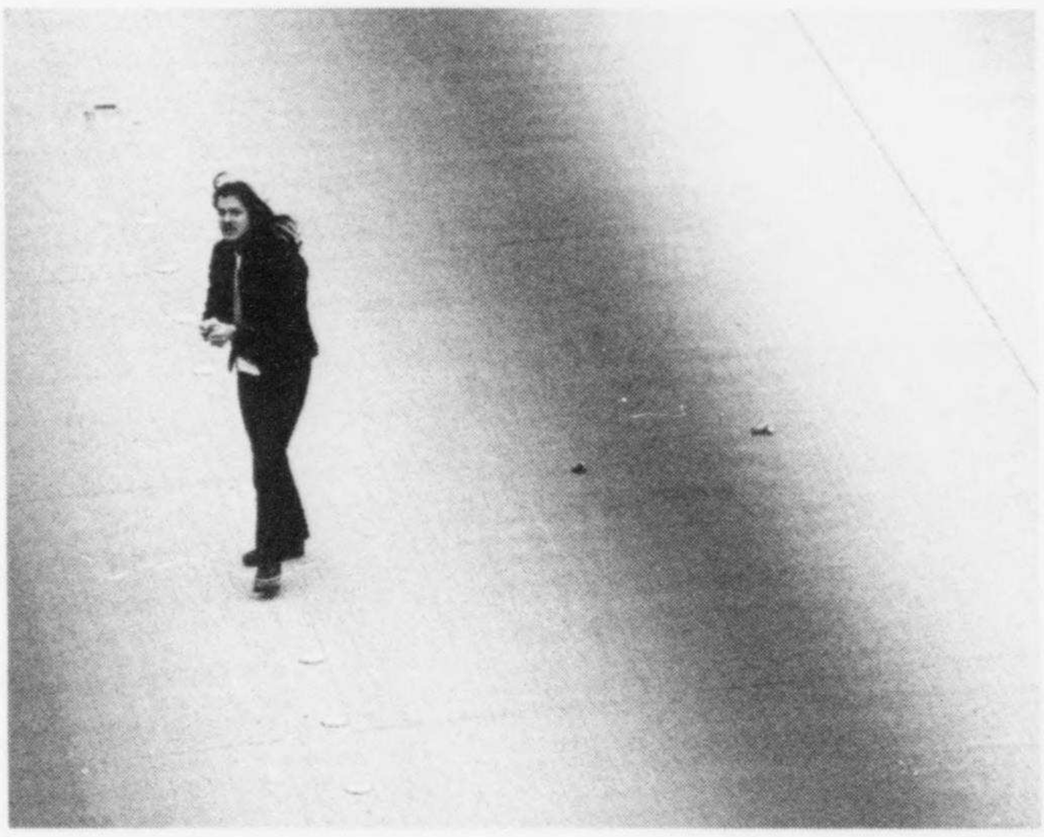
Meat Mass

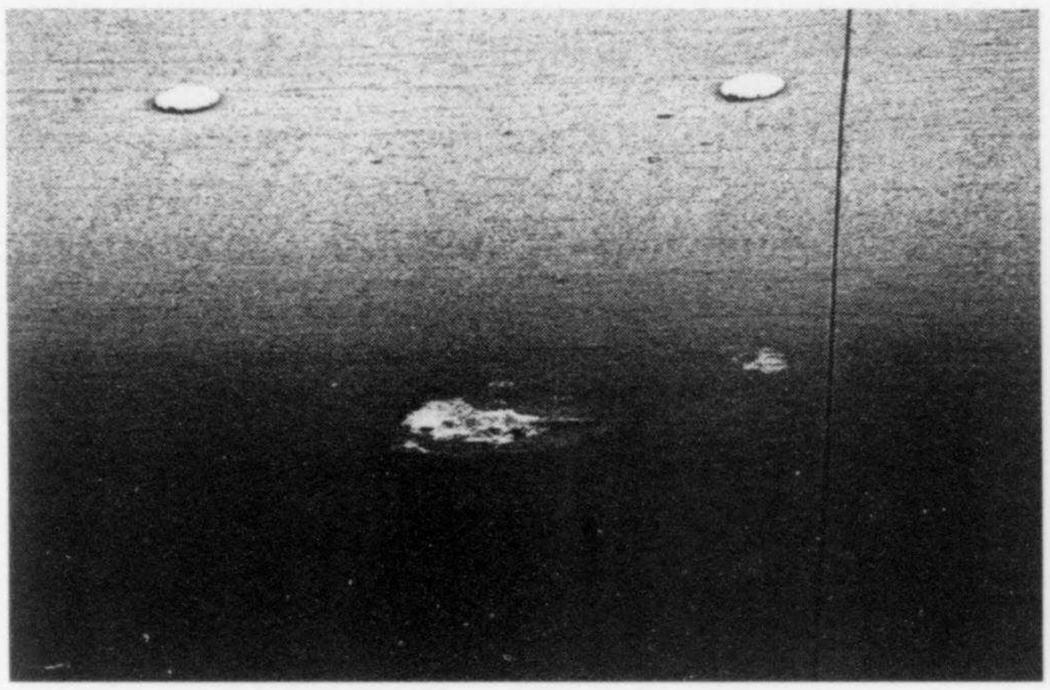
Over a period of several weeks, expensive cuts of meat were stolen from a supermarket and stored in a freezer. The thawed steaks were thrown beneath the wheels of freeway traffic.

January 1972

Sekula. From Meat Mass. *1972.*







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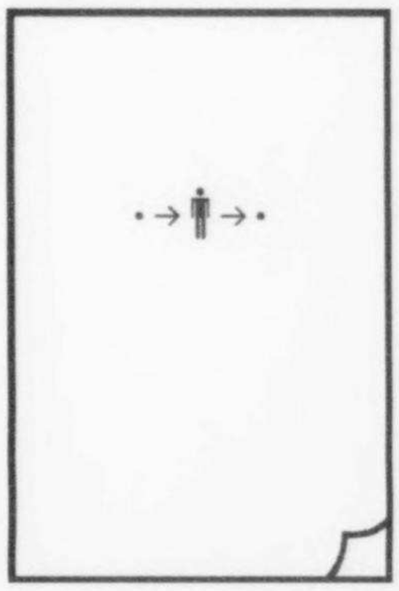

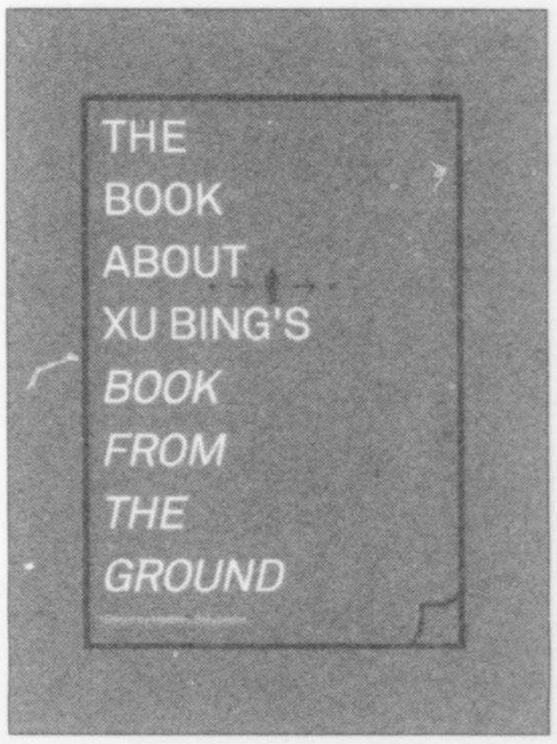

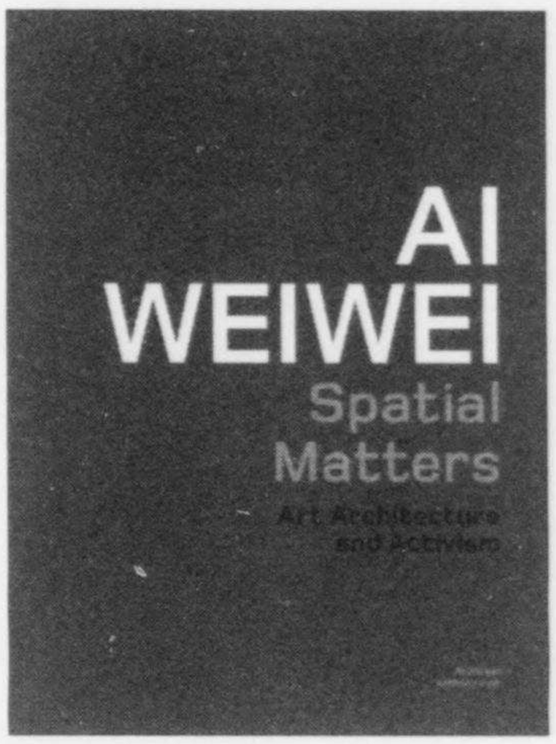

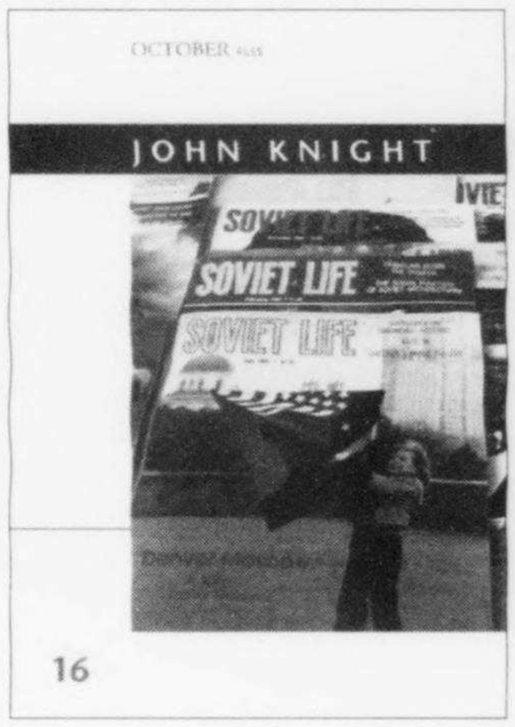

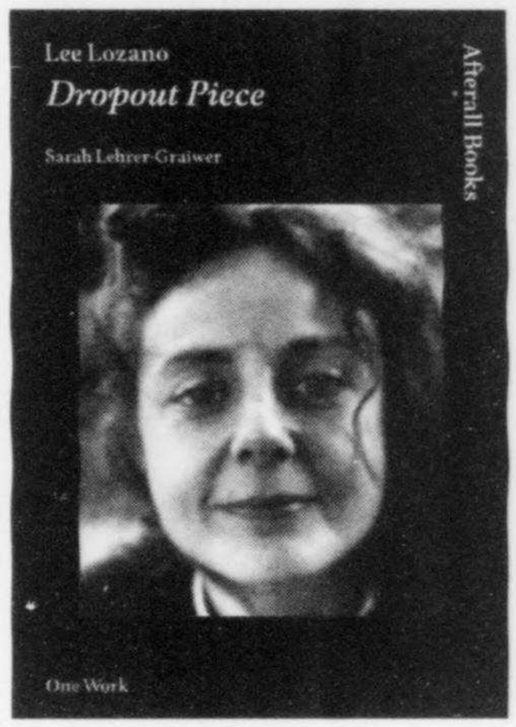

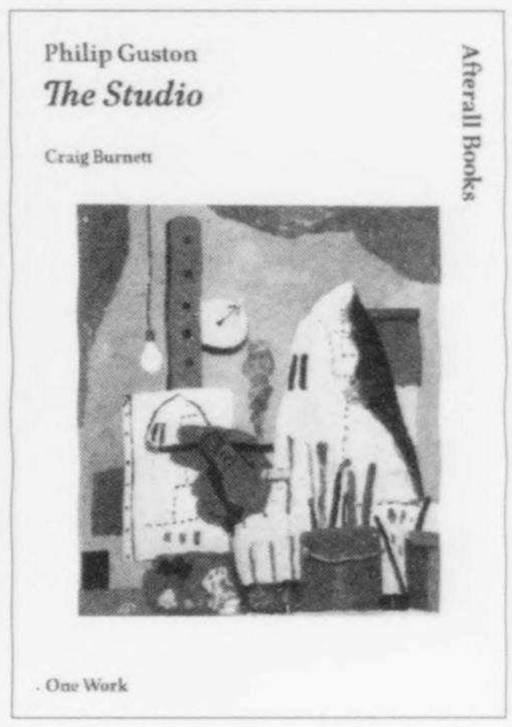

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