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JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY AND THE MOVING IMAGE
REVISTA DE FILOSOFIA E DA IMAGEM EM MOVIMENTO



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ABSTRACTS AND CONTRIBUTORS

THE PHILOSOPHY OF FILM AND FILM AS PHILOSOPHY

Tom McClelland

Abstract

There are two respects in which the medium of film and the discipline of philosophy intersect. First, the philosophy of film asks philosophical questions about the nature of film. Second, the notion of *film as philosophy* (FAP) proposes that films themselves can contribute to a range of philosophical debates. FAP raises some troubling conceptual problems. How is it possible for film to contribute to philosophical debate? And, if it is possible, why should we turn to film for those contributions rather than to traditional academic sources? I address these problems with a “Socratic Model” of the role of film in philosophical debate. I argue that the representational limitations of motion pictures are compatible with film acting as a “midwife” for philosophical insights in its audience. Furthermore, where a film facilitates insights into the philosophy of film, I argue that it can be better positioned to prompt those realisations than an academic text. I put this model into practice with an account of the philosophical value of Hitchcock’s *Rear Window*, which invites its audience to consider moral and epistemic issues surrounding the activity of film viewing.

Keywords

Film as philosophy, Voyeurism, Hitchcock, Socrates, Thought-experiments

Tom McClelland is a DPhil student at the University of Sussex. He is currently writing a thesis on the “Hard Problem” of consciousness, which develops a Neo-

Russellian account of the metaphysical status of conscious experience. His first paper in the philosophy of film explored the relevance of *Being John Malkovich* (1999) to the metaphysics of mind.

LAYERING IMAGES, THWARTING FABLES:

DELEUZE, RANCIÈRE AND THE ALLEGORIES OF CINEMA

Agustin Zarzosa

Abstract

This essay evaluates Jacques Rancière's apparently devastating critique of Gilles Deleuze's film philosophy. In "From One Image to Another," Rancière offers two arguments about Deleuze's distinction between the movement-image and the time-image. First, Rancière questions whether this distinction could correspond to the historical distinction between classical and modern cinema. Second, Rancière claims that this distinction remains allegorical to the extent that Deleuze derives it from film fables.

I claim that Rancière's arguments involve a perspective foreign to Deleuze's ontology. Rancière's first argument overlooks that Deleuze evokes history to explain not a development in the natural history of images but our lack of belief in the action-image. Rancière's second argument relies on the assumption that fable and image entertain a dialectical—rather than an expressive—relationship. In evaluating Rancière's criticism of Deleuze, I offer an alternative account of these two apparent contradictions in Deleuze's film philosophy.

Keywords

Film fables, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Rancière, Movement-image, Time-image

Agustin Zarzosa is assistant professor of Cinema Studies at Purchase College, SUNY. He received his Ph.D. in Film and Television at UCLA. His essays have appeared in *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, *Scope*, *Colloquy* and *Discourse*. His book *Captive Affects, Elastic Sufferings: Redefining Melodrama in Film and Television* is forthcoming from Lexington Books.

THE TWILIGHT OF THE INDEX

Temenuga Trifonova

Abstract

The “digital turn” has prompted a renewed interest in the relationship between film and photography reflected in a return to questions of indexicality and a rethinking of medium specificity away from the idea of medium as a material or physical support. This paper explores the growing ambivalence surrounding the notion of indexicality as it manifests itself in contemporary “cinematic” photography (Barbara Probst, Uta Barth, and Jeff Wall), which, I argue, imposes *a time of reading* by means of self-reference that exposes a single moment’s difference from itself (Probst), by means of extending the present moment into a “long now” (Uta), or by means of enlarging the scale of the image and narrativizing it (Wall). “Cinematic” photography seeks to reclaim the cinematic within the photographic from within the twilight of indexicality: rather than putting us in a deep historical relation with time, it self-consciously reflects on indexicality, automatism, and duration.

Keywords

Cinematic, Indexicality, Medium specificity, Photography, Time

Temenuga Trifonova is Assistant Professor of Film Studies in the Department of Cinema and Media Studies at York University, Toronto. She is the author of *European Film Theory* (Routledge, 2008) and *The Image in French Philosophy* (Rodopi, 2007). Her articles have appeared (or are forthcoming) in *CTheory*, *Studies in European Cinema*, *Studies in Eastern European Cinema*, *Cineaste*, *Film and Philosophy*, *CineAction*, *Rivista di Estetica*, *Space and Culture*, *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Film Theory*, *Quarterly Journal of Film and Video*, *Scope*, *Kinema*, *Postmodern Culture*, *Senses of Cinema*, among other, and in several edited collections.

SEMIOTIC IMAGES

Flore Chevaillier

Abstract

Julia Kristeva's work on cinema has generated inquiries focusing on the figures of the Abject and feminine bodies. Yet, these inquiries do not emphasize Kristeva's conception of the Semiotic as a part of filmic signifying processes, and thus narrow the Kristevan field of studies in film. In this essay, I undertake her Semiotic model in relation to an avant-garde film, *Calendar* (1993) by Atom Egoyan, and a traditional Hollywood movie, *Jurassic Park* (1993) by Steven Spielberg, to expand Kristevan interpretations of film. Both films ask questions about aesthetic contemplation and about the consumption of images, thereby commenting on the nature of the viewer's role while featuring semiotic moments. In Egoyan and Spielberg's works, the Semiotic reaffirms some of the symbolic messages, but also disrupts their order, which allows critics to address matters of pleasure and commodification in more complete and complex ways.

Keywords

Atom Egoyan, Julia Kristeva, Semiotic, Steven Spielberg

Flore Chevallier teaches writing and literature at Central State University. Her research projects have focused on French theory and contemporary American culture and fiction. She is currently at work on a book project entitled *The Body of Writing*, which examines readers' experience of sensuality in their engagement with the language of fiction. She is also working on a collection of interviews with formally innovative American novelists. Her essays have appeared in *Journal of Modern Literature*, *Critique*, *Literature Compass*, and *European Journal of American Studies*.

"BIOPOLITICS ON SCREEN":**AERNOUT MIK'S MOVING-IMAGE INSTALLATIONS**

Gabriella Calchi-Novati

Abstract

In this paper I propose that the moving-image installations *Vacuum Room* (2005), *Scapegoats* (2006), *Training Ground* (2006), and the most recent *Shifting Sitting* (2011), produced by Dutch artist Aernout Mik, are performative instances of current biopolitical concerns. These video installations represent what is supposed, and, more crucially, is always expected to be unrepresentable, namely what Zygmunt Bauman calls "constant uncertainty," which can be considered one of the by-products of biopolitics. It is because of this uncertainty that we feel hopeless in relation to the political status quo and we are made believe, as Bauman contends, "that everything can happen but nothing can be done". I argue that these works, when considered "as-philosophy," or "philosophy-in-motion," function as a series

of conceptual paradigms that illustrate the main thesis of this paper, namely, that these very same installations, seen through Giorgio Agamben's philosophical lens, are in fact *biopolitics on screen*.

Keywords

Giorgio Agamben, Biopolitics, Aernout Mik, Performativity, Video installation

Gabriella Calchi-Novati received a BA *magna cum laude* in Letters and Philosophy and an MA with honours in Public Relations and Corporate Communication from Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan, Italy. She also received an MPhil in Irish Drama and Film from the Drama Department, Trinity College Dublin, where she is completing her doctoral research, and where she also lectures in Performance Studies and Critical Theory. While her work on contemporary theatre has been published in international journals such as *Theatre Research International* and *About Performance*; her more recent work, investigating the interconnections between biopolitics and performance, has appeared in academic publications such as *Performance Research* and *Performance Paradigm*; as well as in edited collections.

PARA UMA TEORIA DO CLICHÉ

Leonor Areal

Abstract

We call *cliché* an image whose shape is repeated and therefore becomes recognizable. Films live upon clichés and create clichés — simple images that are easily retained. Clichés are essential forms of perception and cognition, like gestalt. The cliché is a mixture of an image, an idea and an emotion.

The aim of this essay is to research and define what is a cliché and also to demonstrate its importance inside the process of film semiotics. Could we say that a cliché is a visual sign? This theory presents the hypothesis that — for cognition reasons — cliché is the embryo of a cultural sign, which could be developed inside a semiotic theory of film.

Keywords

Cliché, Cinema, Gestalt, Semiotics, Stylistics

Leonor Areal was awarded a PhD in Communication Sciences, specializing in Film, in 2009 by the New University of Lisbon, with a thesis entitled *Um País Imaginado: Ficções do Real no Cinema Português*, already published by Edições 70. She has directed various documentaries, including *Fora da Lei* (2006), prizewinner at doclisboa. She teaches at the School of Fine Art and Design of the Polytechnic Institute of Leiria. At the moment, she is developing a post-doctoral research project on censorship in Portuguese cinema.

TÉCNICAS CINEMATOGRAFICAS E ACTOS MENTAIS:

THE PHOTOPLAY DE HUGO MÜNSTERBERG

Teresa Pedro

Abstract

This paper analyses Münsterberg's *The Photoplay* in the light of the relation between mind and film, aiming to clarify the parallel between mental acts and cinematographic techniques such as it is drawn by the author. It criticises the interpretation of this relation as an "analogy," stressing that the term used by

Münsterberg to characterize this relation is not “analogy”, but “objectivation”. In this context, it is argued that in determining what the “objectivation” of mental processes in cinematographic techniques in *The Photoplay* means, the principal aim of the book should be remembered: the defense of the aesthetic character of film. In conclusion, Münsterberg’s goal is not, as suggested by Noël Carroll, to elucidate the function of cinematographic techniques through an analogy with mental processes, but to show that the distinctive aesthetics of film relies on the production of the perception of a world structured by mental acts.

Keywords

Aesthetics, Analogy, Mind, Objectivation, Perception

Teresa Pedro was awarded a PhD in Philosophy by the Paris-Sorbonne (Paris IV). She is now a post-doctoral researcher at the Institute for Philosophy of Language of the New University of Lisbon and at the Center for Knowledge Research of the Berlin Institute of Technology. Her research focuses on German idealism, G. W. F. Hegel, F. W. J. Schelling, and at the moment on the cinematographic perception of space and time.

OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

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Paulo Cunha is a researcher at the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies of the Twentieth Century of the University of Coimbra. He is a PhD candidate at the University of Coimbra with a thesis on New Portuguese Cinema (1949-1980). Currently, he works as a researcher in the Cinema and Audiovisual Program of Guimarães 2012 - European Cultural Capital. He is a founding member and director of the Association of Moving Image Researchers (AIM) and is the film programmer of Bacalhau Cinema Clube.

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William Brown is a Lecturer in Film at Roehampton University. He has published articles and chapters on a number of topics. He has forthcoming essays on cognitive neuropsychology and various aspects of film, including editing, colour and acting. He is the co-editor of *Deleuze and Film* (Edinburgh University Press, 2011). And he is the author of *Supercinema: Film and the Digital Age* (forthcoming with Berghahn).

THE PHILOSOPHY OF FILM AND FILM AS PHILOSOPHY

Tom McClelland (University of Sussex)

There are two key respects in which the medium of film and the discipline of philosophy can intersect. First, the philosophy *of* film is an established sub-discipline that asks philosophical questions about the nature of film: What, if anything, are the necessary and sufficient conditions of being a film? How do audiences engage imaginatively with films? What cognitive or emotional value does the viewing of motion pictures have? Here the philosophical practice of clarifying concepts and exploring abstract problems simply takes film as its *object*. Second, the more controversial notion of film *as* philosophy suggests that films themselves can take up philosophical issues, and can contribute to a range of philosophical debates. Here the object of investigation might be the epistemic problem of skepticism, the metaphysical problem of personal identity or the ethical problem of why we should be moral.¹ But on this approach the *film itself* participates in the philosophical investigation.

This paper is primarily concerned with the idea of film *as* philosophy (FAP) and explores some of the problems that this notion raises. Putting documentary and art films aside, I will focus on the idea that *popular narrative* film can “be” philosophy.² The two over-arching issues surrounding FAP can be captured by way of an analogy. Someone suggests that you go to the cinema tonight to see a popular new film. In response to this suggestion there are two questions you might naturally ask: whether there are any tickets available, and whether the film is any good. In other words, you would want to know whether it is *possible* to go to the film and whether it is *worth* going. When presented with the notion of FAP we should be asking

analogous questions. Is it even *possible* for a film to make an active contribution to philosophy? And if it is possible, is it *worth* turning to a film for that contribution or would we be better off reading an academic text, or even a novel, to develop our knowledge?

I dedicate a section to each of these questions in turn and focus on a pair of problems that occur in connection to each question: The Generality Problem and the Explicitness Problem.³ I argue in defence of FAP whilst acknowledging the limitations of film.⁴ I develop what I call the “Socratic Model” of how film can contribute to philosophy and also propose that the obstacles faced by FAP are most effectively overcome when a film engages reflexively in the philosophy *of film*. The third section backs up my conclusions with an examination of the philosophical contributions of a particular film: Alfred Hitchcock’s *Rear Window* (1954). I argue that this film embodies an intriguing and important intersection of film and philosophy by offering us a case of *film as philosophy of film*.

1. HOW IS IT POSSIBLE FOR FILM TO “BE” PHILOSOPHY?

1.1. Philosophy Imposed on Film

Those sceptical of FAP are generally happy to accept that a film can be philosophical in a variety of ways. The scenarios presented in narrative film can exemplify a philosophical problem, and can be put to good use as illustrations of that problem. For example, *The Matrix* (1999) presents a narrative in which the protagonist learns that his life has been an illusion reminiscent of the Cartesian deception hypothesis.⁵ This film can, and has, been deployed to illustrate the epistemic problems entailed by such scenarios. Film can also *present* ideas in philosophy through explicitly philosophical dialogue, offering those ideas in an engaging form.

The sceptical outlook permits a positive assessment of film's use as a popular and accessible way of illustrating or presenting philosophical ideas. It denies, however, that film has any *contribution* to make to philosophical debate. Film is a passive tool philosophers might use to communicate pre-existing philosophical concerns, or as raw material for the application of a theory. Either way, no genuine philosophical work is being done by the film. Where the film contains philosophical dialogue, some philosophy is merely being reported, and is no more a contribution to philosophy than a recording of a philosophy lecture would be.⁶

Often interpreters of film exceed the boundaries laid down by the sceptic and attribute a film its own philosophical significance. However, the sceptic claims that such interpretations are merely *impositions* of the interpreter's own philosophical reflections on to the film.⁷ Advocates of FAP resist this stance, arguing there is philosophical content to be *discovered* in the film rather than *projected* on to it — that film has an *active* place in philosophical inquiry. On this account, film is not always just a mirror in which we see philosophical ideas reflected, but is sometimes a window that offers valuable philosophical insights.

This captures the central contention of FAP, but the task now is to build up a defensible understanding of exactly how film can be philosophy. I will consider a first pass at achieving this but argue that it faces serious objections. I will then introduce a second pass that avoids those objections and reveals how it is possible for film to be philosophy.

1.2. Film as Philosopher

Perhaps the boldest formulation of the FAP position is offered by Mulhall, who claims that *Alien* (1979) and its sequels should be seen not as mere illustrations of philosophical issues, but as

themselves reflecting on and evaluating such views and arguments, as thinking seriously and systematically about them in just the ways that philosophers do. Such films are not philosophy's raw material, nor a source for its ornamentation; they are philosophical exercises, philosophy in action — film as philosophizing.⁸

The phrase "just as philosophers do" suggests that films do not philosophise in some qualified or restricted sense, but do it fully and without limitations. The philosophical content of film is parasitic on neither the philosophical intentions of the film's creators, nor on the responses of its philosophically-inclined audience.⁹ Films are not passive material to be put to philosophical use, but active interventions in philosophical debate. Interpreters of those films are not putting their own words in the mouth of the film, so to speak, but are rather reporting what the film itself has said. I will consider two serious problems for this proposal.

1.2.1. The Generality Problem

Films have content. Though the film *Citizen Kane* (1941) is not an agent, that Kane died in Xanadu is something analogous to a *propositional claim* that the film contains.¹⁰ The Generality Problem suggests that the kind of content distinctive to philosophy is not the kind of content that narrative film can have. Philosophy usually involves general questions that require general answers — the philosophical question "what is knowledge?" requires a general answer such as "knowledge is justified true belief."¹¹ Narrative films present specific concrete scenarios, and any content a film has must be implicit in its depiction of that scenario. A film *cannot* have general content that goes beyond the boundaries of the fictional world it presents. *The Matrix* has the content that what Mr. Anderson took to be the real world was actually a comprehensive deception. It cannot, however, have the

content that what *any* person takes to be the real world might actually be an elaborate deception. Only the latter content would be genuinely philosophical. A possible response is that some philosophical issues do not have this general concern for *all* possible worlds, but are instead concerned only with the *actual* world. However, since films present (at best) a non-actual possible world, they cannot have content concerning *our* world.¹²

Of course, films may include *dialogue* that involves general claims. In *The Matrix*, Morpheus makes the general philosophical claim “If real is what you can feel, smell, taste and see, then real is simply electrical signals interpreted by your brain.” However, any philosophical value this has would be parasitic on the words the film records, rendering the medium of film irrelevant. Furthermore, the fact that a *character* in a film makes a philosophical claim does not mean that the *film* makes that claim. After all, when different characters make contradictory claims, which one is the “film” speaking?

1.2.2. *The Explicitness Problem*

The Explicitness Problem presents a further contrast between the kind of content that film can have, and the kind of content that can be described as philosophical. As discussed, a film itself cannot make an explicit assertion, but through their depiction of a narrative they can have *implicit* content. Since visual representations lack the conceptual precision of linguistic representation, such implicit content is inevitably imprecise. Indeed, in his 1948 work on the nature of film Astruc states that “the fundamental problem of cinema is how to express thought.”¹³

Philosophical claims, such as “knowledge is justified true belief” are characterised by their precision. The worry, paraphrased by Wartenberg, is that “film lacks the explicitness to formulate and defend the precise claims that are characteristic of

philosophical writing.”¹⁴ The motion picture is too inarticulate an instrument to provide any content that could qualify as philosophical.

These concerns about film’s lack of precise content have several manifestations. Philosophy involves *systematic* thought but film lacks the expressive power to organise its content in a systematic way. Where philosophical thought essentially requires *arguments* for its claims, film cannot make a formal argument, nor assess its content in any other way.¹⁵ As Carroll puts it, “narrative films are not arguments.”¹⁶ But if films are not arguments, it is hard to believe that they could genuinely be doing philosophy.

The explicitness problem casts doubt on attributions of precise philosophical content to film, such as Mulhall’s account of the *Alien* films. Why should we take his *philosophical* reconstruction of the content of a film over some *non-philosophical* reading that fits just as well with what the film presents? Bruce Russell concludes that “[n]arrative films so lack explicitness that it is not true that there is some particular argument to be found in them.”¹⁷ When faced with the *indeterminacy* of a film’s content, to selectively attribute precise philosophical content is surely to impose philosophy on the film, rather than to discover philosophical content within it.

Overall, these two problems strongly suggest that it is *not* possible for film to “be” philosophy in the strong sense that Mulhall proposes.

1.3. Film as a Contributor to Philosophy

The central thought behind FAP is a rejection of the sceptical position that films are at best passive illustrations of philosophical problems and positions. Mulhall reveals this motivation when he accuses other approaches of “lacking any sense that films themselves might have anything to contribute to our understanding.”¹⁸ His mistake is to go too far in the opposite direction by proposing that films can philosophise *autonomously*.

We can accept that films are not themselves philosophical investigations but maintain that they have a philosophical value that is not imposed on them by the interpreter. We can accept that films cannot do *all* the philosophical work themselves, but regard a film as philosophy insofar as it plays an integral role in wider philosophical exercises. As Hunt explains, though film has many limitations “it would be fallacious to jump to the conclusion that the motion picture has no contribution to make to philosophical inquiry.”¹⁹ By regarding films as *contributions* to philosophy rather than independent philosophical works, we can overcome the two problems discussed.

1.3.1. *Overcoming the Generality Problem*

Philosophical positions do indeed involve general claims, or at least claims about the actual world. For film to contribute to such positions, it need not be able to *make* those general claims. It only needs to play an integral role in *our* ability to make those general claims. In response to this a sceptic might simply adjust the Generality Problem in the following way: not only can narrative films not *make* general claims, they cannot be used to *justify* general claims. Carroll imagines a sceptic arguing “the moving image trades in a single case, and one case is not enough to warrant the sort of general claims that are the stuff of philosophy.”²⁰ In a similar vein, Russell notes that “imaginary situations cannot provide real data,” placing severe limitations on the philosophical relevance of fictional narratives to the actual world.²¹

Wartenberg captures exactly how the proponent of FAP should respond to this problem. He notes that “there is a well-developed philosophical technique that involves narratives, indeed, fictional ones at that: the thought experiment.”²² He goes on to explain that “[a] thought experiment functions in a philosophical argument by presenting readers with a hypothetical case. They are then asked to endorse a general principle on the basis of their reaction to this case.”²³ Thought-

experiments are a philosophical method used to reach philosophical conclusions. They are thus philosophical in what Livingston calls both “means” and “results.”²⁴ If a *film* can act like a thought-experiment, its presentation of a single fictional narrative will be entirely compatible with its making a valuable contribution to the pursuit of general philosophical truths.

Worries may remain about exactly how philosophical conclusions are extrapolated from fictional scenarios. Russell, for instance, raises concerns about the validity of drawing inferences from an induction base of just one case.²⁵ Hunt’s model of the place of narratives in philosophical reasoning allows us to overcome this worry.²⁶ He suggests that narratives encourage a process of *abduction*. A narrative leads us to make an assessment about that fictional scenario, but through an inference-to-the-best-explanation of that narrow conclusion, we can reach a *general* conclusion. Hunt draws our attention to the famous “slave boy” scenario in Plato’s *Meno*. Here Socrates seems to take a boy from ignorance to mathematical knowledge simply by asking him questions. We reach the narrow conclusion that knowledge can be attained in this way, but it is in an attempt to *explain* this fact that Socrates offers a *general* theory of knowledge in terms of “recollection.” The particular narrative serves as a reason to believe a general philosophical claim. This example from Plato is clearly representative of a philosophical technique that has been used ever since. Overall, narrative film can be philosophy when it makes a contribution to philosophical inquiry analogous to that of the thought-experiment.

1.3.2. Overcoming the Explicitness Problem

Given the above model of film-as-thought-experiment, it is tempting to say that an *explicit* narrative can have *implicit* philosophical content: the narrative is a premise of an implied precise argument and conclusion. This approach fails because philosophical thought-experiments are inevitably open to many interpretations.

Returning to the example of Plato's *Meno*, if that text had presented us with the slave boy exchange but omitted Socrates' subsequent theorising, we could construct any number of arguments and conclusions on the basis of that narrative. Socrates' specific account of those events in terms of recollection would probably not even occur to a modern audience. His explicit arguments and conclusions are what gives the text its precise philosophical content. In film, however, there is no philosopher-guide telling us how to deploy the narrative as part of a philosophical argument.²⁷ The fact that a narrative can *justify* a philosophical claim does not mean that the presentation of the narrative constitutes *making* that claim.

Wartenberg acknowledges that philosophical thought-experiments involve both a narrative *and* an explicit argument that makes use of that narrative.²⁸ However, he goes on to make the following puzzling claim: "If one could show that a thought experiment was an essential element in certain philosophical arguments, the path would be open to showing that films could also make philosophical arguments because their narratives contained thought experiments."²⁹

That narrative thought-experiments are *essential* to certain philosophical arguments offers no support for the conclusion that those narratives are *sufficient* for the instantiation of a philosophical argument.³⁰ Wartenberg does note that a film can contain vital hints about the philosophical significance of its narrative. In *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004) a character's description of a utilitarian ethical system indicates that the film's story of memory-erasure should be regarded as a counter-example to utilitarianism.³¹ Here we find a faint analogue to a commentator guiding us through the philosophical implications of a concrete event, but this falls a long way short of the kind of conceptual clarity required for a film to have precise philosophical content.

Instead of claiming that film can implicitly present precise philosophical positions I suggest that proponents of FAP should adopt a more modest position.

Perhaps a film can behave as an *invitation* for its audience to engage in a philosophical inquiry that treats events in the film like thought-experiments. On this picture there is a kind of mutual co-operation between the film and its audience. The film contributes a salient narrative in a manner that sheds light on a philosophical issue, while the audience is left to contribute the kind of explicit formal argument and articulate conclusion that integrates that narrative into a full philosophical exercise. After all, the central claim of this second pass on FAP is that film cannot philosophise *autonomously*, but can make an active *contribution* to wider philosophical activities. Just as essentially general conclusions can be reached with the active assistance of specific narratives, so essentially explicit and precise conclusions can be reached with the help of works that themselves lack such explicitness and precision.

A possible objection to this picture is that it concedes too much to the sceptic. It might seem that all the real philosophical work is being done by the audience rather than by the film itself. However, if we attend to the ways in which something can contribute to philosophy it will become clear that the restricted role attributed to film is nevertheless a *genuine* philosophical contribution. In a philosophical discussion, someone can present a salient thought-experiment without elaborating on its implications. It is clear that they present the scenario as something that *has* philosophical ramifications, and it is even clear roughly what *kind* of philosophical conclusion it encourages. If such a speaker invites others to develop a rigorous and precise position on the basis of their thought-experiment, they are nevertheless making an active contribution to the philosophical activity.³² Though this kind of open-ended contribution is rare in academic texts, it is the kind of thing one will often see in philosophical dialogue. There is something deeply *Socratic* about this way of contributing to philosophy — without stating any philosophical conclusions, one can cleverly stimulate an audience into achieving their own insights. I claim that

the voice that film can have in philosophical debate is analogous to this Socratic voice.

We are now in a position to overcome the main objections raised against the possibility of film-as-philosophy. Though film cannot itself perform full philosophical exercises, it can make an active *contribution* to such exercises by presenting narratives to its audience that serve the role of thought-experiments. In this way film can actively prompt us to reach the general and precise propositions characteristic of philosophy, despite its inability to express such propositions itself. We can call this view of film's philosophical abilities the "Socratic Model" since film acts as a *midwife* to philosophical knowledge rather than expressing such knowledge itself. The full relevance of Socratic thought to the proposed model will emerge in the next section.

2. WHY TURN TO FILM FOR PHILOSOPHICAL CONTRIBUTIONS?

Having offered a viable notion of film-as-philosophy we now need to consider whether this philosophical resource has any serious value. Returning to our initial metaphor, we have established that there are tickets available for the movie tonight, but have not yet discerned that the movie is worth seeing. Why, when performing a philosophical inquiry, would it ever be advantageous to look to film for assistance rather than using more traditional resources? If narratives can play the role of thought-experiments then, as Fumerton asks, "What significance, if any, does their portrayal in film have?"³³ If film fails to achieve anything that could not have been achieved better by different means, then the notion of film-as-philosophy will be of little value.³⁴ Livingston captures the challenge in terms of the following principle, which he draws from Hegel's work on the value of art:

If we in fact believe a better (for example, more efficient) means to our goal is available, would it not indeed be irrational to pass it by? To propose an analogy: if you know you can quickly, easily, and very effectively tighten a screw with a screwdriver that is ready to hand, or laboriously and imperfectly tighten it with a coin, would it not be irrational to prefer the coin [...]?³⁵

Though this challenge seems to have received less attention than the more foundational question of the possibility of FAP, its importance is clear. I introduce two challenges to the value of film before presenting the main obstacle that must be overcome to meet those challenges.

2.1. Two Challenges

2.1.1. *Film vs. Academia*

Film has been attributed many advantages over academic philosophical texts. Wartenberg cites their accessibility, popularity and vivacity and explains how they give philosophical problems a “human garb” that makes them appear less like a “mock fight.”³⁶ This all contributes to the *pedagogic* value of film, which is championed by many.³⁷ The problem here is that such virtues of film are not philosophical. A swish new lecture theatre might contribute to the *teaching* of philosophy, but clearly it does not make any *philosophical* contributions.

It is easy to doubt that film can ever have philosophical advantages over academic texts. Smith captures the sceptical stance perfectly: “As that sage of Hollywood, Sam Goldwyn, might have put it: ‘Pictures are for entertainment — if I wanted to make a philosophical point, I’d publish an essay in Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society’.”³⁸ Advocates of FAP must cast doubt on that stance. They must

show how film offers something to philosophy, *qua philosophy*, that academic texts do not. Otherwise why should philosophers take the detour from academia at all?

2.1.2. *Film vs. Other Arts*

As we have already established, recording a philosophy lecture or giving characters philosophical dialogue will not constitute a case of FAP. This is because a film's contribution must be made in what Wartenberg calls "a specifically cinematic manner."³⁹ For a contribution to meet that criterion, it must have advantages over *any non-filmic version* of that contribution. Consequently, film must have a philosophical advantage not just over academic texts, but over art works of any other medium. We can adopt an *elimination test* to establish whether or not this criterion has been satisfied. If the content of a film — its narrative or its dialogue, for example — could be translated into a different medium without diminishing its philosophical contribution, then the contribution it makes is not specifically filmic. This criterion is broad enough to allow resources that film shares with other media, such as dialogue, to play *some* role in its contribution, so long as film's more distinctive visual nature is integral to the *overall* contribution that it makes.⁴⁰

The challenge here is that if we are taking the detour from academic philosophy, there are other resources to which one would intuitively turn before turning to film. Hunt, despite his support of the film-as-thought-experiment model, claims that the novel is a better medium for making such contributions.⁴¹ As Goodenough asks, "What philosophically can a film do [...] that a book cannot?"⁴² More to the point, what can a film do that a book cannot do *better*?

2.2. **Generality and Explicitness Revisited**

FAP has two battles on its hands and the main obstacle to victory is provided by our old friends the Generality and Explicitness Problems. The concerns on which they

are based ultimately failed to show that film cannot be philosophy, but they may yet show that film cannot be *good* philosophy. On our model of film-as-philosophy, film can *present* a philosophically salient scenario and *prompt* the audience to construct, on the basis of that narrative, the kind of rigorous arguments and precise general conclusions that the film cannot provide by itself. The question is this: Would it not be better for that salient scenario to be presented in a medium that *can* present rigorous arguments and precise general conclusions?

Leaving the audience to perform that share of the philosophical work is problematic in two main respects. First, the audience might not *recognise* the general philosophical significance of the film's narrative. They might even lack the background knowledge required to extract its general significance.⁴³ Second, even a philosophically-inclined viewer might have difficulty formulating a *reasoned argument* on the basis of that narrative. They might see that it has relevance to a philosophical issue, but fail to extrapolate its specific ramifications. The fact that there is a great deal going on in any film to *distract* us from its philosophical relevance makes these two possibilities all the more probable.⁴⁴

An academic text need not face these problems. It can explicitly state the general significance of a thought-experiment and explicitly present an argument that reveals the general ramifications of that thought-experiment. Furthermore, even when an academic text does aim to entertain, its primary function is philosophical, so any counter-productive distractions will (usually) be avoided. This indicates that any philosophical contribution made by a film would have been better achieved by an academic text based on the same narrative. Film's lack of generality and explicitness is again causing trouble.

The same considerations also cast doubt on film winning the battle with literature. First, the problem of extrapolating general significance from a narrative is avoided if a novel's narrator makes appropriate explicit observations about the

significance of events.⁴⁵ Some novels, such as Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, even have a narrator who acknowledges that the narrative is a fiction and spells out the relevance of that fiction to our own lives in the actual world. Surely a medium with a narrator — a potential philosopher-guide — will be a better aid to our philosophical activities than an inarticulate film? Second, Hunt proposes that “motion pictures are less philosophical than literary narrative insofar as they are less suited to the task of embodying arguments.”⁴⁶ A novel can present a reasoning process in a way that film cannot. Though a novel will doubtless contain non-philosophical distractions, the explicit guidance of a narrator could help us attend to the relevant points. Overall, there is a real threat that even if presenting a salient narrative through art rather than an academic text could be valuable to philosophy, its presentation in film will inevitably be weaker than its presentation in literature.

2.3 Meeting the Challenges

Overall, the limitations of film mean that it can present a philosophically salient scenario but has no voice standing outside that narrative to guide us through the significance of that scenario. Though this is compatible with film making a contribution to philosophy through its narratives, it seems that their presentation in film is inevitably *weaker* than an equivalent presentation in an academic or literary text — a text that can provide that guiding voice. I think we should concede that for most philosophical purposes it is better to have the articulate guiding voice that film typically lacks. However, our task is to show that film has special advantages on at least *some* occasions, and this can still be achieved. I argue that the apparent *disadvantages* of film relative to academic or literary texts are actually potential *advantages*.

We followed Hunt in using Socrates' exchange with the slave boy in *Meno* as an example of philosophy being done through narrative. Fittingly, it is to the central

thesis of that dialogue that we will now turn. The slave boy scenario was supposed to show that he could come to know something “without having been taught but only questioned, and find the knowledge within himself.”⁴⁷ Though this model will not apply to empirical knowledge it does capture the process of reaching philosophical knowledge. Socrates also argues that repeating assertions made by others might constitute “true opinion”, but discovering that conclusion for ourselves will provide us with *knowledge*.⁴⁸ Compare being told the answer to a maths problem with working out the answer for yourself. The epistemic superiority of the latter illustrates Socrates’ claim.

Strangely, in Plato’s dialogues, Socrates is not very good at respecting his own epistemic claims. He tends to impose interpretations of a narrative on his interlocutors and to ask leading questions that give them little opportunity to work things out for themselves. This worry generalises to all philosophical texts. If a salient narrative is of philosophical significance, given the right prompts the audience should be able to work out that significance for themselves and, in doing so, be in a better epistemic position than if it had been spelled out to them.

What does this mean for the philosophical value of film? Film’s inability to express *explicit* reasoning or *general* conclusions actually makes it a suitable medium for prompting an audience into reaching philosophical conclusions for themselves, with the depth of understanding that process provides. Most of the time explicitness and generality will be integral to philosophical progress, but here we see the possible philosophical advantage of the inarticulate presentation of a narrative. On this Socratic Model a film can prompt its audience into greater philosophical understanding precisely by *not* making explicit philosophical claims about its narrative, but rather by inviting us to do some of the work for ourselves. Despite describing himself as a “midwife” to knowledge, Socrates often *does* act as an

articulate commentator. Ironically, film could then be considered more “Socratic” than Socrates.

So far, we have shown how the apparent weaknesses of filmic presentations of a philosophically salient narrative might actually be a source of strength. What we have not shown is how a film with these strengths might make a *specifically filmic* contribution. After all, a novel could easily present a narrative without providing the kind of commentary that we have just objected to. In fact, an academic text could conceivably do the same. We are yet to find something that film has a special ability to achieve.

I suggest that a philosophical contribution is specifically filmic precisely when *the fact that the audience is watching a film* is integral to its achievement. Obviously, no medium other than film can have an audience with that status. But when would that status ever be relevant to philosophy? I suggest it can be of special relevance when the film is contributing to *the philosophy of film*. Unlike an academic text on the philosophy of film, a film can stimulate its audience into a philosophical insight *while they are watching*. We will see how this might work shortly, but it is worth noting that the proposed contribution requires more than “reflexivity” in a film. The fact that a film is in some sense *about* film does not mean it is making any philosophical contribution to our understanding of film, nor any contribution that could not better have been achieved by an academic text.⁴⁹ After all, there is a sense in which *all* art has reflexive significance, but it is implausible that all art makes a contribution to philosophy. We are looking for something more.

Philosophy of film is not the *only* area to which the audience’s status as viewers can be relevant. Wartenberg, for instance, provides an excellent account of how *The Matrix* reinforces the Cartesian deception hypothesis by deceiving the audience into believing that the world they perceive in the early sections of the film is (fictionally) real.⁵⁰ This kind of perceptual deception takes advantage of the fact that the

audience is watching a film. However, too often it is only a film's narrative that is philosophically salient, and the fact that the audience is experiencing that narrative through film is irrelevant. I suggest that the contribution of a film is *most likely* to be specifically filmic when it engages in philosophy of film. There are many plausible cases of film engaging in a critique of the conditions of its existence. For example, the experimental films *Empire* (1964) and *The Flicker* (1965) are explored by Wartenberg, *Serene Velocity* (1970) is considered by Carroll, and the art film *The Five Obstructions* (2003) is discussed by Hjort.⁵¹ These cases complement my stance, but it is worth noting that they are not popular films. Also, the question of the conditions of film is just one of a much wider range of possible issues in the philosophy of film on which a film can shed light. Rather than exploring further conceptual considerations, the time has come to consider an example of film-as-philosophy that promises to vindicate the various conclusions we have reached.

3. HITCHCOCK'S REAR WINDOW:

A CASE STUDY IN FILM AS PHILOSOPHY OF FILM

Alfred Hitchcock's acclaimed 1954 film *Rear Window* grew to become his greatest box office success. Though one dissenting contemporary critic states "Mr Hitchcock's film is not significant [and] is superficial and glib," we will soon see that the opposite is the case.⁵² The protagonist of *Rear Window*, L.B. "Jeff" Jeffries, is a photographer bound to a wheelchair after sustaining a broken leg. Bored in his New York apartment, he begins to watch the lives of his various neighbours on the other side of the courtyard. Looking into the apartment of Lars Thorwald, Jeff starts to suspect that Thorwald has murdered his wife. With the help of his girlfriend Lisa and nurse Stella, his suspicions are confirmed, but in the process Thorwald

discovers Jeff's surveillance. In a thrilling confrontation in Jeff's apartment, Jeff survives a fall from his window before the police finally catch the killer.

The cornerstone of *Rear Window's* relevance to the philosophy of film is Jeff's similarity to the cinema-goer. Belton explains that "Jeff serves as a surrogate for the spectator. Seated in his chair and unable to move, he looks, through a frame that resembles that of the screen, at events that take place in a semidistant space."⁵³ Barton Palmer adds that "to relieve his boredom" Jeff is "poised eagerly before the screen in hopes of a narrative which might become an object of pleasure."⁵⁴ The analogy is reinforced by the opening and closing of the apartment's blind at the beginning and end of the film. Mid-way through the film there is even an "interval" in which Lisa closes the blind saying "the show's over for tonight." This kind of content cleverly invites us to compare ourselves as spectators with Jeff. We can now consider to what philosophical use this comparison is put.

3.1. Voyeurism

The film guides the audience through an exploration of the ethical status of voyeurism, with Stella and Lisa often challenging the morality of Jeff's behaviour. Our alignment with Jeff indicates that *we too* are voyeurs, so we are invited to consider the ethical status of viewing film.⁵⁵ It would be simplistic to transfer our assessment of Jeff's voyeurism onto ourselves since there are obvious respects in which we are not aligned.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, the comparative exercise is valuable. In the film Jeff compares what he can see from his window with a photographic negative of the courtyard — perhaps this is a model of the kind of comparative exercise that the audience is supposed to perform. One of many illuminating points of contrast between Jeff and the spectator is that Jeff's actions lead to the apprehension of a killer. This suggests that *his* voyeurism is excusable, but since *we*

have no such excuse we are prompted to consider how our voyeuristic gaze could be justifiable.

Jeff's apparent preference for *viewing* life rather than *living* it also has ramifications for the cinema-goer. His choice to watch his neighbours rather than respond to Lisa's advances indicates that "[h]e opts for a one-way relationship based on voyeurism instead of a two-way relationship rooted in mutual regard."⁵⁷ Lisa begins to form a judgement of Jeff that she says is "too frightful to utter," indicating there is something perverse about his behaviour.⁵⁸ Are we similarly perverse in our choice to watch a film, or does the fact we are viewing a fiction somehow make things better?

There are many other ways in which the film systematically prompts a philosophical moral assessment of ourselves as viewers of film. It is worth noting that an academic text presenting the same narrative could not catch us whilst we are engaged in the potentially voyeuristic act, so would inevitably put us a step further away from the object of investigation. When it comes to literature, conveniently we can compare *Rear Window* to the short story by Cornell Woolrich on which it is based. That story has little to say about voyeurism and the ethical status of our engagement with fiction, indicating that the philosophical value of *Rear Window* is specifically filmic.

3.2. The Epistemology of Film

In *Rear Window* Jeff is not the passive recipient of information about events in his neighbouring apartments. He actively *looks* in order to acquire evidence — sometimes audio but primarily visual — then *constructs* hypothetical narratives to account for what he perceives. The film's narrative is effectively the *story* of Jeff's interpretations of what he sees.⁵⁹ Since Jeff is presented as a surrogate of the cinema-goer, we are invited to regard our own engagement with the filmic audio-visual

display in a similar manner. This sheds light on how we form beliefs about a film's fictional reality — something we might call the *epistemology* of film. We are prompted to notice the interpretive role that we play.

Interestingly, the narratives Jeff constructs often seem to reflect his own desires and anxieties.⁶⁰ This invites the audience to consider what role their *own* psychological states might play in their interpretations. Furthermore, Jeff appears to interpret events according to the guidelines of specific genres: one apartment is a romance, another is a melodrama and Thorwald's is clearly a murder-mystery. This invites us to assess the extent to which our interpretations are guided by our background understanding of genre rather than by the audio-visual evidence with which we are presented. *Rear Window* reinforces this invitation by toying with its *own* murder-mystery genre. In a contemporary review, Sondheim notes that suspense is achieved by the fact that “[h]alf way through *Rear Window* we are not certain there will be a murder, not sure that Hitchcock may not have a new gimmick, which is to let us *think* there'll be a murder.”⁶¹ By threatening to defy our genre-based expectations, *Rear Window* highlights the *presence* of those expectations and the role that they play in our experience of film.

Jeff's epistemic relationship to events may appear *disanalogous* to that of the cinema-goer when he starts to interfere with what he sees. Jeff sends Lisa to Thorwald's apartment and watches as she posts a note under his door. Viewers of film cannot influence events on the screen — they can only form beliefs on the basis of what they are given. However, if we look at events in *Rear Window* more closely, their relevance to the cinema-goer becomes clearer. The note that Jeff sends reads “What have you done with her?”, but this question is never answered by Thorwald. Furthermore, when Thorwald finally spots Jeff and becomes the viewer rather than the viewed, he invades Jeff's apartment and says one thing — “What do you want from me?” This question also goes unanswered. In both cases, the “viewer” is

analogous to the cinema audience in that they can ask questions but can receive no direct answers. Film *shows* us a reality from a perceptual perspective but, unlike the novel, provides no flat statements of how things stand in that world. We have to make sense of the evidence ourselves. By contrast, in Woolrich's story we simply have to take Jeff's interpretations as gospel, since we are not given the perceptual evidence from which to construct our own hypotheses. The view of film encouraged by *Rear Window* complements our Socratic Model perfectly. Film makes no direct *philosophical* statements, but can provide audio-visual prompts that assist the audience's philosophical inquiries.

At some points in the film, the perceptual evidence offered to the viewer differs from the perceptual evidence available to Jeff. For example, while Jeff is asleep, we see Thorwald leave his apartment with a woman we can only suppose is his still-living wife.⁶² Here we recognise that Jeff's interpretation of events is based on limited evidence. However, since Jeff is clearly a surrogate of the cinema-goer, we are invited to conclude that *we too* have limited access to the film's reality. Perhaps we can never be certain of the "facts" of a filmic fictional world — we can only form more or less satisfactory interpretations based on the limited evidence we have. Again, any sense that film *fully discloses* a world to us is cleverly frustrated by *Rear Window*.

In summation, there is a viable notion of film-as-philosophy. The inarticulate nature of film entails that it cannot make the general and explicit claims characteristic of philosophy. Nevertheless, film can make valuable contributions to philosophical inquiry by presenting narratives that behave like philosophical thought-experiments. By attributing film the Socratic role of prompting its audience into philosophical understanding, we can make sense of how it is *possible* for film to actively contribute to philosophy. For instance, *Rear Window* invites its audience to treat Jeff's behaviour as a salient example for the evaluation of the moral status of

voyeurism. Once the possibility of FAP has been acknowledged, there remains a worry about its *value*. Why would we choose an inarticulate medium over one that can lay out the ramifications of a narrative in general and explicit terms? The Socratic Model allows us to understand how the absence of an articulate guiding voice in film can sometimes *enhance* its philosophical contributions. Where *Rear Window* encourages us to extrapolate the implications of a scenario for ourselves, we achieve a deeper and more reliable insight than we would through an equivalent textual presentation of that scenario. How can there be anything specifically *cinematic* about a film's contribution? Where a film engages reflexively in the philosophy of film, it can utilise the distinctive status of its audience to great effect. *Rear Window* invites us to consider our own interpretative role in the experience of film whilst we are engaged in that very activity. Despite the substantial conceptual obstacles to the notion of FAP, the Socratic Model allows us to make sense of the possibility and value of filmic contributions to philosophy. The case of *Rear Window* shows us that film, despite its limitations, has distinctive advantages over textual works, whether academic or literary. Of course, *this* text can only gesture towards the full significance of the film. Much like the cop that Jeff phones in *Rear Window*, you've heard an eyewitness account, but can only find the real evidence by looking for yourself.

NOTES

1. See, respectively, Stanley Cavell's *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), Daniel Shaw's "On Being Philosophical and 'Being John Malkovich'," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 64:1 (2006) and Chris Falzon's, "Why be Moral?" in *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy and Film*, ed. Paisley Livingston and Carl Plantinga (Oxford: Routledge, 2009).

2. This decision is motivated by the fact that most of the pro-FAP literature focuses on popular narrative films, so defending FAP in the context of documentaries or art films would do little to vindicate that literature.

3. These labels are taken from Wartenberg, though I will not always follow his formulation of the problems. See Thomas E. Wartenberg's "Beyond Mere Illustration: How Film Can Be Philosophy." *The*

Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, 64:1 (2006) and "On the Possibility of Cinematic Philosophy" in *New Takes in Film-Philosophy*, ed. Havi Carel and Greg Tuck (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011).

4. This places my proposal in the category Wartenberg labels the "Moderate Pro-Cinematic Position" on the FAP debate in his "Film as Philosophy" in *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy and Film*, ed. Paisley Livingston and Carl Plantinga (Oxford: Routledge, 2009).

5. *The Matrix* is a fitting example since it is perhaps the single film that has most dominated the film-as-philosophy literature.

6. See Paisley Livingston, *Cinema, Philosophy, Bergman: On Film as Philosophy* (Oxford: OUP, 2009) and Noël Carroll, "Philosophising Through the Moving Image: The Case of *Serene Velocity*," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 64:1 (2006).

7. For an account of this "Imposition Objection" see Thomas E. Wartenberg, *Thinking on Screen: Film as Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2007), 8.

8. Stephen Mulhall, *On Film*, 1st edn. (London: Routledge, 2002), 4.

9. The importance of film-makers' intentions to FAP is emphasised in Paisley Livingston's "Theses on Cinema as Philosophy," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 64:1 (2006) and in Livingston, *Cinema, Philosophy, Bergman*. I will generally avoid engaging with this topic. The central question for us is whether the philosophical content of a film is discovered or imposed. If we conclude it is discovered in the film, we can then ask what role actual or possible intentions play in its being there.

10. It should be clear that films are not thinking agents, but Mulhall's way of describing FAP sometimes seems to suggest that they are. Livingston specifically argues against the attribution of agency to film in his Livingston *Cinema, Philosophy, Bergman*, 3, 194. Wartenberg, *Thinking on Screen*, 12, explains that talk of film "developing an idea" is a turn of phrase no more suspicious than talk of an academic text "developing an idea."

11. Wartenberg, *Thinking on Screen*, 21.

12. I say "at best" since films may present us with impossible scenarios, such as the time-travel paradoxes in *Back to the Future* (1985)

13. Quoted by Karen Hanson, "Minerva in the Movies: Relations Between Philosophy and Film," in *Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures: An Anthology*, ed. Noël Carroll and Jinhee Choi (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 391.

14. See Wartenberg, *Thinking on Screen*, 16. As with the Generality Problem, an appeal to the explicit content of the *dialogue* in the film will not help. Such verbal assertions are not made by the film, and can contribute nothing specifically "filmic."

15. The central place of systematicity and reason-giving in philosophy is noted by Julian Baggini "Serious Men: The Films of the Coen Brothers as Ethics," in *New Takes in Film-Philosophy*, ed. Havi Carel and Greg Tuck (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011).

16. Quoted in Wartenberg, *Thinking on Screen*, 76

17. Quoted in *ibid.*, 18

18. Mulhall, *On Film*, 1st edn., 7.

19. Lester Hunt "Motion Pictures as a Philosophical Resource," in *Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures*, ed. Carroll and Choi, 397.

20. Quoted in Mette Hjort, "The Five Obstructions," in *The Routledge Companion to Film and Philosophy*, ed. Livingston and Plantinga, 631.

21. Bruce Russell, "The Philosophical Limits of Film," in *Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures: An Anthology*, ed. Noël Carroll and Jinhee Choi (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 390.

22. Wartenberg, *Thinking on Screen*, 24.

23. *Ibid.*, 36.

24. Livingston, *Cinema, Philosophy, Bergman*, 13.

25. Russell, "The Philosophical Limits of Film."

26. Hunt, "Motion Pictures as a Philosophical Resource," 401.

27. For more on this point see Smuts, "Review of R. J. Yanal *Hitchcock as Philosopher*," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 65:3 (2007): 340.

28. Wartenberg, *Thinking on Screen*, 57.

29. *Ibid.*, 134.

30. Related doubts about film's ability to utilise narratives as philosophical thought experiments are expressed by Murray Smith in "Film Art, Ambiguity and Argument," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 64:1 (2006): 38.

31. Wartenberg, *Thinking on Screen*, 92.

32. This point is made vividly in Noël Carroll, "Philosophising Through the Moving Image: The Case of *Serene Velocity*," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 64:1 (2006): 180.

33. Richard Fumerton, "Skepticism," in *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy and Film*, ed. Paisley Livingston and Carl Plantinga (Oxford: Routledge, 2009), 604.

34. Concerns about the value of film's contributions are captured in what Wartenberg calls the "Banality Objection," which he ties to Stolnitz and Carroll in Wartenberg, *Thinking on Screen*, 104.

35. Livingston, *Cinema, Philosophy, Bergman*, 56
36. Wartenberg, *Thinking on Screen*, 4, 8.
37. See Fumerton's "Skepticism," Russell's "The Philosophical Limits of Film," Livingston's "Theses on Cinema as Philosophy" and Carroll's "Philosophising Through the Moving Image."
38. Smith, "Film Art, Ambiguity and Argument," 39.
39. Wartenberg, *Thinking on Screen*, 12.
40. A strong case against the total omission of dialogue as a filmic resource is made by Stephen Mulhall, *On Film*, 2nd edn. (London: Routledge, 2008), 150.
41. Hunt, "Motion Pictures as a Philosophical Resource."
42. Jerry Goodenough, "A Philosopher Goes to the Cinema," in *Film as Philosophy: Essays in Cinema After Wittgenstein and Cavell*, ed. Rupert Read and Jerry Goodenough (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 12.
43. On the second point see Livingston, *Cinema, Philosophy, Bergman*, 196-197.
44. Smith's "Film Art, Ambiguity and Argument" notes that film's prioritisation of non-philosophical goals inevitably leads to such compromises. Specific examples of "philosophical" science-fiction films that spend much of their time on elaborate action sequences are noted by Goodenough, "A Philosopher Goes to the Cinema," 6, and Livingston, *Cinema, Philosophy, Bergman*, 198.
45. See Hunt, "Motion Pictures as a Philosophical Resource," 403.
46. *Ibid.*, 402.
47. Plato, *Meno*, 85d.
48. *Ibid.*, 97-99.
49. Wartenberg, *Thinking on Screen*, raises this as an objection to the argument implicit in Mulhall, *On Film*, 2nd edn., 131-132, that being *about* film is sufficient for a film being philosophical.
50. Wartenberg, *Thinking on Screen*, 79.
51. Wartenberg's *Thinking on Screen*, Carroll's "Philosophising Through the Moving Image" and Hjort's "The Five Obstructions."
52. From Bosley Crowther, "Rear Window," *New York Times*, 5 August 1954, reprinted in *Alfred Hitchcock's Rear Window*, ed. John Belton, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
53. John Belton, "Spectacle and Narrative," in *Alfred Hitchcock's Rear Window*, ed. Belton, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 12.
54. Barton Palmer, "The Metafictional Hitchcock: The Experience of Viewing and the Viewing of Experience in Rear Window and Psycho," in *Perspectives on Alfred Hitchcock*, ed. D. Boyd (New York: Simon & Schuster MacMillan, 1995), 145-146. It is worth noting that these observations about the film, along with all the others in this section, are not taken from philosophers, so are unlikely to express a bias in favour of philosophical interpretations. Some thinkers do approach Hitchcock with explicitly philosophical objectives, such as Robert J. Yanal's *Hitchcock as Philosopher* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2005), but we will not draw on their work.
55. The movie's advertising slogan — "revealing the privacy of a dozen lives" — overtly plays on its voyeuristic lure. See Belton, "Spectacle and Narrative," 3.
56. This is against the Pearson & Stam account of the film challenged by Barton Palmer, "The Metafictional Hitchcock," 148.
57. See Belton, "Spectacle and Narrative," 7.
58. Elise Lemire, "Voyeurism and the Postwar Crisis of Masculinity in *Rear Window*" in *Alfred Hitchcock's Rear Window*, ed. John Belton, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 73.
59. Belton, "Spectacle and Narrative," 3.
60. This point is emphasised in Lemire's "Voyeurism and the Postwar Crisis of Masculinity in *Rear Window*," 57-58, and in Jean Douchet, "Hitch and his Public," trans. Verana A. Conley, in *A Hitchcock Reader*, ed. Marshall Deutelbaum and Leland Poague (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 18.
61. Stephen Sondheim, "Rear Window," in *Films in Review* 5:8 (1954), reprinted in *Alfred Hitchcock's Rear Window*, ed. John Belton, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 170.
62. See David Bordwell's "The Viewer's Activity," in *Narration in the Fiction Film* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 43.

**LAYERING IMAGES, THWARTING FABLES:
DELEUZE, RANCIÈRE AND THE ALLEGORIES OF CINEMA**

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In “From One Image to Another,” Jacques Rancière offers one of the most illuminating evaluations of Gilles Deleuze’s film philosophy. Taken as a whole, the chapter presents a devastating critique of Deleuze’s theory of cinema. Rancière offers two distinct arguments: the first one addresses the connection between ontology and history; the second one involves the relationship between theory and its exemplification.

The tension between ontology and history in the *Cinema* books becomes apparent in the break Deleuze proposes between classical and modern cinema. Rancière questions whether an internal development in the natural history of images — the passage from the movement-image to the time-image — could correspond to the historical distinction between classical and modern cinema.¹ Rancière’s second argument takes issue with the way in which Deleuze interweaves the ontology of cinema with its fables. Rancière claims that, despite privileging the undetermined molecular world over the system of representation, Deleuze’s “analyses always come to center on the ‘hero’ of a story.”² Paradoxically, Deleuze’s attempt to do away with the representative tradition relies on an allegorical fable emblematic of the collapse of representation.

My claim is not that Rancière’s arguments are incorrect but rather that they involve a perspective foreign to Deleuze’s ontology. In relation to Rancière’s first argument, I suggest that Deleuze evokes social history to explain not a development in the natural history of images but our lack of belief in the action-image. In relation to Rancière’s second argument, I claim that it relies on the

assumption that fable and image entertain a dialectical — rather than an expressive — relationship. In evaluating Rancière's criticism of Deleuze, I aim at offering an alternative account of these two apparent contradictions in Deleuze's film philosophy. To put Deleuze and Rancière in dialogue, it will become necessary to apply some pressure to Deleuze's terminology, expressing a few of the concepts Rancière evokes in his argument — primarily *character* and *fable* — in terms of the *Cinema* books' ontology of images. The essay is organized in six sections: the first one distinguishes the four layers in the which the image operates; the second and third sections discuss two theses that serve as building blocks for Rancière's argument that Deleuze maps an ontological distinction onto a historical one; the fourth one discusses this argument in detail; the fifth and sixth sections examine the relationship between theory and example.

I. AN IMAGE UPON ANOTHER

One of the difficulties of the *Cinema* books is that everything in its universe is an image that differs from others only by degree. These differences in terms of degree become stratified in at least four different layers. To evaluate Rancière's rhetorical moves, it is first necessary to distinguish these layers, which I refer to as *transcendental*, *ontological*, *regulative* and *semiotic*.

The transcendental layer refers to the material field from which Deleuze deducts both natural and cinematographic perception.³ Of course, this layer is not transcendental in the traditional Kantian sense of an ideality that serves as the condition of possibility of all experience.⁴ For Deleuze, this transcendental layer is, paradoxically, also material or empirical.⁵ In Spinozist terms, this transcendental materialism denotes the parallel expression of substance as *natura naturans*

(expressing itself as cause of itself) and *natura naturata* (expressing itself as material effects).⁶ Deleuze translates Spinoza's affirmation of a single substance into "the laying out of a *common plane of immanence* on which all minds, all bodies, and all individuals are situated."⁷

In the context of the *Cinema* books, Deleuze offers a Bergsonian understanding of the plane of immanence as "a set of movement-images; a collection of lines or figures of light; a series of blocs of space-time."⁸ Deleuze presupposes/constructs this plane of immanence (a world of universal variation without any centers in which all images act and react in relation to one another), which is interrupted by an interval (a gap between action and reaction). This interruption creates a double system of reference in which images vary both in relation to all others and in relation to the interval, generating centers of indetermination or horizons within the plane of immanence.⁹

The ontological layer is concerned with the varieties of world images that result from this double system. At first, only three images emerge: the perception-image, the action-image and the affection-image. Most ontologies identify entities with bodies, distinguishing them in relation to their qualities and their possible actions or passions; Deleuze's ontology does not privilege bodies over actions or qualities, regarding all of them as images (the only entities in this ontology), which may be regarded in relation to their bodies (perception-images), their actions (the action-image) or their qualities (affection-image).¹⁰ Once images cease to be referred to their sensory-motor function, they may enter relations with one another in memory, time or thought, and even develop internal relations between their components. The images that emerge in this new context — the recollection-image, the dream-image and the crystal-image — are entities in the same right.

Both the regulative and the semiotic layers are exclusively cinematic, offering corresponding images to the transcendental and ontological layers, respectively.

As obverse considerations of world images — one oriented from the interval toward the sensory-motor system and another from the collapsed sensory-motor system toward the interval — the movement-image and the time-image operate at a regulative level, offering the conditions for the emergence and legibility of cinematic images. Deleuze refuses to understand cinema as an apparatus of representation because the cinema does more than represent bodies, their qualities and their actions or passions. For Deleuze, the cinema is an apparatus that creates images of its own.

The semiotic layer involves the creation of these cinematic images. Some of these images take the name of world-images (the perception-image, the action-image, the affection-image, the recollection-image, the dream-image), whereas others have no correspondence to world images (chronosigns, lectosigns, noosigns). Although some cinematic images are named after world images, these are distinct kinds of images: unlike world images, cinematic images consist of three signs (a genetic sign, which accounts for the constitution of the image, and two signs that refer to the poles of the image's composition).¹¹

In following Deleuze's discussion about each particular image, one should pay attention to the layer in which each image is located. If Deleuze uses the same terms to refer, on the one hand, to the transcendental and the regulative layers and, on the other, to the ontological and semiotic layers, it is only to stress that the cinema utilizes world images as its signaletic material.¹² In the cinema, the image's double system of reference divides itself into two possible readings of the connections among images, not only turning world images into signs but also creating images that would not exist in a world without cinema. Throughout the rest of the essay, I will be evoking these distinct layers to evaluate Rancière's argument.

II. THE EMANCIPATED PHANTOM

This section discusses a thesis Rancière utilizes as a building block for his argument about Deleuze's problematic mapping of an ontological distinction onto a historical distribution. The thesis, which is in fact correct, is that the movement-image prefigures the time-image. I aim to specify in which sense we should understand this prefiguration, making clear which layers are involved in this foreshadowing of the time-image.

Rancière begins his critique by conceiving of Deleuze's theory of cinema as the solid philosophical foundation of André Bazin's intuition about a distinction between classical and modern cinema. Like Bazin, Deleuze locates the break between classical and modern cinema in Italian neorealism and in the films of Orson Welles. Deleuze replaces Bazin's distinction between imagists (filmmakers who believe in the image) and realists (filmmakers who believe in reality) with a distinction between the movement-image (organized according to the sensory-motor schema) and the time-image (characterized by the rupture of the sensory-motor schema). Despite this difference, Rancière argues, both Bazin and Deleuze fall into the circularity of modernist theory to the extent that their conception of modern cinema is prefigured already in classical cinema. The rupture both Bazin and Deleuze propose is simply "a required episode in the edifying narrative through which each art proves its own artistry by complying with the scenario of a modernist revolution in the arts wherein each art attests to its own perennial essence."¹³

Deleuze himself seems to embrace this modernist thesis when he writes that "[t]he direct time image is the phantom which has always haunted the cinema" and that "it is never at the beginning that something new, a new art, is able to reveal its essence."¹⁴ At the transcendental level, the time-image inheres the movement-image

almost from the very beginning. Deleuze follows Bergson in presupposing a plane of immanence that would constitute the infinite set of all images. At this point, time does not yet exist. As Deleuze writes, the variants of the movement-image “depend on new conditions and certainly cannot appear for the moment.”¹⁵ These variants appear with special kinds of images, which create intervals by absorbing an action and delaying a response. These intervals constitute, by means of this incurvation of the universe, both time and the three basic images of the movement-image. At this point, the ontological layer unfolds upon the transcendental layer. In a certain sense, the interval that interrupts the plane of immanence is the phantom that has always haunted the cinema.

However, time doesn’t yet become apparent to the extent that the interval becomes immediately occupied by one of these images—the affection-image. Clearly, it is not as the transcendental plane of immanence that the movement-image prefigures the time-image. In the passage from the transcendental to the ontological layers, we can only speak of an occlusion of the interval, occlusion necessary for the emergence of world images. This double process of interruption and occlusion only serves as the transcendental/ontological condition for the two obverse readings of the orientation of world images.

We can speak of prefiguration proper only within the cinema, that is, between the semiotic and the regulative layers. The cinematic image that prefigures the time-image is precisely the affection-image, precisely because affection is “what occupies the interval, what occupies it without filling it in or filling it up.”¹⁶ The affection-image ceases to appear in terms of its degree of specification, orienting itself instead toward the interval it occupies. This prefiguration amounts to the possibility of creating images that are no longer extended into the sensory-motor schema within the rarefied spaces of the affection-image. In other words, the affection-image ceases to be considered in terms of its weakened sensory-motor schema to become

considered in terms of its virtual relation to other images that such weakening enables. The affection-image lies at the heart of the time-image not as a phantom but as the rarefied space that makes possible a reversal toward the interval.

III. FROM WORLD TO CINEMA

Another thesis that underlies Rancière's argument about Deleuze's mapping of an ontology onto a historical design is concerned with the relationship between world images and cinematic images. According to Rancière, Deleuze's thesis that the world is composed of images implies that cinema is not an art but the name of the world.¹⁷ From this purported identity between world and cinema, Rancière derives an apparent contradiction in Deleuze's argumentation: If images are the things of the world, how does this natural history of images become expressed as "a certain number of individualized operations and combinations attributable to filmmakers, schools, epochs"?¹⁸

However, Deleuze's argument is not that cinematic images are identical to world images or that the history of cinema would magically recount the natural history of world images. His thesis is less counterintuitive: the cinema creates its own images by using world images as its plastic material. Cinematic images take their name from the dominance of a specific variety of world image. Deleuze explains the distinction between world images and cinematic images in terms of camera distance and montage. In regard to the movement-image (considered as a regulative image), he explains that a film's montage is composed of the three varieties of images but that a type of image inevitably becomes dominant. Accordingly, the montage of a given film becomes active, perceptive or affective. For this reason, as the signaletic material of film, the three kinds of images correspond to

spatially determined shots: the long shot corresponds to the perception-image, the medium shot to the action-image and the close-up to the affection-image.

Considered in terms of montage, each of these images constitutes “a point of view on the whole of the film, a way of grasping this whole.”¹⁹

The dominance of each world image generates a particular cinematic image. For instance, as a world image, an affection-image refers to the interval between perception and action, that is, to an image that absorbs movement instead of reacting to it. As a cinematic regime, the affection-image involves an idealist or spiritual cinema constituted by three signs — its signs of composition (icons of feature and icons of outline) and its genetic sign (qualisign) — and a degree of specification sustained by the pair affects/any-space-whatevers.²⁰ Rancière’s case against Deleuze becomes possible only by confusing two interrelated arguments in *Cinema 1*: first, that the cinema makes apparent the double reference that constitutes world images; and, second, that this double reference makes possible a series of cinematic images organized around signs of composition and genesis. The cinema is not the name of the world but the art that uses world images as its plastic material.

IV. IMPOTENT IMAGES

In the previous sections I have begun the groundwork to examine Rancière’s suggestion that Deleuze maps an ontological distinction onto the history of cinema. First, I showed that the movement-image’s prefiguration of the time-image does not involve the ontological layer; more precisely, a cinematic image within the movement-image opens the space for the emergence of the time-image. Second, I explained why the cinema is concerned with the ontological level only to the extent that world images constitute cinema’s plastic mass of expression. Despite that

Deleuze's argument does not involve the ontological layer of images, we must still address why Deleuze evokes social and political history as a transcendent element that would account for what should be an immanent development of images. If the Cinema books involve not a social history of cinema but a natural history of images, how can this natural history of images depend on events external to cinema? This question is paramount to Deleuze, who considers transcendence the main enemy of philosophy. In this context, transcendence implies an element foreign to the transcendental field from which all images are supposed to emerge, threatening the purported immanence of the project.

The first line in both prefaces to the English and French editions of *Cinema 1* should make clear that the distinction between a natural and a social history of cinema is essential for Deleuze's project: both prefaces begin with the assertion that the study is not a history of cinema.²¹ The organization of both books confirms this disclaimer. Let us consider the organization of the first volume, which is divided into two distinct parts. The first three chapters address the differentiation through which the movement-image expresses the whole: Chapters 1 and 2 make the argument for the Bergsonian character of cinema; Chapter 3 maps four conceptions of the whole onto four pre-war national film movements.

The remaining chapters involve the specification of the movement-image in different images. Chapter 4 returns to Bergson, deducting the three varieties of the movement-image from the plane of immanence. The following chapters substitute auteurs for national schools as privileged examples. In Chapter 5, Deleuze exemplifies the perception-image with Pasolini, Rohmer and, more centrally, Vertov. In Chapters 6 and 7, Griffith, Eisenstein, Dreyer and Bresson serve to articulate the affection-image. Chapter 8, dedicated to the impulse-image, features Stroheim, Buñuel and Losey as the utmost naturalist filmmakers.

The chapters dedicated to the action image are organized mainly around

Hollywood genres. Chapters 9 and 10, which discuss, respectively, the large and the short form, explain how most genres move within either form. Chapter 11, dedicated to the reflection-image, returns to auteurs such as Eisenstein, Herzog and Kurosawa. Finally, Chapter 12, which makes the argument about the crisis of the action-image, is concerned mainly with Hitchcock. It is only in this last chapter where the question of social history appears, parallel to a crisis inherent in cinema. Clearly, the volume follows no historical logic and includes examples from the post-war era, that is, films that appeared after the break between classical and modern cinema. The concern with social history doesn't involve the whole of the Cinema books but only the passage from the movement-image to the time-image.

To understand how social history intervenes in this passage from one regulative image to another, we should keep in mind the four layers I outlined above. What Deleuze maps onto the history of cinema is the crisis of a specific cinematic image (the action-image). The distinction between classical and modern cinema corresponds neither to the transcendental difference between the plane of immanence and the interval that interrupts it, or to a difference among world images. What explains the passage from classical to modern cinema is the insufficiency of the movement-image (as a regulative image) to account for the possibilities of cinema. The proper question, then, is not how an ontological distinction becomes a historical one but rather how the two regulative images might correspond to a distinction between classical and modern cinema.

This distinction shifts the question but does not yet address it satisfactorily. Deleuze himself seems aware that he introduces a transcendent element in explaining the crisis of the action-image. He distinguishes between external factors (the war, the unsteadiness of the American dream, the new consciousness of minorities) and more internal factors (the rise of images both in the external world and in people's minds, the influence of literature's experimental modes of narration

on cinema).²² Clearly, none of these factors emerge purely from the natural history of images that Deleuze outlines. We might find the key to the parallelism between the natural history of images and social history elsewhere, in a passage toward the end of the section on any-space-whatevers. Deleuze explains that, after World War II, the world became populated with any-space-whatevers: the war produced waste grounds, cities in shambles, undifferentiated urban tissue, vacated places and heaps of useless girders.²³ The proliferation of these any-space-whatevers questions the social relevance of the action-image.

Deleuze's argument is not about the magical coincidence between an ontological and a historical distinction but rather about the impotence of the action-image to account for the state of world images. The argument is not concerned with the natural history of images but with the social relevance of cinematic images. By citing external factors, Deleuze attempts to explain why we ceased to believe in the action-image and how the time-image allowed us to continue believing in cinema. The war offered not the ontological conditions for the emergence of the time-image — which are already given by the interval that interrupts the plane of immanence — but only the social conditions for its legibility and relevance.

V. ILLUSTRATING TIME

Rancière moves from the tension between ontology and history to the tension between concepts and their exemplification. He stages his argument in two parts. First, he takes issue with the lack of accord between example and concept. If the movement-image and the time-image are in fact distinct, how can the same films illustrate aspects of both? Second, he takes exception to the shape of these examples. If there is a difference between the movement-image and the time-image, why does

Deleuze resort to fables to allegorize the break between them? These last two sections are dedicated to these questions.

Rancière forcefully argues that it is impossible to isolate “any ‘time-images,’ any images endowed with properties that would distinguish them from the ‘movement-image’.”²⁴ He notes how Deleuze analyzes Bresson’s cinema in almost identical terms in both volumes. Paradoxically, Deleuze seems to analyze the same images as constitutive of both the affection-image and the time-image. In exhibiting this contradiction, this argument manifests its own reliance on a metaphysics foreign to Deleuzianism. Rancière’s unquestioned premise is that films should not belong to both the movement-image and the time-image; otherwise, the two types of images would be indistinguishable. Rancière expects that films behave as what I have elsewhere referred to as *instances*, that is, as particulars contained under a concept. The concept should behave as a *class*, collecting a set of films that share the same quality.²⁵ Clearly, the movement-image and the time-image do not behave as classes that would somehow contain all the films discussed under each of them.

Deleuze rejects this relationship between particulars and universals in terms of containment. In Deleuzian metaphysics, films and concepts implicate one another; their relationship is one of proximity. Films and concepts only differ by degree, that is, both are images expressing the whole world from their point of view. Films behave as cases, which implicate everything in the world (including both regulative images), expressing distinctly those parts of the universe that are nearest or more extensively related to it. From this perspective, it involves no contradiction that a certain film expresses both the affection-image and the time-image. The movement-image and the time-image involve obverse readings of the whole of cinema, readings that proceed in opposite directions. In this sense, any film, regardless of its dominant images, expresses, however confusedly, both regulative images.

The affection-image and the time-image only differ by degree. What appears as

a difference in kind refers not to incompatible natures but rather to avatars and layers of one and the same nature. For this reason, Deleuze insists in calling everything an image, regardless if he is speaking of the transcendental field from which world and cinema emerge, the world itself, the regimes that regulate the creation of cinematic images, or the cinematic images created within these regimes. At the transcendental level, the movement-image and the interval are not of a different kind. The interval, which will be occupied by the living image, is merely subtractive, reflecting the world in one of its facets. At the ontological level, that is, as world images, perception, action, and affection involve differing perspectives of the same nature, expressing living images in terms of substance, action, or quality, respectively.

At the semiotic level, the difference in degree is clearer in the movement-image than in the time-image. The cinematic regimes within the movement-image differ from one another in regard to their degree of specification of their respective space, body and passion. The affection-image consists of an any-space-whatever, an affect, and an expression; in the impulse-image, these three elements are more specified, becoming, respectively, an originary world, a fragment, and an impulse; in the action-image, these elements become almost fully specified and appear as a determined milieu, an object, and an emotion.²⁶ This classification in terms of degree of specification distinguishes a spiritual, a naturalist and a realist cinema, a classification Deleuze evokes to make the case that realism is a station among the regimes that the cinema creates. Cinema's apparent vocation for realism is merely one of the expressions of cinema's vocation for the creation of images.

By expressing the crisis of the action-image in terms of specification, we can better understand the purely regulative nature of the movement-image and the time-image. In the relation-image — the last avatar of the movement-image — images become symbols and no aspect of the world escapes this symbolization. We

could in fact conceive of the sophisticated Hollywood melodrama as the epitome of this utmost degree of specification. One of the theses of Elsaesser's "Tales of Sound and Fury" is that the action that characterizes American cinema comes to a halt in these melodramas.²⁷ Elsaesser writes, "The characters are, so to speak, each others' sole referent, there is no world outside to be acted on, no reality that could be defined or assumed unambiguously."²⁸ The world in melodrama — particularly, the domestic space — becomes saturated with symbols that ultimately devolve into the characters' immobility and helplessness.

In relation to the pressure created by objects, Elsaesser mentions the first sequence of the World War II melodrama *Since You Went Away* (1944), in which Anne (Claudette Colbert) wanders around the family home after taking her husband to the troop-train. All the objects in the family home remind her of marital bliss, "until she cannot bear the strain and falls on her bed sobbing."²⁹ We can compare this sequence to a celebrated sequence in *Umberto D* (1952): in the course of a series of mechanical gestures, Maria's (Maria-Pia Casilio's) eyes meet her pregnant belly "as though all the misery in the world were going to be born."³⁰ Deleuze's point is that a pure optical situation arises when Maria has no response to the violence and misery of the everyday world. In *Since You Went Away*, what Anne can't bear is not the senselessness or brutality of the world but rather the degree to which the world has become specified. What explains the difference between the two sequences is the effect of the war on images: whereas images in *Since You Went Away* are saturated with nostalgic signification, they have become emptied of their everyday meaning in *Umberto D*.

Once we understand the movement-image in terms of escalating degrees of specification culminating in the saturated relation-image, the distinction between the time-image and the affection-image becomes clearer. The movement-image is a plastic system of specification that reaches its melting point in the relation-image.

The newness of the time-image entails the regression (in terms of specification) in which plastic matter enters; this plastic matter unfolds no longer toward a fully specified universe but toward the interval from which the double system of reference emerges. We can say, then, that the time-image must revisit the affection-image — must pass through it — to reveal the interval that affection occupies. This revisiting clarifies an obscure passage in “The Affection-Image.” Deleuze distinguishes between two kinds of any-space-whatevers: disconnected spaces in which links and orientation have lost their determination and empty spaces that have eliminated “that which happened and acted in it.”³¹ Deleuze explains that these two spaces imply each other and retain the same nature but that “one is ‘before’ and the other ‘after’.”³² This ‘after’ attests to the effect of the time-image on the affection-image; the time-image enables the reading of disconnected spaces as spaces that have been emptied of their specification.

Rancière correctly points out that no single element distinguishes the time-image from an affection-image. What allows us to read a hardly specified milieu as a reverse unfolding is the experience of the action-image’s crisis, that is, the experience of an almost total specification. In a certain sense, Rancière is closer to Deleuze than it might appear at first sight. Rancière writes, “movement-image and time-image are by no means two types of images ranged in opposition, but two different points of view on the image.”³³ We should add that what appears as a difference in type is always a difference of perspective, a difference made possible, in this case, by the crisis generated by the image’s saturation. We should, however, avoid Rancière’s conclusion that the difference between the movement-image and the time-image is “strictly transcendental because it does not correspond to an identifiable rupture.”³⁴ As I have been arguing, the difference is more properly regulative, enabling the legibility of cinematic signs that would otherwise remain invisible.

VI. THE FABLE-IMAGE

Rancière takes exception not only to the extension of Deleuze's examples but also to their shape. Deleuze cites fables—and not images—as evidence that the sensory-motor schema is in crisis, locating the signs of this crisis in the characters' own paralysis [most notably, in the paralysis of the characters James Stewart plays in Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954) and *Vertigo* (1958)]. Rancière considers Deleuze's argument strange to the extent that the characters' paralysis does not in any way "hinder the linear arrangement of the images and the action from moving forward."³⁵ Because the fictional situation does not paralyze the logic of the movement-image, Rancière believes that these fictional situations of paralysis are merely allegories emblematic of the rupture of the sensory-motor link.

This argument about the allegorical nature of fables relies on an opposition between image and fable foreign to Deleuzianism. Rancière misconstrues Deleuze's argument about two different regimes of the image (and two corresponding narrative regimes) as an argument about image and fable. This misconception is most apparent in Rancière's suggestion that Deleuze and Godard perform the same operation on the images of Hitchcock's cinema.³⁶ In *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1997-1998), Godard lifts shots of objects from their narrative function; in Deleuze's argument, images are not arrested from a narrative; more properly, characters are arrested from their sensory-motor situations. The characters' immobility is supposed not to generate a narrative paralysis but to point toward a different relation between characters and images — that is, a different relation among images because characters are nothing other than images. As Deleuze writes, we are an assemblage or a consolidate of perception-images, action-images and affection-image.³⁷ The characters' inability to act on images and to react to them points to relations among images that are no longer dominated by actions and reactions. This relationship

continues to generate fables even if the sensory-motor schema no longer regulates these fables.

Rancière's claim about the allegorical nature of Deleuze's argument intersects with his more general criticism of Deleuzian aesthetics. Rancière identifies two moments or gestures in Deleuze's studies on art: first, Deleuze extracts a radical materiality of artistic expression from the realm of representation; and second, Deleuze returns to the realm of representation to analyze particular texts as allegories emblematic of the aim of art.³⁸ In regard to Deleuze's studies on painting and literature, this analysis is correct for the most part. *The Logic of Sensation* begins by explaining how Bacon avoids the figurative (the representative), illustrative and narrative character of painting through what Deleuze calls the Figure, an extraction of the visual whole from its figurative state. The technique consists in isolating the figure from its landscape, establishing "nonnarrative relationships between Figures, and nonillustrative relationships between the Figure and the fact."³⁹ However, the Figure maintains a complex relationship to figuration. The Figure flees from figuration only to generate a second figuration, but between the two "a leap in place is produced, a deformation in place, the emergence-in-place of the figure: the pictorial act."⁴⁰ Deleuze detects in Bacon's paintings a hysteria, whereby the body imposes its own presence and escapes from the organism. But this hysteria is also a more general characteristic of painting to the extent that painting "directly attempts to release the presences beneath representation, beyond representation."⁴¹ The artist marches into the desert to undo the world of figuration.⁴² As Rancière puts it, Deleuze turns Bacon's work into a hysterical formula that keeps schizophrenia "within the framework where it creates again and again the work of art and the allegory for the task of producing the work of art."⁴³

In relation to literature, Deleuze begins by uncovering blocks of precepts and affects beneath classical narration, emancipating a molecular world from the law of

mimesis.⁴⁴ The second gesture consists in returning to the realm of representation, in which Deleuze privileges “narratives about metamorphoses, passages onto the other side, about becoming indiscernible.”⁴⁵ Rancière suggests that, as in the paintings Deleuze selects, these fables must reveal “what literature performs in its own work.”⁴⁶ Bartleby’s formula (“I would prefer not to”) and Gregor’s warbling allegorize within the fable how a minor literature carves “a kind of foreign language within language.”⁴⁷ Paradoxically, despite privileging molecular multiplicities and haecceities over representation, Deleuze ultimately returns to the fable to support his argument.

Rancière extrapolates this analysis to the Cinema books without much qualification. He cites the example of Rossellini’s *Europa ’51* (1952), a film through which Deleuze illustrates how the time-image involves “a cinema of the seer and no longer of the agent.”⁴⁸ According to Rancière, Irene’s (Ingrid Bergman’s) paralysis functions as an allegory not only of the birth of the new image but also of the artist, “the one who has gone to the desert, the one who has seen the too strong, unbearable vision, and who will henceforth never be in harmony with the world of representation.”⁴⁹ However, a shift in terms of the fable Deleuze privileges in literature and in cinema becomes apparent: *Europa ’51* is not a fable of becoming as much as of paralysis.

Deleuze does discuss fables of becoming in the “The Powers of the False.” However, these fables do not allegorize cinema’s own artistic emancipation from the realm of representation as much as they exemplify a type of description and narration freed not from representation but, more specifically, from the sensory-motor schema. In fact, *Cinema 1* is partly dedicated to dispelling the notion that the movement-image is necessarily representational. Precisely because the movement-image already stratifies degrees of specification, the time-image is able to suspend its dependence on the sensory-motor schema. We can identify two gestures in this

argument, but they do not correspond, point by point, to the ones Rancière identifies in Deleuze's works on painting and literature. The first gesture consists not only in extracting the plastic material from what appears as a representational medium but also in understanding representation in terms of specification, that is, as a matter of degree. The second gesture does not return to the realm of representation to offer a paradoxical allegory of cinema's own emancipation from representation. More properly, this gesture consists in detailing a narrative system that operates without the restrictions imposed by the sensory-motor schema.

The fables of paralysis, on the other hand, do identify the crisis of a regime and the transition to another. But why would these fables be allegories about the crisis of one image and the birth of another? Why would these fables not involve directly the crisis and birth of images? At the heart of these questions is the status of narration in cinema. Is narration a transcendent introduced into the cinema through language systems or is narration in itself an image?

Deleuze himself seems to regard narration as a transcendent element in cinema. In arguing against a linguistic conception of cinema, Deleuze claims that "utterances and narration are not a given of visible images" but a consequence that flows from the transformation that the plastic mass suffers from the action of language systems.⁵⁰ In this sense, "[n]arration is grounded in the image itself, but it is not a given."⁵¹ Should we conclude that narrative involves a purely transcendent imposition of language systems on the plastic mass of images? If we accept this conclusion, Rancière's argument about the allegorical nature of fables seems indisputable. Why would the natural history of images and its legibility depend on the transcendent imposition of language systems?

However, this conception of narrative as an element foreign to images would be at odds with Deleuze's own argument that the movement-image and the time-image implicate two different regimes of narration. The movement-image implicates

a truthful and organic narration, which develops in a Euclidean space and in accord with the sensory-motor schema. The time-image implicates a falsifying and crystalline narration, which exists in disconnected, empty or amorphous spaces in which the connections among parts are not predetermined.⁵² In other words, narration expresses the difference between the movement-image and the time-image. From this perspective, narration appears neither as a given of world images nor as an effect of the transformation images suffer as a reaction to language systems. More precisely, narration develops in agreement with the connections among images that the movement-image and the time-image establish as legible and legitimate.

We can speak, then, of a fable-image, which would consist simply of the images considered from the perspective of the links among them. A fable is nothing but the series of links among images and the reading of images that arises from the perspective of these links. The fable-image arises not from world images themselves but from a reading of their connections that the movement-image and the time-image make possible. For this reason, fables in the *Cinema* books do not function as a transcendent device that would allegorize a difference among images, a difference that would be ineffectual at the level of images themselves. Fables exhibit a difference that pertains to the movement-image and the time-image, even if this difference does not inhere world images.

For Rancière, on the other hand, the relationship between image and fable is eminently dialectical rather than expressive. He begins *Film Fables* with an argument about how film theoreticians (specifically Epstein and Deleuze) “extract, after the fact, the original essence of the cinematographic art from the plots the art of cinema shares with the old art of telling stories.”⁵³ Paradoxically, Rancière argues, the fable about the essence of cinema must be extracted from the stories that supposedly obscure this essence. Rancière puts Epstein’s and Deleuze’s procedure on its head:

rather than discounting the fables cinema tells to extract the essence of the medium, he suggests that fables internalize what appears to reside outside cinema. The film fable is thwarted to the extent that the passivity of the image offers a “counter-movement that affects the arrangement of incidents and shots.”⁵⁴ In Rancière’s reformulation of the medium specificity thesis, the medium no longer reaches its zenith when its fables and forms express the essence of the medium. Instead, film fables dramatize whatever thwarts the cinema. For this reason, in each of the chapters in *Film Fables*, Rancière locates a thwarting game in the films he analyzes. Particularly, in the first three chapters of the book, he stages cinema’s encounter with theater (“Eisenstein’s Madness” and “A Silent Tartuffe”) and with television (“Fritz Lang Between Two Ages”).

In each of these thwarting games, an apparently external limit to these fables proves to be an internal limit. What appears as an external limit of cinema (theater, literature, or television) is in fact its internal limit. As Rancière writes, “Cinema can only make the games of exchange and inversion with its own means intelligible to itself through the games of exchange and inversion it plays with the literary fable, the plastic form, and the theatrical voice.”⁵⁵ It is difficult to miss the Hegelian game between internal and external limits in this argument. In Hegelian terms, the specificity thesis would claim that cinema should transcend its external limits to become what it ought to be. The Hegelian maneuver — and this is Rancière’s maneuver as well — consists in recognizing these external limits as inherent to cinema, that is, in reflecting these limits into cinema itself.

This dialectical conception of the relationship between fable and image derives not from a different ontology as much as from a political philosophy that privileges aesthetics. For Rancière, aesthetics distributes the sensible, delimiting “spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise,” simultaneously determining “the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience.”⁵⁶ Cinema

is caught between two different regimes of art: the representative and the aesthetic. Guided by the mimetic principle, the representative regime distributes “ways of doing, making, seeing, and judging,” a distribution that figures “into an analogy with a fully hierarchical vision of the community.”⁵⁷ Accordingly, the representative regime privileges dramatic action to the detriment of the image. The aesthetic regime counters this hierarchical distribution by proclaiming the identity of conscious and unconscious, active and passive, exterior and interior, sensible and intelligible. The aesthetic regime frees art from any hierarchy, distinguishing instead a mode of being particular to art “inhabited by a heterogeneous power, the power of a form of thought that has become foreign to itself.”⁵⁸

Rancière’s argument about the imbrication of the representational and aesthetic regimes in cinema follows a sinuous line of thought. By recording images that offer counter-movements to dramatic progression, cinema appears to undermine the hierarchy inherent in the representative regime of art. Cinema would seem to fulfill one of the promises of the aesthetic regime of art, namely, the union of contraries whereby “the activity of thought and sensible receptivity become a single reality.”⁵⁹ Paradoxically, although cinema recovers the pure presence of the image, cinema also restores the representative regime with its genres, arrangement of incidents and defined characters. Finally, Rancière argues that, despite this restoration of the representational regime, cinema is necessarily informed by the gap between the arrangement of incidents and the image’s automatism. For this reason, film fables are essentially thwarted; in cinema, this automatism imposes a counter-effect that always accompanies the arrangements of fictional incidents.⁶⁰

From this perspective, Deleuzian aesthetics — as well as the *Cinema* books — appears firmly inscribed within the destiny of the aesthetic regime of art, which submits the sensible (and the work of art) to the heterogeneous power of the spirit.⁶¹ Rancière views Deleuzian aesthetics as a continuation (in an inverted configuration)

of the Romantic model of thought. For Rancière, the Romantic model “highlights the immanence of logos in pathos.”⁶² Accordingly, whereas Romanticism “goes from stone and desert to the spirit,” Deleuzianism attempts to seize instead “the spirit at that point of arrest where the image becomes petrified and returns the spirit to its desert.”⁶³ Furthermore, Deleuze fulfills “the destiny of aesthetics by suspending the entire power of the work of art to the ‘pure’ sensible,” paradoxically destroying the substance of aesthetics by turning art into an allegory for the destiny of aesthetics.⁶⁴

The tension between *Film Fables* and the *Cinema* books resides in the substitution of the representative regime for the movement-image. Refusing to acknowledge cinema’s restoration of the representative regime, Deleuze understands representation as a station in the specification of images. This refusal creates a curious status for the time-image, which is inscribed within every image yet only fully appears as a regime after external conditions allow for its legibility. Rancière’s substitution of the representative regime for the movement-image locates an ongoing dialectic at the heart of cinema, which struggles from its very inception between its call to restore the fading representative arts and its affinity with the pure sensible that characterizes the aesthetic regime.

This substitution ultimately inverts the relationship between image and fable in the *Cinema* books. In *Film Fables*, the image no longer transforms the fable into one of its expressions; instead, the fable transfigures the image’s passivity into one of the fable’s dramatic elements. For this reason, Rancière privileges fables that allegorize the representative regime’s negotiations with its limits and the absorption of these limits. Not surprisingly, Rancière locates in the *Cinema* books the opposite allegory, a fable about the aesthetic regime’s struggle against representation. What appears at first as a matter of theoretical commitments — a choice between a strict ontology of images and a political theory founded on aesthetics — devolves into a matter of taste — a choice between a becoming-image of the fable and a becoming-fable of the image.

NOTES

1. Jacques Rancière, *Film Fables*, trans. Emiliano Battista (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 108-109.
2. Rancière, *The Flesh of Words*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 154.
3. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 58.
4. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 159-171, 176-192.
5. For a brief discussion of Deleuze's transcendental empiricism, see Slavoj Žižek, *Organs Without Bodies: On Deleuze and Consequences* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 3-9.
6. See Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Zone Books, 1992), 99-111.
7. Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988), 122.
8. Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 61.
9. *Ibid.*, 56-62.
10. *Ibid.*, 62-66.
11. *Ibid.*, 69.
12. Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 28-30.
13. Rancière, *Film Fables*, 108.
14. Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 41 and 43.
15. Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 60.
16. *Ibid.*, 65.
17. Rancière, *Film Fables*, 109.
18. *Ibid.*, 110.
19. Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 70.
20. *Ibid.*, 97, 110.
21. *Ibid.*, ix, xiv.
22. *Ibid.*, 207.
23. *Ibid.*, 120.
24. Rancière, *Film Fables*, 112.
25. See Agustín Zarzosa, "The Case and its Modes: Instance, Allusion, Example, Illustration and Exception," *Angelaki* (forthcoming).
26. Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 102-111, 123-125, 141-143.
27. Thomas Elsaesser, "Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama," in *Home Is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film*, ed. Christine Gledhill (London: British Film Institute, 1987), 54-58.
28. *Ibid.*, 56.
29. *Ibid.*, 62.
30. Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 2.
31. Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 120.
32. *Ibid.*, 120.
33. Rancière, *Film Fables*, 112-113.
34. *Ibid.*, 114.
35. *Ibid.*, 115.
36. *Ibid.*, 116.
37. Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 66.
38. Rancière, interview by David Rabouin, "Deleuze accomplit le destin de l'esthétique," *Magazine littéraire* 406 (February 2002): 38-40.
39. Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 6.
40. Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 79.
41. *Ibid.*, 45.
42. Rancière, "Is there a Deleuzian aesthetics?," trans. Radmila Djordjevic, *Qui Parle* 14:2 (Spring/Summer 2004): 7.
43. *Ibid.*, 7.
44. Rancière, *The Flesh of Words*, 150-151.
45. *Ibid.*, 153.
46. *Ibid.*
47. Deleuze, "Bartleby; or the Formula," in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 71-72. See also Deleuze and Felix

- Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 16-27.
48. Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 2.
 49. Rancière, "Is there a Deleuzian aesthetics?", 8.
 50. Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 29.
 51. *Ibid.*, 29.
 52. *Ibid.*, 126-129.
 53. Rancière, *Film Fables*, 6.
 54. *Ibid.*, 15.
 55. *Ibid.*, 15.
 56. Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), 13.
 57. *Ibid.*, 22.
 58. *Ibid.*, 23.
 59. *Ibid.*, 27.
 60. Rancière, *Film Fables*, 7-15.
 61. For discussions of the aesthetic regime of art, see Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 20-30; Rancière, "Is there a Deleuzian aesthetics?", 8-11; and Rancière, *Film Fables*, 7-11.
 62. Rancière, "Is there a Deleuzian aesthetics?", 10.
 63. *Ibid.*, 10-11.
 64. *Ibid.*, 13-14.

THE TWILIGHT OF THE INDEX

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I. MEDIUM SPECIFICITY

Contemporary film theory is doubly ungrounded: by metacritical debates about *the status of theory* and the role philosophy has to play in the reinvention of film theory, and by debates *about the status of film* in an era when film as a physical object might be disappearing. We can distinguish three main strands in recent theoretical debates: 1) a re-evaluation of the status of film theory in relation to philosophy and science; 2) a turn to ethics, as evidenced by a number of recent publications on Levinas and cinema;¹ and, most importantly, 3) a return to earlier ontological theories of film in response to the emergence of the digital, i.e., a historicization of theory.

The digital has prompted a critical revival of Bazin, Kracauer, Epstein, Balasz and Arnheim and, more specifically, a renewed interest in the relationship between film and photography² reflected in 1) the return to questions of indexicality and 2) a rethinking of medium specificity away from the idea of medium as a material or physical support. In *Remediation: Understanding New Media*,³ Jay David Bolter's and Richard Grusin's exploration of the numerous ways in which new media and old media remediate each other, the notion of "indexicality" dissolves into the "double logic of remediation," which renders the history of *all* media as a continual oscillation between two contradictory impulses toward immediacy and hypermediacy, the experience of which, Bolter and Grusin suggest, remains constant regardless of the specific temporal and spatial limitations of different media.⁴ That Bolter and Grusin use the term "remediation" to describe both remediation of one

medium by another, e.g., cinema and photography, as well as remediation within the same medium, suggests the extent to which they consider a material-based definition of medium specificity obsolete.

For Rosalind Krauss, too, in the “post-medium condition” a medium is no longer defined in terms of its material or physical support; “medium specificity” retains its legitimacy only as “different specificity”: Krauss locates the specificity of a medium not within a medium’s material limits but in the medium’s relationship to the “essence of Art itself.”⁵ In “Two Moments from the Post-Medium Condition” she develops further her critique of the Greenbergian notion of medium specificity by expanding the notion of a medium’s “physical support” to what she terms its “technical support,” a concept that still acknowledges a medium’s past practice (based on its material limits and constraints) but also refers to the development of new aesthetic conventions that ‘reinvent’ the medium by rethinking the Idea of Art itself:

I am using the term “technical support” here as a way of warding off the unwanted positivism of the term “medium” which, in most readers’ minds, refers to the specific material support for a traditional aesthetic genre. [...] “Technical support” has the virtue of acknowledging the recent obsolescence of most traditional aesthetic mediums [...] while it also welcomes the layered mechanisms of new technologies that make a simple, unitary identification of the work’s physical support impossible (is the “support” of film the celluloid strip, the screen, the splices of the edited footage, the projector’s beam of light, the circular reels?).⁶

Some have interpreted Krauss’s substitution of “technical” for “physical” support as evidence of her commitment to upholding a medium’s materiality in the face of

digital media's threatening immateriality.⁷ However, Krauss never quite explains what distinguishes the "technical" from the "physical" support of a medium. For instance, her analysis of the work of conceptual photographer Sophie Calle fails to demonstrate how Calle's appropriation of the *aesthetic conventions* of "the documentary report" — which Krauss offers as an example of the "technical" support of Calle's medium — reinvents the *medium* of photography.

Like Krauss, Rodowick argues that "there is no medium-based ontology that grounds film as an aesthetic medium"⁸ and that "a medium should be distinguished from its physical support and channel of transmission even if they share the same substance or material,"⁹ although he offers a slightly different explanation: the cinematic image, he insists, is inherently virtual on account of its spatialization of time and temporalization of space. Appropriating Stanley Cavell's notion of medium as the creation of "automatisms" that are "cultural as well as mechanical,"¹⁰ Rodowick posits cinematic and photographic codes as *virtual* rather than deriving from the physical nature of the signifier.¹¹

Rodowick's "virtualization" of media informs, as well, a number of recently published studies on the relationship between photography and cinema, which continue to challenge medium-specific claims. In "Photography's Expanded Field" George Baker introduces the notion of "expanded photography," thereby problematizing any attempt to determine whether a given work is an instance of cinema's remediation of photography or of photography's remediation of cinema.¹² Along similar lines, in *Photography and Cinema* David Campany claims that the history of avant-garde cinema has been the history of cinema's gravitation toward photographic stillness, with art photography itself gravitating toward cinema. In Campany's view, both tendencies point to each medium's precarious place in contemporary digital culture. "Often the nature of a technology," he writes, "becomes clear to us just as it is about to mutate or disappear. Cinema seems to have

been attracted to different forms of the photographic image at such moments.”¹³ Peter Wollen suggests that even still photographs, while not narratives in themselves, can be considered elements of narrative and that, alternatively, movement is not essential to film.¹⁴ Seemingly following Roland Barthes, Laura Mulvey claims that indexicality “gets lost” in the moving image, only to remind us that slowing down or freezing the moving image returns indexicality to it, thereby encouraging a more fetishistic involvement with the image.¹⁵ David Company surveys the changing social uses of photography in order to demonstrate that the definition of a medium is cultural rather than technological or physical.¹⁶ In *After Photography* Fred Ritchin dismisses the *material* distinction between indexical and non-indexical photographs as secondary to the *cultural* distinction between fictional and non-fictional photographs.¹⁷ Finally, Corey Dzenko elaborates on this point by noting that analog photography’s relation to reality has always been *ideological*, once again emphasizing the social applications and the appearance of digital images which, he claims, they share with analog images.¹⁸

II. THE TWILIGHT OF INDEXICALITY

Recent theoretical engagements with indexicality reveal a subtle shift in the traditional understanding of this concept, not only in the work of theorists who believe digital photography and cinema to be just extensions of their analog counterparts, but also in the work of those who have tried to salvage the notion of medium specificity and to underscore the differences between analog and digital. In *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*,¹⁹ perhaps the most exhaustive study of indexicality and archival desire, Mary Ann Doane locates the index on the threshold of semiosis: contingency, indexicality and illegibility are understood in terms of photography’s

and cinema's capacity to record a plenitude of information irreducible to signification. However, in the final pages Doane reminds us that

the index is evacuated of content; it is a hollowed-out sign. [...] Hence, indexicality together with its seemingly privileged relation to the referent — to singularity and contingency — *is available to a range of media*. The *insistency* and *compulsion* Peirce associates with the indexical sign are certainly attributes of television and digital media as well; witness the televisual obsession with the “live” coverage of catastrophe, the ultimate representation of contingency, chance, the instantaneous, as well as the logistics of the Internet which promises to put diversity, singularity and instantaneity more fully within our grasp.²⁰

Here “contingency” becomes conflated with the unpredictability of natural catastrophes, while “instantaneity,” no longer a temporal category, signifies the ease with which we access information.²¹ Perhaps more importantly, by aligning the digital with the after-image, which she posits as a natural aspect of human vision, Doane suggests that the digital might indeed be pre-figured by, or inherent in, perception. At first, she claims the afterimage and the indexical sign stake out different relations to referentiality: “After looking at a bright object and then looking away, one will see an afterimage whether the original bright object continues to exist or not. [...] The concept of the index, on the other hand, seems to acknowledge the invasion of semiotic systems by the real.”²² However, she then reminds us that perception is never instantaneous but “pivots upon a temporal lag, a superimposition of images, an inextricability of past and present.”²³ If perception is always, to a certain degree, independent of its referent, on account of this inherent delay, then the digital's complete independence from its referent only extends, or makes visible, the temporal lag: the after-image pre-figures the digital image

inasmuch as both exemplify the movement “away from referentiality and toward subjectivization of vision.”²⁴

The anxiety produced by the digital is then not inherent in new technologies of representation: it is caused by our realization that new technologies materialize the inherent instability or virtuality of the body, a body that cannot even trust its own senses. In the face of such a body, “the desire for instantaneity emerges as a guarantee of a grounded referentiality. [...] [Photography and cinema] become forms of prosthetic devices that compensate for a flawed body.”²⁵ Doane implies that *the index is not necessarily synonymous with referentiality* because a temporal tension, in the form of delay, is inherent in the index: “Yet the index also harbors within itself a temporal tension. On the one hand, the indexical trace — the footprint, the fossil, the photograph — carries a historicity, makes the past present. At the other extreme, the deictic index — the signifiers ‘here,’ ‘now,’ ‘this,’ ‘that’ — are inextricable from the idea of presence.”²⁶ Ultimately, the tension between the notion of the digital as breaking the indexical relation to reality and, on the other hand, the idea that all media — both old and new — are defined in terms of their legibility, conceived as both a lure (the promise of archiving time) and a threat (the threat of illegibility, noise, nonsense) remains unresolved in Doane’s study. At the end of the book she notes that “the project of the cinema in modernity [...] that of endowing the singular [the contingent, the indexical] with significance without relinquishing singularity [contingency, indexicality] [...] is not necessarily abandoned with the emergence of even newer technologies of representation.”²⁷

Adopting a pragmatic position, in “What Is the Point of an Index?” Tom Gunning seeks to demonstrate that the digital and the indexical are not mutually exclusive by proposing that the index is meaningless or useless outside of the visual accuracy or recognisability of the image. He suggests a re-reading of Peirce’s system of signs, arguing that indexicality cannot be separated from considerations of visual

accuracy against Peirce's claim that the indexical and the iconic function of a sign must be considered independent of each other. For Gunning the fascination we feel when confronted with a photograph stems not from any desire to know how it was made (whether it has a real referent or not) but rather from our ability to *recognize* its visual resemblance to a referent (however different it might be from it): "[T]he power of the digital (or even the traditional photographic) to 'transform' an image depends on maintaining something of the original image's visual accuracy and recognisability. I use this phrase (visual accuracy and recognisability') to indicate the manner in which indexicality intertwines with iconicity in our common assessment of photographs."²⁸ Gunning challenges the usefulness of the notion of indexicality by downplaying the photograph's semiotic structure and foregrounding its phenomenology:

It is only by a phenomenological investigation of our investment in the photographic image (digital or otherwise obtained) that I think we can truly grasp the drive behind digitalization and why photography seems unlikely to disappear. [...] I am positing a phenomenological fascination with photography that involves a continuing sense of a relation between the photograph and a pre-existing reality. While this is precisely what "indexicality" supposedly involves, I am less and less sure this semiotic term provides the proper (or sufficient) term for the experience.²⁹

The knowledge of how the photograph was produced (the indexical relation to a real object guaranteed by the light bouncing off the object), argues Gunning, cannot explain our fascination with it. An indexical relation "falls entirely into the rational realm"³⁰ and thus cannot account for the photograph's "irrational power to bear away our faith."³¹ Gunning urges us to revisit Barthes and Bazin, both of whom

conceived of the photograph as an image without a code (Barthes) that puts us in the presence of something (Bazin). However, contrary to Barthes and Bazin, Gunning claims that the qualities that make the photograph fascinating are *not* necessarily those related to indexicality, i.e., to temporality. Instead, he emphasizes the photograph's "sense of a nearly inexhaustible visual richness," the delight in visual illusion it provokes, and its ability to put us in the presence of something that is not necessarily a real referent: qualities we recognize as essential to the digital rather than to the analog image.

In *The Virtual Life of Film* Rodowick challenges Gunning's reduction of indexicality to perceptual realism. Analog images, he reminds us, function through transcription, primarily a temporal process, while digital images function through calculation or conversion: they do not provoke an experience of the intensity of time but merely measure time as the conversion of light into code: "The primary sense of every photograph is that it is a *spatial record of duration* [...] Capturing a cone of light involves opening *a window of time*."³² On the contrary,

the technological criteria of perceptual realism [wrongly] assume [...] that the primary powers of photography are *spatial semblance*. [...] The concept of realism in use by computer graphics professionals [...] does not correspond to an ordinary spatial sense of the world and actual events taking place within it, but rather to our *perceptual* and *cognitive* norms for apprehending a *represented* space, especially a space that can be represented or constructed according to mathematical notation.³³

Paradoxically, Rodowick, like Doane, ends up effacing the distinction between analog and digital he is supposedly trying to uphold by underscoring cinema's inherent virtuality. Rodowick returns to Metz who "distinguishes between film as

actual or a concrete discursive unity, and cinema as an ideal set. This distinction launches us toward another sense of the virtuality of film and film theory. [...] Within the filmic, the cinematographic inscribes itself as vast virtuality [...] [through] the notion of cinematic codes.³⁴ Individual films are concrete and singular while cinematic codes are virtual: “[T]he quality of being cinematic in no way derives from the physical nature of the signifier.”³⁵ Medium specificity does not originate in the materiality of the cinematic signifier: a code “is a constructed rather than inherent unity, and it does not exit prior to analysis.”³⁶

Thus, cinema exists as a *conceptual virtuality*, of which analog cinema is just one particular instance. On the other hand, cinema’s inherent virtuality is a function of its hybridity as both a temporal and a spatial medium. Unsettling the conceptual categories of 18th and 19th century aesthetics, cinema, defined as the presence of something spatially and temporally absent, was from the beginning “among the most temporal, and therefore virtual, of the arts”³⁷: its “twofold virtuality [is] defined by a vertiginous spatialization of time and temporalization of space.”³⁸ By treating the digital as the virtual life of the analog, and by emphasizing the ontological groundlessness of cinema — by implying that even the index cannot ground it — Rodowick downplays the rupture between the two, suggesting that the digital and the index are not mutually exclusive.

Along similar lines, in “Digital Editing and Montage: The Vanishing Celluloid and Beyond” Martin Lefebvre and Marc Furstenau propose that insofar as digital images are made in the hope of being interpreted as photographic they should be considered indexical: their “index” is photography rather than reality.³⁹ In order to demonstrate that every sign is indexical the authors analyze a realist painting of a house represented in a way that allows us to read it as a sign of domesticity:

The hypothesis is that houses of this sort really belong to our concept of domesticity. The house in the picture is thus conceived as belonging to a class of *experiential objects* i.e. as being *indexically* “connected” to that class by contiguity. Moreover, if the house really exists, then the painting can be seen to have been *determined* by the *existence* of a house belonging to the class of objects falling under the concept of domesticity. If, on the contrary, it is a mere figment of the painter’s imagination, still it is its *connection* to other *existing* houses belonging to the class of objects falling under the concept of domesticity that has partly *determined* it.⁴⁰

Here indexicality is defined conceptually: the house functions as an indexical sign merely by virtue of belonging to a general *type* — houses, existent or imaginary — which fall under the *concept* of domesticity. The authors argue that this example “illustrates that every sign, whether it be about some individual existent or about a general type, requires indexicality. [...] In short, all signs, including digital images and cinematic fictions, should they mean anything, are to be understood ultimately as...indexically connected to reality.”⁴¹ Here indexicality is conflated with legibility: if a sign is legible it must be (because it is) indexical. All signs are automatically indexical because indexicality is merely

the semiotic function by which a sign indicates or points to its object. [...] Now any given object, whether it be a photograph, a film, a painting, or a CGI is connected with the world (or Reality) in an unlimited number of ways, all of which are ways in which it can serve as an index. Thus it makes no sense to say, for instance, that a traditional photograph is more (or less) indexical than a digital image since we cannot quantify the number of ways in which a given thing can serve as a sign.⁴²

Like Gunning, Lefebvre and Furstenuau propose temporality as just one of the many ways in which a sign can function indexically: an index does not have to be a trace (an imprint of a past moment). Indeed, they go as far as to suggest that there is an entire spectrum of different *degrees of indexicality*, including direct and indirect indexicality, “an index of artistry” and “an index of style” being examples of the latter.

Theoretical discussions of indexicality have been shifting away from a strictly semiotic analysis to a phenomenological analysis of the index in terms of *affect*.⁴³ Thus, Thierry de Duve urges us to consider the psychological response produced by the photograph’s illogical temporality rather than the semiotics of the index: “What is in question here is the *affective and phenomenological* involvement of the unconscious with the external world, rather than its linguistic structure.”⁴⁴ The illogical conjunction of ‘the here and the formerly’, which results in the sudden vanishing of the present tense, accounts for the traumatic effect of the snapshot, while the time exposure’s conjunction of ‘now and there’ accounts for its melancholy effect. Since there is no clear distinction between the snapshot and the time exposure (“one cannot decide on a shutter speed that would operate as a borderline between the two”⁴⁵), every photograph has built into its semiotic structure the trauma effect and the mourning process, i.e. every photograph gives rise to two opposing libidinal attitudes: melancholy (the response to the work of mourning) and mania (the defensive reaction to trauma). It is important to note, however, that de Duve deduces the nature of our unconscious investment in the photograph from an analysis of its semiotic structure, i.e., he still relies on *semiotics* to explain our strong *affective* response to the photograph.

Similarly, Doane understands the index no longer in terms of the deeply historical relationship to reality photography was said to guarantee by virtue of its automatism but in terms of the *affective response* — which she describes in terms of

intensity — produced by *both analog and digital* images. The shift from “the index” to “the affective response to the index” points to a new understanding of indexicality as something *produced: now it is certain representations that guarantee an experience of intensity (i.e., indexicality) rather than the index serving as the representation’s guarantee.* For instance, Doane notes that the indexical trace “as filmic inscription of contingency [...] indissociable from affect”⁴⁶ can take the form of cinephilia, “a kind of zero degree of spectatorship [that] ‘doesn’t do anything other than designate something which resists, which escapes existing networks of critical discourse and theoretical frameworks. [...] [C]inephilia hinges *not on indexicality but on the knowledge of indexicality’s potential.*”⁴⁷

Let us now see how this growing ambivalence surrounding the notion of indexicality manifests itself in contemporary photography.

III. THE “SERIALIZED INSTANT,” “THE LONG NOW,” AND “CINEMATOGRAPHY”

Over the last couple of decades, art photography and experimental cinema have been engaged in a process of mutual mimicking that complicates medium-specific claims. Traditionally, photography has been aligned with stillness and film with movement, i.e., the two media have been distinguished by their different temporalities. Metz described photography as fetishistic by virtue of its ‘off-frame effect’:

[T]he off-frame effect in photography results from a singular and definitive cutting off which figures castration and is figured by the “click” of the shutter. It marks the place of an irreversible absence, a place from which the look has been

averted forever. The photograph itself, the “in-frame,” the abducted part-space, the place of presence and fullness — although undermined and haunted by the feeling of its interior, of its borderlines, which are the past, the left, the lost: the far away even if very close by, as in Walter Benjamin’s conception of the “aura” — the photograph, the inexhaustible reserve of strength and anxiety, shares, as we see, many properties of the fetish (as object). [...] Film is much more difficult to characterize as a fetish.⁴⁸

At the same time, as Thierry de Duve reminds us, photography has a privileged relation to the past, which accounts for its traumatic/melancholy effect:

However, I wish to claim that the photograph is not traumatic because of its content, but because of immanent features of its particular time and space. [...] [P]hotography is probably the only image-producing technique that has a mourning process built into its semiotic structure, just as it has a built-in trauma effect. The reason is again that the referent of an index cannot be set apart from its signifier.⁴⁹

Film, on the other hand, has a privileged relation to the present, which makes it incapable of producing what Barthes, in *Camera Lucida*, describes as the “punctum” of the still image: while the essence of photography is “the Intractable,” its quality of “this has been” and “this was now,” cinema, in Barthes’ view, cannot put us in a similar contact with death.⁵⁰

While a strong investment in slowness and stillness has always been characteristic of the cinematic avant-garde, experimental cinema’s turn toward photography really gained momentum in the wake of the “digital turn,” for instance in works like Douglas Gordon’s *24 Hour Psycho* (1993), James Coleman’s *La tache*

aveugle (*The Blind Spot*, 1978-90), and Sam Taylor-Wood's *Pieta* (2001). Experimental cinema mimics photography by "slowing down" the image and even eliminating movement altogether:

Popular narrative film stays away from endless difference and endless sameness. [...] By contrast, the history of avant-garde cinema is a history of gravitation to those two extremes. At one end there is the film built up from rapid cuts and at the other the long single take. Significantly, at both ends we find versions of photographic stillness. Montage sees the photograph as a partial fragment. The long take sees the photograph as a unified whole.⁵¹

Thus, in *24 Hour Psycho* Gordon extends an entire time frame to that of a 24 hour day, while Coleman's *La tache aveugle* is a slide projection derived from a brief sequence, less than a second long, of the 1933 film.

While experimental cinema mimics photography, contemporary art photography mimics cinema by spatializing and narrativizing time in works of increasing temporal complexity. Barbara Probst's "serialized instant," Uta Barth's "the long now," and Jeff Wall's "cinematography" (staged photography) challenge the notion of the still image as instantaneous by exposing the cinematic within the photographic. That their photography, which relies on tripods, large formats and slow deliberation, has come into prominence at a time when we are bombarded with nostalgia-infused pronouncements of the imminent death of cinema can perhaps be attributed to their attempt at archiving time by exposing the cinematic within the photographic. Contemporary photography's "cinematic turn," I would argue, can be seen as a response to the waning of indexicality, an attempt to compensate for the evacuation of duration from digital cinema⁵² by returning time to the still image.

In *Exposures* (2007) Probst uses as many as twelve cameras and tripods,

arranged around the subject, to photograph multiple points of view captured in separate images but taken simultaneously with a single *radio-controlled* shutter release: extending a single moment into a series dramatizes the impossibility of instantaneous perception. The multiplication of points of view prevents the viewer from taking them in at a glance and imposes a time of reading. Although the multiple vantage points expose the multiplicity and heterogeneity of the instant, they also eliminate “the outside” by making the act of archiving time itself an object of representation: rather than the index being an imprint of the past, we literally see the instant inscribing itself, automatically producing its own record in the present. Probst exposes the cinematic within the photographic by using techniques we have come to associate with cinema as a time-based medium: *suture, montage, shot reverse shot, variations in shot scale reminiscent of cinematic establishing shots, mediums shots, and close ups, elliptical editing, jump cuts, remakes/sequels.*

Each series of photographs is so meticulously staged that it takes a while before the viewer realizes what is missing from the photographs: the photographer’s look. In the diptychs two subjects face two cameras set side by side: the shutters are released simultaneously, recording two “versions” of same moment. In *Exposure #23* a girl and a boy are looking at two cameras positioned in front of them. In each photograph, which records the same moment, they seem to be looking in different directions even though they have not moved, and their facial expressions seem slightly different, which prompts the viewer to “read” the images as consecutive rather than simultaneous, i.e., to narrativize them. Recalling both Kuleshov’s psychological montage experiment (“the Kuleshov effect”) as well as the *jump cut*, in which two sequential shots of the same subject are taken from camera positions that vary only slightly, Probst’s diptychs expose *montage*, traditionally associated with cinema as a time-based medium, as inherent in the photograph. *Exposure #39* employs another familiar cinematic device, *the green screen*: a girl walks, in medium

shot, in front of a Swiss Alps background, which in the next image, a long shot, is revealed to be fake. In the first image of *Exposure #44*, a medium shot, a woman runs in front of the camera against the backdrop of a mountain in Bavaria; the second image, a long shot, reveals the woman to be running in front of a painting of the mountain, the painting itself held up by another woman standing in front of the real mountain. The “reframing” reveals what we thought was real, to be fake, but then re-inscribes the fake back into the real. The diptych exposes the real and the fake as interchangeable: the fake can pass for the real but the real can also pass for the fake, inverting the logic of the cinematic green screen.

Exposure #9 shows a woman walking through Central Station as various people pass her by. The series consists of two black and white images and four color ones. One of the images shows two of the photographers taking pictures of the woman: the pictures they produce are among the six making up the series. The arrangement of the images resembles a film sequence made up of establishing shot, medium shots, and close ups. The changes in *camera angle, distance, and lighting* narrativize the instant, infusing it with time: one image seems to record a moment before the woman passes by, another “after” she passes by, i.e., spatial extension produces temporal extension. The effect is similar to that produced by *elliptical editing*, which extends an action’s screen time beyond its real time.

The same effect — creating a sense of “before” and “after” — can be observed in *Exposure #11a* and *#11b*. In the first diptych a woman and a little girl holding her hand are crossing the street. The first image is shot from a street level and gives us a close up of the girl; only parts of the woman’s body are visible in the shot. The second image is shot from a high vantage point, most likely from a building across the street. In *#11b* a woman is biking across the street: the first image is a color medium shot, the second one is a black and white long shot. In both diptychs the variation in scale creates a sense of temporal variation; in both, as well, the archiving

of time has devolved into a surveillance of time (hence the forensic connotations of the titles of all photographs: *numbered exposures* that mimic forensic evidence).

On several occasions Probst returns to the same subjects and the same places, months or years after she has first photographed them, producing photographic *remakes* or *sequels*. In *Exposure #41* she returns to the same couple she shot a year earlier. The difference in the subjects' facial expressions from the first to the second series is superimposed onto the difference in their facial expressions within the same series. Since the two subjects *already* appear so different within the same moment, merely on account of the slight change in camera angle, we are less likely to believe that they would be dramatically different from themselves after a year has passed. Time collapses onto itself: it does not need to pass or unfold in order for difference to emerge since each moment already differs from itself. *Exposure #27* is a "sequel" to *Exposure #16*: both series are shot in the same hallway and seem to feature the same subject, though we see only the lower part of her body lying on the floor. The change in camera angle produces two different versions of the same moment: the first seems to represent the woman's point of view shot, while the second could be attributed to her attacker, or perhaps to a policeman investigating what appears to be a scene of domestic violence.

Probst's triptychs *suture* the viewer into the illusion of a self-produced space and time: each photograph in the series is taken by a photographer represented in one of the other images in the same series, collapsing the distinction between subjects and objects of representation. In *Exposure #32*, featuring two women and one man photographing one another, the first image is produced by the man represented in the third image, and the second image is produced by the woman represented in the third image. Every point of view shot includes the subject who produced it, mimicking the cinematic technique of *shot/reverse shot*. The triptychs set off an apparently infinite yet finite circulation of looks between the images without

ever opening up to the world outside: the images appear to be produced by no one. Within each series *time re-circulates rather than flows*. The inherent automatism of the photographic medium becomes an object of representation: indexicality is “preserved” in the form of self-reference. In other words, Probst’s exposures archive the spectator’s time: *it is the spectator that now functions as the index of the image*.⁵³

Uta Barth’s photographs in *The Long Now*⁵⁴ challenge the long history of the *point* in photographic discourse: de Duve identifies “the point of sharpness” as essential to the breakdown of the symbolic function in the photograph⁵⁵; Cartier-Bresson speaks of “the decisive moment” also in terms of a point⁵⁶; Roland Barthes builds his phenomenology of photography around the Latin term for point, *punctum*.⁵⁷ By contrast, Barth’s multipanel images hover on the brink of visibility and legibility. Her subject is the act of perception itself, the act of focusing, not what we focus on. According to Barthes, even when I try to focus on the surface of a photograph, I eventually pass through it to that which really fascinates me: the photograph’s referent. As he puts it, “the referent adheres.”⁵⁸ In Barth’s images, however, the referent does not adhere. The choice of a subject is no choice, she claims; the real “referent” are the conditions of seeing: “The more important data of perception...as disclosed in her images, are transitions, overlappings, indistinct limits, inconsistencies, depositions, and vacancies [i.e.] those conditions of vision which make perception non-identical with itself.”⁵⁹

Although Barth’s images are very different from Probst’s, her vision is equally self-effacing: Jonathan Crary describes it as “a non-punctual seeing in that it functions without seeking points of focus, climax, or attraction,”⁶⁰ an “anonymous seeing [...] that labors to free itself from the [...] confines of subjectivity.”⁶¹ The images in the *Ground* series (1994-95) collapse the figure/ground distinction by eliminating the nominal subject of the photograph and making the background the subject not by bringing in into focus but by keeping it out of focus. The images are

focused “but on empty areas — focused on air, or focused on things off to the side in some way.”⁶² The images in the *Field* series (1995-98), shot mostly outdoors, mimic cinematic framing conventions in a subtle investigation of the visual structures that imply movement or activity in the foreground. The subjects — e.g., car headlights shining through falling rain — are “unspecific, generic places. The real subject [...] is the atmosphere itself.”⁶³

In the series *...and of time* (2000) Barth’s attention “shifts away from the light outside toward the light that streams in. Now she is entirely contained within her house, and her attention is focused on nothing more than the light from outside as it enters the space, and how it moves and changes.”⁶⁴ Just as Antonioni often lets his camera wander off, “forgetting” the character it is supposed to follow and instead following some insignificant, irrelevant, inexpressive detail of the environment, Barth “archives” everything: not just the image but also the afterimage; not a particular space, but “any-space-whatever,” a term Deleuze employs to describe Antonioni’s distracted camera.

The images in the series *white blind (bright red)* (2002) are “rooted in prolonged staring and the optical afterimages it can produce.”⁶⁵ The series *Sundial* (2007) records “the (apparent) passage of late afternoon sunlight on the walls, furniture and floors of a home”⁶⁶: “all the images [some five feet high, other thirteen feet long] are shot at dusk, just as the light begins to fade and in the process to erase whatever it has previously made visible.”⁶⁷ These three series are a meditation on light, and thus, time, passing; thus they are inevitably tinged with melancholy.

Like Probst, Barth utilizes a range of what we typically think of as cinematic devices: she pans with the camera to produce slightly different points of view of the same unfocused subject; in her diptychs she alternates between close ups and long shots of the same subject. Barth’s “method” in the series *Untitled 1998-1999* recalls Probst’s interest in recording slight shifts in facial expressions through slight shifts

in camera angle. However, rather than using multiple cameras as Probst does, Barth sets up a single camera and waits for an imperceptible shift in the atmosphere. Rather than multiplying the same moment until it seems like different moments (Probst), Uta records different moments which seem to be the same on account of the almost imperceptible difference between the vantage points from which the same subject is shot, always out of focus. By extending time into "the long now" Barth's images move in the direction of cinema, mimicking the freedom, contingency and anonymity of the cinematic long take. Inasmuch as her images evacuate the nominal subject of a photograph, that which is supposed to leave its imprint in the image, they do not make a past moment present but render present that which renders the past present, namely light.

On one hand, Wall's light box photographs, like Uta Barth's series *...of time* and *Sundial*, betray his preoccupation with the materiality of light via the illuminated image and can thus be read as a response to the waning of indexicality manifested in the reduction of the materiality of light to an abstract symbol. On the other hand, his "cinematography" (staged photography) suggests a reinterpretation of indexicality's relation to temporality. The notion of indexicality in photographic discourse is usually bound up with the idea of the photograph as rendering the past present. However, Wall's "cinematography" renders the present (event) as past (representation): as he puts it, he is not interested in the event but in the representation of it.⁶⁸ "One of the problems I have with my pictures," Wall admits, "is that since they are constructed, since they are what I call 'cinematographic,' you can get the feeling that the construction contains everything, that there is no 'outside' to it, the way there is with photography in general."⁶⁹

Wall insists that to look at the medium of photography one needs to come through another art: cinema, painting, or literature. Thus, his "cinematography" investigates how cinema affected the criteria for judging photography. Once he

turned to large scale photographs, Wall began referring to his photography as “cinematography”:

Cinematography’ referred simply to the techniques normally involved in the making of motion pictures: the collaboration with performers (not necessarily actors, as neo-realism showed); the techniques and equipment cinematographers invented, built and improvised; and the openness to different themes, manners, and styles. It was probably an overstatement to identify these things strictly with filmmaking and not with still photography, since photographers, to a greater or lesser extent, have used almost all of the same techniques; but it made me concentrate on what was needed to make pictures with the kind of physical presence I wanted.⁷⁰

Referring to Barthes’s “The Third Meaning: Notes on Some of Eisenstein’s Stills,” in which Barthes stills the film experience to study single frames, Wall reminds us that films are made up of still photographs: the techniques we normally associated with film are simply photographic techniques and are thus “at least theoretically available to any photographer.”⁷¹ Indeed, Wall challenges the traditional view that cinema originated in photography, arguing instead that cinema was essential to photography establishing itself as an art:

I think that artistically photography established itself on the basis of cinema, and not the other way around. [...] I have spent a lot of time talking about the fact that once cinema emerged, the narrativity that had previously been the property of painting was expelled from it. Until this time painting was quite explicitly painted drama and so it was always in a multivalent relationship with theatrical ideas. Our pictorial experience of drama was created by painting,

drawing, etching and so on. But the cinema, unlike the forms of performance it canned and played back, is a performance picture. Cinema synthesized the functions of painting and of theatre simultaneously on the technical basis of photographic reproduction. So in that synthesis the mechanics of photography were invested with tremendous meaning, a meaning they will now always have.⁷²

How do Wall's photographs expose the cinematic within the photographic? First, the cinematic aspect of his work reveals itself in his interest in "micro-gestures" (e.g., *Mimic* [1982]), which "seem automatic, mechanical or compulsive. They well up from somewhere deeply social," from the social, collective unconscious rather than from the individual's unconscious. Wall's "micro-gestures," which reveal thinking precisely through their extreme economy,⁷³ recall Cavell's "somatograms" which Cavell uses to demonstrate that the importance of cinema in "returning the mind to the living body" by recording thinking, which is not limited to "intellectual processes" but is enacted in "universal fidgetiness," the little involuntary gestures and movements of the human body. Cavell sees these micro-gestures or somatograms as instances of film's "optical unconscious" (Benjamin).⁷⁴

Second, like Probst Wall has produced a number of "remakes," e.g., *The Destroyed Room* (1978) "remakes" both commercial window displays of clothing and furniture and Delacroix's *Death of Sardanapalus* (1827), while *Picture for Women* (1979) remakes Manet's *Bar at the Folis-Bergere* (1882): "It was a remake the way that movies are remade. The same script is reworked and the appearance, the style, the semiotics, of the earlier film are subjected to a commentary in the new version."⁷⁵

Third, Wall's large-scale photographs (e.g. *Milk* [1984], *Bad Goods* [1985], *Eviction Struggle* [1988]) are structured dramatically, like movies. In fact, he describes his method of preparing for a shoot in cinematic terms: "location scouting" and

“flânerie.”⁷⁶ Given that his backlit transparencies are more reminiscent of projected film stills than of traditional photographs, it is not surprising that he admits to being fascinated by images whose source remains hidden, as in film viewing:

In a painting, for example, the source of the site of the image comes from where it is. But in a luminescent picture the source of the image is hidden, and the thing is a dematerialized or semi-dematerialized projection. [...] To me, this experience of two places, of two worlds, in one moment is a central form of the experience of modernity. It’s an experience of dissociation, of alienation.⁷⁷

Fourth, Wall — like Probst and Barth — challenges the notion of photography’s instantaneity by infusing the photograph with time: photography, he claims, is

not a medium in which the sense of the non-identity of a thing with itself can be easily or naturally expressed; quite the opposite. A photograph always shows something resting in its own identity in a mechanical way. I think it’s possible, through the complex effects of techniques derived from painting, cinema, and theatre, to infuse the photographic medium with this dialectic of identity and non-identity.⁷⁸

Wall goes further: the dialectic of non-identity does not refer only to the duration of the photograph’s subject but also to its ontological status, which Wall believes to be always unfixed or spectral, i.e., constructed. Thus, he claims that even his most “realistic” work is

populated with spectral characters whose state of being [is] not that fixed. That, too, is an inherent aspect, or effect, of what I call “cinematography”: things

don't have to really exist, or to have existed, to appear in the picture. [...] The claim that there is a necessary relationship (a relationship of "adequacy") between a depiction and its referent implies that the referent has precedence over the depiction. [...] Depiction is an act of construction; *it brings the referent into being*.⁷⁹

Without completely rejecting photography's indexical claim, Wall maintains that photography cannot be reduced to it. His way of working through this problem is "to make photographs that somehow suspend the factual claim while simultaneously continuing to create certain illusions of factuality. One of the ways [he does this is] by a kind of mimesis or simultaneous imitation of other art forms, painting and film in particular, each of which has a history of querying and subverting documentary claims."⁸⁰ Wall identifies two sets of film influences on his work: Godard's and Fassbinder's hybrid, mannerist, intertextual style⁸¹ and the documentary, reportage, self-effacing style of the neo-realists. Indeed, the fusion of performance and reportage is one of the distinguishing characteristics of Wall's work.

Wall claims that his "cinematography" represents a return to, or a reclaiming of, the documentary or indexical aspect of photography: e.g., setting performances further away from the camera (*The Storyteller*) or shooting landscapes "was the way documentary or straight photography became a stronger elements in [...] [his] cinematography."⁸² For instance, he thinks of works like *Milk*, *Bad Goods*, *Eviction Struggle*, which deal with aspects of documentary photography as examples of neo-realism.⁸³ However, his digital 'cinematography' is better understood in the context of Manovich's observation that digital cinema is not a recording medium but a subgenre of painting, inasmuch as it returns to the hand-painted and hand-animated images of cinema's pre-history. This is evident from Wall's own reflections on his use of digital technology:

Digital technology allows you to put different pieces together after the shooting is finished, so it is something like film editing. [...] I have always envied the way a painter can work on his picture a little bit at a time, always keeping the totality in mind by stepping back from his work for a glance at it. A painting is never the rendering of a moment in time, but an accumulation of actions which simulates a moment or creates the illusion of an event occurring before our eyes. By opening up the photographic moment, the computer begins to blur the boundaries between the forms and creates a new threshold zone which interests me greatly.⁸⁴

Here Wall talks of the digital as blurring the boundaries between photography and painting by means of cinema, i.e., by “opening up the photographic moment” to temporalization and narrativization. According to Rosalind Krauss, one of his most vocal critics, Wall wrongly assumes that the “unassailable *now* of the photograph can be dilated endlessly by the chatter of narrative, which not only suffuses Wall’s images insofar as they produce themselves as “history paintings” but is repeatedly thematized by the works themselves: e.g., the soldiers telephoning in *Dead Troops Talk*, the conversation of the two women in *Diatrobe*.

In “A Note on Photography and the Simulacral” (1984) Krauss maintains that the discourse of photography is not aesthetic: with art’s entry into a “post-conceptual” and “post-medium” age, photography stops functioning as a medium, becoming instead a tool for deconstructing artistic practice.⁸⁵ In the “post-conceptual,” “post-medium” age the only possible use of photography is the reinvention, not the restoration, of a medium. She correctly identifies the failure of Wall’s supporters to analyze his medium by treating him as having rehabilitated the medium of painting, thus ignoring the fact that he is a photographer. For Krauss, Wall’s work is really a restoration of painting in another medium: Wall turned to the history of painting and, with contemporary scenes and costumes, used photography

to recapitulate well-known paintings created around the beginning of modernism. Furthermore, he reconstituted the pictorial unity of the old master *tableau*: in this respect his images are diametrically opposed to the modernist project of fracturing imagery and disrupting the flow of narrative or the apparent intelligibility of the artwork.

IV. CONCLUSION

Probst's photographs do not register the "pregnant" or "decisive" moment; rather than revealing the contingency of the indexical they present the index as a carefully choreographed multiplicity of instants from a range of impossibly simultaneous angles. Of primary interest to the spectator is not the photograph's indexical relationship to the object photographed but rather the difference of each instant from itself. Her photographs, shot with a traditional camera, present the index as *constructed* or *produced* through external devices (remote control). Similarly, although Barth uses a traditional camera, her photographs *represent* that which guarantees their indexical relation to reality: light. In both cases, then, the index is not immediately or automatically registered but has to be *recognized* as such, i.e., these photographs *signify their indexical relation*, reminding us that analog photographs can "deceive" us as much as digital ones can. At first sight, Probst's photographs appear to represent different instants: it is only after a certain delay — necessary for *recognition* to take place — that we realize it is the same instant, i.e., we recognize the photograph's indexical relation to reality. Similarly, Barth's photographs appear to be multiple copies of the same instant: it is only after a certain delay that we *recognize* (using as "clues" the slight shifts in light) that they register different instants.

The photographs discussed here are impossible to take in at a glance but impose *a time of reading* by means of self-reference that exposes a single moment's difference from itself (Probst), by means of extending the present moment into a "long now" (Barth), or by means of enlarging the scale of the image and narrativizing it (Wall). Perhaps we can see contemporary photography as a response to what Manovich and Rodowick have described as the transformation of digital cinema into a subgenre of painting. While the digital announces the return of the artist but fails to capture duration inasmuch as it relies exclusively on patterns of recognition of spatial resemblance (perceptual realism), contemporary photography seeks to reclaim the cinematic within the photographic from within the twilight of indexicality: rather than putting us in a deep historical relation with time, it self-consciously reflects on indexicality, automatism, and duration.

NOTES

1. *Levinas and the Cinema of Redemption: Time, Ethics and the Feminine* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); *Film and Ethics: Foreclosed Encounters* (London: Routledge, 2010); *Out of Time: Desire in Atemporal Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); *Afterimages of Gilles Deleuze's Film Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

2. David Campany, *Photography and Cinema* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), Campany, ed., *The Cinematic* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007), Karen Beckman and Jean Ma, ed. *Still Moving: Between Cinema and Photography* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

3. Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000).

4. A computer interface is organized spatially rather than temporally while a photograph, if we follow Barthes, is distinguished mostly by its illogical temporality. How, then, does the spatiality of the computer interface "remediate" the temporality of the photograph? On the other hand, how does the specific temporality of film "remediate" the specific temporality of the photograph? These questions remain unanswered in Bolter's and Grusin's study, which seeks to underscore the continuity, rather than discontinuity, between old and new media. Ultimately, Bolter and Grusin fail to reconcile their claim that there is very little new about new media — since all media are driven by the contradictory desire for immediacy and hypermediacy — with their belief that new media are radically different from old media, supposedly by virtue of the revolutionary ways in which new media remediate old media.

5. Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000), 10.

6. Krauss, "Two Moments from the Post-Medium Condition, *October* 116 (Spring 2006): 55-62. Krauss's examples include works by Ed Ruscha, James Coleman, and conceptual photographer Sophie Calle). While acknowledging the aggregate or composite nature of media, however, Krauss has remained reluctant to admit intermedia and installation into what she herself described as an "expanded field."

7. See, e.g., Ji-hoon Kim, "The Post-Medium Condition and the Explosion of Cinema," *Screen* 50:1 (2009): 114-123.

8. D. N. Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 23.
9. *Ibid.*, 32.
10. *Ibid.*, 48.
11. *Ibid.*, 18-19.
12. George Baker, "Photography's Expanded Field," in *Still Moving: Between Cinema and Photography*, ed. Karen Beckman and Jean Ma (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 175-189.
13. Company, *Photography and Cinema*, 110.
14. Peter Wollen, "Fire and Ice," in *The Cinematic*, ed. Company (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007), 108-113.
15. Laura Mulvey, "Stillness in the Moving Image," in *The Cinematic*, ed. Company (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007), 134-142.
16. Company, "Safety in Numbness: Some Remarks on Problems of 'Late Photography'," in *The Cinematic*, ed. Company (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007), 185-195.
17. Fred Ritchin, *After Photography* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2008).
18. Corey Dzenko, "Analog to Digital: The Indexical Function of Photographic Images," *Afterimage* 37:2 (September-October 2009): 19.
19. Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).
20. *Ibid.*, 231.
21. Indeed, it refers to the total mediation of hypertext: all Internet entries are instantaneously present to one another, rather than to me.
22. Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, 70.
23. *Ibid.*, 77.
24. *Ibid.*, 70.
25. *Ibid.*, 80-81.
26. *Ibid.*, 220.
27. *Ibid.*, 208.
28. Tom Gunning, "What's the Point of an Index? or, Faking Photographs," in *Still Moving: Between Cinema and Photography*, ed. Karen Beckman and Jean Ma (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 26.
29. *Ibid.*, 33-34.
30. *Ibid.*, 36.
31. Bazin cited in Gunning, "What's the Point of an Index? or, Faking Photographs," 36.
32. Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film*, 48.
33. *Ibid.*, 103-105. Rodowick concludes that we are now experiencing "an interesting mutation in our ontological relations with digital images. In its presumed correspondence with the viewer's cognitive and perceptual structures, perceptual realism retreats from the physical world, placing its bets on imaginative worlds" (105). The starting point for Rodowick's discussion of the paradoxes of perceptual realism is Stephen Prince's essay on the development of computer graphics for narrative film, in which Prince "clearly implies that the viewer's audiovisual experience is not defined by phenomenological criteria as such; rather, both 'understanding' and 'experience' are defined by the mental or psychological work of cognitive schemata" (102).
34. *Ibid.*, 17-18.
35. *Ibid.*, 19.
36. Metz cited in Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film*, 19.
37. *Ibid.*, 21.
38. *Ibid.*, 23.
39. Marc Furstenu and Martin Lefebvre, "Digital Editing and Montage: the Vanishing Celluloid and Beyond," *Cinemas: Revue d'études cinématographiques* 13:1-2 (2002): 69-107.
40. Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film*, 17.
41. *Ibid.*, 17-18.
42. *Ibid.*, 18. Curiously absent from this analysis is a consideration of Peirce's first trichotomy of signs, which depends on whether the sign itself is a quality, an actual thing, or a habit (*tone, token, type*, also called *qualisign, sinsign, legisign*). A "qualisign" is a quality which acts as a sign, a "sinsign" (or "token") is an actually existing thing or event which acts as a sign, and a "legisign" is a law which acts as a sign.
43. Barthes had already made that connection with his notion of the *punctum* as unlocking the subject's deeply personal investment in the photograph. He claimed that the search for the essence of photography cannot be separated from the pathos inherent in photography.
44. Thierry de Duve, "Time Exposure and Snapshot: The Photograph as Paradox," in *The Cinematic*, ed. David Company (London: Whitechapel, 2007), 56.
45. *Ibid.*, 60.
46. *Ibid.*, 225.
47. *Ibid.*, 226-227.

48. Christian Metz, "Photography and Fetish," in *The Cinematic*, ed. Company (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007), 129-130.
49. Thierry de Duve, "Time Exposure and Snapshot: The Photograph as Paradox," in *The Cinematic*, ed. Company (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007), 57, 59.
50. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 55-57.
51. Company, *Photography and Cinema*, 36.
52. For instance, Rodowick argues, in relation to *Russian Ark* (2002), that the digital long take cannot convey duration — see Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film*, 169-171.
53. Numerous commentators have drawn attention to the way in which Probst's photographs unsettle our belief in "photographic truth." See, for instance: <http://www.mmoca.org/exhibitions/exhibitdetails/barbaraprobst/index.php> and http://www.barbaraprobst.net/press_2_schessl_eng.html.
54. Uta Barth, *The Long Now* (New York: Gregory R. Miller & Co., 2010).
55. De Duve, "Time Exposure and Snapshot," 57.
56. Henri Cartier-Bresson, "Images à la sauvette," in *The Cinematic*, ed. Company (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007), 47.
57. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 26-27.
58. *Ibid.*, 6.
59. Jonathan Crary, "The Singularity of the Every Day," in Barth, *The Long Now* (New York: Gregory R. Miller & Co., 2010), 349.
60. *Ibid.*, 353.
61. *Ibid.*, 351.
62. Russell Ferguson, "Wider than the Sky," in Barth, *The Long Now* (New York: Gregory R. Miller & Co., 2010), 12.
63. *Ibid.*, 12.
64. *Ibid.*, 19.
65. *Ibid.*, 21.
66. Crary, "The Singularity of the Every Day," 352.
67. Ferguson "Wider than the Sky," 22.
68. Wall often uses video to rehearse his actors' movements until they get them "just right."
69. Jeff Wall, *Selected Essays and Interviews* (New York: MOMA, 2007), 251. Wall argues that photography's unique properties are contradictory: the history of photography has tended to privilege the notion of the photograph as a fragment of the world, downplaying the notion of it as a whole construction (this was often criticized as the influence of painting on photography, from which photography had to emancipate itself from) (252).
70. *Ibid.*, 179.
71. *Ibid.*, 179-180.
72. *Ibid.*, 195.
73. See Wall, *Selected Essays and Interviews*, 85-87.
74. Stanley Cavell, "What Photography Calls Thinking," in *Cavell on Film*, ed. William Rothman (Albany: SUNY Press, 2005), 126.
75. Wall, *Selected Essays and Interviews*, 188.
76. *Ibid.*, 189.
77. *Ibid.*, 193.
78. *Ibid.*, 199.
79. *Ibid.*, 254-255.
80. *Ibid.*, 299.
81. Wall also admits to being influenced by cinematographers like Nestor Almendros, Sven Nykvist, Conrad Hall, and by directors like Luis Buñuel, Robert Bresson and Terrence Malick.
82. Wall, *Selected Essays and Interviews*, 318.
83. Arthur Lubow, "The Luminist," *New York Times*, 25 Feb. 2007.
84. Jeff Wall, "Wall Pieces: Jeff Wall interviewed by Patricia Bickers," *Art Monthly* 179 (September 1994): 4.
85. Rosalind Krauss, "A Note on Photography and the Simulacral," *October* 31 (Winter 1984): 68.

SEMIOTIC IMAGES

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INTRODUCTION

Julia Kristeva is famous for the theories on literature and linguistics she developed in *Revolution in Poetic Language*.¹ However, she has also shown interest in film, especially in her essay “Ellipsis on Dread and Specular Seduction” and *Intimate Revolt*. Furthermore, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* and *The Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* have also influenced film studies, as they provide interpretive tools for psychoanalytic readings, feminist readings, and readings of the Abject in films.² Along these lines, Kristeva’s theories have generated inquiries focusing on the figures of the Abject (often in horror films) and feminine bodies.³ However, these inquiries do not emphasize Kristeva’s conception of the Semiotic as a part of signifying processes. Instead, these analyses focus on the Oedipal model on which Kristeva bases her paradigm or on thematic applications of the Abject. This methodology leads such readings to regard themes and characters as representations of the Semiotic or Symbolic instead of focusing on the “nonexpressive” nature of the Semiotic in films.⁴

Consequently, critics have used Kristeva for a fairly limited range of films: avant-garde and horror (or, less commonly, other films that represent the Abject). I suspect that Kristeva herself provoked these limitations. Although I appreciate that she shapes a paradigm of Semiotic analyses, I want to tackle her inconsistencies and contradictions when dealing with film. In this essay, I will undertake Kristeva’s misleading statements about films and go back to the

Semiotic model she proposes in *Revolution in Poetic Language*, which I find more suitable to understand the significance of the Semiotic in cinema. In reading *Revolution in Poetic Language* in relation to film, I hope to open the narrow field of analysis that has focused on the limited film genres of horror and avant-garde associated with Kristeva's work.

Thus, I propose to examine an avant-garde and a traditional Hollywood movie to expand Kristevan filmic interpretations. Even though these films have different goals, they nonetheless have similar interests in image-making and commodification, and ask questions about aesthetic contemplation and about the consumption of images. In their questioning, they comment on the nature of the viewer's role and feature semiotic moments. Hence, these movies address the relationship between the economic and semiotic structures of films.

THE SYMBOLIC AND THE SEMIOTIC IN FILM

Kristeva's distinction between the Symbolic and the Semiotic has yet to be substantially explored by film scholars. In Kristeva's paradigm, the Symbolic relies on the rules of logical discourse whose goal is limited to communication. The Semiotic is less tangible; it is the "nonexpressive" part of the signifying process. Kristeva locates the evolution of the Semiotic in the pre-oedipal phase of the child's development. At this stage, drives articulate into a mobile and ephemeral totality, which she calls the semiotic *chora*, borrowing the term *chora* from Plato's *Timaeus*, where it denotes "an essentially mobile, extremely provisional articulation constituted by movements and their ephemeral stases."⁵ Kristeva defines the *chora* as "a nonexpressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a mobility that is as full of movement as it is regulated."⁶ When the child positions her body into a

social environment, social rules organize her discourse. Hence, the semiotic *chora* becomes a pre-enunciation inseparable from the Symbolic.

However, the *chora* exists as a sub-layer in the signifying process: in any signifying practice, both the Symbolic and Semiotic poles are present. In daily communications, the *chora* might not catch our attention, as we focus on the message of the interaction. Yet, as Philip Lewis explains, Kristeva

reserve[s] the term *écriture* for the writing of the avant-garde, for texts which make the problematic of semiotic productions more visible than others, for texts whose irreducibility to the structures of normative linguistics or concepts of representations is discernable and unsettling.⁷

The otherness and the inaccessibility of the poetic text disrupt mimetic rules and allow a more visible experience of the Semiotic. As Christophe Den Tandt explains, in a *géno-text* (as opposed to the *phéno-text* which is a plain articulation of a message relying on grammaticality), “the signifiers are subjected to the non-symbolic ordering of meter and rhythm, and its syntax is either disrupted or structured beyond the need of symbolic expression.”⁸ Therefore, the Semiotic can re-emerge in the realm of the very materiality of the signifier when disrupting the Symbolic. For Kristeva, this allows a pleasurable experience with the medium of the text.

My interest in this phenomenon joins with concerns that film theories focusing on excess have also addressed. Kristin Thompson’s study of excess, for example, illuminates elements in films “which do not participate in the creation of narrative or symbolic meaning.”⁹ Thompson focuses on gaps in the narrative structure or elements that challenge the unifying construction of a film. Unjustified, problematic, and unclear elements, such as excessive close-ups, texture, colors, and shapes of the costumes are sites of excess. Kristeva’s concept of the Semiotic alludes to similar

constituents in films. In "Ellipsis on Dread and Specular Seduction," Kristeva refers to the irruption of the Semiotic in film, or the "*frayages*, nameless dread, noises preceding the name, the images — pulsations, somatic waves, color frequencies, rhythms, tones."¹⁰ Consequently, in focusing strictly on plot or characters, most readers using Kristeva's work fail to see central aspects of films that lie in the Semiotic.

Although Kristeva and Thompson target similar points, their analyses of the Semiotic and excess differ on two grounds. First, Thompson does not rely on a psycho-analytic model, and thus does not think of excess in terms of repressed elements in films. It is the critic's role to elaborate on these moments of excess since, unlike most viewers, the critic is trained to *see* these elements. Second, for Thompson, "excess implies a gap or lag in motivation."¹¹ This means that excess works against narrative motivation: when there is excess, motivation fails. On the contrary, Kristeva's model conceives of the Semiotic always in relation to the Symbolic, which relies on motivation. For her, one does not exclude the other. That is why her paradigm adds to film theories that address films' "*frayages*" without excluding them from motivation. V. F. Perkins, for instance, reminds us that "images and rhythm" can "release [...] meanings which are most relevant to the director's purpose," so that these meanings do not come only from "superimposed statement."¹² In this context, a closer attention to the role of the Semiotic on these "images and rhythms" would benefit film interpretations.

Semiotic approaches would also add to analysis of screen performers. The work of Andrew Klevan, for example, pays attention to the "the moment-by-moment movement of performers" and to the "character's physical and aural detail," as they enhance our understanding of film: the actor's body, while at times overlooked in film analyses, "embodies" film characters.¹³ The Semiotic participates in "the physicality and texture" of interest to Klevan because it shows the limitations of

“thin interpretations based on general themes or summaries of narrative strands.”¹⁴ Consequently, the interrelation between the Semiotic and Symbolic allows a more in-depth and multifaceted vision of excessive elements in films.

This interrelation has been overlooked, as critics tend to only emphasize the political power of the Semiotic. Ann Chanter notes, for example, that the semiotic trace “is capable of disrupting and reorganizing even the overt, formal requirements of a work of art.”¹⁵ For Toril Moi, the Semiotic is revolutionary because “the revolutionary subject, whether masculine or feminine, is a subject that is able to allow the *jouissance* of semiotic motility to disrupt the strict symbolic order.”¹⁶ However, the radicalness of the Semiotic cannot be measured without meticulously describing the interface between the Semiotic and the Symbolic. As I hope to show in my analysis of *Calendar* (1993) and *Jurassic Park* (2000),¹⁷ the Semiotic can have a revolutionary impact when it allows viewers to relate pleasurably with the filmic medium, going beyond a profit and goal-oriented process. However, it can also, in emphasizing the active participation of the viewer, take part in the commodification system on which *Jurassic Park* relies to make profit. Therefore, the claim that the Semiotic always has a revolutionary impact on art because of its non-systematic nature is reductive. The Semiotic in itself is not politically commendable, but analyzing its relationship with the Symbolic will enable critics to evaluate its challenges to film structures.

Kristeva’s comments on film and literature might be partly responsible for the confusion regarding the Semiotic and the Symbolic. She provides misleading comments on images and literature that could have caused the analyses based on her theories. For example, she favors literature to images:

I find, in a way, the verbal art, insofar as it eludes fetishization, and constantly raises doubts and questioning, the verbal lends itself better

perhaps to exploring these states that I call states of abjection. From the moment that you establish it in a sort of image or something representable, salable, exposable, capitalizable, you lose it.¹⁸

This remark might have motivated the lack of interest for the Semiotic in film studies.¹⁹ One could interpret Kristeva's statement as a comment on filmic nature: images give a more tangible nature to the Semiotic. This reasoning leads film critics to look for compromising ways to deal with the Semiotic: they focus on the Semiotic not so much as "nonexpressive" and fluid, but more as a pragmatic notion (i.e., they look for allegories of the Semiotic and the Symbolic).

These analyses usually pair Kristeva and horror films, relying on Kristeva's statement that "everything specular is fascinating because it bears the trace, in the visible, of this aggressivity, this unsymbolized drive."²⁰ Here, Kristeva refers to the threat of the fissure of the subject, but she adds, "no doubt this effect [the anguish of the viewer] is obtained to the maximum when the image itself signifies aggressivity."²¹ As she understands the Semiotic in films in terms of aggressivity and violence, it is logical that most Kristevan readings focus on horror films. Yet, Kristeva and the critics following her statement imply that the threat of the "lektonic traces" (i.e., the "elements left unaccounted for in the too-visible, too-signifying") can be traced almost strictly in films that represent aggressivity, which again limits our understanding of the Semiotic.²²

Film critics using Kristeva's theories do not provide a detailed analysis of the Semiotic, but they usually underline the theory of the Abject, which refers literally to abject secretions that threaten the subject of keeping a clean body and thus need to be expelled. The Abject must be "radically excluded" in order to keep a safe boundary between the inside and the outside, hence securing the self.²³ This emphasis on the Abject results, at times, in misleading readings of the Semiotic. For

instance, in her analysis of *Candyman*, Andrea Kuhn builds on Kristeva's notion of Abjection.²⁴ She explains that "Kristeva conceptualizes the Semiotic as contract and precondition to the Symbolic, bound to overcome and outgrown in order for 'culture,' society, and subjectivity to exist. So-called abjects point towards the impossibility of such an ideal transcendence of the physical."²⁵ She adds that the mother, related to the semiotic *chora*, needs to be repudiated so that the child can turn to his or her father and enter the Symbolic.

Kuhn identifies various representations of the Symbolic and the Semiotic, finding referents in the film that *represent* them. However, she does not justify her method thoroughly enough for it to be helpful in terms of Semiotic analysis. Instead of thinking of Semiotic manifestations as "lektonic traces," Kuhn considers the Symbolic and Semiotic as places:

the universe of *Candyman* is clearly divided into Semiotic and Symbolic spaces. The Symbolic can be found in the (predominantly white) world of the University of Illinois and Lincoln Village [...] Cabrini Green is the semiotic space (full of abjects and abjections) that the symbolic world is trying to negate and repress.²⁶

In transposing Kristeva's notion of the Symbolic and the Semiotic to actual spaces in the movie, Kuhn simplifies the complexity of the relationship between the two aspects of signifying processes. Later on Kuhn claims, "at this point her [Helen's] self-abandonment to the power of the Semiotic seems almost complete: Rose stages this final encounter between monster and heroine as romantic seduction [...], but repulsion wins over fascination and Helen resist."²⁷ Here, the Semiotic appears as an exterior force in the character's life. Furthermore, at times the characters are also "representative of the Symbolic": Helen's "status as a representative of the Symbolic

remains severely compromised by her gender."²⁸ Besides, Kuhn claims that Helen "sacrifices herself for the boy, gives her life for his, and thus enables his transition from the Semiotic to the Symbolic."²⁹ There, she equates moments in the plot with Kristeva's model.

Although Kuhn provides a compelling reading of *Candyman*, her use of the notions of Semiotic and Symbolic is unstable and confusing. If the Semiotic and Symbolic are actual places in the film, as well as forces that drive the characters' actions, and eventually descriptions of advancement in the plot, it becomes difficult to pinpoint the role of the Symbolic and Semiotic. This does not mean that the Semiotic and the Symbolic cannot have different effects on texts. Yet, here Kuhn provides allegorical representations of the Semiotic and the Symbolic without explicitly referring to the characters or to the places as allegories. In doing so, she "symbolizes" the Semiotic.

It is surprising, however, to think of cinema as a medium that does not favor the emergence of the Semiotic. In fact, Kristeva herself refers to film as an art form that provides "meticulous organization of space, rigorous positioning of each object, calculated, intervention of every sound and every bit of dialogue — all were meant to add a 'rhythmic,' 'plastic' dimension to the *too* visible."³⁰ In this quote, cinema does incorporate the "*too* visible," but it also presents elements that build grounds for the emergence of the semiotic *chora*. Consequently, there is an obvious tension between Kristeva's comments on images and her consideration of films.

Moreover, in her writing on visual arts, Kristeva frames her discussion within the notion of great art. D. N. Rodowick suggests that Kristeva and other French thinkers approve of the experiments of avant-garde art and disapprove of the Classic Realist text (both artistically and politically), which illuminates Kristeva's comments on film and the interpretation of her work.³¹ As Tina Chanter explains, Kristeva "identifies the cinema of Eisenstein — up to that of Godard — as 'great

art’.”³² Chanter points out that Kristeva invites critics to focus on avant-garde films and praises Godard for his creation of films that give the pleasure of fascination to the viewer, but at the same time create a distance from this fascination. The distance makes the viewer focus more on film as a medium, thus coming closer to the functioning of the *chora* (as the latter is concerned with an unmotivated play with sounds as a material of pleasure). Although it seems logical that avant-garde films would be the best subjects of analysis for a Kristevan reading, one must not forget that the Semiotic is also an intrinsic constituent of any communication.

Consequently, I agree with Chanter’s concern about the “adequacy of this sweeping and exclusive judgment about what constitutes great art, which designates, by its silence, everything else as inferior;”³³ I would add that what is most fascinating about Kristeva’s model is its possible application to all systems of signs. It thus appears restrictive to assert an opposition between great art and its opposite when Kristeva’s model in *Revolution of Poetic Language* goes beyond such limitations.³⁴ Consequently, I would like to build on Chanter’s effort to broaden the field of Kristevan studies in film, not focusing on certain kinds of films in relation to Kristeva’s theory, but rather providing a different reading of Kristeva’s work applicable to films. Therefore, instead of adapting Kristeva’s terminology to actual characters, spaces, or moments in movies, I suggest focusing more on the characteristics of the Semiotic in cinema. Such an analysis will enable me to clarify the revolutionary possibilities of the Semiotic in the filmic realm.

To explore these matters, I would like to provide an analysis of two films: an avant-garde film, *Calendar*, and a more traditional Hollywood film, *Jurassic Park*. Here, I build on Chanter’s efforts to broaden Kristevan readings of films. In her work, Chanter reads Third Cinema as an appropriate medium to study the representation of the Abject. In proposing different film categories, Chanter goes beyond Kristeva’s distinction between traditional and avant-garde representations.³⁵

Third Cinema, Chanter claims, combines linearity and other traditional filmic elements, as well as avant-garde tools, such as the disruption of the viewer's fascination with the image. On the other hand, Chanter's area of study is mostly thematic; she briefly analyzes films that disrupt representations of race or gender in a political way. It is worth noting that the Semiotic does not appear in her reading of Third Cinema. I wish to expand this aspect in my examination of Egoyan and Spielberg's films.

In some ways, *Calendar* and *Jurassic Park* are two radically different works. In *Calendar*, "the only real event [...] happens in between the lines, yet this sliver of a movie will remain in your head long after many more action-packed movies have faded away."³⁶ It relates the story of a Canadian photographer (played by Atom Egoyan) hired to take pictures of Armenian churches for a calendar. Hence, Egoyan is the writer, director, and actor of *Calendar*. Although the character has Armenian origins, he does not speak the language, and his wife serves as a translator while their guide takes them to the churches. It turns out that the photographer fails to understand the significance of these churches, but his wife is truly interested in their stories. The shooting becomes the account of her detachment from her husband, as she falls in love with their guide. Back in Canada, the photographer (re)watches the shooting of his trip and hires women who speak eastern languages to help him re-envision his relationship with his wife and write about it. The film does not provide this information linearly, however; it is layered with flashbacks and changes of filmstocks since "two distinct film media make up the body of the film: high resolution technicolour film stock is intercut with low-resolution, monochromatic video."³⁷

In contrast, *Jurassic Park* is a commercial Hollywood film that enables the audience to experience continuity during the viewing of the film because it strives to conceal the technical choices necessary to this very continuity. Nevertheless,

parallels can be made between the two films' forms and messages. In *Calendar*, a photographer is hired to take pictures of Armenian churches in order to make a calendar, and in *Jurassic Park* the characters take a trip in the extraordinary world of dinosaurs. In *Calendar*, the film literally stops and we can see the shots of each church. They appear, still, as beautiful painterly scenes. As the film pauses, it becomes clear that the spectator is invited to reflect on cinema as a medium and to take pleasure in the aesthetic pictures. Similarly, in *Jurassic Park*, the characters stop at each dinosaur area and observe the scenes. As we shall see, although *Calendar* and *Jurassic Park* have opposed artistic goals, it is possible to read Semiotic moments in both movies. Here, I am not only trying to justify my use of two very different films (as I see in them some thematic and stylistic parallels), but also to show that the binary oppositions we make between them become precarious when we approach them within a semiotic framework.

ATOM EGOYAN'S CALENDAR

At the narrative level, *Calendar* comments on the non-expressive characteristics of film; the texture of the medium becomes the viewer's focus. The film deals with the techniques of making beautiful images. This image-making activity is filmed and presented as a video image (8mm).³⁸ The viewer has direct access to the video, as it fills in the gaps in the story related in the film. The embedded media offers a self-reflexive account of art and images. Therefore, the film provides meta-comments on its medium, which enables the emergence of the *chora*, as Egoyan invites his audience to take pleasure in the medium of the film in a semiotic moment. Thanks to these semiotic moments, Egoyan asks, what does it mean to make art? In turning an object into an aesthetic artifact, does an artist transform the essential "truth" of

this object? How do artists deal with the techniques and constraints of the media they use? To what extent do these constraints affect the final product?

The film asks such questions when displaying disruptive moments in the fascination of the viewer with the image. Several times in the film, we watch the video that the travelers recorded during their trip in Armenia. Because the photographer holds the camera, we do not see him, but he figures as the visually absent character (although orally present). Hence, when his wife talks to him, she faces the camera: she talks to the viewer and looks at the viewer (when she in fact faces her husband who holds the camera). Identifying with the two characters on the screen thus becomes impossible. The photographer's unusual presence/absence, as well as his wife and the guide's gaze in front of him, as they look at the viewer, insist that the object facing the viewer *is* a film. This allows the viewer to experience the Semiotic, as the latter relies on a disturbance of straightforward and logical narrative structures that allow identification between viewer and character through an immersion in the filmic medium.

The rewinding of the video that punctures the actual film accentuates this effect: a fascination with the image is unfeasible at such moments. Also, at times, the sound of the film does not match the action of the video because the sound takes place in the protagonist's present life and does not go with the recorded past. All of these disruptions of the identification with the image remind the viewer of the way film works as a medium: *Calendar* reflects on image-making processes. The photographer's comments on his art-making lead us to such conclusions. For example, the photographer says to his wife, "the light is really perfect for me right now, so if you guys could move out of the frame [...] so I can just take a picture." His statement interrupts a discussion with his wife and the guide about the church behind them. The constraints of image-making appear as an interruption of life. Conversely, as the picture becomes part of the film (the film pauses on the beautiful

image of the church), the character's remark on light is also valid for the medium the viewer watches. This self-reflexivity disrupts traditional Symbolic modes of storytelling and visual presentation, allowing the Semiotic to irrupt into the filmic experience.

Conversely, this semiotic irruption is in tension with the implications of the photographer's activity and behavior. The film shows that the photographer can take breathtaking pictures while not relating to the landscape and its signification. In fact, when preparing to take a picture, the photographer's wife brings up the guide's concern for the artist's lack of attention to the reality of the buildings he photographs:

WIFE: Don't you feel the need to come closer? Actually touch and feel...

PHOTOGRAPHER: Touch and feel the churches?

WIFE: ...realize how it's made, constructed?

PHOTOGRAPHER: Hasn't occurred to me.

WIFE: Hasn't occurred to you?

PHOTOGRAPHER: He'd like me to caress them or something?

WIFE: You know what he means.

PHOTOGRAPHER: No, I don't, really.

Here, it is clear that the artist paradoxically creates insightful images without having a deeper understanding of the reality that lies behind these churches. Art is misleading, or as Ron Burnett explains "although these places are beautiful with rich color tones, wildflowers and sun-baked fields, they are 'tourist' images for which some anecdotal history is provided, but where the depth seems to be missing."³⁹ He adds that "no photograph escapes the contradictions and potential excitement of temporal dislocation."⁴⁰ In making the viewer realize the deceptive

nature of the photographs, Egoyan points out that “the pleasures of seeing [...] are invested with desiring to make the memory real, to generate truth, to manufacture a narrative. The truth becomes a metaphor just as quickly as the image disguises its sudden transformative power.”⁴¹ When immobilizing time and space, the photographer ends up commodifying the site he shoots, hence staining the real experience of the edifice. As Crissa-Jean Chappell shows, “some moments are too ethereal to be recorded. For example, in *Calendar*, Egoyan’s photographer takes pictures of the Armenian churches but cannot capture their history.”⁴² Egoyan thus reveals the contradictions involved in art-making.

As a matter of fact, Egoyan has commented on this issue, explaining that “he fears falling into the trap of the photographer, an observer who records but understands very little the inner meaning of what he sees.”⁴³ He adds in another interview:

the image-making process is not simple, in my opinion. Although creating images is very attracting to me, I am aware of all of the contradictions involved in the making of images of human beings, in representing and defining these images through mechanical properties.⁴⁴

The images that interrupt the progression of film (when the film literally stops for a few seconds) become loci of reflection on these contradicting directions.

The film pauses for each picture that figures in the calendar and thus provokes the contemplation of the image. Even though the movie might help one think about the nature of image-making, ironically, it also invites one to appreciate these very images. The repetition of the beautiful churches allows the “elements left unaccounted for in the too-visible, too-signifying” to resurface, creating a rhythm of aesthetic pleasure.⁴⁵ During the church scenes, the church is at the center of the

frame in front of the green grass. Behind, the trees' color harmonizes with the lighter green of the grass. The yellow light complements the darker browns of the edifice. Warm and cold colors balance, as well as light and shadows. When such scenes appear, we can hear the "click" of the camera taking the picture, immobilizing reality. The familiar sound makes the audience aware of the image-making process, and calls its attention to the painterly composition of the scene; it emphasizes the perfect harmony of the picture. The viewer focuses on the semiotic elements of this picture (i.e., the power of its perspective, colors, lights) and takes pleasure in the presentation of the aesthetic object.

While the emergence of the Semiotic in the film is obvious in such moments, it also appears in less stylized scenes. At the beginning of the film, when a flock of sheep stops the characters' car, the photographer records the scene using the 8mm camera, which gives a gray blue color to the scene. The flock's colors vary from black to white. Its movements and the car's movements create a rhythm of abstraction and clarity, as well as a composition in shades of colors. When the car is able to go on, the image becomes blurry and the flock becomes abstract shapes. The faster the car goes, the more abstract the shapes become. When the car slows down or stops, one has the impression that the sheep's speed goes down, although that is an optical illusion. Then, each sheep become more distinctive. Thus, the movement of the camera (in the car) adds to the texture and shapes of the scene. The sound of the sheep and bells complement the rhythms of the movements.

One pays attention to these sensory details because the film has barely developed its plot yet, and the audience is immersed in a scene with no dialogue, no voice-over, just the sounds of the sheep. Although the photographer's wife comments on this scene later on during the movie, initially, the viewer does not know its significance in the film's narrative.⁴⁶ What is important when the scene appears in the film is the texture of the animals, their colors, the sensation of their

movements and the rhythms they create. Daniele Riviere elaborates on the power of Egoyan's images to compensate for the lack of physical contact with the bodies he puts on screen, and she explains, "the camera has become subjective, and it participates in the transmission of emotion."⁴⁷ Hence, the film encourages the viewers' visual pleasure in the sensation of such scenes because these moments suspend visibility and allow the film medium to intrude in the filmic experience: the blurry colors of the sheep, for example, disrupt the deciphering of the image. These sights are semiotic because they sensually draw the viewer's attention to the surface of the image.

In sum, in *Calendar*, the Semiotic appears in the composition of images, the shift of colors and textures of the different films, the emphasis of sensory details, and it is also provoked by self-reflexiveness. *Calendar* invites viewers to enjoy the physical characteristics of the film in the sensation that this use of the medium creates. In Egoyan's work, the Semiotic works as the basis for the argument the narrative puts forth. The contradiction between the wish to look and the danger in looking at what you transform into an aesthetic object relies on our experience of the Semiotic because the film needs this experience to comment on the danger of the composition and contemplation of images.

STEVEN SPIELBERG'S *JURASSIC PARK*

While *Calendar* centers thematically on the tension between aesthetic contemplation and the warning against the misunderstanding provided by the consumption of images, *Jurassic Park* is not self-reflexive about this problem. Yet, *Jurassic Park* invites viewers (with the characters) to *look* at the dinosaurs. The plot of the film revolves around wealthy entrepreneur Whilst Hammond's theme park. Situated on a hidden

island, the park features living dinosaurs drawn from the prehistoric DNA preserved by an amber stone. Before the opening of his park, Hammond invites a lawyer, a paleontologist, a paleobotanist, a mathematician, and his two grandchildren to visit the park. During their visit of the park, the security system breaks down, allowing the dinosaurs to run off and attack the visitors.

On their tour (before the system breaks down), the characters stop and look at the spectacle of the dinosaurs in nature. Many viewers have enjoyed these scenes: “the dinosaur scenes are spectacular,” they said.⁴⁸ In fact, before the film came out, Stan Winston anticipated, “it’ll be beautiful, seamless mix of technologies so that what you see are living dinosaurs that are almost too real to be real.”⁴⁹ Dean Cundey notes, “the audience has to believe the unbelievable. You have to give them as much reality and recognizable truth as you can. They have to walk in the shoes of the characters. They have to feel the terror when the experiment goes wrong.”⁵⁰ All of these comments direct us toward a closer attention to the creation of such verisimilitude.⁵¹

Several critics have asked about *Jurassic Park*, “how do you light mechanical puppets so it looks and feels real? [...] How does the composing of digital characters affect the overall mood and texture of lighting, the way the camera moves, and the way images are composed? What about shadows cast by digital characters?”⁵² To answer such questions, Fisher stresses the continuous movements and the extreme angles of the camera that emphasize the reality effect of the movie. He also mentions the attention to details, such as the wrinkling of the dinosaurs when they move, as well as the use of shadows and light to produce a “clean look which Cundey describes as ‘heightened’ reality.”⁵³ These features end up creating a believable image of the dinosaurs.

Robert Baird proposes a different approach to the verisimilitude of *Jurassic Park* based on Spielberg’s comment that, he “wanted [his] dinosaurs to be animals.”⁵⁴

Braid studies how the audience relates the dinosaurs to a well-known schema, animals. The reliance on the animal-like dinosaurs fosters emotional engagement from viewers. For Warren Buckland, such emotional engagement is made possible by the digital images Spielberg uses to produce a new aesthetics. The images of the dinosaurs “go beyond spectacle by employing special effects to articulate a possible world;” “while clearly visible, the effects attempt to hide behind an iconic appearance; that is, they are visible special effects masquerading as invisible effects.”⁵⁵ The composite or layered image that combines the dinosaurs and the humans gives the impression that both take place at the same time and space, even though the viewer knows that this is impossible. The illusionist qualities of the special effects do not produce perfect photographic credibility, but they stimulate the viewer to imagine a real world.

Buckland also claims that “the optical and photochemical equipment [...] has inherent limitations that cannot be disguised, such as loss of resolution, grain, and hard edge matter line.”⁵⁶ While I agree with Buckland that the film works at compensating for these technical limitations to appear realistic, I would argue that when Spielberg uses high technology and calculation to give life to the dinosaurs, the “loss of resolution, grain, hard edge matte lines” creates a Semiotic disruption. The extreme use of technology calls our attention, although probably not during the entire movie, to the texture of the special effects. Hence, like in *Calendar*, the viewer focuses on the medium of the film in a Semiotic approach.

These semiotic experiences occur when the images are too green, too perfect, too spectacular. The forced realness of some scenes interrupts the immersion of the viewer in the story, calling attention to the film as a medium and to the ways in which it uses this medium. For example, at the beginning of the film, after the short ride in the park, the car stops and the characters look extremely surprised, as if they are facing the unreal. Paleontologist Alan Grant and Paleobotanist Ellie Sattler take

their glasses off, open their mouths, and stare at something the audience cannot see. The camera turns to the dinosaur as it goes by the car. The two scientists and the billionaire walk towards the diplodocus and look at the dinosaur. In this shot, Alan Grant's blue shirt matches the color of the sky. John Hammond's white clothes tone with the color of the white clouds. Ellie Sattler's pink shirt goes with the undertones in the trees and the clouds. The colors of nature, the green grass, and the blue sky are bright and distinct. These color associations and the green landscape produce a stylized representation of nature. In looking at this scene, one realizes that the composition and the minute attention paid to the harmony of the site make it unauthentic. In addition, the different elements of the picture are arranged harmoniously. The trees slightly bend the opposite direction of the diplodocus's head. The three humans appear as a little mass under the dinosaur, and the bushes on its right add symmetry to the image.

Here, like in the church sights of *Calendar*, the minute attention to every detail that composes the scene makes the viewer focus on the symmetry and harmony of the shapes and colors. The composition emphasizes the beauty of the painterly scene, which goes against the realistic nature of the film. Thus, I suggest that it might not be as simple to lose oneself in the reality of the film as most claim. Yet, *Jurassic Park* uses this attention toward the film medium: the acceptance of the aesthetization of nature and its believable traits relies on the new looking conventions related to the rules of an amusement park. The movie, a medium of mass consumption, presents the visual consumption set up in the entertainment park. Nigel Clark points out that in a theme park

the entire environment is designed for visual consumption, a place where things are more beautiful, more perfect, more enchanting than any ordinary locale. But in order to enjoy these illusions to the fullest [...] it is necessary to

follow the rules, to comply with the arrangements that regulate movement and spectatorship.⁵⁷

Regulations of the park and of the audience's visual processes enable the illusion and the imaginary to be effective. Hence, the film invites the viewer to look at the dinosaurs that will enable an "ecstatic desire for sensory stimulation."⁵⁸ The regulated experience invites the viewer to consume images.

The viewer, in his or her gazing activity regulated by the rules the film sets up, *produces* the effect of the film. Constance Balides puts forth this argument in addressing the relationship between the economic and textual systems of the film. She shows that "*Jurassic Park* makes its economics visible" when calling attention to the objects that figure the Jurassic Park logo, for example.⁵⁹ The film also emphasizes the commodification of time through the use of the dinosaurs; "in the ride in *Jurassic Park* the work of reproduction becomes tourist spectacle, another blurring of production and reproduction."⁶⁰ She adds:

Jurassic Park addresses its spectator as economic subjects in various ways — as literal (not only semiotic) consumers, as worker / consumers invested in the luster of capital through strategies of immersion, and as theme park riders for whom the labour of the assembly line is visible through its trace in the realm of consumption.⁶¹

This double consumption becomes the rule that structures the viewing of the film. The Semiotic tends to reaffirm this process when the narrative stops and invites the viewer to contemplate colors, line, and movement that are "nonexpressive."

This process is clarified early in the movie by the shot of a mosquito caught in an old amber stone that takes the entire frame. This recess in the film calls the

spectator's attention to the texture of the colors; the light that reflects in the golden bubbles on the stone; and the lines of the fracture of time on it, almost as an abstract or cubist piece of art. The brief pause in the narrative invites the viewer to think about the film as a medium because the close-up deforms the images of the mosquito. The close-up of the stone looks like a cave, darker on the outside, lighter where the light comes in, in the middle. The bubbles and the imperfections of the stone add to the texture of the image. Here, one loses bearings in regards to the nature of the image for a few seconds: is it a mosquito, is it a stone, is it a cave? Hence, at that moment, the "lektonic traces" are more important than the "representable, salable, exposable, capitalizable" elements of the film.⁶²

Although it enables the emergence of a semiotic sensibility, this scene works at confirming the symbolic aspects of the film. In fact, the narrative explains this shot later on: the characters, when they enter the lab, watch a cartoon clarifying the use of the amber stone. It was utilized to produce the DNA that enabled scientists to recreate dinosaurs. But more importantly, this scene shows that the intensity of one's look is important during the movie and in amusement parks. Hence, the audience is invited, right during the introduction of the plot, to learn how to *look* at things.

This contemplative activity reinforces the consumption that the movie proposes. As Balides argues, the "excessive mise-en-scene" and the "hypervisual" illuminate how economy and art work together.⁶³ When Balides refers to the hypervisual, she points to the representation of the economic practices the film involves, as well as its representative strategies. I would add that the Semiotic also takes part in this category. The Semiotic participates in the modeling of the viewers as consumers/producers; it is the key to our pleasurable filmic experience.

However, *Jurassic Park* plays with this experience: it also condemns this pleasurable contemplating activity because it is wrong to disrupt nature. The moral of the film might be that it is dangerous to contemplate and make marketable

images out of what you do not understand. Here, *Jurassic Park* joins *Calendar's* message about the commodification of reality. In the end, there will be no more gazing at the dinosaurs and the park will be destroyed. The film invites its viewer to think about the deceptiveness of the park, and it also provides aesthetic pauses that make the viewer take pleasure in the contemplation of images loosely connected to the symbolic messages. I am reminded here of the last scenes of the movie where pelicans fly by the helicopter. One can interpret the images of the birds flying as a comment on natural reproduction; Alan has come to accept his role as a future father. The birds also mark a return to nature, and its natural evolution (from dinosaurs to birds). All of these interpretations add to the conclusion of the film on natural evolution and reproduction.⁶⁴

Conversely, the pelican scene is unusually long, and it does not add to the development of the narrative. This scene interrupts the gazes of Alan and Ellis, and focuses on the pink, gray, and blue colors of the animals as they go over the ocean that mirrors their colors. Their subtle movement is calming and soothing. The flapping of their wings harmonizes with the waves of the sea. Here, Spielberg uses parallel editing to go back to the interior of the helicopter and then to the birds. At the end of the pelican scene, the camera centers on one bird and its powerful and gracious moves over the water, now more lighted than the first scene. The Semiotic emerges in this scene and provides an aesthetic pause. Thus, although the film banishes the characters' gaze on the dinosaurs, it offers other aesthetic contemplations that do not rely on the moral of message the plot, but on the experience of film as an aesthetic medium.

Hence, in *Jurassic Park*, the Semiotic has diverse impacts on the experience of the film. The Semiotic disrupts realistic images that the minute attention to technology and filmic techniques created. In addition, it tends to reaffirm the Symbolic message of the film that relies on viewers' consuming and producing of

meaning in accord with theme park rules. Yet, the Semiotic also provides breaks in the narrative that do not relate directly to the Symbolic activity of the film: it enables a focus on the aesthetic pleasure of the viewer.

CONCLUSION

As a result, the exploration of the Semiotic's influence on the interpretations of films reveals that the Semiotic has different effects on our experiences. It can reaffirm some of the Symbolic messages or disrupt their order. The multiplicity of the Semiotic's effects thus allows us to address questions of pleasure and commodification in cinema in more complete and complex ways. Consequently, Kristeva's analytical tools and concepts to identify the non-tangible aspects of texts are useful to approach the filmic realm. Yet, an analysis of these non-tangible aspects has been overlooked in film studies. My analysis of *Calendar* and *Jurassic Park* has emphasized that the aesthetic conclusions drawn from Kristeva's paradigm clarify their ambivalent position toward the beauty of aesthetic images and their commodified uses. While studies of film in relation to categories of the subject and the Object are important, the aesthetic impact of Kristeva's theory points toward another facet of film analysis. To acknowledge the significance of the Semiotic in films is to understand its influence on our interpretative methods. The awareness of the Semiotic's disruptiveness thus provides film analyses with a fuller understanding of their Symbolic significances (i.e., what critics give attention to almost strictly). In other words, a focus on the Semiotic takes into account the parts of movies that critics do not emphasize but that affect their readings nonetheless. In concentrating on the role of the Semiotic, viewers understand why some Symbolic aspects of films were of importance to them, to society, or to the filmmaker. For

example, when the Semiotic reinforces the Symbolic messages of a film, viewers find the Semiotic useful to support their interpretation of the film. However, as the Semiotic can also disrupt the Symbolic, they might face a more complex vision. In short, future studies of the Semiotic in film would provide other sources of interpretation that might limit, complement, or complicate our interpretations of film.

NOTES

1. Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).
2. Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989) and *Intimate Revolt: The Powers and Limits of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).
- Numerous film analyses have used the theory of the Abject. See for example, Stephen Linstead's "Abjection and Organization: Men, Violence, and Management," *Human Relations* 50:9 (1999): 1115-31, in which he argues that "bureaucracies seek to deny the emotional dimensions of their behavior and decision-making which creates emotion as an abject phenomenon" (1115). Tina Chanter also studies the Abject at length in "Abject images. Kristeva, Art, and Third Cinema," *Philosophy Today* 45:5 (2001): 83-98 and "The Picture of Abjection: Thomas Vinterberg's *The Celebration*," *Parallax* 10:1 (2004): 30-9.
3. See Andrea Kuhn, "'What's the Matter, Trevor? Scared of Something?': Representing the Monstrous-feminine in *Candyman*," *Erfurt Electronic Studies in English*, <http://webdoc.sub.gwdg.de/edoc/ia/eese/artic20/kuhn/kuhn.html> (last modified in 2000), and Barbara Creed's *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993).
4. Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, 25.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. Philip E. Lewis, "Revolutionary Semiotics," *Diacritics* 4:3 (1974): 29.
8. Christophe Den Tandt, "Staccato, Swivel and Glide: A Poetics of Early Rock 'n' Roll Lyrics," in *Sound as Sense: Contemporary US Poetry & In Music*, ed. Jean-Pierre Bertrand, Michel Delville, and Christine Pagnouille (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 83.
9. Kristin Thompson, "The Concept of Cinematic Excess," in *Film Theory and Criticism*, ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 488.
10. Kristeva, "Ellipsis on Dread and Specular Seduction," in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 236.
11. Thompson, "The Concept of Cinematic Excess," 491.
12. V. F. Perkins, *Film as Film* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1993), 114.
13. Andrew Klevan, *Film Performance: From Achievement to Appreciation* (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2005), 7.
14. *Ibid.*, 11.
15. Tina Chanter, "Abject images. Kristeva, Art, and Third Cinema," *Philosophy Today* 45:5 (2001): 94.
16. Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London and New York: Methuen, 1985), 170.
17. *Calendar*, directed by Atom Egoyan (Ego Film Arts); *Jurassic Park*, directed by Stephen Spielberg (Universal Pictures).
18. Kristeva, "Fetishizing the Abject," Interview with Sylvere Lotringer, in *More & Less*, ed. Sylvere Lotringer (Brooklyn: Semiotext(e)/Autonomedia, n.d.), 30.
19. Martin Jay provides an analysis of the relationship between French thinkers and the visual. He contends that French theorists have shown suspicions of and denigration toward the visual realm and that Kristeva's concept of the Semiotic relies on an antiocular perception of the world, "pitting the temporal rhythms of the body against the mortifying spatialization of the eye." Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California

Press, 1993), 528. Dealing with Kristeva and cinema in particular, he explains that, for her, “only if disrupted by laughter can the cinema escape its complicity with authority and order” (458).

20. “Ellipsis on Dread and Specular Seduction,” in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 237.

21. *Ibid.*, 238.

22. *Ibid.*, 238.

23. Kristeva, *The Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 82.

24. Kuhn, “‘What’s the matter, Trevor? Scared of Something?’,” provides TriStar’s official production’s synopsis of the film:

For Helen Lyle, urban mythology is nothing more than an academic exercise. A doctoral candidate at the University of Illinois, she regards oral folklore and superstition with a skeptical eye, particularly one legend concerning a hook-handed killer who, it’s said, can be summoned by chanting “Candyman” five times while looking in a mirror. When she learns that a signature murder in the Cabrini Green projects of Chicago is being attributed to the mythological Candyman, Helen sees a way of securing her scholarly reputation: Braving the dangers of the crime-ridden projects, she’ll conduct interviews, gather data and write a doctoral thesis about this urban legend that will make her a star in academia. But as Helen begins her research, a terrible presence lurking deep within the scarred heart of the projects begins to sap her complacent belief in what is rational and what is possible, and she soon finds herself trapped by evidence that points towards her as a murderer.

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*

27. *Ibid.*

28. Kuhn’s interpretation of Kristeva’s paradigm is somewhat limiting here, as it leads her reader to think of the Semiotic in terms of femininity. However, as Toril Moi points out, “the fluid mobility of the semiotic is [. . .] associated with the pre-oedipal phase, and therefore with the pre-oedipal mother, but Kristeva makes it quite clear that like Freud and Klein she sees the pre-oedipal mother as a figure that encompasses both masculinity and femininity” (Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* [London and New York: Methuen, 1985], 165). Although Kuhn builds on Barbara Creed, she fails to mention Creed’s clarification of that problem. Creed explains, “Kristeva places semiotic language on the side of femininity and symbolic language on the side of masculinity although both aspects of language, the semiotic/feminine and symbolic/masculine are open to all individuals regardless of their biological sex” (*The Monstrous-Feminine*, 38). Beatriz Penas adds, “Kristeva maintains that both men and women can have access to the semiotic and the symbolic, although sexual difference as it is discursively constructed in our culture does come to bear on how and to what extent. Poetic language and maternity are functions which, though assimilated to femininity, can be performed by both man and woman” (Penas, “Kristeva’s *Desire in Language: A Feminist Semiotic Perspective on Language and Literature*” in *Gender, Ideology; Essays on Theory, Fiction, and Film*, ed. Chantal Cornut-Gentille d’Arcy and José Angel García [Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi Press, 1996], 100). For Kristeva, “the paternal and maternal are functions which do not automatically attach per se to the male as father or to the female as mother” (*ibid.*, 95).

29. Kuhn, “‘What’s the matter, Trevor? Scared of Something?’”

30. Kristeva, “Ellipsis on Dread and Specular Seduction,” 238.

31. D. N. Rodowick, *The Crisis of Political Modernism: Criticism and Ideology in Contemporary Film Theory* (Urbana and Chicago: The University of Illinois Press 1998).

32. Tina Chanter also studies the Abject at length in “Abject images. Kristeva, Art, and Third Cinema,” *Philosophy Today* 45:5 (2001): 89.

33. *Ibid.*

34. I do not mean to claim here that the Semiotic and the Symbolic function in the *same* way in any text, but Kristeva’s model enables a variety of approaches that go beyond opposition such as good vs. bad art or high vs. low art.

35. First cinema refers to Hollywood. Second cinema is the European avant-garde, and third cinema is a more open category that encloses all “democratic, national, popular cinema” (Chanter, “Abject images,” 88).

36. Bret Fetzer, “Review,”

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail//B00005KCAS/10355281969123818?v=glance> (last modified in 2004).

37. Monique Yvonne Tschofen, “Anagrams of the body: hybrid texts and the question of postmodernism in the literature and film of Canada” (PhD diss., University of Alberta, 1999), 226.

38. The photographer travels with a camera, and shoots the trip in Armenia. In Canada, he watches this film.

39. Ron Burnett, "Between the Borders of Cultural Identity: Atom Egoyan's *Calendar*," http://www.ecuad.ca/~rburnett/Weblog/archives/2008/02/calendar_between_1.html (last modified in 2008).
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Crissa-Jean Chappell, "Alain Resnais and Atom Egoyan," *Cinetext*, http://cinetext.philo.at/magazine/chappell/resnais_egoyan.html (last modified on 18 July 2003).
43. Atom Egoyan quoted in James Wall, "Review," *The Christian Century* 110:7 (1993): 227.
44. Egoyan, "Lettres Video," interview with Paul Virilio, in *Atom Egoyan*, ed. Carole Desbarats, Jacinto Lageira, Daniele Riviere, and Virilio (Paris: Editions Dis Voir, 1993), 113 (my translation).
45. Kristeva, "Ellipsis on Dread and Specular Seduction," 238.
46. She says about this moment, "as you were taping, he [their guide] placed his hand on mine. I remember because I gripped his hand so hard, watching you grip your camera as if you knew all the time. Did you know?"
47. Daniele Riviere, "La place du Spectateur," in *Atom Egoyan*, ed. Carole Desbarats, Jacinto Lageira, Riviere, and Paul Virilio (Paris: Editions Dis Voir 1993), 58 (my translation).
48. Stephen Gould, "Dinomania," *New York Review of Books* (August 1993): 54.
49. Stan Winston quoted in Ron Magid, "Effects Team Brings Reptiles Back From Extinction," *American Cinematographer* 6 (1993): 52.
50. Dean Cundey quoted in Bob Fisher, "When the Dinosaurs Rule the Box Office," *American Cinematographer* 6 (1993): 39.
51. For a detailed discussion of technology and special effects in *Jurassic Park*, see Jody Duncan's "The Beauty in the Beast," *Cinefex Magazine* 55 (August 1993).
52. Bob Fisher, "When the Dinosaurs Rule the Box Office," *American Cinematographer* 6 (1993): 39.
53. Ibid., 42.
54. Steven Spielberg, quoted in Robert Braid, "Animalizing *Jurassic Park*'s Dinosaurs: Blockbuster Schemata and Cross Cultural Cognition in the Threat Scene," *Cinema Journal* 37:4 (1998): 91.
55. Warren Buckland, "Between Science Fact and Science Fiction: Spielberg's Digital Dinosaurs, Possible Worlds, and the New Aesthetic Realism," *Screen* 40:2 (1999): 178, 184-5.
56. Ibid., 185.
57. Nigel Clark, "Panic Ecology: Nature in the Age of Superconductivity," *Theory, Culture & Society* 14:1 (1997): 78.
58. Ibid., 86.
59. Constance Balides, "Jurassic Post-Fordism: Tall Tales of Economics in the Theme Park," *Screen* 41:2 (2000): 151.
60. Ibid., 154.
61. Ibid.
62. Kristeva, "Fetishizing the Abject," interview with Sylvere Lotringer, in *More & Less*, ed. Sylvere Lotringer (Brooklyn: Semiotext(e)/Autonomedia, n.d.), 30.
63. Balides, "Jurassic Post-Fordism": 160.
64. Rajani Sudan offers a different reading of these scenes. She notes that the last scenes play out a parallel between the birds and the helicopter to underline that the characters "survive by the very technology that has so lately imperiled their lives: birds of prey (dinosaurs) turn into birds of rescue (helicopters) [. . .] animals become machines in the service of humans" (Sudan, "Technophallia," *Camera Obscura: A Journal of Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 40-41 [1997]: 115). As the last shot is followed by Spielberg's name, she argues that the film shows that the director can "learn from its own mistakes through the 'good' technology Hollywood provides" (ibid.).

**“BIOPOLITICS ON SCREEN”:
AERNOUT MIK’S MOVING-IMAGE INSTALLATIONS**

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Is there not something catastrophic in the very nature of thought? Thought is driven by an excessive compulsion and is itself an excess over and beyond perception. [...] Thought is seeing what exceeds the possibility of seeing, what is intolerable to see, what exceeds the possibility of thinking.

— Alphonso Lingis, “Catastrophic Times”

According to art critic and philosopher Boris Groys, the transformation that the art world is undergoing today is shifting the focus of attention from the actual artwork toward art documentation. Groys interprets such a shift as the artistic response to today’s “biopolitical age.”¹ And while technologies reduce life as “a pure activity that occurs in time,” that is to say, “as time artificially produced and fashioned;” for Groys “art [itself] becomes biopolitical” exactly when it attempts “to produce and document life as a pure activity.”² Groys here rightly implies that what we find at the core of *(bio)political art* is *life* caught in an indistinct zone of friction between *politics* and *art*. A life that, by residing in a space of indistinction, can then be turned into an event that can be started and ended; an activity that can be easily timed at one’s own will. “The real achievement of biopolitical technologies,” Groys alerts us, “lies more in the shaping of the lifespan” so as:

From begetting and lifelong medical care by way of the regulation of the relationship between work time and free time up to death as supervised, or

even brought about by, medical care, the lifetime of a person today is constantly being shaped and artificially improved.³

Groys' concerns are echoed, and further articulated by Giorgio Agamben, for whom the lives of the overcomatose person lying in a hospital room, along with the ones of the neomorts waiting for their organs to be transplanted, inhabit that "threshold of indistinction between biology and politics." Such a threshold, Agamben claims, is the same one that is crossed by Western "military interventions" when, acting on humanitarian grounds, they carry out military interventions "for the sake of biological ends such as nutrition or care of epidemics."⁴

The same threshold of indistinction between biology and politics has been increasingly problematised and addressed by artists. Let us think of the work produced, from the second half of the nineties onwards, in the recently established field of *bio art* by artists such as Eduardo Kac, Oron Catts and Ionat Zurr (also known as Tissue Culture and Art Project), George Gessert, and so on.⁵ A critical engagement with bio art and an investigation of its correlations to biopolitics is beyond the scope of this article; however it is necessary, for the foundation of my argument, to at least gesture towards it. Bio art, considered as a macro example, is able to show that the means through which biopolitics manifests itself in art and the means through which art manifests itself in biopolitics are always under the cipher of indistinction. Indistinction, thus, is on the one hand what biopolitics employs to perform power, and on the other the powerful result of the implicit performances that happen within and through *biopolitical art*.

Let us now reconsider what I mentioned at the beginning of the paper, namely that in biopolitical times life is just an activity that happens in time. Let us now relate this claim to Groys' assertion that it is because of such an event that our ability "to distinguish between the natural and the artificial" is in crisis:

How does one distinguish between a technologically facilitated beginning of life, such as artificial insemination, for example, and a “natural” continuation of that life, or distinguish that natural continuation, in turn, from an equally technology-dependent means of extending life beyond a “natural” death?⁶

Once confronted with these questions it becomes clear why Groys advances that the one and only difference that we can aspire to detect between what is *real* and what is *artificial* is “exclusively a narrative difference.” Groys’ proposition brings the discussion back to the topic of documentation, since the difference between the real and the artificial “cannot be observed but only told, only documented.”⁷

A great example of this kind of undetectable difference is described in Christopher Nolan’s movie *Inception* (2010). In this film the real⁸ and the artificial (which in the movie is the dream world) happen to be blurred to the extent that at the end of the feature not only the fictional characters in the movie, but also the actual audience, are left wondering whether the spinning top (which in the movie is the only element able to *document* with certainty the difference between the real and the artificial) is going to fall (= real) or is going to keep spinning (= artificial).

I would like to push this idea a step further, by suggesting that what we experience in Aernout Mik’s moving-image installations is *biopolitical art*, for it creates “something living and original from something artificial and reproduced.”⁹ The production of something *real* from its *artificial* copy is, in fact, another mechanism of contemporary biopolitics. Think of biometric systems of identification in which it is paradoxically the copy (i.e., my iris scan or my digital finger prints) that identifies (me as) the original, and not vice versa. Think of the fact that nowadays the dynamics of power have substituted human life for the human subject. All of the above is but a drop in the mare magnum of biopolitics, an area that has been investigated by an increasing number of contemporary Italian

philosophers such as Antonio Negri, Maurizio Lazzarato, Pietro Montani, Giorgio Agamben, and Roberto Esposito, to name just a few.

In her extraordinary text *Biopolitica: Una mappa concettuale*, published at the end of 2010, Laura Bazzicalupo reminds us that the term biopolitics was for the first time explicitly used in a text dated 1938 and written by Morley Roberts: *Biopolitics: An Essay on the Physiology, Pathology and Politics of Social and Somatic Organism*. In this text biopolitics is considered as the attempt to detect a normality through pathological aspects of society that otherwise would be ungraspable.¹⁰ Since 1938 the term biopolitics has undergone innumerable semantic migrations. In contemporary philosophical discourse the term biopolitics has been employed to address mostly the conceptual coupling of life and politics, and the ways in which governments have performed their (il)legal interventions over life, with norms and legislation such as the ones concerning abortion and euthanasia, organ transplants and biometric systems of security and identification. By displaying a terminological fusion and (con)fusion of the concepts of *bios* and *politics*, biopolitics attempts to eliminate — in a theoretical sense at least — the gap that is always-already present between *bios* and politics. *Bios*,¹¹ which is first of all a term that refers to life, is a generic, indeterminable, and indeed vague concept. But as soon as *bios* appears to be framed by power, a decisive semantic shift from concept to content happens. As if to say that *bios* becomes life only, and only when, power frames it and so defines it. It is only within the frame of power, then, that life metamorphoses, and from a neutral, cold and somehow impalpable concept becomes something else, namely, a warm and palpable content; something much more specific, much more present, much more subjective, and so much more subjectable. This something *so much more* is what we call body.

In Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer Trilogy*, which consists of *Homo Sacer* (1995), *Quel che Resta di Auschwitz* (1998) and *Stato di Eccezione* (2004),¹² biopolitics, from a

mere legal and political concept, became a critical tool employable in different fields of analysis in the attempt to understand contemporaneity. Springing from Michel Foucault's critical elaboration of biopower and biopolitics, and Carl Schmitt's theory of the state of exception, Agamben's philosophy depicts biopolitics as the *modus operandi* of contemporary democratic regimes. Recognizing not just an eerie interconnection but also a reciprocal necessity between the constitution of sovereign power and the production of the borderline figure of the *homo sacer*, Agamben, in his writing, attempts to peer through the opaque folds of contemporary politics. It is there that he finds the human body, or rather life in its bare nudity. *Nuda vita* — bare life — is a life that, stripped of its ethical values and meaning, is the prime object of governmental power's performances.

Agamben, in his work, reminds us that the "original political relation" that lies at the foundation of Western democracies is no longer "the Schmittian opposition between friend and enemy, fellow citizen and foreigner." The contemporary political relation is "marked by [a] zone of indistinction in which the life of the exile or the *aqua et igni interdictus*, borders on the life of *homo sacer*, who may be killed but not sacrificed."¹³ The Latin expression *homo sacer* comes from an archaic Roman law and refers to the life of any individual who has been doubly marked by a cursed holiness and a holy curse through the action of *sacratio*. Already within the same idiom *homo sacer* there appears an obscure and ungraspable paradox, some sort of semantic indistinction. By being defined and identified as *sacer* by both human and divine law; and by being excluded by both — because of that very same definition, *homo sacer* is holy and cursed, inside and outside: *homo sacer* is included via its exclusion. Such a semantic indistinction, which in turn opens itself up to a conceptual malleability, has made *homo sacer* become the apt philosophical paradigm to define the indefinable, to name what is in itself always-already

nameless: our contemporary human condition. After all, has not the main task of philosophy been the attempt to explain that which is unexplainable?

The following passage from *Homo Sacer* is crucial to grasp the interconnections between *homo sacer*, bare life, sacrifice, and our modern condition. I shall quote it at length:

Homo sacer is unsacrificeable, yet he may nevertheless be killed by anyone. The dimension of bare life that constitutes the immediate referent of sovereign violence is more original than the opposition of the sacrificeable and the unsacrificeable, and gestures toward an idea of sacredness that is no longer absolutely definable through the conceptual pair (which is perfectly clear in societies familiar with sacrifice) of fitness for sacrifice and immolation according to ritual forms. In modernity, the principle of the sacredness of life is thus completely emancipated from sacrificial ideology, and in our culture the meaning of the term sacred continues the semantic history of *homo sacer* and not that of sacrifice (and this is why the demystifications of sacrificial ideology so common today remain insufficient, even though they are correct). What confronts us today is a life that as such is exposed to a violence without precedent precisely in the most profane and banal ways. [...] If today there is no longer any one clear figure of the sacred man, it is perhaps because we are all virtually *homines sacri*.¹⁴

Employing this quote as a critical lens, I would like to propose that the moving-image installations *Vacuum Room* (2005), *Scapegoats* (2006), *Training Ground* (2006), and the most recent *Shifting Sitting* (2011), produced by Dutch artist Aernout Mik,¹⁵ are performative instances of current biopolitical concerns and can be considered “as-philosophy,” or “philosophy-in-motion,” so to speak. These video installations

represent what is supposed, and, more crucially, is always expected to be unrepresentable, namely what Zygmunt Bauman calls “constant uncertainty,” which can be considered one of the by-products of biopolitics. It is because of this uncertainty that we feel hopeless in relation to the political status quo and we are made believe “that everything can happen but nothing can be done.”¹⁶ In order to offer a more comprehensive picture of Mik’s imagery and to build a more coherent and linear argument I will now take some time to sketch out the structure of the pieces mentioned above. These are video installations that all share the following elements: they represent staged situations; they are in colour, silent, and looped. Before engaging with the individual description of the pieces I need to say that Mik’s installations, in this paper, will function as a series of conceptual paradigms aimed to help me to illustrate the thesis of this paper, namely, that the very same installations are *biopolitics on screen*.

Vacuum Room is a six-channel video installation, whose screens are held by a freestanding semicircular architectural structure designed to physically surround the viewers. The action represented on the screens develops within what appears to be an official legislative chamber. Shot from the vantage point of six security cameras positioned at different angles, and lacking a linear narrative, the footage of *Vacuum Room* shows a group of rebels entering the chamber and taking over what looks like an animated political debate. Unlike his other films, in *Vacuum Room* Mik uses fixed cameras to record the happenings, perhaps to give the impression that the images are actually coming from real surveillance cameras. That said, nothing is actually certain or clear in the piece, as we read in the catalogue of the 2009 exhibition entitled *Aernout Mik*, which took place at MoMA in New York:

During a boisterous debate (complete with shoe-banging) a protest group bursts into the already contentious assembly, exacerbating tensions and creating

a power vacuum in which order is threatened and authority compromised. [...] In spite of the work's specificity [...] much remains unclear. There is no chronology. The piece does not open with pictures of the ministers in session. In fact it does not open at all.

The way Mik positions his telling precludes any beginning, and without a beginning there can be no middle and no end. The work starts whenever the viewer first encounters it, and then continues and loops, and continues some more.¹⁷

Instead of occurring within a secluded and confined space, the action depicted in the two-screen installation *Training Ground*¹⁸ happens in an outdoor environment where "guards with weapons oversee/harass/abuse/corral/search detainees against a background of parked police vehicles and transport trucks."¹⁹ We might have the impression that if we pay close attention we could eventually discern a coherent plot. However, "by shifting sequences shot in different parts of the field from screen to screen" Mik deprives us "of contiguity and presents [us] with a puzzle that, like the violent action described in the work, cannot be solved."²⁰ While in *Training Ground* we are not completely sure who is a guard and who is a detainee, especially considering that at a certain moment the two factions seems to swap roles; in the sports arena of the single-screen work *Scapegoats*, the demarcation between the group hostages/prisoners and the group of guards becomes even more unstable, to the extent that differences turn into similarities.

Mik's most recent production, *Shifting Sitting*, is an open reference to the legal court cases in which the Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi has been involved since the 1990s. In a sophisticated fashion, *Shifting Sitting* exposes the implosion and the resulting erasure of the boundaries between governmental power, legal power and media-related power; boundaries that should be of crucial importance for the

maintenance of democratic systems. Filmed in the EUR district of Rome (where EUR stands for Esposizione Universale di Roma), which was built in the late 1930s by order of Benito Mussolini to host the 1941 World Exhibition, *Shifting Sitting* seems to suggest some sort of similarity between the current state of Italian democracy and the Fascist regime. Mounted on three separate screens, the video installation shows scenes that take place in an Italian law court, where, symbolically overseen by the motto *La Legge e' Uguale per Tutti* [*The Law is Equal for Everyone*], five men — who, by the way they are dressed, might be either businessmen or politicians, some of whom bear an obvious resemblance to Berlusconi — are being questioned.

As appears clear from these four examples, what Mik develops in his work is a reflection on European democracy, which depicts democracy not as a unified concept but as a plural one that manifests itself in many different specific ways.²¹ Mik, in his work, tries to tackle some of these ways. In all his videos we see groups of people gathering together, some of them sit, some of them walk, some of them interact. Although, overall, it seems that nothing noticeable is happening, the scenes are always disquieting. We see groups of people that sometimes come together in a political chamber, sometimes in a field, sometimes in a stadium, sometimes in a law court. The people of Mik's videos often appear divided into conflicting groups. It is through the employment of slightly different objects or clothes, or by positioning the people in particular spatial arrangements, that Mik leaves us to imagine who belongs to which group and why. And while we are attempting to make sense out of what we are seeing, and maybe we think we have understood, the two groups suddenly "mingle and intermingle, or they may disperse into an amorphous gathering, a crowd, sometimes to regather, reform, regroup."²² In the attempt to offer what I would tentatively call a "democratic plurality of performances," in filming the movements of these groups of people Mik "keeps the whole field in sharp focus so that no group is visually privileged and all activity is equal."²³ Such

equality extends outside of the space of the video into the physical space of the exhibition venue. Because of the cues that Mik uses in his films, which act as reminders of recent social or political events, the viewers are captured by the images and yet puzzled by the absence of a coherent narrative. Steve Klee rightly points out that the scale of the screens generates a sort of *trompe l'oeil* environment, which lures the viewer into the space of the video:

The projected characters are often life, or near life, sized and the space within the training ground, conference room and sports arena seem somehow continuous with the gallery. This continuity depends upon the positioning of the screens flush to the floor, so that as we pass by the images there is often the curious feeling of walking on the same ground as Mik's performers.²⁴

What Mik is interested in is to deconstruct the behavioural dynamics of groups, and to question how people act and what happens when they come together in a specific space. Preferring to refer to himself as a sculptor rather than a video artist, Mik admits that his fascination for the presence of bodies in space is "a sculptural starting point," which over the years has developed in "the idea of installations." Mik, however, describes his video-installations as 'situations' more than videos. They are "spatial arrangements" where a physical encounter between the viewer and the work is necessary to allow what he refers to as "a constellation of people or different living creatures and objects" to meet in a space. Mik, in other words, seeks to produce a "kinaesthetic and kinetic relationship with the viewer's body."²⁵ But how can he control in advance the ways in which the viewer will experience the piece? The answer is that "where the viewer will stand and how his eyes will engage with both the images on-screen and the other observers"²⁶ can be somehow choreographed through the shape of the architectural constructions and the size of

the screens that combined together turn the video-installation into something *living* to experience as opposed to a *dead* film to watch.

Experience implies the concepts of time and space, and therefore of movement. The latter is a common element to all Mik's installations: not only are the people in the film frames always in movement, but so are the people in the exhibition space. As I have mentioned at the beginning of this paper, for Groys "art becomes biopolitical" when it attempts "to produce and document life as a pure activity,"²⁷ that is to say, when it attempts to contract life into an event that happens in a time frame that can be controlled and manipulated. Now let us briefly recall that for Groys it is exactly because "life is no longer understood as a natural event [...] but rather as time artificially produced and fashioned" that we are increasingly losing the ability to discern what is natural and what is artificial.²⁸ Let us also not forget that for the philosopher "the difference between the living and the artificial is exclusively a narrative difference" and that "the artistic documentation, whether real or fictive, is primarily narrative, and thus it evokes the unrepeatability of living time."²⁹ Now, in the light of these claims, if we think of Mik's moving-image installations, which are always presented in a loop, the question of time, space and movement, that is, the question of experience, surfaces.

Mik's work incarcerates time in a loop, so that the viewers can frame it at their own will. Such a conceptual paradox, which is nothing but a step further into the zone of biopolitics indistinction, can be explained as follows. The time of the video-installation, which has been already framed by the looped video, presents itself *as unframed* to the viewers, so that the viewers can then frame it, once again, and in so doing, they come to own it in a way. What Mik does in his films, then, is to engage with documentation in a conceptual sense, as he uses it as an art form to document what the performers enact, and as an evocative tool, since the images of his films are meant to arouse the memories of the viewers. It is the combination of these two

kinds of documentation that allows his work, I would argue, to produce *art from life*. The difference between performance and factuality, between art and life is very much indistinct in Mik's videos that, by also lacking a narrative, lack what Groys sees as the only element able to help us differentiate between artificial and real. Therefore, Mik's videos can be seen as paradigmatically "shows on screen of bare life," since the life that surfaces in his work is a life that belongs to a third category, between *zoë* and *bios*. This is a life that caught in the indistinct zone between politics and art, has yet to achieve political or artistic representation. Mik, however, shows *nuda vita* less naked because through his work it ends up being dressed, so to speak, with the projected memories and failed expectations of the viewers. Through the viewers' projections, obviously aimed at understanding, or at least at making sense out of a constructed loop of silent moving images, the viewers find themselves inside Mik's films. *Biopolitics on screen* happens there, where the screen of both Mik's and the viewers' projections, overlap and thus become a symbolic materialization of what Agamben calls "the hidden matrix and *nomos* of the political space where we are still living."³⁰

Vacuum Room, Scapegoats, Training Ground and *Shifting Sitting* engage with violent and abusive group behaviours, and depict, in a non-linear fashion, the blurring of the boundaries between social roles and identities. In none of them can the viewer gain any certainty, whether in relation to the topography of the spaces or in relation to the actual events happening on screen. In an exemplary fashion these moving-image installations perform and display, at once, biopolitics in its bareness. What appears in Mik's films is "the very bare life (or sacred life) [...], in the relation of ban, [which] constitutes the immediate referent of sovereignty,"³¹ as Agamben describes it, in the wake of Bataille's reasoning on the accursed share. What we witness in *Vacuum Room, Scapegoats, Training Ground* and *Shifting Sitting* is the confrontational and yet unspecific behaviours of two different groups of people,

those who apparently are in control and those who are controlled, and the groups' movements in space. Needless to say, that the space of these particular video installations is extremely evocative for a contemporary viewer: a parliament chamber becomes a riotous arena (*Vacuum Room*), a stadium becomes a refugee camp (*Scapegoats*), a training environment becomes a zone for torture and abuse (*Training Ground*) and a court room becomes a theatre of media display (*Shifting Sitting*).

Moreover, what confuses in these video installations is the fact that the already unclear division between the factions often develops into "a sudden reversal of roles and the captives temporarily take over" so that

The visual similarities between all of the factions — soldiers, prisoners in uniform, and those who are partially dressed in both civilian and military attire, further the confusion and make it impossible to place people in distinct categories. Nor is it clear if the "prisoners" may actually be dangerous.³²

Scapegoats, in particular, seems to visualise almost *ad litteram* Agamben's controversial claim that the concentration camp has become the *nomos* of modernity.³³ Agamben, of course, does not contend that the same inhuman cruelty of the Nazi concentration camps marks the general geopolitics of our times. Unfortunately, there are instances where such cruelty is still performed, think of Guantanamo Bay or the many camps for immigrants that dot our Western urban topographies. Agamben, however, suggests that the rationale of the camp is what is pervading the topographies of Hardt and Negri's *Empire*. The exceptionality of the German camps, with their production of *nuda vita*, or "naked life," has — in Agamben's view — become the norm. "Naked life," by being metaphorically denuded of its intimate values and meanings, can also be seen as one of the tangible

results of a biopolitical annihilation of any distinction between inclusion and exclusion, inside and outside, citizen and criminal. I would advance that “naked life” is indeed what is depicted by the looped videos of Mik’s installations, works in which apparently innocuous spaces such as a stadium or a training field are transformed instead into spaces where the exception is the norm, and where violence is accepted and, for some unknown reason, even justified. As Agamben puts it:

If the essence of the camp consists in the materialization of the state of exception and in the subsequent creation of a space in which bare life and the juridical rule enter into a threshold of indistinction, then we must admit that we find ourselves virtually in the presence of a camp every time such a structure is created, independent of the kinds of crime that are committed there and whatever its denomination and specific topography.³⁴

Which means that we have a camp anytime “an apparently innocuous space” (for example, a stadium or a training field or those many spaces that belong to the government, such as legislative chambers and so on)

actually delimits a space in which the normal order is de facto suspended and in which whether or not atrocities are committed depends not on law but on the civility and ethical sense of the they who temporarily act as sovereign.³⁵

The fact that these “innocuous spaces” are becoming increasingly common in everyday life is what causes Mik’s spectators to be drawn into the videos. We saw an incredibly tragic actualization of one of those “innocuous spaces” in the New Orleans Superdome when it was used as a shelter for the people who could not be

evacuated after Hurricane Katrina in August 2005. We saw another clear example in the San Nicola stadium in Bari where in 1991, from the 7th to the 8th of August, Italian police forcefully detained 15,000 illegal Albanian immigrants, before sending them back to their country. Shortly after such an appalling event the Italian government legalized the actual creation of “exceptional spaces,” the so-called *centri di permanenza temporanea* [centres of temporary permanence],³⁶ in which immigrants were — as already suggested by the name of the spaces themselves — temporarily hosted within a state of “permanent exception” prior to the moment of their expulsion. Shifting the attention towards identification more than housing and care, these centres, from 2008 onward, were legally renamed *Centri di Identificazione e Espulsione* [Centres of Identification and Expulsion].³⁷

I would argue that uncertainty and insecurity are the feelings that we experience when confronted with Mik’s moving-image loops. Regardless of the actual events depicted in the films, the actions performed by the actors display a certain uneasy uncertainty. Interestingly, Mik does not explain the details of the actions to his cast but just gives them a general outline of the events they are going to perform. He explains his creative process in an extremely detailed fashion:

It is always important to inform them and not inform them, so I hold back information because it is better for the way I work that they don’t have a full image of what they are supposed to do. And since they are also not really very specific roles, no one knows really how different he is from the other and what exactly he represents. I don’t give them too much information because I don’t want them to become characters and to act.

[...] During the shoot, different qualities, different people emerge and become useful to what is coming to the surface. [...] In the shooting, I don’t know when or exactly why what happens happens. [...] It is collective action

that's really going on. What always happens with people, even if they are completely unskilled, if you put them together in a certain situation and with certain general instructions, for the first twenty minutes to half an hour it is kind of a directionless mass. After a short while the mass starts to behave as an organic unity and takes a certain direction on its own, even though I am partly manipulating it. Even if the people don't understand what they are doing, they physically know how to behave and there is a certain tone appearing that makes them understand what is more or less correct to do. Therefore there is some combination of control and loss of control, which is not the same as improvisation.³⁸

Therefore, besides experiencing the dilemma of "is it real — *like us* — or is it not?" any time we watch Mik's videos, as rightly pointed out by Adam Chodzo,³⁹ it is the uneasiness that emerges from within the videos that renders the "fluidity of boundaries"⁴⁰ so palpable. By creating what the artist refers to as an "encountering space," which is at the same time a physical and symbolic space, such a fluidity of boundaries is performed even further, allowing the space inside the video to reach out and touch the space of the exhibition venue. It is in its symbolic variation that Mik crafts a new space of reception in which the viewer, confronted by the absence of a linear narrative that could justify the bare and silent images of the videos, is turned into a producer, as Benjamin would say. Esther Leslie highlights that "for Benjamin, properly political art is [...] concerned with reception effects, generated by modes of production that provide conditions for consumers to become producers."⁴¹ I am not suggesting that in viewing Mik's moving-image installations we, as viewers, become literal producers. What I am proposing is that Mik's work engages with our reception so as to make us experience, in the first person, confusion, indistinction, uncertainty, and fear, which are exactly the same means

employed by biopolitics to exert power over human lives, to colonise and own them.

As I mentioned earlier, the screens of Mik's video installations inhabit the exhibition space so as to create what the artist calls "spatial arrangements." The screens are often positioned in a way that makes the viewers walk through the projection so as to become themselves a living part of the video installation. These "spatial arrangements" after all, are environments that the viewers can actively experience, rather than just passively look at. "When video images are placed in an exhibition space," Groys claims, the images are what will "dictate the time the visitor needs to view them," making the viewer lose control "over the duration of his or her contemplation."⁴² When it comes to moving-images installations, such as the ones by Aernout Mik, "we do not possess sovereignty, administrative power over the time of contemplation." Which is, in a sense, what we experience in our everyday life, where "we are always only accidental witnesses of certain events and certain images, whose duration we cannot control."⁴³ That feeling of being "only an accidental witness" is rendered in Mik's videos by the ways in which the camera moves amongst the elements of the scenes, always in an invisible fashion as if it were "looking for something else, equivocating, haunting a space, returning to it."⁴⁴ An element that is common to most of Mik's work, besides silence, which in my opinion calls for much closer attention, is the feeling that something is missing. As if we were standing in the wrong place or we were watching from the wrong angle. As if "the *real* action" is actually happening somewhere else, maybe "outside the frame," or "perhaps it has already happened or is going on in the distance?"⁴⁵ It is this "narrative ambiguity of Mik's staged situations" that produces coexisting opposite dispositions in the viewer: "the feeling of being both engrossed and distracted, implicated in the actions on screen and distanced by them at the same time."⁴⁶

Let us now turn to some aspects of Agamben's work on language to investigate further how in Mik's moving-image installations *biopolitics* indeed ends up being *on screen*. Conceiving politics as "the sphere of pure means" — where means identify with gesture, and gesture with language — Agamben sustains that biopolitical regimes employ a language devoid of its content. Such a vacancy of message is for Agamben the result of a crisis of communicability, for in our spectacular biopolitical times "what prevents communication is communicability itself."⁴⁷ According to the philosopher, in fact, "an alienation of the linguistic nature of human beings" has been pushed to its extreme so that right now "human beings are kept separate by what unites them," namely by language itself.⁴⁸

In *Infancy and History*, Giorgio Agamben, echoing what Benjamin had already described in *The Storyteller*, claims that what modernity brought about was first and foremost a crisis of communicability. Such a crisis manifested itself exactly in a communally shared crisis of experience whose dawn was identified by Benjamin in the catastrophic events of the First World War when "men returned from the battlefield grown silent — not richer, but poorer in communicable experience."⁴⁹ For Agamben, thus, there is a noteworthy convergence, or better to say a quasi-identity, of these two kinds of crisis: the one of communicability and the one of experience. To recuperate experience on the one hand, and its communicability on the other, or rather its "translatability,"⁵⁰ what needs to be reconsidered is, according to Agamben, the essence of experience itself. More than a question related to knowledge and consciousness, experience should be understood as a question of language, for "any rigorous formulation of the question of experience inevitably impacts on the question of language."⁵¹ After all, language along with mortality is what makes us and marks us as human. Agamben explains:

In the tradition of Western philosophy, humans appear as both mortal and

speaking. They possess the “faculty” for language (*zoon logon echon*) and the “faculty” for death (*Fähigkeit des Todes*, in the words of Hegel). This connection is equally essential within Christianity: humans, living beings, are “incessantly consigned to death through Christ” [...], that is through the Word.⁵²

And if we follow Agamben’s claim that “it is in language that the subject has its site and origin,”⁵³ and that, “it is in and through language that the individual is constituted as a subject”⁵⁴ then we would clearly see why it is only in linguistic terms that we can actually locate experience.

For if the subject is merely the enunciator [...] we shall never attain in the subject the original status of experience: “pure, and thereby still mute experience.” On the contrary, the constitution of the subject in and through language is precisely the expropriation of this “wordless” experience; from the outset, it is always “speech.” A primary experience, far from being subjective, could then only be what in human beings comes before the subject — that is, before language: a “wordless” experience in the literal sense of the term, a human infancy [in-fancy], whose boundary would be marked by language.⁵⁵

The alienation of language that Agamben denounces as being one of the main features of the contemporary biopolitical phantasmagoria is appropriated by Mik and in turn employed to produce a “biopolitical idiom” that stretches beyond both words and images. If it is true what Heraclitus says, namely that “*logos* is common to all”⁵⁶ and if it is true what Agamben claims, that is, that “the extreme form of expropriation of the common is the spectacle” which is “the politics in which we live,” what we might discover in the spectacle is “our very linguistic nature inverted.”⁵⁷ But what is the result of such inversion? It is what Agamben refers to as

infancy: that conceptual condition which is not understood temporally (as the time before childhood for example) but rather as “the transcendental experience of the difference between language and speech, which first opens the space of history.”⁵⁸ I argue that what we experience in Mik’s moving-image installations is an experience of history and *ethos*. Infancy seems to me what can actualize the potentiality that Agamben recognizes in the spectacle when he claims that

precisely because what is being expropriated is the possibility itself of a common good [that] the spectacle’s violence is so destructive; but, for the same reason, the spectacle still contains something like a positive possibility-and it is our task to use this possibility against it.⁵⁹

What we see on Mik’s screens are “singularities that are truly *whatever* singularities.”⁶⁰ The people that appear in Mik’s films are not characters but the conceptualisation of gestures: of what Agamben calls “a constellation of gestures.” What happens within this “constellation of gestures” is firstly the destruction of the role’s identity together with the actor’s identity and secondly a questioning of “the relationship between text and execution, power and act.”⁶¹

What Agamben attributes to the mask in the *Commedia dell’Arte*, namely the ability “to insinuate itself between the text and the execution, creating an indistinguishable mixture of power and act” happens where the space inside the video and the space outside collide. Such a space of intersection is what can bridge the gap between life and art, act and power, general and particular, text and execution; what Agamben calls *gesture*.⁶² By being “neither use value nor exchange value, neither biographic experience nor impersonal event,” the gesture is for Agamben “a moment of life subtracted from the context of individual biography as

well as a moment of art subtracted from the neutrality of aesthetics: it is pure praxis."⁶³

When in *Potentialities*, Agamben addresses the relationship between the concept of revelation and the idea of language, he premises his argument on the claim that it is because "humans see the world through language but they do not see language," that revelation can actually reveal itself, for the "invisibility of the revealer in what is revealed is the word of God; it is revelation."⁶⁴ The philosopher at this point shows how revelation is in fact the main facet not of theology, but actually of philosophy, for:

Philosophy considers not merely what is revealed through language, but also the revelation of language itself. A philosophical presentation is thus one that, regardless of what it speaks about, must also take into account that it speaks of it, it must first of all say *language itself*.⁶⁵

This very concept, Agamben explains, can also be expressed "by saying that philosophy is not a vision of the world but a *vision of language*." However, he clarifies, language cannot be the only subject of philosophical presentations; otherwise, philosophy would just be reduced to "a metalanguage that speaks of language," to a voice that embodies a message by just being voice. On the contrary, Agamben reminds us, "the voice says nothing;" the only thing that the voice does is to show itself, to make itself present without ever becoming a content, or a message of some sort. It is worth considering that according to Agamben voice and philosophy have mutually exclusive natures: while on the one hand voice "cannot become the subject of [philosophical] discourse," on the other hand "philosophy can only lead thought to the limit of the voice," that is to say that philosophy "cannot say

the voice."⁶⁶ "Philosophy," Agamben concludes, "has hardly posed the question of the voice as an issue."⁶⁷

I see in that aphasic fracture of philosophical thinking a germane space, a space where the work of Aernout Mik is at home. I would like to propose that the silent nature of his work, regardless of the disparate visual content, is Mik's theoretical resistance against biopolitics' silencing agendas. It is via the absence of a pre-constituted narrative that an *ethos* of the viewers can resonate with the material on screen, and thus allow individuals to find sense in what is apparently nonsensical. Such a mechanism of reflection is articulated through codes that exceed the scope of language, which in itself, as we have seen, separate instead of unite. Agamben, however, foresees an "event of language" that could be a productive eventuality, instead of just being a nihilistic incident. In this paper what I have tried to show is that the video-installations produced by Aernout Mik can be read as paradigms of current philosophical concerns and can be easily considered "as philosophy."

Videos such as *Vacuum Room*, *Scapegoats*, *Training Ground* and *Shifting Sitting*, visually elucidate that, it is only by exposing "what unites human beings amongst themselves [...] [which] is the experience of language's limits, its end,"⁶⁸ that the very incommunicability articulated by Agamben may be defeated. In Mik's videos an unexpected communication is enabled via the employment of new codes, which by exposing what Agamben refers to as "gestures," become what I call "biopolitical idioms." The implicit performative power of those "gestures," of those "idioms" is actualised in Mik's films, and demands a physical and yet always displaced engagement of the spectator's body; demands that always-already challenge to the fixity of filmic documentation.

I will conclude by advancing the hypothesis, that it is through the potentiality of these "biopolitical idioms" that Mik's films "as-philosophy" perform "gestures" able to produce something *ethical* while evading, all the same, the usually

anticipated and yet ethically paralyzing dichotomy between means and end. And while the “biopolitical idioms” employed by Aernout Mik might be read as “gestures without end,” for their power to voice the always-already silence(d) *homo sacer*, they nonetheless perform a “resistance from within” against the silencing status quo of contemporary biopolitical phantasmagoria. As I have shown, Mik’s works can be considered in themselves “philosophy-in-motion” for their ability to put *biopolitics on screen*. And, if it is true that “philosophy cannot say the voice,” Mik has proved that it can certainly say silence. A silence that dwells in the zone of indistinction proper to infancy, and that makes visible what Agamben calls the “limit of the voice.” Considering that “we are not only animals whose life as living beings is at issue in their politics,” but also that we are “citizens whose very politics is at issue in their natural bodies;”⁶⁹ and that, as Agamben invites us to do, we should look for ways and forms of a new politics within “these difficult zones of indistinction,”⁷⁰ what Aernout Mik offers in his work is, if not a new politics, a new political aesthetics nonetheless.

NOTES

1. Boris Groys, “Art in the Age of Biopolitics: From Artwork to Art Documentation,” in *Art Power* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2008), 53-65. [AP]

2. *Ibid.*, 54.

3. *Ibid.*, 55-56.

4. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 186-187. [HS]

5. *Bio Art* is a term that was first used by Australian artist Eduardo Kac in relation to his piece *Time Capsule* (1997). The first and most comprehensive text available that focuses on bio art is: Eduardo Kac, ed., *Signs of Life. Bio Art and Beyond*, ed. Eduardo Kac (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007).

6. Groys, AP, 56.

7. *Ibid.*, 55.

8. My use of the term *real* is not related to any particular theory, therefore I am not referring to the Lacanian real but rather and more simply to something that could be called the “actual.”

9. Groys, AP, 65.

10. Laura Bazzicalupo, *Biopolitica: Una mappa concettuale* (Roma: Carrocci Editore, 2010), 26.

11. In this paper, due to lack of space and in order to keep the argument on topic, I will consider the terms *bios* and *life* interchangeable, and therefore I won’t address the essential difference between *bios* and *zoë*. I investigate the philosophical implications and complications of such a difference in the work of Aernout Mik in one of the chapters of my doctoral thesis.

12. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen

(Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998). Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (New York, 1999). Giorgio Agamben, *States of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

13. Agamben, *HS*, 110.

14. *Ibid.*, 114-115. On Friday 23rd of July 2011, while I was revising this article, an atrocious murderous event happened on the little island of Utoya off the coast of Norway. More than 80 people, all children and teenagers, were killed at the hands of an unstable individual, while they were enjoying their holidays in one of the most popular summer camps of the region. This event sadly shows us the extent to which life is nowadays "exposed to a violence without precedent precisely in the most profane and banal way."

15. I have decided not to discuss *Raw Footage* (2006) because it is the only work that is not staged but, instead, is made by the assemblage of found footage from the war in the former Yugoslavia. The material that forms *Raw Footage*, although it comes from news agencies, has not been broadcasted because it shows how, even in a war zone, life goes on regardless of anything else, which, in other words, does not describe war as we usually see it. For its substantial difference within Mik's oeuvre I believe that *Raw Footage* deserves a chapter of investigation on its own.

16. Zygmunt Bauman, "La Incertezza Costante," *Reset Doc*, 18 May 2011, <http://www.resetdoc.org/story/00000021599> (accessed 15 June 2011).

17. Laurence Kardish, "Aernout Mik: An Introduction," in *Aernout Mik*, ed. Libby Hruska (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2009), 17.

18. *Training Ground* is the piece that Aernout Mik presented at the Venice Biennale, Dutch Pavilion, in 2007.

19. Kardish, "Aernout Mik," 17.

20. *Ibid.*

21. For an exhaustive analysis of democracies and universalisms (in the plural) I refer to the work of contemporary sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos and his project The World Social Forum.

22. Kardish, "Aernout Mik," 15.

23. *Ibid.*

24. Steve Klee, "'Aernout Mik: Shifting Shifting' at Camden Arts Centre," *Afterall*, 5 February 2008, <http://www.afterall.org/online/aernout.mik.shifting.shifting.at.camden.arts.centre> (accessed 15 June 2011).

25. Kardish, "Aernout Mik," 13-23.

26. *Ibid.*

27. Groys, *AP*, 54.

28. *Ibid.*, 56.

29. *Ibid.*, 57.

30. Agamben, *HS*, 166.

31. *Ibid.*, 112.

32. Kelly Sidley, "Scapegoats," in *Aernout Mik*, ed. Libby Hruska (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2009), 63.

33. Agamben, *HS*, 166.

34. *Ibid.*, 174.

35. *Ibid.*

36. See Article 12 of the 1998 *Legge Turco-Napolitano* (L. 40/1998).

37. See Article 9 of D.L. 92/2008.

38. Kardish, "Aernout Mik," 15.

39. Adam Chodzcho, "#18 Aernout Mik: Shifting Shifting," *Camden Arts Centre / February – April 2007*, <http://www.camdenartscentre.org/file-uploads/File/File-Notes-Aernout-Mik.pdf> (accessed 15 June 2011).

40. Kardish, "Aernout Mik," 13.

41. Esther Leslie, *Walter Benjamin. Overpowering Conformism* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 96.

42. Groys, *AP*, 87-88.

43. *Ibid.*

44. Chodzcho, "#18 Aernout Mik."

45. *Ibid.*

46. Klee, "Aernout Mik."

47. Agamben, "Marginal Notes on 'Commentaries on the Society of Spectacle'," 84, and "Notes on Politics," 115, in *Means Without End: Notes on Politics*, trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000). [MWE]

48. *Ibid.*, 84.

49. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. and intr. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 83-84.

50. Agamben, "An Essay on the Destruction of Experience," in *Infancy and History* trans. Liz Heron, (London and New York: Verso, 1993), 15-72. [IH]

51. Ibid., 50.
52. Agamben, *Language and Death: The Place of Negativity*, trans. Karen E. Pinkus with Michael Hardt (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), xii. [LD]
53. Agamben, *IH*, 51.
54. Ibid., 52.
55. Ibid., 54.
56. Heraclitus, *The Complete Fragments*, trans. William Harris, available online at: <http://community.middlebury.edu/~harris/Philosophy/heraclitus.pdf>.
57. Agamben, *MWE*, 82.
58. Agamben, *IH*, 60
59. Agamben, *MWE*, 83.
60. Ibid., 87.
61. Ibid., 79.
62. Ibid., 79-80.
63. Ibid., 80.
64. Agamben, "The Idea of Language," in *Potentialities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984),
40. [P]
65. Ibid., 43 (emphasis added).
66. Ibid.
67. Agamben, "Experimentum Linguae," in *IH*, 4.
68. Agamben, *P*, 47.
69. Agamben, *HS*, 188.
70. Ibid., 187.

PARA UMA TEORIA DO CLICHÉ

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1. INTRODUÇÃO

Uma imagem cuja forma se repete e se torna reconhecível é o que se chama um *cliché*. O cinema vive de clichés e gera clichés — imagens que, quanto mais simplificadas, mais facilmente são retidas. Um cliché é ainda uma imagem que transporta um sentido ou uma significação segunda (além daquela que a insere no fio narrativo). Será então uma espécie de embrião de signo visual?

O objectivo deste ensaio é investigar e definir o que é um cliché e demonstrar a sua pertinência enquanto elemento do processo semiótico cinematográfico. Um cliché será então como uma figura de estilo, um *tropo* tornado imagem. Contudo, o cliché é um tropo diferente de outras figuras de retórica clássica.

Por outro lado, o cliché decorre de formas essenciais de cognição e percepção. Na medida em que um cliché é um condensado de imagem, ideia e emoção, importa situá-lo enquanto processo de semiose muito presente do cinema.

No desenvolvimento desta teoria, pomos a hipótese de que, por razões de cognição essencial, se esboça na existência dos clichés uma ideia de signo cultural que poderá constituir base para uma teoria semiótica do cinema — tese teórica que este ensaio defende.

2. MEMÓRIA E IMAGEM

Antes de entrar na definição de cliché, importará recordar alguns pressupostos da linguagem cinematográfica, aquela que, segundo Munsterberg, “obedece às leis da mente mais que às do mundo exterior,”¹ sendo “uma ‘arte da subjectividade,’ imitadora da maneira como a consciência confere forma ao mundo fenoménico”²: “O *photoplay* conta-nos uma história humana apropriando-se das formas do mundo exterior, ou seja, espaço, tempo, causalidade, e ajustando os acontecimentos às formas do mundo interior, ou seja, atenção, memória, imaginação e emoção.”³

Assim, memórias e imaginações, representações e imagens, serão todas da mesma natureza; pertencem a um nível de pensamento onde se fundem os dados da experiência e encontram nexos os factos de uma narrativa, seja ela nossa ou alheia ou partilhada.

A memória é selectiva e condensa-se em imagens de síntese que lembram um acontecimento, um momento. Exemplificando: lembramo-nos das coisas da nossa vida por imagens e fragmentos que se vão justapondo muitas vezes sem ordem definida, estabelecendo relações novas, e criando laços e encadeamentos arbitrados por nós através da reflexão que fazemos, quotidianamente, incansavelmente, involuntariamente mesmo.

É neste terreno de fantasmas e entidades abstractas — que já deixou de ser sequencial, lógico, factual ou narrativo — que nos situamos após ver um filme. Já não sabemos com muita certeza o que aconteceu antes ou depois, e já compreendemos melhor o início do filme porque lhe conhecemos o final. O nosso pensamento amalgama, sobrepõe ou reorganiza os dados da experiência de outra forma para lhe dar outros sentidos.

Essas imagens condensadas encontram eco, ou projectam-se, ou são ensinadas pela nossa experiência de vida, como por tantas outras representações que nos

rodeiam, verbais, icônicas ou outras. O mundo adquire sentido, porque nós o recriamos a partir dessas imagens, vozes, gestos, memórias que retivemos. Quando virmos uma situação parecida, lembrar-nos-emos daquela imagem que mais marcada está na nossa memória: o cliché.

3. DEFINIÇÃO DE CLICHÉ

Quanto mais uma imagem é repetida, mais ela se torna simplificada e mais ela é retida por cada um de nós. A forma repetida e reconhecível que chamamos *cliché* é um elemento fundamental da linguagem do cinema, terreno onde surge amiúde esse género de *citação*. Este é o primeiro pressuposto da teoria que procurarei aqui desenvolver.

Uma cena pode ficar-nos na memória por um gesto, um dito, uma expressão, um enquadramento, um *significante imaginário*.⁴ Mas os clichés não nasceram com o cinema. O final habitual das histórias de fadas (por exemplo) — “casaram e foram muito felizes” — é um óbvio cliché. Uma narrativa ela mesma pede clichés, porque se baseia nas expectativas do género em cuja genealogia se insere.

O cliché sofre de uma dupla faceta: por ser conhecido, beneficia — tanto o espectador como os fazedores — do prazer do reconhecimento; por ser banal, gasta-se e a certo ponto aproxima-se da sua exaustão e provoca a rejeição (passando pelo riso). Martine Joly refere que “tal como a citação, o cliché ‘é sempre sentido como algo emprestado: ambos constituem a retoma de um discurso anterior’.”⁵

Por exemplo: o final de filme em que as personagens se afastam de costas, em contraluz ou de malas na mão — como acontece em *Saltimbancos* (1951) e em *Dom Roberto* (1962), onde foi lido como uma citação de Chaplin em *Tempos Modernos* (1936) — ou o movimento de grua ascendente abrindo o campo de visão e

afastando-se do lugar de acção; são clichés por demais usados e porventura capazes de entediar o espectador mais ávido de novidade.

Joly associa a persistência — ou a memória — de clichés e estereótipos com o processo de conhecimento e reconhecimento que se dá essencialmente através das formas:

Como saber o que recordamos das imagens mediáticas? Pode pensar-se, sem se ir demasiado longe, que recordamos principalmente aquilo que se repete [...]. Só se reconhece efectivamente aquilo que já se conhece e que não se esqueceu. [...] Apercebemos-nos então de que, a menos que sejam repetidas e/ou deslocadas e portanto memorizadas, as outras imagens televisivas desaparecem dos nossos espíritos, em proveito de uma memória de formas mais do que de conteúdos.⁶

De facto, podemos dizer que a televisão é a maior fábrica de clichés de sempre, evidência que não escapa aos discursos comuns que sobre televisão se fazem.⁷ O *medium* televisivo é por isso — para Joly — ponto de partida⁸ para repensar a noção de cliché como modo de comunicação específico, como discurso social e individual:

É por isso [...] que nos propomos reconsiderar a noção de cliché e de estereótipo, já não como figuras imobilizadas e modificadas, mas em primeiro lugar como modo de comunicação específico, como discurso social e individual, forçado por natureza a reactivar modelos de aceitabilidade.⁹

Enquanto imagem de repetição, “o cliché recobre tudo o que produz uma impressão de *dejà vu*.”¹⁰ A definição corrente associa-o à ideia de banalidade; segundo um dicionário de poética, a sua “banalidade está tanto na imagem como na ideia.”¹¹ E “a

segunda parte desta definição expõe claramente as duas facetas próprias ao cliché: a imagem e a ideia, ou o objecto e a significação que se lhe agarra.”¹²

A ideia difundida e generalizada que conota negativamente os estereótipos e clichés tem a ver, diz Joly citando Barthes, “com o facto de ‘nós dependermos de uma ideologia filosófica e estética da originalidade’,” além da valorização do indivíduo *versus* a sociedade, do espontâneo *versus* o normativo.¹³ Esta valorização da individualidade interpõe-se como uma cortina que nos impede de aceitar a importância do cliché enquanto forma de reprodução social de ideias, conceitos e estruturas de significação; como forma *tout court* de representar o mundo, à qual ninguém é imune.

A imagem-cliché, à força de ser repetida e tornada evidente e simples de apreender, pode tornar-se uma “figura gasta.”¹⁴ Contudo, creio que o cliché será menos uma fórmula gasta do que uma forma que se gasta e se renova, evoluindo a par e passo das sucessivas reutilizações; concordo que o cliché funciona como uma figura de estilo, até pela sua constituição imagética, mas não é “imutável;” pelo contrário, seria, sim, como também dizem Amossy e Rosen,¹⁵ uma “fórmula” que “remete para o facto de estilo,” ou, em parte, uma *estilização*.

4. LIMIARES DO CLICHÉ

Penso que a força do cliché está em que é difícil libertarmo-nos dele. Um cliché *imprime-se* na nossa mente como uma chapa.¹⁶ É uma imagem que persiste *retinidamente* no nosso pensamento consciente ou subconsciente. Quando saímos de um filme que nos interessou e emocionou, chegamos cá fora e vemos o mundo transformado pelos *olhos* do filme.¹⁷ Além dos clichés de linguagem cinematográfica, são inumeráveis outros clichés que o cinema criou e que fornecem modelos de

comportamento ou de beleza, gerando tipologias psicológicas e alimentando fobias para uso doméstico; capazes de influenciar as vidas das pessoas.

Convirá aqui distinguir o cliché de outros conceitos afins. Para clarificar a sua utilização no cinema, Fiolet começa por distingui-lo de *lugar-comum*, de *estereótipo* e de *topos*. *Topoi* são *situações recorrentes* cuja função é essencialmente dramática ou convencional (por exemplo, o duelo num *western*, ou a tourada num filme do Ribatejo). Um *topos* contém possibilidades múltiplas, a que não se pode ligar nenhum significado pré-estabelecido.¹⁸

Lugar-comum será um *tema* banal e tornado desinteressante à força de ser explorado; cliché é uma *expressão imagética* (cuja definição mínima se restringe à metáfora lexicalizada, por exemplo: o véu estrelado, agarrar o touro pelos cornos, etc.); o primeiro tem uma natureza conceptual; o segundo opõe-se àquele pela natureza formal.¹⁹

Poderíamos definir o academismo como a capacidade de reutilizar os clichés intactos. Assim uma paisagem grandiosa vai significar enfaticamente a grandeza dos sentimentos (o pôr-do-sol é geralmente posto em ressonância com uma cena de amor), o violino na cena de amor fixa o clímax do filme, a apoteose emocional.²⁰

À semelhança dos estereótipos, também os clichés obedecem a um princípio de simplificação e de reconhecimento da similaridade; porém o cliché é uma entidade mais flexível, tem a capacidade de metamorfose, através das suas ocorrências e variações; e transporta uma componente semântica mais complexa e erigida na base de imagens nucleares; o estereótipo será mais rígido e formal, ainda que possa representar-se como imagem. Desta forma, podemos pôr a hipótese de que, também por razões de cognição essencial, se esboça na existência dos clichés uma ideia de

signo cultural que pode constituir base para uma teoria semiótica do cinema (como veremos adiante).

Clichés e estereótipos, diz Denis Lévy²¹ simplificando, são imagens congeladas (*figées*), cujo sentido foi parado (*arrêté*). Porém, a certa altura, o cliché, pelo seu didactismo ou simplificação, torna-se paródico:

Paradoxalmente, o cliché vai vazár a emoção que está precisamente demasiado associada à tonalidade que ele prescreve. Com efeito, a percepção do cliché provoca no espectador a rejeição da significação e da tonalidade impostas, rejeição de que o riso é o sintoma corrente.²²

Este risco torna “particularmente difícil o trabalho artístico dos cineastas a partir do cliché.”²³ Denis Lévy acrescenta que muitos cineastas trabalham fazendo do cliché um *operador*; e distingue ainda diferentes operações sobre o cliché: a variação, o deslocamento, a junção (*assemblage*), a surpresa, a subtração, o esvaziamento (*évidement*), a pista falsa (*contre-pied*), a inversão (*renversement*), o excesso, e o encurtamento e alongamento; “*ad libitum...*,” acrescenta.

“O cliché interrompe a ambiguidade essencial do cinema e expõe-se ao ridículo do sentido demasiado evidente.”²⁴ Naturalmente as possibilidades formais e semânticas do cliché alimentam gulosamente o género da “paródia e o pastiche, que passam ambos pela imitação mais ou menos irónica ou cómica do que é conhecido (e reconhecível),” como escreve Emmanuel Dreux.²⁵ O efeito cómico pode também surgir quando se vêem filmes antigos e se reconhecem já muito gastos os clichés de época. Nesses casos é quase difícil tomá-los a sério, ainda que na época fossem aceitáveis. O cliché “interrompe a ilusão de realidade de um filme em benefício de um efeito de artifício, de ficção.”²⁶

Fiolet distingue ainda vários tipos de clichés: a imagem cliché (que corresponde

no imaginário popular ao postal ilustrado); o cliché sonoro ou musical (por exemplo, o violino sentimental, ou a antecipação do perigo através da música); o gesto cliché (teatral ou corriqueiro mas codificado); o gag-cliché típico do filmes burlescos. “Em conclusão diremos que um cliché é uma representação cujos parâmetros formais produzem um reconhecimento imediato. É uma imagem que podemos qualificar de simbólica, pois incarna uma significação unívoca pré-determinada.”²⁷

Para Marshall McLuhan,²⁸ existe um processo contínuo de transformação entre o cliché e o arquétipo, figuras que identifica e localiza sobretudo em textos literários, mas que evocam imagens ou figuras,²⁹ ambos servindo como “respostas feitas para as situações não verbais da nossa vida”:³⁰ McLuhan encontra assim no cliché (e no arquétipo) uma espécie de elo entre o não verbal e o verbal, o *percepto* e o *concepto*, o que, de certo modo, poderíamos conceber como um interface entre imagem e conceito, vertentes integradas como um núcleo indistinto numa só imagem, numa espécie de signo icónico com *dupla projecção* semântica.

A ideia de cliché como padrão de percepção e compreensão do mundo tem, aliás, antecedentes referidos por McLuhan. De James Hillman provém uma noção que me parece central e vital para a compreensão do cliché, a de que a sua força se encontra numa emoção que ele desencadeia: “Uma percepção não liberta apenas energia latente, mas também pode causar a formação de novos e tensos sistemas físicos que — como em Kafka — são a base da emoção.”³¹

O que é comum em todas as abordagens é a compreensão de que o cliché não é necessariamente verbal, e que é também uma característica activa, estruturante e penetrante da nossa consciência. Ele desempenha múltiplas funções desde libertar emoções a recuperar outros clichés da nossa vida tanto consciente como inconsciente.³²

Também McLuhan sugere que o poder de permanência (*staying-power*) dos clichés, tal como o das canções antigas ou de embalar, deriva do *envolvimento* que pedem.³³ Os clichés proporcionam uma percepção inteligente e o choque do reconhecimento.³⁴ Poderemos perguntar-nos se será isso que explica, por exemplo, o desenvolvimento de emoções como a hostilidade e a violência nos meios de entretenimento da nossa sociedade, como acontece com outras emoções através de diferentes formas de recuperação (*retrieval*) de clichés: “Este é o processo da paixão. A emoção mais sugerida na literatura é o amor, mas patriotismo, ódio racial, ambição, sensualidade servem igualmente, desde que a escolha seja vivida completa e fanaticamente.”³⁵

5. PERCEPÇÃO

Também Deleuze deu atenção ao fenómeno do cliché, visto enquanto forma de percepção que sobrevive às mutações do cinema e simultaneamente as faz evoluir; e que, por outro lado, estabelece relações com as imagens exteriores ao cinema e as imagens interiores aos sujeitos *reais*. Tal como Bergson, Deleuze radica a formação de clichés na percepção:

Como diz Bergson, nós não percebemos a coisa ou a imagem inteira, nós percebemos sempre menos, percebemos aquilo em que estamos interessados, ou antes, aquilo que nos interessa perceber, segundo os nossos interesses económicos, as nossas crenças ideológicas, as nossas exigências psicológicas. Portanto, nós não percebemos geralmente senão clichés.³⁶

Ao definir “um novo tipo de imagem” (a imagem-tempo) que terá nascido com o neo-realismo italiano e provocado uma “crise da imagem-acção” (e da imagem-

movimento) que define o cinema pós-guerra, Deleuze aponta as suas principais características — dispersão de personagens e situações; fio condutor ténue entre acontecimentos; estrutura de passeio ou balada; tomada de consciência dos clichés; e o monopólio da reprodução mecânica de imagens e sons que oculta o poder.³⁷

Neste novo paradigma do cinema — a Imagem-Tempo — surgem situações puramente ópticas e sonoras, distintas da Imagem-Movimento que se baseava em situações sensorio-motores. É neste contexto que os clichés anteriores são postos em causa e o novo cinema se questiona sobre “o que mantém o conjunto deste mundo sem totalidade nem encadeamento;” “a resposta é simples”: “o que faz o conjunto são os clichés, e nada mais. Apenas clichés, em tudo clichés.”³⁸

Deleuze prossegue exemplificando como o neo-realismo italiano, criando “um novo tipo de *narrativa*, capaz de compreender o elíptico e o inorganizado, fez proliferar os *espacos quaisquer*,³⁹ cancro urbano, indiferenciado, terrenos vagos, que se opõem aos espacos determinados do antigo realismo” e desse modo “o que surge no horizonte, o que se perfila neste mundo, o que se vai impor [...] não é sequer a realidade crua, mas o seu duplo, o reino dos clichés, tanto no interior como no exterior, na cabeça no coração das pessoas como no espaco inteiro.”⁴⁰

Para Deleuze, “o fazer-falso torna-se o signo de um novo realismo, por oposição ao fazer-verdade do antigo,” aquilo que ele designa como *puissance du faux*: “Sob esta potência do falso, todas as imagens se tornam clichés, seja pelo seu desajeitamento, seja pela sua denunciada perfeição aparente.”⁴¹

O papel dos renovadores é então romper com os anteriores clichés: “Então pode aparecer um outro tipo de imagem : uma imagem optico-sonora pura, a imagem inteira e sem metáfora que faz surgir a coisa mesma, literalmente, no seu excesso de horror e beleza, no seu carácter radical e injustificável.”⁴²

Mas aquela *crise* da imagem-acção passou e, com o tempo, também o cinema de situações opti-sonoras puras criou os seus clichés (as suas paisagens desoladas de

personagens *egarés*, etc.). Deleuze aponta a dificuldade: “O difícil é saber em que é que uma imagem óptica-e-sonora não é ela mesma um cliché, ou uma fotografia.”⁴³

E assim diagnostica uma *civilização do cliché*:

Civilização da imagem? Na verdade é uma civilização do cliché, onde todos os poderes têm interesse em esconder de nós as imagens, [...] em esconder qualquer coisa na imagem. Por outro lado, ao mesmo tempo, a imagem procura incessantemente furar o cliché, sair do cliché. Não sabemos até que ponto pode conduzir uma verdadeira imagem: a importância de ser visionário ou vidente.⁴⁴

6. FIGURA

Decorre das anteriores definições de cliché a possibilidade de o considerar como uma figura de estilo, um tropo; diferente das outras figuras, mas podendo apresentar afinidades com elas, na medida em que um cliché é um condensado de imagem, ideia e emoção, como vimos.

Um cliché será pois um tropo tornado imagem. E enquanto imagem, afirma-se como um todo uno. Imprime-se na *retina* das nossas mentes como um dado instantâneo, sem dar espaço nem tempo a uma reflexão. Seduz e penetra pela sua simplicidade. Tem uma perfeição que nos faz reféns da sua forma, com a mesma força das formas elementares explicadas pela teoria da *Gestalt*. Também no cinema e na vida, a força do cliché está nessa psicologia da forma simples, numa *gestalt* do pensamento. A forma impõe-se diante dos nossos olhos e do nosso cérebro como modo de percepção e compreensão.

O conceito de figura aparece na retórica clássica como fundamental para a explicação dos tropos e figuras de pensamento ou de expressão usados na literatura

e no discurso argumentativo.⁴⁵ A noção de figura tornou-se também importante para a compreensão dos mecanismos da percepção e da psicologia da forma com a teoria da Gestalt, a partir dos anos 10 e 20 do século XX.⁴⁶ Contudo há «poucos trabalhos analíticos acerca de figuras efectivamente produzidas em imagens», como afirma Jacques Aumont.⁴⁷ Numa definição simplificada, a figura é essencialmente uma determinada forma que pelo seu recorte específico permite veicular uma ou outra ideia e dá-la a compreender de uma forma diferente de outra. A *forma* da figura define o modo de pensamento, tanto como a *ideia* que transporta.

Neste sentido, a figura será a forma discursiva que um enunciado adquire,⁴⁸ e que, mesmo se transporta um sentido qualquer (verbal ou outro), existe enquanto modelador do espírito — do pensamento, do olhar — mais do que por um intuito comunicativo.

Outros estudos têm explorado a hipótese de que o nosso pensamento funciona por imagens. A psicanálise mostrou-o através da importância dada aos sonhos e às imagens.⁴⁹ O antropólogo Georges Lakoff,⁵⁰ em *Metaphores we live by* e noutras obras, demonstra cabalmente como nos regemos mais por imagens do que por argumentos racionais.

O papel da figura na comunicação e a sua relação com o signo foi desde há muito percebido, apesar de para alguns semiólogos ela não estar bem definida. Por exemplo, Hjelmslev há muito pressentiu que a figura, sendo um não-signo,⁵¹ desempenharia um papel fundamental nos processos de comunicação, ou mais propriamente no plano discursivo.⁵² Assim, partindo desta perspectiva, considero que a figura será a forma discursiva que um enunciado adquire,⁵³ e que, mesmo se transporta um sentido qualquer (verbal ou outro), existe enquanto modelador do espírito — do pensamento, do olhar — mais do que por um intuito comunicativo.

Note-se que o conceito de figura recobre o princípio de formulação da arte, e igualmente, o princípio formal do pensamento, das emoções, do gosto, etc. O

“trabalho da figura” é metamórfico e anamórfico (como o designa Mourão) e multiforme; a figura corresponde ao *sentido não dito* do enunciado, mas *mostrado* no processo de interlocução;⁵⁴ podendo ser associado — o que acontece frequentemente — ao trabalho semântico, como no caso que aqui nos ocupa do cliché, e, de um modo mais lato, no cinema e na comunicação visual.

Em suma, parece não oferecer dúvidas que o cliché, tal como o definimos atrás, é uma figura, um todo cuja forma não pode ser decomposta em partes sem perder a sua identidade e significação discursiva. Não será, porém, uma figura no sentido tradicional. Convirá então distingui-la das velhas figuras de estilo e perceber como também estas se manifestam no interior do discurso cinematográfico.

7. METÁFORA

A metáfora é a figura máxima e um conceito amplamente usado nos mais variados contextos e nem sempre fácil de delimitar ou de fugir às ambiguidades dos seus usos.⁵⁵ Na minha definição: uma metáfora (literária) será geralmente uma imagem do concreto a que se sobrepõe um conceito abstracto; ou seja, uma metáfora é criada a partir de uma imagem do concreto que gera, através de uma associação de ideias mais ou menos inusitada, um conceito abstracto.⁵⁶ A metáfora assume quase sempre aspectos imagéticos, que decorrem da sua geração por analogia. Quando se associam várias metáforas ou outras figuras retóricas, fala-se, aliás, de *imagem literária*, espécie alargada de metáfora que consegue evocar imagens visuais e sensoriais mais complexas.

Quando se chega ao campo do cinema, as definições clássicas de metáfora deixam de ser aplicáveis e há quem questione a sua adequação ou mesmo existência, apesar do uso frequente do conceito de metáfora na crítica

cinematográfica.⁵⁷ A metáfora literária expressa-se por palavras e representa imagens; parte do abstracto para o concreto. A metáfora cinematográfica parte necessariamente de uma imagem, e portanto, a metáfora expressa-se de forma concreta para representar conceitos abstractos. Já Pasolini o tinha intuído:

o autor de cinema não poderá nunca recolher termos abstractos. Esta é provavelmente a diferença maior entre a obra literária e a obra cinematográfica (se quisermos fazer esta comparação). A instituição linguística, ou gramatical, do autor cinematográfico é formada por imagens e as imagens são sempre concretas, nunca abstractas.⁵⁸

O que o autor de cinema pode fazer é partir do concreto para representar o abstracto: conceitos, ideias, sentimentos. A metáfora cinematográfica cria portanto um elo que parte de uma imagem física para um conceito; esta constituição de um significado imaginário associado a uma imagem corresponde ao processo nuclear de constituição dos clichés, embora metáfora e cliché não coincidam necessariamente; o processo de significação através da imagem é que é nos dois casos semelhante. Essa capacidade de reprodução e ressignificação no interior da imagem — que opera tanto na metáfora como no cliché — será uma forma de condensação (ou metáfora).

8. SEMIÓTICA

Como vimos, um cliché é uma imagem que arrasta um sentido, uma significação segunda (além daquela que a insere no fio narrativo). Será então uma espécie de embrião de signo visual? Yuri Lotman, Jean Mitry, Christian Metz e Pasolini, entre

outros, desenvolveram diferentes teorias semióticas acerca do cinema. Contudo, nenhum deles chegou a identificar o cliché enquanto forma de significação autónoma e complexa. Tentarei situar no contexto dessas teorias a hipótese teórica do cliché enquanto signo visual.

Pier Paolo Pasolini andou próximo do conceito de cliché quando definiu os “signos mímicos.”⁵⁹ Pasolini associa esta forma de comunicação, esta linguagem de “imagens significantes” ao “mundo da memória e dos sonhos;” por outro lado, “a comunicação visual, que é base da linguagem cinematográfica, é [ao contrário da comunicação poética ou filosófica] extremamente rude, quase animal.”⁶⁰

Aquilo que Pasolini dá como exemplo de “estilema,” “a imagem das rodas de um comboio correndo entre baforadas de vapor,”⁶¹ é o que podemos designar como cliché, ideia que se reforça quando o autor a explica:

Todos nós, com os nossos olhos, temos visto o famoso correr das rodas dos comboios movidas pelos âmbolos e rodeadas de baforadas de vapor. É uma imagem que pertence à nossa memória visual e aos nossos sonhos: se a contemplamos na realidade “ela diz-nos qualquer coisa”: a sua aparição numa charneca deserta, *diz*, por exemplo, como é comovente a actividade do homem e enorme a capacidade da sociedade industrial, e por conseguinte, do capitalismo, para anexar novos territórios; e, a alguns de nós, também *diz* que o maquinista é um homem explorado, não obstante cumprir dignamente o seu trabalho, por uma sociedade que é o que é, mesmo se são os seus exploradores quem se identifica com ela, etc., etc.⁶²

Naturalmente, a nossa leitura deste cliché, hoje, já terá evoluído, juntamente com o próprio cliché, e com as ideias que andam no ar, e não faremos exactamente a mesma interpretação, nem ela será válida noutra filme e noutra contexto; mas

permanece, não obstante, como cliché, como forma preta de significado e ressonâncias partilhadas. Pasolini chama-lhe “símbolo cinematográfico,” assinalando assim a sua natureza significante; mas mais propriamente trata-se de um cliché como temos vindo a defini-lo).

O processo de redundância que cria e consolida os clichés é também descrito por Pasolini (apesar de não lhe atribuir esta designação):

A breve história estilística do cinema, por causa da limitação expressiva imposta pela enormidade numérica dos destinatários do filme, obrigou a que os estilemas, que no cinema se tornaram de imediato sintagmas e que, portanto, reintegraram a institucionalidade linguística, fossem pouco numerosos e, sobretudo, grosseiros (lembremo-nos uma vez mais das rodas da locomotiva, a série infinita de grandes planos iguais, etc.). Tudo isto se apresenta como um momento convencional da linguagem dos *im-signos* e assegura-lhe uma vez mais um elementar carácter convencional objectivo.⁶³

O cliché poderá ser, creio, uma espécie de “filtro interpretativo que vem sobrepor-se ao que nós vemos.”⁶⁴ Contudo para Lotman esse filtro interpretativo tem uma outra explicação: “Conscientes de que estamos em presença de uma narrativa artística, isto é, de uma cadeia de signos, segmentamos o fluxo de impressões visuais em elementos significantes.”⁶⁵ Estes *elementos visuais significantes* parecem-me corresponder à definição essencial de cliché; que associa três polaridades triangularmente: a forma, o sentido e a emoção.

O ponto de encontro entre as representações do filme e as do espectador — esse momento partilhado onde as emoções emergem e onde os planos imaginários se tocam — será o cliché, na minha hipótese; ou será *da mesma natureza* do cliché, considerando aqui cliché num sentido lato, associado a um processo de cognição

efectivo, e menos em termos de consolidação de imagens-clichés (como antes vimos, os clichés são mutáveis e têm um ciclo de surgimento e esgotamento).

Lotman pergunta então: será possível existir um sistema semiótico sem signos?⁶⁶ E responde: “um sistema semiótico sem signos, que opera com unidades de ordem superior, os textos, não constitui um paradoxo, mas uma realidade.”⁶⁷ São portanto possíveis dois tipos de semiose: com signos e sem signos. No cinema coexistem duas outras tendências: uma figurativa, outra verbal; que se desenvolvem em conjunto através da narrativa.⁶⁸

De novo, esta entidade mutacional onde palavras e imagens se juntam e se metamorfoseiam nos conduz à ideia de cliché, enquanto imagem complexa resultante de uma congregação de factores de naturezas diferentes: gestuais, verbais, visuais, sonoros, simbólicos, imaginários, míticos, etc. Aliás, Lotman lembra que o gesto já é uma forma de bilinguismo sem palavras.⁶⁹ A semiótica do cinema — e do cliché — não é independente das outras semióticas do real; porém o cliché encontra aqui a sua expressão mais nítida, enquanto condensação multifacetada de sentidos e reflexos.

Hjelmslev propôs uma definição mais abrangente do signo enquanto *forma*: uma forma que se divide em *expressão* e *conteúdo*, equivalentes ao significante e significado de Saussure. Por sua vez, estes dois níveis de expressão e conteúdo alargam-se à realidade extra-sígnica (ou extra-semiótica): à substância exterior ao signo, e que será a substância da expressão (fonológica, escrita, etc.); ou à substância do conteúdo (o pensamento e o referente real). Temos assim um signo não apenas dual, mas um esquema quadripartido que inclui: substância da expressão; forma da expressão; forma do conteúdo, substância do conteúdo. Esta diferenciação progressiva — que transita do pensamento para a expressão, através da matéria e da forma — parece-me particularmente apropriada para referir e organizar as ideias sobre cinema; não enquanto teoria essencialista; mas como instrumento conceptual de trabalho.

SAUSSURE	HJELMSLEV	VANOYE (CINEMA)	ECO	CINEMA
Signo (significante)	Expressão (substância ou matéria)	imagens e sons	<i>Continuum</i> (yle)	
	Expressão (forma)	composição e montagem		gesto, cliché
Signo (significado)	Conteúdo (forma)	narrativa, temas, sentimentos e ideias		gesto, cliché
	Conteúdo (substância ou matéria)	acontecimentos reais ou imaginários	<i>Continuum</i> (yle)	

Francis Vanoye transpõe da seguinte maneira os quatro níveis semióticos de Hjelmslev para o cinema: a substância (ou matéria)⁷⁰ da expressão serão, no discurso fílmico, as imagens em movimento, os sons, etc.; a forma da expressão definir-se-á pela montagem, pela composição de formas e cores, etc.; a forma do conteúdo corresponderá à estrutura narrativa, aos sentimentos, temas e ideias; a substância (ou matéria) do conteúdo serão os acontecimentos reais ou imaginários mostrados.⁷¹

Nesta arrumação, o cliché poderia caber no plano da forma, tanto do lado da expressão como do conteúdo. Contudo, parece-me que a separação de Vanoye, ao não contemplar, por exemplo, o gesto, que pertenceria, enquanto signo da vida, indistintamente a ambos os níveis de forma (da expressão e do conteúdo), também não prevê aí a inclusão do cliché. Defendo assim que *gesto* e *cliché* serão signos que fundem em si aspectos de expressão e conteúdo; são formas semióticas, por excelência. Metz também “demonstrou que o recurso aos conceitos de Hjelmslev permite evitar o escolho da distinção comum entre ‘fundo’ e ‘forma’: há assim uma ‘forma do fundo’ (conteúdo) e um “conteúdo da forma.”⁷²

Umberto Eco complementa o esquema de Hjelmslev com elementos da teoria do signo de Peirce, “sincretismo elegante,” diz, “pois permite a um modelo estrutural sair de sua fixidez sincrónica e abrir-se também à consideração de factos diacrónicos.”⁷³ Temos então dois planos, o da Expressão e o do Conteúdo; “ambos os planos, com admirável simetria, contemplam um elemento de Forma e um

elemento de Substância.” Eco nota que “é muito claro em Hjelmslev o que seja a Forma, em ambos os casos. É muito obscuro em Hjelmslev o que seja a Substância.” Isso leva Eco a regressar ao original em dinamarquês e perceber que existe uma expressão original (*mening*) cuja tradução variou entre *matéria* e *substância*, e para a qual propõe o termo “continuum,”⁷⁴ que seria realmente um *continuum* entre conteúdo e expressão, entre pensamento e mundo: “creio e me proponho crer que o continuum da expressão e o continuum do conteúdo são a mesma coisa. E o que são? A *yle*, a matéria-prima, ou seja, o mundo, aquilo que é, do qual ainda estamos falando e no interior do qual estamos. É a matéria no sentido mais amplo.” A *yle* será também, então, a realidade no seu sentido mais projectivo, enquanto interpretação do mundo. Dessa realidade faz parte a vida enquanto matéria do cinema.⁷⁵

A *semiótica da vida* será a nossa capacidade de ler o mundo — e, no caso do cinema, a de o figurar e transfigurar de modo a ser legível por outros. Esta semiótica pode ser concebida num sentido que concilia e junta os conceitos de *semiose* e *semiótica* tal como os diferenciou Umberto Eco: “A semiose é o fenómeno, a semiótica é um discurso teórico sobre fenómenos semióticos;”⁷⁶ enunciado no qual podemos retirar a palavra *teórico*, uma vez que qualquer falante que exerça um metadiscurso sobre a língua ou as significações de um enunciado já pode considerar-se que está a elaborar a um nível semiótico. Assim, o cinema junta os dois processos: o fenómeno de significação directa (*semiose*); e o acto de significar os fenómenos semióticos num segundo sistema de significação onde eles se tornam signos que se referem à vida. A diferenciação de Eco referia-se, aliás, apenas a discursos linguísticos, e o cinema, efectivamente, faz parte de um outro universo de produção de signos e informações designado como *semiurgia*.⁷⁷

A ideia de que o cinema possa ser uma espécie de semiose ou semiótica aplicada da vida poderá ser contestada logo pela sua temeridade. Poder-se-á

objectar que tal não existe. Não existe, de facto, enquanto corpo de saber, mas poderá existir enquanto experiência e conhecimento do quotidiano, enquanto capacidade para aprender, associar e ler os gestos e os acontecimentos da vida; vasto universo impossível de catalogar e que cada um organiza à sua maneira, mas que o cinema consegue condensar quando, em menos de duas horas, nos apresenta criteriosamente os gestos e acções que fazem sentido para explicar, apresentar e discutir certos aspectos da vida, seja o da organização social das relações humanas, seja o das motivações das personagens individuais.

Pasolini sugeriu que “a acção humana sobre a realidade” seria a “primeira e principal linguagem dos seres humanos.”⁷⁸ E disse também que a realidade da vida é um “continuum visual”⁷⁹ de gestos e significados em que nos encontramos imersos; portanto, deduzo que só o cinema, enquanto sua reformulação, enquanto forma, permite destacar dessa matéria informe da vida aqueles elementos que se constituem significativos, isto é, elementos de linguagem.

9. CONCLUSÃO

Vimos como o cliché se distingue de outros tropos frequentes, seja no campo do cinema ou da literatura. Por outro lado, o cliché pode ser encarado como um modo de percepção decorrente das nossas capacidades cognitivas essenciais que têm como matriz o processo cognitivo da analogia.

O cliché será assim uma espécie de operador semiótico; um mecanismo de compreensão do mundo — que procurei inserir numa teoria semiótica mais ampla, proveniente de Hjelmslev e desenvolvida, entre outros, por Umberto Eco.

Assumindo a hipótese teórica do que designei como “semiótica da vida,” considerei que só a forma *escrita* da vida — o cinema — se poderá constituir

enquanto sistema semiótico, linguagem efectiva, *corpus* de análise e interpretação. O cliché será um embrião, a forma nuclear desta semiose (o processo de significação cinematográfico); um ponto de partida para discutir o mecanismo semiótico das imagens cinematográficas.

Mas, para além de uma semiótica da vida — sistema de significação complexo, virtualmente impossível de definir e codificar, mas visível e legível por meio do cinema — torna-se importante pensar o cliché inserido numa Estilística — que contemple as formas estéticas da arte cinematográfica e as variações estilísticas das figuras concretas que são os clichés, no seu processo de mutação permanente. Este será talvez o próximo o passo no desenvolvimento uma teoria do cliché.

NOTAS

1. Hugo Münsterberg, "The Photoplay: A Psychological Study," in *Hugo Munsterberg on Film*, ed. Allan Langdale (Nova Iorque: Routledge, 2002), 91.
2. Robert Stam, *Introdução à Teoria do Cinema* (Campinas: Papirus, 2003), 45.
3. Münsterberg "The Photoplay," 45.
4. O *significante imaginário* será um significante de outra natureza que não linguística, constituído pela matéria do filme e ressignificado num segundo grau pelo imaginário do espectador/leitor. Ver Christian Metz, *O Significante Imaginário: Psicanálise e Cinema* (Lisboa: Livros Horizonte, 1980).
5. Ruth Amossy e Elisheva Rosen, *Les discours du cliché* (Paris: Sedes, 1982), citado em Martine Joly, *A Imagem e a sua Interpretação* (Lisboa: Edições 70, 2003), 211.
6. Joly, *A Imagem e a sua Interpretação*, 203-206.
7. Joly diz que "a condenação geral da repetição, da citação, do cliché e do estereótipo na televisão têm tendência para conferir à imagem mediática, e muito particularmente à imagem televisiva, o estatuto de 'signo vazio,' sem verdadeiro referente a não ser ele mesmo" (*ibid.*, 209).
8. "[D]a mesma forma que Roland Barthes começou a sua pesquisa dos signos visuais a partir da publicidade [...], da mesma maneira pensamos que, se existem estereótipos visuais, encontrá-los-emos em primeiro lugar na televisão, visto que se trata de um meio de comunicação de massas" (*ibid.*).
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. Michelle Aquien, *Dictionnaire de poétique* (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1997), citado em Annick Fiolet, "Les clichés au cinéma," *L'art du cinéma* 27 / 28 (Inverno 2000): 5.
12. Fiolet, "Les clichés au cinéma", 6.
13. Joly, *A Imagem e a sua Interpretação*, 210.
14. *Ibid.*, 211.
15. Citado em *ibid.*
16. A origem metafórica deste conceito dá conta do seu significado essencial: o cliché era a chapa metálica que permitia a impressão tipográfica repetida de uma fotografia.
17. A "persistência retiniana" é apenas o mecanismo fisiológico usado aqui como metáfora para outras formas de persistência que englobam, naturalmente, o auditivo, o simbólico, o afectivo, etc.
18. Fiolet, "Les clichés au cinéma," 7-8.
19. *Ibid.*, 6-7.
20. *Ibid.*, 10.
21. Denis Lévy, "D'où viennent les idées troubles?", *L'art du cinéma* 27 / 28 (Inverno 2000): 13.
22. Fiolet, "Les clichés au cinéma," 10.

23. Ibid. “Tento evitar os clichés usados e trazer sobre eles uma luz diferente. Há um valor nos clichés, pois podemos elaborar a partir deles. É um denominador comum entre mim e o espectador, que permite fazer um comentário suplementar” — Billy Wilder citado em *ibid.* (tradução livre).
24. Ibid.
25. Emmanuel Dreux, “De l’usage parodique et comique du cliché,” *L’art du cinéma* 27/28 (Inverno 2000), 56.
26. Lévy, “D’où viennent les idées troubles,” 13.
27. Ibid., 12.
28. A obra de McLuhan, *From Cliché to Archetype* de 1970, organiza-se fragmentariamente como um abecedário de exemplos e conjecturas em volta dos conceitos de cliché e arquétipo; embora não constitua uma teoria organizada sobre o cliché, é talvez o maior repositório de especulações em torno deste conceito, apesar de muito centrado em textos literários e negligenciando as formas propriamente visuais do cliché.
29. Marshall McLuhan, *From Cliché to Archetype* (New York: Pocket Books, 1970), 19.
30. “[S]tock responses in all the nonverbal situations of our lives” (*ibid.*, 20).
31. James Hillman, *Emotion* (Evanstone: Northwestern University Press, 1961), 152.
32. Ibid., 54-55.
33. “[M]as não poderá ser que o poder de permanência dos clichés, tal como o das velhas canções e as rimas de embalar, derivem do envolvimento do espírito que pedem?” (McLuhan, *From Cliché to Archetype*, 58-59).
34. “[T]he sting of perception and the schock of recognition” (*ibid.*, 59).
35. Hillman, *Emotion*, 196, 183.
36. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinéma II - L’Image-temps* (Paris: Minuit, 1985), 32.
37. Deleuze sintetiza assim estas características: “Tais são as cinco características aparentes da nova imagem: a situação dispersiva, as ligações propositadamente fracas, a forma-balada, a tomada de consciência dos clichés, a denúncia do *complot*. É a crise simultânea da imagem-ação e do sonho Americano” em Deleuze, *Cinéma I - L’Image-mouvement* (Paris: Minuit, 1983), 277-283.
38. “Ce qui fait l’ensemble, ce sont les clichés, et rien d’autre. Rien que des clichés, partout des clichés” (*ibid.*, 281).
39. No original, “espaces quelconques.”
40. Ibid., 286.
41. Deleuze, *Cinéma I*, 288.
42. Deleuze, *Cinéma II*, 32.
43. Ibid., 33.
44. Ibid.
45. Groupe μ , *Rhétorique générale* (Paris: Seuil, 1982), 11.
46. Para a teoria da Gestalt, objectos e percepções são compreendidos como um todo — como uma figura — cuja totalidade é mais do que a soma ou a descrição das suas partes (Wertheimer). Weber apresenta uma *teoria das relações* acerca de como “os todos têm certas propriedades únicas, inexplicáveis através das relações analisáveis entre as suas partes.” Kurt Koffka precisa que os elementos de percepção, na forma de sensações, também podem ser experimentados na forma de imagens. O próprio conceito de *gestalt* será uma noção embrionária na definição de outras formas de pensamento mais complexas que se desenvolvem a partir de imagens.
47. Jacques Aumont, *A Imagem* (Lisboa: Texto&Grafia, 2009), 187.
48. José Augusto Mourão associa a ideia de figura à formulação sintática: “as regras que regem a sintaxe das nossas frases são muito mais misteriosas, exprimindo factores globais, contextuais, ligados à presença de situações dinâmicas simples (chamemos-lhes ‘figuras’) que se reflectem na estrutura das frases elementares” (“O Trabalho da Figura: Metamorfose / Anamorfose,” *Revista de Comunicações e Linguagens* 20 [1994]: 122).
49. Os conceitos de *condensação* e *deslocação* usados por Freud, que se tornam operativos na interpretação semântica dos sonhos, correspondem precisamente às figuras de *retórica* há muito designadas de metáfora e metonímia (e sinédoque).
50. Georges Lakoff e Mark Johnson, *Metaphores We Live By* (Chicago: Chicago University Press: 2003).
51. Louis Hjelmslev define a figura por oposição a signo, como a parte e a totalidade, dado que os signos são compostos por não-signos: as “figuras, e a relação das figuras com os signos é dada como uma função interna à linguagem” (Mourão, “O Trabalho da Figura,” 122). Nas palavras de Hjelmslev: “A economia relativa entre os inventários de signos e de não-signos responde inteiramente àquilo que é provavelmente a finalidade da linguagem. [...] para preencher esta finalidade, deve ser sempre capaz de produzir novos signos, novas palavras ou novas raízes. [...] Tais não-signos que entram como partes de signos num sistema de signos serão chamados aqui figuras, denominação puramente operacional que é cómodo introduzir” (citado em Adriano Duarte Rodrigues, “As Figuras da Interlocução,” *Revista de Comunicações e Linguagens* 20 [1994]: 151).
52. Como diz José Augusto Mourão, “A figura não obedece às regras de funcionamento do signo. Não tem por função fazer conhecer um significado por meio de um significante. Não resulta de uma

codificação, nem desemboca numa decodificação. [...] Num texto identificam-se figuras, não signos, conceitos ou coisas. É necessário romper com a ligação entre figuras e valores na estrutura do signo, exactamente porque os elementos figurativos que constituem o plano discursivo não são signos, mas antes 'figuras'" (Mourão, "O Trabalho da Figura," 122).

53. Ver *ibid.*

54. "Enquanto a significação é dita ou significada pelos enunciados que os interlocutores trocam entre si, o sentido não é dito mas mostrado no decurso do processo de interlocução. É este aspecto que confere ao sentido a sua natureza figural, na acepção etimológica do termo." (Rodrigues, "As Figuras da Interlocução," 156)

55. A metáfora é uma "modificação do conteúdo semântico de um termo" que "resulta da junção de duas operações de base," duas sinédoques (Groupe μ , *Rhétorique générale*, 106). A metáfora pode também aproximar-se da *metonímia* ou da *sinédoque*, processos simétricos de substituição vocabular através da contiguidade do referente, não sendo por vezes claras as fronteiras precisas destes quatro conceitos. Todos eles pertencem aos grupo dos tropos, figuras "de palavras ou de sentido."

56. Este conceito resultante é o que se sobrepõe aos dois "termos" da metáfora (o comparado e o comparante); ao associar signos de paradigmas semânticos diferentes, a metáfora cria um novo paradigma que se sobrepõe àqueles ou os junta; todavia a metáfora gera-se não nessa sobreposição de paradigmas, mas através de uma relação de analogia que é muitas vezes imagética; a metáfora (como processo analógico) precede, assim, a criação desse novo paradigma *sobreposto*.

57. Neste contexto, o termo metáfora é usado no sentido mais lato de *analogia*, o processo cognitivo e expressivo que lhe está na base. A analogia, por definição estrita, será um paralelismo de raciocínios, mas pode também referir-se a todos estes processos analógicos que consistem em associar conceitos diferentes a partir de semelhanças parciais. Discordo da diferenciação feita por Trevor Whittock, (*Metaphor and Film* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990], 5-6) entre metáfora e analogia, ao tomar a primeira como um processo figurativo e a segunda como um processo de literalidade. Diria até que ambos os processos operam no eixo paradigmático de substituição pela mudança ou intercâmbio de paradigmas literais inicialmente diferentes; sendo este aliás o processo por que funcionam grande parte dos mecanismos do humor: pela substituição paradigmática de elementos tomados noutra contexto literal ou figurativo. O mecanismo humorístico, mal estudado em retórica ou em linguística, é no entanto uma operação simples e percebida desde a muito pequena infância (onde conduz directamente à gargalhada), pela compreensão do desajuste semântico, contextual ou simplesmente absurdo. A excepção particular da ironia, essa sim, bastante estudada, funciona por semantização contextual ou pragmática mais subtil e, também por isso, muitas vezes assimilada inconscientemente na linguagem corrente.

58. E acrescenta: "(só no horizonte de uma previsão milenária seria possível conceber imagens-símbolos que sofram um processo semelhante ao das palavras, ou pelo menos radicais, de origem concreta que pela fixação do seu uso, se tornaram abstracções)." Pier Paolo Pasolini está aqui a limitar o seu escopo às imagens-signos, imagens isoladas que transportem significados à semelhança dos signos linguísticos. Não considera outras formas de significação que, como o cliché ou a metáfora, não sejam *monemas*. Ver Pasolini, *Écrits sur le cinéma* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 2000), 141.

59. Ou *im-signos*, cujo sistema, aliás, se integra com a língua falada, composta de *lin-signos* (*ibid.*, 137).

60. *Ibid.*, 138.

61. *Ibid.*, 139.

62. *Ibid.*, 140.

63. *Ibid.*, 142.

64. Yuri Lotman, *Estética e Semiótica do Cinema* (Lisboa: Estampa, 1978), 48.

65. *Ibid.*

66. *Ibid.*, 65.

67. *Ibid.*, 69.

68. *Ibid.*, 72.

69. *Ibid.*, 73.

70. Algumas traduções e autores usam o termo *matéria* em vez de *substância*, que são aqui equivalentes.

71. Francis Vanoye, *Récit Écrit, Récit Filmique* (Liège: Armand Colin, 2005), 42.

72. *Ibid.*, 43.

73. Umberto Eco, *Conceito de Texto* (São Paulo: Edições Universitárias São Paulo, 1984), 18.

74. Já Pasolini usara o termo *continuum* num sentido aproximado: "A língua do cinema forma um 'continuum visual' ou 'cadeia de imagens'" (Pasolini, *Empirismo Herege* [Lisboa: Assírio & Alvim, 1982], 165).

75. Mas nessa realidade poderá igualmente caber o cinema enquanto matéria de vida, fusão que encontramos no cinema mais actual, o da era do vídeo doméstico e da imagem digital (que funde sob um mesmo critério todas as imagens, qualquer que seja a sua proveniência). No mundo actual, a imagem não é já apenas uma forma de mediação do real exterior a ela, a imagem é constitutiva de uma

relação com o real que se faz através do meio digital *online*. Muitos filmes hoje reflectem um universo comunicacional onde as relações humanas se confundem com os dispositivos de mediação e já não há distinção entre a vida e os sonhos. São imagens fantasmas, ou fantasmas que se representam na sua materialidade imediata, sem mediações de sentido, sem contexto. Muitos filmes usam a matéria da vida como objecto de trabalho e pensamento. A matéria da vida coincide aí com a matéria do cinema. E a imagem é esse estádio da matéria que resolve a (obsoleta) oposição entre real e virtual, entre ficção e documentário, entre representação e vida, fechando o círculo do continuum. A imagem já não é uma forma de mediação do real inacessível. A imagem pode ser o real tangível. Será a *imagem-matéria*. Contudo, esta especulação introduz uma deriva ontológica que não pretendo aqui desenvolver, sob pena de gerar alguma confusão teórica.

76. Umberto Eco, *Os Limites da Interpretação*, 2.^a ed. (Lisboa: Difel, 2004), 244.

77. Robert Stam, *Introdução à Teoria do Cinema* (Campinas: Papirus, 2003), 329.

78. Pasolini, *Empirismo Herege*, 162.

79. *Ibid.*, 165.

TÉCNICAS CINEMATOGRAFICAS E ACTOS MENTAIS: “THE PHOTOPLAY” DE HUGO MÜNSTERBERG

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INTRODUÇÃO

A questão de saber em que medida o filme constitui uma forma de arte distinta das demais formas de arte é um problema que marca a génese da teoria do cinema e constitui, no início do século XX, a questão orientadora que subjaz à reflexão sobre a especificidade daquilo a que se chama “filme” ou que alguns autores denominam de “cinemático.”¹ Nos Estados Unidos, o pioneiro da teoria do cinema como arte foi o poeta Vachel Lindsay, que, em 1915, publicou *The Art of the Moving Picture*.² Mas foi sobretudo com a obra de 1916 de Hugo Münsterberg intitulada “The Photoplay: A Psychological Study”³ que assistimos, pela primeira vez, a uma tentativa sistemática de fundamentar o valor artístico do filme.⁴ Por essa razão, é algo surpreendente que esse texto permaneça ignorado e pouco comentado pelos próprios teóricos e filósofos do cinema.⁵

No entanto, na literatura contemporânea sobre cinema, Münsterberg não deixa de ser considerado como um nome incontornável da teoria cinematográfica. Segundo Noël Carroll ou ainda Gregory Currie, por exemplo, a teoria desenvolvida por Münsterberg constitui um caso paradigmático, representativo de uma determinada tendência das teorias contemporâneas do filme. Contudo, *The Photoplay* foi alvo de crítica por parte dos dois autores. No seu artigo sobre Münsterberg, Carroll considera que o estudo do psicólogo alemão⁶ é precursor de certas teorias contemporâneas do cinema, que Carroll caracteriza pelo recurso a

processos e a analogias mentais para compreender o modo de funcionamento do filme.⁷ Gregory Currie, numa perspectiva similar, afirma, em *Image and Mind*, que a teoria corrente⁸ do filme se baseia num mal-entendido, cujas raízes podem ser encontradas em textos de autores como Münsterberg, que consideram o cinema sobretudo como um *medium* da subjectividade.⁹

Ora, se é certo que Münsterberg escreveu *The Photoplay* baseando-se na nascente psicologia da percepção e que a sua teoria do filme é classicamente apresentada como defendendo uma analogia entre dispositivos fílmicos e processos mentais, importa determinar de maneira precisa a natureza da relação entre mente humana e filme, subentendida pela sua teoria. Neste contexto, o propósito do presente artigo é questionar o significado do paralelismo que Münsterberg estabelece entre técnicas cinematográficas e actos mentais: trata-se, efectivamente, para Münsterberg em *The Photoplay*, de estabelecer uma analogia entre mente e filme? E, se é o caso, pode ser esta interpretada no sentido que Carroll lhe dá? No intuito de responder a estas questões, procederemos, em primeiro lugar, a uma breve apresentação da interpretação que Carroll propõe de Münsterberg, em que confrontamos a sua leitura do paralelismo entre mente e filme como “analogia” com o termo “objectivação,” utilizado pelo autor alemão na obra que nos ocupa. Em seguida, tentaremos determinar o papel que possui a relação entre mente e filme através da consideração do projecto global de *The Photoplay*. Em terceiro lugar, procederemos a uma análise dos processos mentais evocados por Münsterberg à luz da nossa problemática. Após o exame da obra do psicólogo alemão, tentaremos determinar o sentido daquilo que ele nomeia de “objectivação” e discutiremos duas interpretações de Münsterberg fornecidas por M. R. Wicclair e por N. Carroll. Ao longo deste artigo, tentaremos mostrar que a interpretação da relação entre técnicas fílmicas e actos mentais em Münsterberg como “analogia” é problemática. Na medida em que essa interpretação serve de base, para autores como Noël Carroll, a

uma classificação da teoria de Münsterberg na história da teoria do cinema, a crítica proposta pelo presente artigo deverá possibilitar uma reavaliação da obra do autor alemão no contexto dessa mesma história.

ANALOGIA VERSUS OBJECTIVAÇÃO

No seu artigo sobre Münsterberg, Carroll distingue duas tendências na teoria do cinema: uma primeira tendência que assimila o cinema às noções de realidade e de realismo e uma segunda tendência que tenta conceptualizar o cinema como um análogo da mente humana. Representativos desta segunda tendência são, para Carroll, a semiótica psicanalítica e, na tradição analítica, teorias como a de Suzanne K. Langer, que estabelece um paralelo entre cinema e sonho. De facto, a teoria do psicólogo alemão é classicamente apresentada como pioneira da concepção do filme como modelo do funcionamento da mente, paradigma desenvolvido mais tarde por autores como Christian Metz.¹⁰ No entanto, tal aproximação entre as duas teorias escamoteia uma diferença essencial nas duas abordagens da relação entre filme e mente, pois, tal como o próprio Carroll reconhece, a teoria da semiótica psicanalítica baseia-se numa análise de processos mentais inconscientes, enquanto que Münsterberg se refere a processos mentais que não supõem uma teoria do inconsciente.¹¹ A questão que se coloca-se é então a de saber em que medida exactamente Carroll aproxima a teoria de Münsterberg de paradigmas desenvolvidos ulteriormente na teoria cinematográfica.

De acordo com Noël Carroll, a relação entre mente e filme defendida por Münsterberg é uma relação de “analogia” e é justamente com base nesta leitura que Münsterberg é interpretado, no artigo de Carroll, como sendo um precursor do paradigma desenvolvido por Christian Metz. Mas que significa exactamente

“analogia”? De uma maneira geral, a “analogia” implica uma relação de similitude entre dois objectos, um objecto A e um objecto B. Segundo a interpretação de Carroll, a construção da “analogia” em Münsterberg baseia-se numa caracterização dos processos cinemáticos como se estes fossem modelados de acordo com a mente humana.¹² O objecto A — o filme — é considerado similar, no seu funcionamento, ao objecto B — mente. Nós abordaremos de novo a interpretação de Carroll no final deste artigo, mas convém desde já sublinhar que a sua compreensão da relação entre mente e filme em Münsterberg como “analogia” é problemática, na medida em que o autor alemão nunca utiliza o termo “analogia” para caracterizar a relação que estabelece entre técnicas cinematográficas e mente humana. O termo a que o psicólogo alemão recorre é o de “objectivação.”¹³ Se uma identificação entre os dois termos não deve ser à partida excluída, ela necessita todavia de uma justificação, a qual pode ser ou não fornecida mediante uma elucidação do que significa exactamente, no contexto de *The Photoplay*, “objectivação.” Este termo não deixa de estar envolvido numa certa ambiguidade: trata-se de exprimir a ideia de que o filme oferece uma reprodução do funcionamento da mente humana, como Ian Ch. Jarvie¹⁴ pretende, ou a concepção duma “objectivação” dos processos mentais nas técnicas fílmicas supõe a ideia de que a vida mental fornece como que a base e o material do cinema, como defende James D. Andrew ao apresentar a teoria de Münsterberg?¹⁵

PSICOLOGIA E ESTÉTICA DO FILME

Na medida em que a compreensão daquilo que Münsterberg nomeia “objectivação” dos processos mentais é indissociável do projecto global de *The Photoplay*, convém aqui ter em conta a estrutura do texto e os objectivos que Münsterberg visa alcançar com a sua argumentação. O texto de 1916 comporta uma introdução e duas partes. A

introdução divide-se, por sua vez, em dois capítulos. O primeiro capítulo da introdução é consagrado ao “desenvolvimento exterior das imagens em movimento” (“The Outer Development of the Moving Pictures”), ou seja, à história tecnológica do filme, cuja evolução se enraíza, segundo o autor, na tentativa de reproduzir movimento nas imagens. No segundo capítulo da introdução, Münsterberg aborda aquilo que denomina de “desenvolvimento interno das imagens em movimento” (“The Inner Development of the Moving Pictures”), ou seja, a evolução da utilização da tecnologia da imagem em movimento para fins artísticos. Deste modo, a dicotomia introduzida no início do texto entre desenvolvimento exterior e interior do filme faz referência à concepção duma utilização artística dessa tecnologia, utilização que permite ao filme desenvolver um carácter artístico próprio. A questão que se coloca desde logo para Münsterberg é a de saber em que é que consiste o valor artístico do filme e em que medida a tecnologia da imagem em movimento permite a emergência de uma nova forma de arte que se demarca das formas de arte clássicas. O propósito de defender a especificidade artística do filme domina assim a argumentação de *The Photoplay*, numa época em que não são raros os autores que recusam estatuto artístico ao cinema e vêem neste um derivado do teatro.

No entanto, Münsterberg inicia o seu texto contendo um propósito estético, com uma parte dedicada à psicologia do filme. De facto, à questão estética que domina o segundo capítulo da introdução do texto de Münsterberg segue-se a primeira parte da obra dedicada à psicologia do filme (“The Psychology of the Photoplay”) e será apenas na segunda parte do texto que o autor aborda a estética do filme (“The Aesthetics of the Photoplay”). Ora, compreender a relação entre as duas partes é essencial para conseguir determinar o significado da aproximação que Münsterberg estabelece entre técnicas fílmicas e processos mentais: porque é que Münsterberg começa um texto, que propõe uma reflexão estética sobre o filme, por uma parte

dedicada à psicologia do filme? A resposta a esta questão parece-nos residir na própria introdução de *The Photoplay*. No último parágrafo da introdução, Münsterberg evoca o direito do filme a ser classificado como uma arte em si mesma, que produz condições mentais totalmente novas.¹⁶ Ao fazer esta consideração, o psicólogo alemão prepara o leitor para o ponto crucial da sua argumentação: a defesa da nova arte cinematográfica através da psicologia da experiência da visualização de um filme.¹⁷ Na medida em que, no início do século XX, o cinema era tido como uma reprodução fotográfica do teatro, Münsterberg dedica-se sobretudo a distinguir os processos mentais de percepção no filme dos processos mentais de percepção no teatro, a fim de diferenciar as potencialidades estéticas do filme das da arte dramática. Trata-se assim de defender o filme enquanto nova forma de arte contra a concepção do cinema como “teatro filmado” ou como mera reprodução fotográfica de uma realidade dada. É com base numa análise psicológica da experiência do espectador de cinema que Münsterberg distingue os filmes que apenas reproduzem uma performance teatral daqueles que não se limitam a uma reprodução de uma peça de teatro.¹⁸

A primeira parte do texto de Münsterberg responde assim à questão de saber quais são as condições psicológicas de visualização dum filme, enquanto que, na parte dedicada mais especificamente à estética do filme, o psicólogo alemão tira as conclusões estéticas da sua análise psicológica e aplica a sua teoria da arte, elaborada num escrito de 1904 intitulado *The Principles of Art Education*, à nova arte cinematográfica.¹⁹ De facto, é a partir duma análise psicológica que Münsterberg, na segunda parte do texto dedicada à estética do filme, desenvolve uma estética do “isolamento,” caracterizada por uma concepção da obra de arte como comportando uma totalidade e uma harmonia em si mesma e encontrando-se separada da esfera dos nossos interesses quotidianos.²⁰ No entanto, uma análise da teoria estética de Münsterberg não tem lugar no presente artigo. O que nos importa aqui reter é que é

no contexto de uma defesa do filme como nova forma de arte que a relação entre técnicas fílmicas e processos mentais adquire, em *The Photoplay*, todo o seu sentido: são os momentos perceptivos e a experiência do filme que nos indicam as potencialidades estéticas do filme.

O autor tenta assim mostrar, na primeira parte do texto, que a experiência dum espectador de teatro obedece às mesmas leis que a percepção do mundo exterior, enquanto que o espectador de cinema experiencia um mundo, veiculado pela câmara, que se emancipa das leis do mundo natural. Importa presentemente questionarmo-nos sobre a maneira como Münsterberg desenvolve a sua argumentação.

ACTOS MENTAIS E OBJECTIVAÇÃO

Para responder a esta questão e poder assim determinar o sentido de “objectivação” que caracteriza a relação entre técnicas cinematográficas e actos mentais segundo Münsterberg, convém referir quais os processos mentais por ele analisados, que fornecem os elementos constitutivos da experiência cinematográfica. Eles são: percepção do espaço e do movimento no filme, a atenção, a memória e a imaginação e as emoções.

Na sua análise da percepção do espaço e do movimento no filme, Münsterberg não evoca ainda o termo de “objectivação.” O autor dedica-se antes de mais a mostrar que a impressão de profundidade e de movimento no ecrã são dependentes de mecanismos mentais e que, deste modo, a mente tem um papel activo na constituição da experiência da realidade e das suas características físicas. Ao defender uma implicação activa da mente na emergência do movimento das imagens, Münsterberg demarca-se de uma explicação passiva da impressão de

movimento das imagens pela teoria da retenção dos estímulos visuais. O movimento no ecrã de cinema não resulta da retenção, pela retina, de uma imagem vista que se sobrepõe às imagens que o olho vê num dado momento, mas é, antes, de acordo com o autor, o resultado de um acto mental. Com o objectivo de elucidar a sua posição, Münsterberg opera uma distinção fundamental entre conhecimento (*knowledge*) e impressão (*impression*) a propósito da percepção da profundidade no ecrã de cinema:

Claro que, quando estamos sentados na sala de cinema, sabemos que vemos um ecrã plano e que o objecto que vemos tem apenas duas dimensões, direita/esquerda e cima/baixo, mas não a terceira dimensão de profundidade, de distância na nossa direcção ou na direcção contrária. É plano como uma imagem e nunca plástico como uma obra de escultura ou arquitectura ou como um palco. No entanto, isto é conhecimento e não impressão imediata. Todavia, nós não temos o direito de dizer que as cenas que vemos no ecrã nos aparecem como imagens planas.²¹

De acordo com a citação anterior, Münsterberg considera que o espectador de um filme *sabe* que o ecrã é bidimensional, mas este conhecimento não impede que as cenas que ele visualiza no ecrã lhe *apareçam* como tridimensionais. É por essa razão que, segundo o psicólogo alemão, nós não podemos dizer que o que nos aparece no ecrã são imagens planas. Evocando várias experiências da percepção da profundidade através de imagens planas, como no caso do estereoscópio, assim como as experiências de Max Wertheimer sobre a percepção do movimento, o autor conclui que é um mecanismo mental que nos permite ver a profundidade no espaço do ecrã e o movimento nas imagens.²² Segundo Münsterberg, o olho humano não recebe, na experiência da visualização do filme, as impressões de um movimento

real, mas a sugestão de um movimento, que, de acordo com o autor, serve de base para a construção da ideia de movimento, que não mais é do que um produto da nossa reacção ao estímulo visual das imagens em movimento.²³ Münsterberg pretende assim mostrar que a percepção do movimento e do espaço é mental.

É através da primeira análise que Münsterberg fornece dum processo mental no filme em *The Photoplay*, a saber, da percepção do espaço e do movimento no filme, que vários autores tentam caracterizar a psicologia que a estética do filme de Münsterberg supõe. O facto de Münsterberg citar as experiências de Max Wertheimer, um dos fundadores do Gestaltismo, pode ser considerado como um sinal da distância que Münsterberg adopta em relação à psicologia atomista do seu antigo professor Wilhelm Wundt.²⁴ No entanto, a discussão em volta da concepção que Münsterberg possui da psicologia não será levada a cabo no presente artigo, pois ela não possui nenhuma consequência directa sobre a interpretação da relação entre processos psíquicos e técnicas do filme.

De facto, aquilo que nos importa reter da análise efectuada por Münsterberg relativamente à percepção do espaço e do movimento no filme é que, a esse nível da argumentação do psicólogo alemão, não se trata ainda de estabelecer uma relação entre técnicas cinematográficas e processos mentais, mas, antes de mais, de mostrar que as características da imagem cinematográfica (espaço bidimensional, movimento ilusório) apelam a mecanismos mentais que permitem ao espectador ter a impressão de um espaço tridimensional e de um movimento efectivo no ecrã de cinema.

Deste modo, é apenas no caso da análise subsequente do acto mental da atenção que Münsterberg introduz a ideia de uma objectivação da mente numa técnica cinematográfica e imprime uma viragem na sua argumentação. Se é certo que a atenção constitui um acto mental que, segundo Münsterberg, organiza o caos das impressões que nos rodeiam²⁵ e que, neste sentido, se situa em continuidade com a

análise anterior do autor sobre o papel activo da mente na percepção do mundo exterior, as considerações de Münsterberg sobre a atenção, ao contrário do que acontece no exame da percepção da profundidade e do movimento no espaço, apontam para algo que não é efectuado pelo sujeito, ou seja, pelo espectador de cinema, mas sim pela câmara. De facto, aquilo que interessa a Münsterberg sublinhar, na sua análise da atenção, é que a técnica cinematográfica do *close-up* objectiva o funcionamento da mente que efectua um acto de atenção, na medida em que o *close-up* nos mostra um objecto ou detalhe de maneira similar àquela em que ele aparece quando este é alvo de atenção por parte do sujeito. Mais precisamente, o *close-up* reproduz a concentração num objecto ou detalhe do campo visual e a consequente desfocagem daquilo que o rodeia, tal como acontece no acto mental da atenção.²⁶ Com o *close-up*, Münsterberg argumenta a favor da especificidade artística do filme, na medida em que esta técnica cinematográfica consegue efectuar algo que é impossível levar a cabo no teatro classicamente encenado. Numa peça de teatro, o acto de atenção do espectador pode ser despoletado por gestos ou palavras do actor, mas ele permanece um acto subjectivo do espectador.

Não é assim descabida a tentativa de fornecer uma compreensão do vocábulo “objectivação” através da ideia de “reprodução,” como sugere a leitura de Ian Ch. Jarvie:²⁷ a técnica cinematográfica do *close-up* reproduz o acto mental do sujeito e, nesse sentido, objectiva-o. No entanto, é necessário alguma prudência na utilização do termo “reprodução” para caracterizar a relação entre processos mentais e técnicas cinematográficas, tal como ela é exposta em *The Photoplay*. De facto, aquilo que Münsterberg nos diz não é que o *close-up* reproduz um acto de atenção do sujeito-espectador, mas que esta técnica fílmica reproduz o modo de funcionamento do acto mental da atenção sem que haja um sujeito particular. Isto é, as características do acto mental da atenção, que são a concentração num detalhe e a desfocagem do resto do campo visual, são operadas pela câmara e não pelo sujeito particular que é o

espectador, apesar de este último experienciar, na visualização do filme no ecrã, a concentração num aspecto particular do campo visual. Deste modo, quando Münsterberg estabelece um paralelismo entre o *close-up* e a atenção e distingue esta técnica cinematográfica da atenção que o espectador de teatro pode dedicar a vários detalhes no palco, não se trata de considerar que o *close-up* nos oferece uma reprodução, através da câmara, daquilo que aconteceria na mente do espectador de teatro se este estivesse perante uma peça de teatro. É por essa razão que Münsterberg fala de “objectivação”: a câmara oferece um mundo filtrado por uma mente, mas sem sujeito particular. Através da câmara, o espectador de cinema é confrontado com um mundo moldado por processos mentais.²⁸ Jörg Schweinitz refere-se assim, a propósito da teoria de Münsterberg, ao filme como espaço mental de percepção.²⁹

Esta concepção é aprofundada na análise que Münsterberg nos fornece da memória e da imaginação.³⁰ Ao abordar os actos mentais da memória e da imaginação e ao considerar que estes se objectivam nas técnicas do *flashback* (Münsterberg nomeia esta técnica de *cut-back*) e do *flashforward*, o autor introduz-nos a dois actos mentais que não se encontram ligados à espacialidade, como era o caso dos dois processos mentais anteriormente analisados (percepção do espaço e do movimento, atenção³¹), mas sim à temporalidade. Münsterberg põe assim em relevo que o funcionamento da memória e da imaginação quebra a continuidade temporal do mundo exterior, na medida em que o passado, o presente e o futuro se entrelaçam na mente do sujeito. Ora, a percepção natural, que rege a experiência do espectador de teatro, pode apenas sugerir-nos uma retrospectção no tempo, que tem lugar na mente do próprio espectador de teatro. Ao contrário, a percepção do mundo veiculada pelo filme e por técnicas cinematográficas como o *flashback* e o *flashforward* encontra-se estruturada por actos mentais que reproduzem o funcionamento da memória e da imaginação. O filme não obedece assim às leis do mundo exterior, como é o caso do teatro classicamente encenado a que Münsterberg

se refere, mas opera uma objectivação das próprias leis da mente. Münsterberg afirma assim:

O *cut-back* admite inúmeras variações e pode servir muitos propósitos. Mas este que estamos considerando é, psicologicamente, o mais interessante. Há realmente uma objectivação da função da memória. Neste sentido, o *cut-back* apresenta um certo paralelismo com o *close-up*: neste identificamos o acto mental de prestar atenção, naquele, o acto mental de lembrar. Em ambos, aquilo que, no teatro, não passaria de um acto mental, projeta-se, na fotografia, nas próprias imagens. É como se a realidade fosse despojada da própria relação de continuidade para atender às exigências do espírito. É como se o próprio mundo exterior se amoldasse às inconstâncias da atenção ou às ideias que nos vêm da memória.³²

Após a análise da memória e da imaginação, o psicólogo alemão aborda o tema das emoções. Neste tópico, Münsterberg muda de novo de estratégia argumentativa e verificamos que o tema da “objectivação” não tem aqui nenhum papel de relevo. O tema das emoções não se encontra assim tratado do ponto de vista do aspecto activo da mente na organização do caos sensorial do mundo exterior, mas as emoções são apresentadas como sendo aquilo que o filme procura, segundo o autor, representar.

ANALOGIA FENOMENOLÓGICA E ANALOGIA FUNCIONAL: DUAS INTERPRETAÇÕES DE MÜNSTERBERG

Após a análise dos processos mentais constitutivos da experiência cinematográfica, convém agora confrontar o sentido e valor do paralelismo que Münsterberg

estabelece entre processos psíquicos e técnicas cinematográficas com as interpretações deste paralelismo como “analogia,” realizadas Noël Carroll e por M. R. Wicclair. Segundo a leitura deste último, Münsterberg constrói a “analogia” entre técnica fílmica e acto mental fenomenologicamente, na medida em que admite que a experiência de um sujeito que concentra a sua atenção num objecto é fenomenologicamente similar à do espectador do filme face a um *close-up*, ou ainda que a experiência de um espectador de teatro que se lembra de uma cena observada anteriormente é fenomenologicamente similar à de um espectador de cinema que visualiza um *flashback*.³³ No seu artigo sobre Münsterberg, Wicclair parece entender o “fenomenológico” no seu sentido mais abrangente, enquanto referência à experiência da consciência, sem reenviar para uma filosofia ou filósofo determinado. Assim, a “analogia” entre técnicas cinematográficas e actos mentais residiria, segundo o autor, na similitude da experiência da consciência aquando de um acto mental com a experiência da consciência na visualização de imagens construídas segundo técnicas cinematográficas. Por exemplo: a atenção e a visualização de um *close-up* são análogos; ou seja, aquilo que se passa na consciência do sujeito é similar, na medida em que um objecto ou detalhe do campo visual é trazido para o centro do conteúdo consciente. No entanto, como o próprio Wicclair reconhece, a tese de Münsterberg assim interpretada apresenta-se como problemática, na medida em que existem dissimilitudes fenomenológicas entre, por exemplo, o *close-up* e o acto mental da atenção. É pois com razão que o autor do artigo sobre Münsterberg chama a atenção para o facto de que o *close-up* não reproduz meramente o acto de atenção, pois o primeiro implica um acto físico ausente do acto de atenção, ou seja, um movimento no espaço (o *close-up* parece trazer o objecto mais perto do espectador). No entanto, não deixa de ser verdade que, ao reduzir a distância que separa o espectador do detalhe, o *close-up* não faz mais do que, por um meio técnico, reproduzir o acto de concentração num ponto do campo visual. Consequentemente, uma interpretação estritamente

fenomenológica da relação entre técnicas cinematográficas e processos mentais revela-se problemática, na medida em que a experiência consciente do sujeito enquanto sujeito de um acto de atenção e enquanto espectador de um *close-up* não é totalmente similar. Assim, no caso da atenção, podemos dizer que o sujeito não experienciará um movimento que ele próprio produz, pois cabe à câmara a iniciativa de concentração num detalhe do campo visual. Isso significa que o espectador de cinema não experienciará, como o sujeito de um acto de atenção, o movimento no espaço que o aproxima do objecto de atenção ou a distância que o separa desse mesmo objecto.

A segunda interpretação do paralelismo entre mente e filme enquanto “analogia” é a de Carroll, que difere daquela proposta por Wicclair:

Assim, ao invés de considerar que as suas [de Münsterberg] analogias são fenomenológicas, podemos considerá-las como sendo funcionais. Ou seja, o *close-up* e a atenção são funcionalmente análogos no que toca à execução da mesma função — chamemos-lhe focagem selectiva - em diferentes sistemas, o cinemático, por um lado, e o psicológico, por outro lado.³⁴

Ao colocar a ênfase na “função” para interpretar a relação que Münsterberg estabelece entre técnicas cinematográficas e actos mentais, Carroll considera que a “analogia” estabelecida por Münsterberg significa, no caso exemplar do *close-up*, que esta possui a mesma função que o acto mental da atenção ao trazer os objectos para o centro da consciência do sujeito. Na perspectiva de Carroll, essa “analogia” funcional não é convincente. Carroll formula a sua crítica da seguinte maneira:

Pois será que aprendemos alguma coisa ao nos dizerem que o *close-up* é um análogo do processo psicológico de atenção, quando sabemos tão pouco sobre a maneira como o processo psicológico de atenção opera? E as analogias com a

memória e com a imaginação não se encontram em terreno mais firme. As analogias com tais processos não têm força explicativa, na medida em que pouco sabemos da natureza e da estrutura da mente.³⁵

De acordo com a citação de Carroll, o problema da “analogia” pensada por Münsterberg, assim como de todas as teorias dos filme que se baseiam numa analogia entre a mente e o filme, reside no facto de a analogia dos processos mentais com técnicas fílmicas ser desprovida de poder explicativo, na medida em que a analogia se revela impotente para nos esclarecer sobre o modo de funcionamento dos dispositivos cinematográficos. Se é certo que, como Carroll considera, uma analogia consistente do ponto de vista teórico supõe um conhecimento mais alargado do termo elucidativo da analogia (por exemplo, a memória) do que o conhecimento do termo a elucidar (por exemplo, o *flashback*), esse ponto perde relevância a partir do momento em que o paralelismo estabelecido não implica um termo elucidativo nem um termo a elucidar, como parece ser o caso na tese da “objectivação” de Münsterberg.³⁶

De facto, Münsterberg não propõe uma “analogia” no sentido que Carroll lhe atribui, na medida em que o valor da objectivação pensada pelo psicólogo alemão não reside numa explicitação do modo de funcionamento das técnicas cinematográficas. Münsterberg é o próprio a reconhecer que ele não pretende analisar as técnicas cinematográficas por elas mesmas, mas sim a percepção e a experiência do espectador que elas suscitam.³⁷ É necessário ter em conta que a análise psicológica de Münsterberg serve o propósito duma argumentação a favor do valor estético do filme, ao mostrar que as técnicas cinematográficas supõem uma experiência essencialmente diferente da do espectador de teatro. Não se trata assim de explicar o filme através do funcionamento da mente humana, mas de tornar explícitas as características da percepção e da experiência cinematográficas que

permitem, segundo Münsterberg, pensar a especificidade artística do filme. Ao proceder deste modo, o autor alemão integra a especificidade da percepção e da experiência cinematográficas no conceito do filme como forma de arte e é apenas neste contexto que a tese da “objectivação” de processos mentais em técnicas cinematográficas adquire o seu sentido.

CONCLUSÃO

Ao longo deste artigo, tentámos mostrar que a interpretação do paralelismo que Münsterberg estabelece entre actos mentais e técnicas cinematográficas como “analogia” é problemática, na medida em que ela não tem em conta o contexto no qual Münsterberg pensa o paralelismo entre mente e filme. A análise do texto de Münsterberg revelou-nos que o significado daquilo que o psicólogo alemão nomeia de “objectivação” de processos mentais reenvia para o papel activo da mente humana na constituição e organização duma experiência do mundo exterior e supõe assim uma determinada concepção das técnicas fílmicas como uma espécie de reprodução desses mecanismos criativos de experiência. As técnicas cinematográficas permitem, segundo o autor, oferecer ao espectador de cinema a experiência de visualização de um mundo moldado por actos mentais. O significado da “objectivação” dos actos mentais nas técnicas cinematográficas encontra-se assim distante da leitura que Noël Carroll propõe de Münsterberg. De facto, segundo Carroll, Münsterberg pretende elucidar o filme ao estabelecer uma comparação analógica das técnicas cinematográficas com actos mentais. Ora, a consideração do texto de Münsterberg no contexto das relações entre estética e psicologia em *The Photoplay* demonstrou que aquilo que Münsterberg pretende, ao evocar uma “objectivação” de processos mentais em técnicas cinematográficas, é considerar que

a percepção do mundo veiculada pelo filme é tornada possível através das técnicas cinematográficas que produzem um mundo estruturado por actos mentais. Essa percepção possui assim um carácter estético próprio que distingue o cinema do teatro.

Por essa razão, parece-nos igualmente problemática a posição que alguns autores contemporâneos atribuem à filosofia de Münsterberg no contexto da história das teorias cinematográficas. De facto, a relação que o autor alemão estabelece entre filme e mente encontra-se bastante distante do paradigma desenvolvido por autores como Christian Metz e, na medida em que Münsterberg não pretende fornecer uma compreensão do funcionamento do filme através de uma analogia com a mente, a relação entre filme e mente em *The Photoplay* não se identifica com aquela que é pensada pelas teorias do cinema que Noël Carroll aponta como criticáveis do ponto de vista teórico. Münsterberg pensa a relação entre filme e mente sem se basear numa teoria do inconsciente e sem pretender elucidar o funcionamento das técnicas cinematográficas: o que está em causa é pensar a especificidade artística do filme através de uma psicologia. Deste modo, a elaboração de uma visão crítica da teoria de Münsterberg e do paralelismo que o autor estabelece entre filme e mente não nos parece possível sem repensar o problema da relação entre estética e psicologia nos estudos sobre cinema.

NOTAS

1. Noël Carroll, "Introduction to Part II," in *Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures*, ed. Noël Carroll e Jinhee Choi (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 52: "O cinemático é a característica ou as características do *medium*, que distingue não apenas o filme dos média adjacentes, mas que, para além disso, permite ao filme *qua* filme produzir arte — isto é, arte especificamente fílmica ou cinematográfica (em oposição à arte teatral, que é, no celulóide, apenas preservada)." [Tradução de: "The cinematic is the feature or features of the medium that not only distinguish film from adjacent media, but which, in addition, enable film *qua* film to produce art — that is, specifically filmic or *cinematic* art (as opposed to theatrical art that is merely preserved on celluloid)."].

2. Vachel Lindsay defende o valor artístico do filme ao distingui-lo do teatro e ao estabelecer paralelos entre o filme e outras artes como a pintura, a escultura e a arquitectura. Para uma confrontação das teses de Lindsay e de Münsterberg ver Michael Pressler, "Poet and Professor on the

Movies," *The Gettysburg Review* 4:1 (1991): 157-165.

3. Antes de publicar "The Photoplay" em 1916, Münsterberg escreveu um artigo intitulado "Why We Go to the Movies," *Cosmopolitan* 60:1 (Dezembro 1915): 22-32, que antecipa algumas teses de "The Photoplay." Sobre cinema, Münsterberg escreveu ainda um artigo intitulado "Peril to Childhood in the Movies," que aborda o impacto da violência nos filmes sobre as crianças em *Mother's Magazine* 12 (Fevereiro 1917): 109-110, 158-159.

4. Münsterberg é assim frequentemente considerado como o primeiro grande autor da teoria do cinema. Cf., e.g., Ian Jarvie, *Philosophy of the Film: Epistemology, Ontology, Aesthetics* (Londres: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), 69-70, ou ainda, Dudley Andrew, *The Major Film Theories* (Nova Iorque: Oxford University Press, 1976), 14.

5. Uma das razões que têm sido apontadas para tal reside no facto de Münsterberg ter sido um apologista da cultura alemã numa altura em que as relações entre os Estados-Unidos e a Alemanha se deterioravam e em que os Estados-Unidos entravam na Primeira Guerra Mundial. Este factor pode explicar em parte porque é que, após a sua morte em 1916, os escritos de Münsterberg conhecem uma fraca recepção nos Estados-Unidos. Sobre este ponto cf. Allan Langdale, "S(t)imulation of Mind: The Film Theory of Hugo Münsterberg," in *Hugo Münsterberg on Film*, ed. Allan Langdale (Londres: Routledge, 2002), 5-6. Donald L. Fredericksen, por sua parte, indica outra razão para o esquecimento de Münsterberg em *The Aesthetic of Isolation in Film Theory: Hugo Münsterberg* (Nova Iorque: Arno Press, 1977), 44-45: a falta de interesse dos estudos fílmicos pela sua própria história.

6. Münsterberg escreveu a sua tese de doutoramento sob a orientação do psicólogo experimental alemão Wilhelm Wundt e é considerado como sendo um dos pais da psicologia aplicada.

7. Carroll, "Film/Mind Analogies: The Case of Hugo Munsterberg," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 46:4 (1988): 489-499. Este artigo foi reproduzido em Noël Carroll, *Theorizing the Moving Image* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 293-304. O texto por nós citado corresponde à mais recente publicação do artigo.

8. Gregory Currie, *Image and Mind: Film, Philosophy and Cognitive Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), xxiii. Currie não nomeia a teoria à qual ele se refere ao evocar a "current theory," mas parece, com este termo, designar teorias contemporâneas que aplicam a psicanálise à nossa experiência do filme.

9. *Ibid.*, xxiii. Cf. ainda *ibid.*, 34, onde Currie contesta a ideia de Münsterberg, segundo a qual o movimento percebido é um produto da nossa mente. Segundo Currie, ao contrário, existe um movimento efectivo que é realmente percebido.

10. Cf. Langdale, "S(t)imulation of Mind," 9. Cf. ainda Helmut H. Diederichs, *Kunsttheoretische Texte von Méliès bis Arnheim* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2004), 21, n. 57, que considera que os trabalhos de Cynthia Freeland se aproximam da reflexão de Münsterberg ao colocar em relação técnicas fílmicas com situações psíquicas.

11. Carroll, "Film/Mind Analogies," 294.

12. *Ibid.*, 293.

13. Münsterberg utiliza uma única vez o termo de "analogia" (*analogy*) no texto de "The Photoplay" ao estabelecer uma analogia do funcionamento da visão com outros sentidos. Cf. Hugo Münsterberg, "The Photoplay: A Psychological Study," in *Hugo Münsterberg on Film*, ed. Allan Langdale (Londres: Routledge, 2002), 75.

14. Jarvie, *Philosophy of the Film*, 72.

15. Andrew, *The Major Film Theories*, 19-20.

16. Münsterberg, "The Photoplay," 63.

17. Uma relação semelhante entre estética e psicologia do filme pode também ser observada na obra de Rudolf Arnheim como reconhece Ismail Xavier, "Introdução," in *A Experiência do Cinema: Antologia*, ed. Ismail Xavier (Rio de Janeiro: Graal, 1983), 19: "Nele [em "The Photoplay"] vemos antecipado muito do que vamos encontrar, por exemplo, em Rudolf Arnheim, no seu clássico livro *O Cinema como arte*, onde então a psicologia da forma servirá de base para o estudo das diferenças entre filme e realidade responsáveis pela dimensão estética do cinema."

18. Mark R. Wicclair considera que esta distinção corresponde à diferença entre "filmes cinemáticos" (*cinematic films*) e "filmes teatrais" (*theatrical films*). Cf. Wicclair, "Film Theory and Hugo Münsterberg's 'The Film: A Psychological Study,'" *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 1:3 (1978): 34.

19. Münsterberg, *The Principles of Art Education: A Philosophical, Aesthetical and Psychological Discussion of Art Education* (Boston: The Prang Educational Co., 1904).

20. Para um panorama geral da teoria estética de Münsterberg, ver Donald L. Fredericksen, *The Aesthetic of Isolation in Film Theory: Hugo Münsterberg* (Nova Iorque: Arno Press, 1977).

21. Münsterberg, "The Photoplay," 65: "Of course, when we are sitting in the picture palace, we know that we see a flat screen and that the object which we see has only two dimensions, right-left, and up-down, but not the third dimension of depth, of distance toward us or away from us. It is flat like a picture and never plastic like a work of sculpture or architecture or like a stage. Yet this is knowledge and not immediate impression. We have no right whatever to say that the scenes which we see on the screen appear to us as flat pictures."

22. Sobre a questão da percepção da profundidade em Münsterberg, ver o seu artigo "Perception of Distance," *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 1:23 (1904): 617-623.

23. Münsterberg, "The Photoplay," 78.

24. Para uma aproximação da teoria de Münsterberg com a teoria da *Gestalt* ver Andrew, *The Major Film Theories*, 16. Para a defesa da posição contrária, segundo a qual Münsterberg permanece ligado a uma visão atomista da psicologia causal ver Fredericksen, *The Aesthetic of Isolation*, 132.

25. Münsterberg, "The Photoplay," 80.

26. Münsterberg, "A Atenção," trans. Teresa Machado, in *A Experiência do Cinema: Antologia*, ed. Ismail Xavier (Rio de Janeiro: Graal, 1983), 34: "O detalhe em destaque tornou-se de repente o conteúdo único da encenação; e tudo o que a mente quer ignorar foi subitamente subtraído à vista e desapareceu. As circunstâncias externas submetem-se às exigências da consciência. Os produtores de cinema chamam a isso *close-up*. O *close-up* objectivou, no nosso mundo da percepção, o acto mental de atenção e com isso dotou a arte de um meio infinitamente mais poderoso do que qualquer palco dramático." A tradução citada foi modificada pela autora do artigo. O texto traduzido corresponde a Münsterberg, "The Photoplay," 87: "The detail which is being watched has suddenly become the whole content of the performance, and everything which our mind wants to disregard has been suddenly banished from our sight and has disappeared. The events without have become obedient to the demands of our consciousness. In the language of the photoplay producers it is a "close-up." *The close-up has objectified in our world of perception our mental act of attention and by it has furnished art with a means which far transcends the power of any theater stage.*"

27. Jarvie, *Philosophy of the Film*, 72.

28. Münsterberg, "The Photoplay," 88, considera assim que, ao fornecer uma percepção do mundo moldada por actos de natureza subjectiva como é o caso da atenção, o filme não obedece às leis objectivas do mundo exterior natural.

29. Jörg Schweinitz, "Psychotechnik, idealistische Ästhetik und der Film als mental strukturierter Wahrnehmungsraum: Die Filmtheorie von Hugo Münsterberg," in *Das Lichtspiel: Eine psychologische Studie [1916] und andere Schriften zum Kino*, ed. Jörg Schweinitz (Viena: Synema, 1996), 25.

30. De uma maneira geral, Münsterberg fornece análises mais detalhadas dos processos mentais analisados em "The Photoplay" no seu texto *Psychology: General and Applied* (Nova Iorque: D. Appleton & Co., 1914). Para a questão da memória e da imaginação cf. *ibid.*, 165-175.

31. De facto, o acto mental da atenção pode ser caracterizado pela sua espacialidade, na medida em que ele supõe a concentração num detalhe do campo visual. Da mesma maneira, o *close-up* reproduz este acto ao reduzir a distância que separa o olho do espectador do detalhe no qual a câmara se concentra.

32. Münsterberg, "A Atenção," 37-38. A tradução citada foi modificada pela tradutora. O texto traduzido corresponde a Münsterberg, "The Photoplay," 90: "The cut-back may have many variations and serve many purposes. But the one which we face here is psychologically the most interesting. We have really an objectivation of our memory function. The case of the cut-back is there quite parallel to that of the close-up. In the one we recognize the mental act of attending, in the other we must recognize the mental act of remembering. *In both cases, the act which in the ordinary theater would go on in our mind alone is here in the photography projected into the pictures themselves. It is as if reality has lost its own continuous connection and become shaped by the demands of our soul.* It is as if the outer world itself became molded in accordance with our fleeting turns of attention or with our passing memory ideas."

33. Wicclair, "Film Theory," 39-41.

34. Carroll, "Film/Mind," 302: "So rather than taking his analogies to be phenomenological, we might take them to be functional. That is, the close-up and attention are functionally analogous in regards to performing the same function — call it selective focusing — in different systems, the cinematic, on the one hand, and the psychological on the other."

35. *Ibid.*, 302: "For do we really learn about anything by being told that the close-up is an analog to the psychological process of attention when we know so little about the way in which the psychological process of attention operates? And analogies to memory and to the imagination are on no firmer standing. Analogies to such processes have no explanatory force where we have so little grasp of the nature and structure of the mind."

36. Numa nota do seu artigo "Film/Mind," 304, n. 15, Carroll tem em conta uma objecção que lhe foi feita por Mary Devereaux, em que esta considera que não se deve interpretar a relação entre mente e filme em Münsterberg como constituindo a base de um programa de investigação teórico, mas como sendo um instrumento retórico, ou, mais precisamente, como uma metáfora para apresentar o novo *medium* a uma audiência céptica. Carroll considera, no entanto, que, apesar do seu valor heurístico, a metáfora elaborada por Münsterberg é teoricamente duvidosa.

37. Münsterberg, "The Photoplay," 63: "Não são os meios físicos e os dispositivos técnicos que estão em questão, mas os meios mentais. Que factores psicológicos estão envolvidos quando assistimos ao que acontece no ecrã?" (Tradução de: "Not the physical means and technical devices are in question, but the mental means. What psychological factors are involved when we watch the happenings on the screen?")

MERLEAU-PONTY E O PENSAMENTO DO CINEMA

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1. MERLEAU-PONTY E O CINEMA

Em 1948 o filósofo francês Maurice Merleau-Ponty reúne no volume intitulado *Sens et non-sens*¹ os principais artigos escritos nos anos precedentes, organizando-os em três secções que intitula respectivamente “Obras,” “Ideias,” “Políticas.”

Nos quatro textos que compõem a primeira secção, publicados em revista entre 1945 e 1947, o autor sublinha a profunda convergência entre certas experiências artísticas (a pintura em *Le doute de Cézanne*, o cinema no ensaio dedicado ao tema, a literatura em *Le roman et la métaphysique*, que comenta *A Convidada* de Simone de Beauvoir, e em *Un auteur scandaleux*, escrito em defesa de Sartre), e aquela que ele designa preferencialmente por “nova psicologia” — e que tende a identificar na psicologia da forma — e a filosofia contemporânea.

Merleau-Ponty observa concretizar-se esta convergência em particular no que se refere aos temas da nossa relação com o mundo e da nossa relação com os outros.

Relativamente ao tema da relação com o mundo, no ensaio intitulado “Le cinéma et la nouvelle psychologie”² — texto da conferência pronunciada em 1945 no Institut de Hautes Études Cinématographiques de Paris — o autor começa por referir que, enquanto aquela que ele define por “psicologia clássica” tende a atribuir um papel primário às *sensações* (concebidas como os efeitos *pontuais* de excitações locais que a inteligência e a memória teriam que compor sucessivamente num quadro unitário), a “nova psicologia” mostra que, pelo contrário, no nosso

conhecimento sensível é a *percepção* entendida como apreensão sensível de um fenómeno no seu todo que deverá ser considerada como *primária*:

A percepção analítica, que nos dá o valor absoluto dos elementos isolados, corresponde, portanto, a uma atitude tardia e excepcional, é aquela do cientista que observa ou do filósofo que reflecte; a percepção das formas, no seu sentido geral de percepção de estrutura e de conjunto ou de configuração, deve ser considerada como o nosso modo de percepção espontâneo.³

Deste modo, a “nova psicologia” evidencia, então, o carácter cinestésico da percepção, em virtude do qual, esta não deverá ser considerada como “uma soma de dados visuais, tácteis, auditivos” uma vez que “fala simultaneamente a todos os meus sentidos.”⁴ De uma maneira mais geral, Merleau-Ponty considera que a teoria da forma (*Gestalttheorie*), “ao recusar de forma resoluta a noção de sensação, ensinamos a deixar de distinguir os signos dos seus significados, o que é sentido do que é pensado.”⁵

No que diz respeito à nossa relação com os outros, também aí Merleau-Ponty entende que a “nova psicologia” comporta “uma concepção nova” da *percepção* dos outros, a partir da qual é possível recusar “a distinção clássica entre observação interna ou introspecção e observação externa;”⁶ ou seja, “recusar o preconceito que faz do amor, do ódio e da cólera ‘realidades internas’ acessíveis a um único indivíduo, aquele que as sente.”⁷ Segundo Merleau-Ponty a “nova psicologia” mostra, pelo contrário, que “cólera, vergonha, ódio e amor não são factos psíquicos escondidos no mais profundo da consciência do outro, mas são tipos de comportamento ou estilos de conduta visíveis de fora.”⁸

Merleau-Ponty considera que também “as melhores observações dos estudiosos

da estética do cinema”⁹ convergem com estas novidades da psicologia, algo que o autor pretende evidenciar ao assumir “o filme como um objecto a perceber,”¹⁰ ou seja, — explica a “Introduzione” de Enzo Paci na tradução italiana de *Sens et non sens* — considerando “o cinema [...] como forma (no sentido de *Gestalt*) em movimento.”¹¹

Nesse sentido, Merleau-Ponty precisa: “um filme não é uma soma de imagens, mas uma *forma* temporal”¹² que, segundo os termos do autor, pode ainda ser qualificada de *ritmo* e definida como “uma realidade nova que não é apenas uma simples soma dos elementos utilizados,”¹³ elementos não só visuais obviamente, mas também sonoros e musicais.

Para sustentar tal definição, Merleau-Ponty chama a psicologia da forma e uma gramática mínima da linguagem cinematográfica a iluminarem-se reciprocamente, e a evidenciar o carácter ficcional que sustenta o aparente realismo do filme. Tanto aquele carácter como esta aparência são de seguida interpretados numa chave que deriva explicitamente da estética de Kant. Mais especificamente, refere-se à definição das “ideias estéticas” proposta no parágrafo 49 da *Crítica do Juízo*: elaboradas pela imaginação do artista e encarnadas no belo da obra por este criada, as ideias estéticas “[d]ão muito que pensar”¹⁴ embora não sejam inteiramente conceptualizáveis e conceptualmente exprimíveis. Segundo Merleau-Ponty, no caso do cinema, tal significa que “o sentido do filme está incorporado no seu ritmo tal como o sentido de um gesto é imediatamente legível no gesto, e o filme não quer dizer nada mais do que ele próprio. A ideia é aqui reconduzida ao seu estado nascente,”¹⁵ ou seja, à sua forma aconceptual. Ela resulta, portanto, como indivisível da sua manifestação sensível: “emerge da estrutura temporal do filme, como numa pintura emerge da coexistência das suas partes. [...] Como vimos mais acima, um filme significa como uma coisa significa: um e a outra não falam a uma inteligência separada, mas dirigem-se ao nosso poder de decifrar tacitamente o mundo e os homens e de coexistir com eles.”¹⁶

Eis então que reaparece a convicção de Merleau-Ponty acerca da convergência íntima entre a “nova psicologia” e algumas tendências artísticas e filosóficas contemporâneas: a sua intenção comum parece ser a de fazer-nos *reaprender a ver o mundo*, segundo a célebre expressão com que Husserl define a tarefa da fenomenologia e que Merleau-Ponty havia já retomado para descrever o objectivo da “nova psicologia”: “Esta reensina-nos a ver o mundo com o qual estamos em contacto através de toda a superfície do nosso ser.”¹⁷ O eco daquela expressão husserliana retorna mais tarde numa formulação que reconduz de forma significativa à experiência literária de Proust ou à pintura de Paul Klee. A propósito da *petite phrase* da sonata de Vinteuil, Proust escrevia no volume inicial de *La recherche*: “Esses encantos de uma tristeza íntima era o que ela tentava imitar, recriar e até à respectiva essência, que consiste, porém em serem incomunicáveis e parecerem frívolos a quem quer que não seja aquele que os experimenta, até ela fora captada, *tornada visível* [*rendue visible*], pela pequena frase [*petite phrase*].”¹⁸ E é com esta mesma expressão que, como sabemos, Paul Klee abria *A Confissão Criadora*: “A arte não reproduz o visível, torna visível [*macht sichtbar*].”¹⁹ Por seu lado, Merleau-Ponty conclui a conferência sobre *Le cinema et la nouvelle psychologie* explicando que “uma boa parte da filosofia fenomenológica ou existencial, consiste no admirar-se perante esta inerência do eu ao mundo e do eu aos outros, no descrever tal paradoxo e tal confusão, no fazer *ver* a relação entre sujeito e mundo, entre o sujeito e os outros, em vez de *a explicar*, como faziam os clássicos recorrendo ao espírito absolute.”²⁰

Mas a meditação sobre a convergência posta aqui em evidência, sublinha Merleau-Ponty, não pode ser abordada em termos determinísticos de “derivação” de um âmbito face ao outro: “Se, portanto, a filosofia e o cinema estão de acordo, se a reflexão e o trabalho técnico procedem no mesmo sentido, tal significa que o filósofo

e o cineasta têm em comum uma certa maneira de ser, uma certa visão do mundo, e que é aquela de uma geração.”²¹

A meditação merleau-pontiana sobre tal convergência chega então à hipótese — muito prudente do ponto de vista teórico e francamente um pouco limitada — da afinidade geracional. Irão passar-se cerca de quinze anos até que esta hipótese venha a ser modificada em sentido explicitamente ontológico: tal acontecerá nas notas preparadas por Merleau-ponty para o curso intitulado *L'ontologie cartésienne et l'ontologie d'aujourd'hui*,²² que se encontrava a leccionar no Collège de France em 1961 quando morre inesperadamente aos cinquenta e três anos de idade.

Estas notas apresentam o referido curso sublinhando que o tema que lhe dá o título

não é história da filosofia no sentido habitual: o que se pensou, é: aquilo que foi pensado no quadro e horizonte do que se pensa — Evocado para fazer compreender o que se pensa — Objectivo: a ontologia contemporânea – Partir desta para depois ir de encontro a Descartes e aos cartesianos, depois voltar ao que pode ser a filosofia hoje.²³

Este curso pretende, portanto — também através de um exame em contraste com a ontologia cartesiana — procurar atribuir uma formulação filosófica à ontologia contemporânea, a “toda uma filosofia espontânea, pensamento fundamental”²⁴ que até agora tem encontrado expressão “especialmente na literature,”²⁵ observa Merleau-Ponty, mas também nas artes, a propósito das quais o autor sublinha entre parênteses: “(pintura-cinema),”²⁶ acrescentando duas linhas mais abaixo: “Andre Bazin ontologia do cinema”²⁷ para depois retomar pela última vez: “Nas artes Cinema ontologia do cinema — a questão do movimento no cinema.”²⁸

Também nas experiências e nas reflexões desenvolvidas a partir do cinema, portanto, as notas deste curso prometiam individualizar linhas de tendência convergentes com aquelas desenhadas pela pintura e pela literatura contemporâneas, traçando o perfil da “nova ontologia” que Merleau-Ponty, com este curso, pretendia “formular filosoficamente.”²⁹ Em particular, como verificámos, era sua intenção indicar tais linhas assumindo qual *exemplum* “a questão do movimento no cinema”. Não é assim surpreendente (mas parece ainda mais interessante) observar que o outro único sinal das reflexões dedicadas pelo autor ao cinema refere precisamente aquela questão, e coloca-se no âmbito da comparação entre diversas expressões artísticas do movimento e que foi desenvolvida no seu último texto acabado: o ensaio de filosofia da pintura intitulado *O Olho e o Espírito*.³⁰ Aqui o autor escreve de facto que

[a]s fotografias de Marey, as análises cubistas, a *Noiva* de Duchamp não se mexem: elas oferecem um devaneio zenoniano sobre o movimento — vemos um corpo rígido como uma armadura que mexe as suas articulações, que está aqui e está ali, magicamente, mas não *vai* daqui para ali. O cinema restitui o movimento, *mas como?* Será, como se crê, copiando o melhor possível a mudança de lugar? Pode-se presumir que não, pois o *ralenti* mostra um corpo flutuando entre os objectos como uma alga, mas que não *se move*.³¹

Merleau-Ponty volta assim a assinalar o carácter *não mimético* do realismo cinematográfico — observação de evidente relevo ontológico — sem, no entanto, levar mais adiante as suas referências ao cinema.

“Sobre a utilização do movimento na pintura e na arte do cinema”³² — também neste caso interessando-se assim pelos elementos de convergência — Merleau-Ponty havia-se debruçado um pouco mais no resumo do curso intitulado *Le monde sensible*

et le monde de l'expression, leccionado no College de France em 1952-53. As reflexões desenvolvidas nesta ocasião parecem vislumbrar — ou pelo menos inferir com maior precisão — as orientações através das quais a última fase do seu pensamento teria podido desenvolver uma consideração ontológica do cinema. De facto, ao tratar da “utilização do movimento,” tais reflexões pretendem abordar não já uma questão particular, mas a própria identidade que vimos qualificar, com uma expressão que merece enfatizar, “a arte do cinema.” Explicam assim: “O cinema, inventado como meio de fotografar os objectos em movimento ou como *representação do movimento* descobriu com este muito mais do que a mudança de lugar: uma maneira nova de simbolizar os pensamentos, *um movimento da representação.*”³³ Acima de tudo parece existir simultaneamente nesta “descoberta” o seu carácter de “arte” — precisamente aquele carácter não mimético que Klee reivindicava para toda a arte — e a sua novidade ontológica. Tanto uma como a outra são caracterizadas explicitamente mais à frente, quando Merleau-Ponty escreve que o cinema “mete em cena não já, como no seu início, movimentos objectivos, mas *mudanças de perspectiva que definem a passagem de uma personagem a outra ou o deslizar de uma personagem em direcção ao acontecimento.*”³⁴

Por outro lado, parece também possível vislumbrar aqui os motivos do interesse merleau-pontiano — apenas enunciados nas notas de curso de 1960-61 — pelo pensamento de André Bazin, que foi como se sabe o fundador da revista *Cahiers du cinéma*, para além de pai espiritual da *nouvelle vague*. A sintonia teórica entre o último Merleau-Ponty e Bazin parece de facto centrar-se — como sugere, pois, a frase acima citada — na consideração comum da “precessão do olhar sobre as coisas e das coisas sobre o olhar” como bem relevou Pietro Montani,³⁵ isto é, numa nova consideração ontológica da visão: uma consideração que rejeita qualquer distinção entre o estatuto (de ser) do vidente e do visível, assim como deste último e do invisível, que por sua vez se entenderá seja como inteligível seja

como memória ou como imaginação. A propósito, Montani comenta: “A verdade é que Bazin, tal como Merleau-Ponty, é um fenomenólogo que se apercebeu da aposta ontológica do jogo da imaginação: o emergir da imagem a partir de um ‘fluxo’ e de um ‘refluxo,’ do seu constituir-se enquanto um ir e vir da visão, desde as coisas à forma e vice-versa, do facto ao sentido e vice-versa.”³⁶

2. MERLEAU-PONTY, DELEUZE E O CINEMA:

ALGUMAS CONTINUIDADES

Esta análise das considerações de Merleau-Ponty dedicadas ao cinema conduzem-nos de forma inevitável — e, ao mesmo tempo, não surpreendente — a relevar importantes elementos de continuidade com o mais importante confronto com o cinema alguma vez elaborado por um filósofo nos últimos vinte anos: aquele realizado por Gilles Deleuze em dois volumes, intitulados respectivamente *A Imagem-Movimento*³⁷ e *A Imagem-Tempo*.³⁸

Limito-me, por agora, a sublinhar três daqueles elementos.

Aquilo que provavelmente aparece como mais extrínseco consiste na perspectiva assumida tanto por Merleau-Ponty como por Deleuze no que se refere ao campo da teoria cinematográfica. Se de facto é possível encontrar o nome de André Bazin nas notas de curso do primeiro, são os próprios *Cahiers du cinema* por este fundados, que foram indicados, desde a publicação de *A Imagem-Movimento*, como a “referência teórica privilegiada por Deleuze, dentro de um quadro de alguma forma muito francês.”³⁹

Mas vamos aos elementos de continuidade mais intrínsecos. Ainda que no “Prefácio” de *A imagem-movimento* Deleuze afirme que “os grandes autores de cinema” são comparáveis “a pensadores,”⁴⁰ pouco depois assume, para retomar a

expressão conhecida por Merleau-Ponty, “o filme como um objecto a perceber.” Como sugeria o texto da conferência merleau-pontiana de 1945, portanto, também os volumes de Deleuze consideram inseparáveis, no cinema, a percepção e o pensamento: analogamente a tudo quanto se possa dizer de qualquer outra arte, sem dúvida, mas — igualmente sem dúvidas — segundo peculiaridades tais que fazem um todo com a própria essência do cinema. Sabemos, neste sentido, como ao assumir “o filme como um objecto a perceber,” Merleau-Ponty o torne o *exemplum* da “percepção do todo,” que ele define como “mais natural e mais primitiva do que aquela dos elementos isolados.”⁴¹ Por sua vez, é precisamente na abordagem do cinema do ponto de vista perceptivo que Deleuze não hesita em criticar o amado Bergson, ainda que seja *através do próprio Bergson*. De facto, Deleuze rejeita a afirmação avançada na *L'évolution créatrice* (1907), segundo a qual o cinema seria “o exemplo típico do falso movimento”⁴² porquê reconstrói o próprio movimento como soma de “cortes imóveis + tempo abstracto.”⁴³

A questão é levantada em primeiro lugar pela consideração do “estímulo luminoso proveniente do ecrã”⁴⁴ cinematográfico, visto que, como se sabe, num filme sucedem-se vinte e quatro fotogramas por segundo, intervalados por tantos outros momentos de escuridão que porém o espectador não percebe. A isto acrescenta-se o facto de o cinema criar movimento ao colocar de forma sucessiva uma série de fotogramas, em si mesmos fixos, separados por um intervalo temporal que é tão curto que dá uma impressão de continuidade.

No entanto, Deleuze não concorda com a apreciação avançada por Bergson na *L'évolution créatrice*, enquanto mantém que — graças às “descobertas,” diria provavelmente Merleau-Ponty, que definem a sua própria essência⁴⁵ — “o cinema não nos apresenta uma imagem a que se junta movimento, apresenta-nos imediatamente uma imagem-movimento,”⁴⁶ ou seja, uma “percepção do conjunto”: aquela imagem-movimento que, considera Deleuze, Bergson havia descoberto no

primeiro capítulo de *Matière et mémoire* (1896) superando a oposição entre “o movimento como realidade física no mundo externo, e a imagem como realidade psíquica na consciência.”⁴⁷

Quanto ao último elemento de continuidade que aqui se pretende esboçar, verificámos como, nas suas notas de curso, Merleau-Ponty planeasse aproximar-se filosoficamente do cinema não já para investi-lo de um pensamento filosófico elaborado preliminarmente, mas nem mais, para encontrar um “pensamento fundamental” que, no seu parecer, a filosofia, enquanto tal, ainda não sabe pensar.

Parece que se encontram intenções análogas na abordagem de Deleuze. Já no “Prólogo” de *Diferença e Repetição*, de facto, ele escrevia:

Aproxima-se o tempo em que já não será possível escrever um livro de filosofia como há muito tempo se faz: “Ah! O velho estilo...” A pesquisa de novos meios de expressão filosófica foi inaugurada por Nietzsche e deve prosseguir, hoje, relacionada com a renovação de outras artes, como, por exemplo, o teatro ou o cinema.⁴⁸

E ainda, falando de si mesmo e de Guattari, acrescentava: “Os dois, pretendemos ser o Humpty Dumpty da filosofia, ou o seu Bucha e Estica. Uma filosofia-cinema.”⁴⁹

Enfim, no cinema Deleuze encontrava projectadas as interrogações da filosofia não apenas sobre o real, o imaginário e o simbólico, mas também — como é inevitável — sobre si mesma. E no entanto, quando a sua pesquisa chega por fim a encontrar directamente o cinema, o mesmo assume uma prudência teórica singular (e singularmente significativa) que acaba por deixar aberta a interrogação em torno do que seja, portanto, “uma filosofia-cinema.” Como se para ele, em relação a esta, valesse o que Jean-Luc Godard por seu lado declarou em relação ao cinema: “Até há bem pouco tempo sabia o que é, agora já não sei mais.” Mas, no fundo, não pode ser

de outra forma. Porque isto de “uma filosofia-cinema” não é a questão de um pensador: sendo matéria do que Merleau-Ponty chamava *l’ontologie d’aujourd’hui*, ela é matéria do próprio pensamento.

NOTAS

1. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sens et non-sens* (Paris: Nagel, 1948).
2. Merleau-Ponty, “Le cinema et la nouvelle psychologie,” *Les temps modernes* 26 (1947): 930-947, agora em *Sens et non-sens*, 61-75. Relativamente à influência do ensaio de Merleau-Ponty na teoria do cinema veja-se Elena Dagrada, “Jean Mitry, un ‘sémiologue malgré lui’,” em *Cinegrafie 2:II* (1989): 121-127.
3. Merleau-Ponty, *Sens et non-sens*, 62-63.
4. *Ibid.*, 63.
5. *Ibid.*, 64.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, 67.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*, 68.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Merleau-Ponty, *Senso e non senso*, trad. P. Caruso (Milão: Il Saggiatore, 1962; depois Milão: Garzanti, 1974), 13.
12. *Ibid.*, 69.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Berlim e Liepāja: Lagarde und Friederich, 1790), trad. port. A. Marques e V. Rohden, *Crítica da Faculdade do Juízo* (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional - Casa da Moeda, 1998), §49, 219.
15. Merleau-Ponty, *Sens et non-sens*, 73.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.*, 68.
18. Marcel Proust, *Du côté de chez Swann* (Paris: Grasset, 1913; depois Paris: Gallimard, 1988), trad. Port. P. Tamen, *Do Lado de Swann* (Lisboa: Relógio D’Água, 2003), 364.
19. Paul Klee, “Schöpferische Konfession,” *Tribune der Kunst und Zeit* XIII (1920), agora em *Id., Das bildnerische Denken* (Basel: Benno Schwabe & Co., 1956), trad. port. C. Pires e M. Manuel, rev. J. Barrento, *Ensaaios Sobre Arte* (Lisboa: Cotovia, 2001): 38.
20. Merleau-Ponty, *Sens et non-sens*, 74.
21. *Ibid.*, 75.
22. Cf. Merleau-Ponty, *Notes des cours au Collège de France 1958-1959 et 1960-1961* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996).
23. *Ibid.*, 390-391.
24. *Ibid.*, 391. A expressão “pensamento fundamental,” que decorre das notas de trabalho de *O Visível e o Invisível* — cf. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l’invisible* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), trad. port. J. A. Gianotti e A. M. d’Oliveira, 2.^a ed. (São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva, 1984), 171, 173, 176 — torna-se central nas notas de curso aqui consideradas para indicar precisamente uma espécie de “filosofia espontânea,” de “pensamento do Ungedachte” (Merleau-Ponty, *Notes de cours au Collège de France 1958-1959 et 1960-1961*, 391) onde opera uma relação entre o homem e o Ser que o pensamento propriamente filosófico ainda não pensou verdadeiramente. Neste sentido G. B. Madison aproxima o “pensamento fundamental” ao *Wesentliche Denken* de Heidegger e à fenomenologia hegeliana — ver G. B. Madison, *La phénoménologie de Merleau-Ponty: Une recherche des limites de la conscience* (Paris: Klincksieck, Paris 1973), 159.
25. Merleau-Ponty, *Notes des cours au Collège de France 1958-1959 et 1960-1961*, 391.
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Ibid.*, 166.
30. Ver M. Merleau-Ponty, *L’œil et l’esprit* [1960, 1961] (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), trad. port. L. M. Bernardo, *O Olho e o Espírito*, 6.^a ed. (Lisboa: Vega, 2006).

31. *Ibid.*, 62.
32. Merleau-Ponty, *Résumés de cours: Collège de France 1952-1960* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), 19.
33. *Ibid.*, 20.
34. *Ibid.* (ênfase minha).
35. Pietro Montani, *L'immaginazione narrativa: Il racconto del cinema oltre i confini dello spazio letterario* (Milão: Guerini e associati, 1999), 75, mas mais em geral ver todo o capítulo quinto. Na passagem aqui citada, Montani retoma a seguinte definição proposta em *O Olho e o Espírito*: "Esta precessão daquilo que é em relação àquilo que se vê e que faz ver, daquilo que se vê e faz ver em relação àquilo que é, é a própria visão" (69). Sobre Merleau-Ponty e o "realismo fenomenológico" de Bazin, ver também Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought* (Berkeley e Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 459ff. Jay sublinha por sua vez como a consideração do neo-realismo italiano elaborada por Bazin "poderia ser sustentada, em termos merleau-pontianos, como operação holística que reúne aquele que vê e o o que é visto na carne do mundo" (461).
36. Montani, *L'immaginazione narrativa*, 74.
37. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: L'image-mouvement* (Paris: Minuit, 1983), trad. port. R. Godinho, *A Imagem-Movimento: Cinema 1* (Lisboa: Assírio e Alvim, 2004).
38. Deleuze, *Cinema 2: L'image-temps* (Paris: Minuit, 1985), trad. port. R. Godinho, *A Imagem-Tempo: Cinema 2* (Paris: Assírio e Alvim, 2006).
39. E. Ghezzi, "Specchio per il corpo senza radici: Gilles Deleuze entra nel cinema per rientrare nel mondo," *Il manifesto* (Abril 1984): 6.
40. Deleuze, *A Imagem-Movimento*, 11.
41. Merleau-Ponty, *Sens et non-sens*, 62.
42. Deleuze, *A Imagem-Movimento*, 12.
43. *Ibid.*, 11.
44. Em relação a esta e seguintes referências à percepção no cinema, ver Francesco Caselli, *Teorie del cinema dal dopoguerra a oggi* (Milão: Espresso Strumenti, 1978), 134ff.
45. "A evolução do cinema, a conquista da sua própria *essência* ou novidade, far-se-á pela montagem, a câmara móvel e a emancipação da captação de imagem que se separa da projecção." (Deleuze, *A Imagem-Movimento*, 15, ênfase minha).
46. *Ibid.*
47. *Ibid.*, 11.
48. Deleuze, *Différence et répétition* (Paris: P.U.F., 1968), trad. port. L. Orlandi e R. Machado, *Diferença e Repetição* (Lisboa: Relógio d'Água, 2000), 39.
49. Deleuze, "Nota dell'autore per l'edizione italiana" in *Id.*, *Logica del senso*, trad. M. de Stelanis (Milão: Feltrinelli, 1975), 294.

**QUESTIONS FOR JACQUES RANCIÈRE
AROUND HIS BOOK *LES ÉCARTS DU CINÉMA***

Interview conducted by

Susana Nascimento Duarte (New University of Lisbon)

CINEMA (C): Just like La fable cinématographique... (published in English as Film Fables), your 2001 book that was also entirely dedicated to cinema, Les écarts du cinéma, recently published by La Fabrique, is a collection of texts, which together provide support for your singular approach to cinema, and whose prologue attempts to explain the logic of this approach after the fact. How did this book come about, and how did you decide on the structure?

Jacques Rancière (JR): The theme of gaps was at the centre of the text that forms the prologue to this book. This text was a *post hoc* reflection on *Film Fables*, and shifted the axis of reflection somewhat. *Fables* looked at cinema through the lens of a tension between two regimes of art: the aesthetic regime, including the novelty of a writing with movement and the dream of a language of images; and the representative regime, with the resurgence of the art of telling stories in cinema, and distinctions between genres, which had been renounced in the old noble art forms. The problem of gaps is more a reflection on my own approach to cinema and all that this implies about the idea of cinema as an object of knowledge and discourse. It calls into question the idea of cinema as an art form that is thought to be a product of its own theory and specialised body of knowledge, by pointing out the plurality of practices and of forms of experience that are brought together under the name of cinema. From this starting point, I was prompted to bring together the texts I had written since *Film Fables* from the point of view of the gaps which, by drawing

cinema outside of itself, reveal its inner heterogeneity: gaps between cinema and literature, which question the idea of a language of cinema, transformation of filmmakers' politics, which are also tensions between cinema and the theatrical paradigm, paradoxical relationships between entertainment and art for art's sake, and so on. At each turn, it needs to be shown how an art form is intersected by other art forms, how it is impossible to separate the transformations that set it apart from itself, how it cannot be neatly assigned to a specific area of knowledge.

C: It could be said that the logic underlying these essays is the idea of the gap. However, you come back to the concept of fable, as a way of bringing together but not eclipsing the varieties of gap which, you say, characterise cinema and on which you have focused your writings about it. The fable is synonymous with a tension between the story and the constraints imposed on it by causality, and of a set of images that function as a way of suspending the story. But this is not specific to cinema. In your view, to what extent does the idea of the fable seem decisive to the way cinema is thought about today and the contradictions you have identified as having existed from the outset?

JR: The fable is a core idea of the representative regime, and within this regime the fable defines the connection between the incidents that occur in the poem, and the art forms for which the latter acts as the norm. In this way, it is an essential way of measuring to what extent a new art form has adopted such a logic. From the start, cinema was caught between two opposing regimes: on the one hand, in the representative regime, the fable was what set cinema apart from simple popular entertainment, and on the other, it was what separated cinema from the forms of artistic novelty which renounced the fable and which saw in the art of moving images an art form that would be able to transform the will of art into perceptible forms, by dismissing story and character. The history of cinema is, to me, the history of this tension between two logics. This is not just a tension between the story and

the image that arrest it. I attempt to bring out the divided nature of the fable in my analysis: there is a visual plot, which modifies the narrative plot, or there may even be a tension between two visual plots. This is the focus of my analysis of Robert Bresson's *Mouchette*. Shots play two different roles in this film, and this leads to the development of two different visual plots. On the one hand, the shots tend to become emptier, and thus act as a pure sign in an arrangement of images – a glance and a gesture, or a gesture and its outcome. It is thus made to serve the narrative in a story of a hunt, in which the young girl is only prey. On the other hand, the shots become more dense, and serve as a frame for a deviant performance by Mouchette's body: half of her is resistant to the messages and looks of others, and half is inventing deft gestures which form her own performance and which trace a narrative path that is distinct from the hunt, although these strands remain entangled throughout the film.

C: In the prologue to Film Fables, you directly related cinema to a pre-existing conceptual framework, the one concerning the “distribution of the sensible” and the regimes of art, while in your new book, although you return to the questions that you addressed in Film Fables, these are posed more explicitly from within cinematographic experience, which in your view is the experience of the cinephile and the amateur. You refer to a politics of the amateur, rather than that of the philosopher or the cinema critic. Could you explain the nature of your philosophical work on cinema, and how you see the relationship between philosophy and film?

JR: I talk about the politics of the amateur in this book, and this is consistent with the rest of my work: a way of practising philosophy that moves away from the dominant view that philosophy provides the foundation or truth of whatever practice we may be considering, be it politics, an art form or anything else. I have practised a philosophy that questions the division between disciplines and skills, and the division between practices and the metadiscourses that claim to be able to

explain them. In my view there is therefore no single relationship between philosophy and cinema; rather, there is a variety of philosophical nexuses that can arise from various aspects of cinema. For example, in the article on Hitchcock and Vertov, the relationship of cinema to philosophy is implicit in the literature it adapts; in the article on Bresson, it is consistent with the idea of a language of images; in the article on Rossellini, it is the incarnation of thought in the philosopher's body, and so on. None of these nexuses arises from a specific body of knowledge that might be called a theory or philosophy of cinema.

C: You write about the privileged experience that constitutes an encounter with a film. What is it that defines this encounter, which paradoxically manifests itself as a gap, in that it is impossible to identify cinema completely with art, or theory, or politics?

JR: This idea of the encounter should not be seen as religious. This is partly linked to the generation in which I grew up: the status of cinema as an art form, the criteria for judging films, and the hierarchy of directors were all rather uncertain. There was no settled canon. The relationship between artistic and political judgements was also somewhat fluid: the Brechtian paradigm that was dominant at the time was very useful for criticising images in the media, but provided little by way of a framework for judging films as such. Under such conditions, the effect produced by one or more films was often what provided the feeling of the specific nature of cinema, or established a connection between the emotions of cinema and political affects. This situation is linked to a methodological question. Precisely because cinema is not a language, it does not delimit an object of knowledge that arises from a systematic reasoning, learning cinema lends itself particularly to the application of methods of intellectual emancipation: as Jacotot said, "learn something, and relate everything else to it." Cinema is "learned" by widening one's scope of perceptions, affects and meanings, which are built around a set of films.

C: *Your relationship with cinema is built around three gaps: between cinema and art, cinema and politics, and cinema and theory. For you, cinephilia is an illustration of the first type of gap, in that it throws confusion among the accepted judgements about cinema; and at the same time, it enables you to highlight the other two types of gap: if cinephilia calls into question the categories of modernism in art, and introduces a positive understanding of the impure nature of art, it is because it “struggles to comprehend the relationship between the reason underlying its emotions, and the reasons that enable one to adopt a political stance towards world conflicts.” One shifts from an intimate relationship between art and non-art (as determined by the difficulty of identifying criteria which can distinguish one from the other) to the impossibility of reconciling the appropriateness of a director’s gesture with the political and social upheavals in society. What is the relationship between these two types of gap? To what extent has theory shown itself incapable of filling these gaps, and (in your view) to what extent has it become, conversely, the place in which these gaps are rendered manifest?*

JR: In one sense the *cinephile* gap is an extension of an old tradition whereby artists and critics contrast rigorously accurate performances of minor art forms with culturally accepted forms. These gaps, which are a matter of taste, are always difficult to rationalise. But, in this case, this gap in taste arose at the same time as the huge theoretical upheaval that is summarised by the word “structuralism” and which claimed to be able simultaneously to renew the paradigms of thought, science and art. Passion for cinema was therefore swept up in the large-scale rationalisations of the 1960s, when the desire was to bring everything together into a general theory. It was claimed that these theories corresponded to the political agitation of the time, to anti-imperialist and decolonisation movements, to the cultural revolution, and so on. There was a large gap between taste-based judgement, theory and political commitment, which was difficult to fill using the notion of *mise-en-scène* alone, which itself seeks to hide the heterogeneous nature of film, and to associate it

artificially with a single artistic will. Conversely, awareness of this gap could encourage a practice that is very different from “theory”: the object of this practice is understood to be the product of an encounter between heterogeneous logics.

C: There is the encounter with a film, but you also mention the experience of returning to a film, watching a film or films again, either to make comparisons with one’s memories — for example, the “vivid impression” left by a particular shot, or the more general impression left by a work that beguiled us — or to question an interpretation that was provided previously. Could you explain your relationship with cinema when you revisit films in this way, given that re-viewings are transformations, deformations and prolongations by memory and speech of the material object that is film, and lay open the variations in your thoughts within the territory of cinema? In what way has the unstable reconstitution of the perceptions, affections and traces that have been left by the films you have encountered been influenced by changing theoretical, political and philosophical concerns over the course of your life? What is the relationship between films you have watched and re-watched, your thoughts about cinema, and your work in the political and aesthetic fields?

JR: Here we see the conjunction between a structural necessity and a contingent reason. The first is part of the aesthetic regime of art. The idea of art is defined less by a way of doing things than by whether or not one belongs to a universe of sensibility. The codes and norms of the representative regime are replaced by other ways of “proving” art, which consist of a weaving together of memories, stories, commentaries, reproductions, re-showings and reinterpretations. This woven fabric is perpetually shifting: in ancient theatre, Dutch painting, “classical” music, etc., there is a constant metamorphosis of the ways in which these art forms can be perceived. The same is true of cinema. There is a practical problem, however: cinema, which is said to be an art that is technically reproducible, was for a long time an art form whose works were not accessible to methods of reproduction. You

never knew if you would see a film again, and it changed in your memory, and in the texts that discussed it; you were surprised when seeing it again to find that it was very different from how you remembered it, particularly since individual and collective perceptual frameworks had changed in the meantime. This is the idea behind my various visions of *Europa '51* (1952): the representation of the communist people, and of the marginal world on the edges of it; the acts of the well-meaning woman who attempts to navigate between the two; her experience of the brutal speed of the production line; the relationship between what she does and the communist explanation of the world or with psychiatric rationalisations — all of which is amenable not only to judgement but also to completely different interpretations, seen in the light of the time of the cultural revolution, the lessons of the Left, of Deleuze etc.

C: In the essay about Hitchcock and Vertov, these two directors represent two opposing ways of coming after literature. What does this mean in each case? This essay, as the title indicates, travels from Hitchcock to Vertov, i.e. from submitting cinematographic machinery to the mechanism of fiction and the Aristotelian logic, to a cinematographic utopia which denies the possibility of a storytelling art form, and back to Hitchcock via Godard, who, in his Histoire(s) du cinéma (1988-98) seeks, in a Vertovian gesture, to release the shots created by the master of suspense from the plots in which they are trapped. However, in your view, the analogy goes no further. What is the difference between the way in which Vertov dismisses story-telling and the way in which Godard dismantles stories?

JR: Vertov's work is part of the system of historical modernism: eliminating stories and characters, which also means eliminating art itself as a separate practice. His films are supposed to be material performances that link together all other material performances, and these connections are meant to represent communism as a tangible reality. This aesthetic communism, in which all movements are equally

possible, is a way of distancing the model of historical plotting on which the Soviet state found itself dependent: a model of strategic action supported by faith in a historical movement. As for Hitchcock, he used moving images to serve his stories, in other words he relegated machines to the status of instruments of narrative machination. Godard wants to release images in order to allow cinema to achieve its primary vocation and atone for its previous servitude to stories, in which is included the bad side of History in the form of 20th century dictatorships. The fragments that he thus isolates, though they link together as smoothly as those of Vertov, have little in common with the energies that Vertov wished to let loose. These images inhabit an imaginary museum in the style of Malraux, and they are testimonies and shadows that speak to us of the horrors of History.

C: In your analysis of Mouchette (1967), you try to show that Bresson's search for cinematographic purity, detached from references to theatre and literature, from classical theatrical and literary conventions, had precursors in literature and theatre. What are the gaps that are examined here?

JR: Bresson is emblematic of the idea of pure cinema as a language of images. He makes fragmentation into a way of avoiding representation. The paradox is that this idea of a language of images ends up being a "linguistic" theory of montage, in which each shot is an element in a discourse-like statement. From this there results an over-emphasis on causal and organic relationships between elements. And yet this is exactly what is at the heart of the representative system. It is as though the Aristotelian model of the poem as an "arrangement of incidents" were applied to the combination of meaningful elements. Images lose their independence, their own duration and their ability to generate a variety of aleatoric image series. The body of the actor — the model, according to Bresson — is the element that must reintroduce this potentiality. This is accomplished using the gap between the actor's behaviour

and the traditional psychological expressive acting. However, the gap that Bresson distinguishes between “cinematography” and “filmed theatre” was in fact first identified by theatre reformers.

C: In your analysis of The Band Wagon (1953), in the essay “ars gratia artis: la poétique de Minnelli” [“ars gratia artis: the poetics of Minnelli”], to what extent is Minnelli’s cinematography both merged with and separate from that of the modern avant-garde director, with whom you compare him, and who dreams of the end of boundaries between art forms, and the equivalence between great art and popular entertainment?

JR: *The Band Wagon* is an adaptation of a Broadway show. Minnelli came from a show business family, for whom popular entertainment was an art. His work as a director was firmly within this tradition, and this is why he put so much emphasis in this film on the clash between the music hall artist and the avant-garde director. The director proclaims the great avant-garde credo: art is everywhere. What matters is the performance, not whether the subject is noble or lowly. This credo is, above all, a way in which art can give meaning to itself, by showing itself capable of absorbing anything, while remaining equal to itself. The result is a surfeit of the spectacular. Minnelli takes a different route. For one thing, he adheres to genre conventions: a musical comedy, which is primarily a series of musical and dance numbers, and melodrama, which is primarily defined by the emotions its subject can excite. Using this as a starting point, he deploys cinema's ability to displace genre requirements, by incorporating romantic emotion into the musical performance, and choreography and visual fireworks into melodramatic episodes. Art involves metamorphosis, not displaying itself. His films are faithful to MGM’s motto: *ars gratia artis*, or art for art's sake. This is true for “popular” films, even though the term is often reserved for works aimed at connoisseurs.

C: *The essays on Straub and Pedro Costa clearly demonstrate that a film is not a political message and cannot be measured by its theme or by well-intentioned relationships with what is filmed. In your view, where does their cinematic politics reside, exactly?*

JR: Politics in film is not a simple strategy by which awareness and activism are elicited, using well-defined means — as montage was, once upon a time. It is a complex assembly of several things: forms of sensibility, stances adopted towards the current world order, choices about the duration of a shot, where to place the camera, the ways in which the entities being filmed relate to the camera, and also choices about production, funding, equipment and so on. These assemblages give rise to various types of adjustment. Straub and Costa are on the side of the oppressed. They work outside the mainstream, use non-professional actors and make films that are distanced from dominant fictional paradigms. Beyond this point, their methods differ. Straub constructs films around literary texts, but he never “adapts” them. These texts work in two different ways. Initially, they provide, in a Brechtian way, an explanation of or judgement on the characters’ experiences. More and more, though, they specify a particular type of high register or nobility of speech, and the amateur actors, portrayed against a backdrop that illustrates the condensed power of nature, are there to test the ability of common people to utter such speech and rise to its level. This dual purpose is presented in an exemplary way in the extract from *Dalla nube alla resistenza* (1953) on which I comment, in which a shepherd and his son discuss, as they do in Pavese’s story, the reasons for injustice. Pedro Costa dispenses of explanation, and of the heroic aspects of the backdrop and speech. He plunges with his lightweight camera into the life of immigrants and those on the edge of society, and into their relationship with time. He films these people first in shanty towns and then in new social housing. He is committed to showing that these people are able to create ways of speaking and attitudes that are equal to their own fate. He seeks to distil from their lives,

environments and stories the nobility of which all people are capable. The film is in the style of a documentary about their lives, although all the episodes were invented as the film progressed, as a way of condensing their experience and making the film less personal. They use different methods, but in neither case do these film-makers seek to express their politics by denouncing a situation; rather, they demonstrate the capabilities of those who are living it.

QUESTIONS À JACQUES RANCIÈRE

AUTOUR DE SON LIVRE *LES ÉCARTS DU CINÉMA*

Entretien réalisée par

Susana Nascimento Duarte (Université Nouvelle de Lisbonne)

CINEMA (C): Tel que La fable cinématographique... — votre livre précédent totalement dédié au cinéma et qui date de 2001 — Les écarts du cinéma, qui vient de sortir aux Éditions La Fabrique, se compose d'un recueil de textes, autant d'analyses de films qui recourent une approche singulière du cinéma dont, après-coup, le prologue essaye de faire comprendre la logique. Comment a surgi ce livre et comment avez-vous pensé sa structure?

JACQUES RANCIÈRE (JR): Le thème des écarts était déjà au centre du texte qui sert de prologue au livre. Ce texte était une réflexion après-coup sur *La fable cinématographique* qui déplaçait l'axe de la réflexion. *La fable* pensait le cinéma à travers la tension entre deux régimes de l'art: le régime esthétique, avec la nouveauté d'une écriture du mouvement et le rêve d'une langue des images; le régime représentatif avec le retour en force, au cinéma, d'un art des histoires et des distinctions de genres qui étaient répudiés dans les anciens arts nobles. La problématique des écarts, elle, est davantage une réflexion sur ma propre approche du cinéma et sur ce qu'elle implique comme conception du cinéma en tant qu'objet de savoir et de discours. Elle met en question l'idée du cinéma comme un art qui relèverait d'une théorie propre et d'un savoir spécialisé, en marquant la pluralité des pratiques et des formes d'expérience unifiées sous ce nom. A partir de là, j'ai été amené à regrouper des textes que j'avais pu écrire depuis *La fable* du point de vue des écarts qui, en tirant le cinéma hors de lui-même, révèlent son hétérogénéité interne : écarts du cinéma avec la littérature qui mettent en question l'idée d'une

langue du cinéma, transformation des politiques des cinéastes qui sont aussi des tensions entre le cinéma et le paradigme théâtral, rapports paradoxaux du divertissement et de l'art pour l'art, etc. Il s'agit à chaque fois de montrer comment un art est traversé par d'autres arts, impossible à séparer des transformations qui le mettent hors de lui-même, inassignable à un savoir spécialisé.

C: On peut dire que la logique d'ensemble qui préside à ces essais est déterminée par la notion d'écart. Cependant c'est encore à l'idée de fable que vous revenez comme façon de réunir, sans les subsumer, tous les écarts qui, selon vous, font l'existence du cinéma et au sein desquels vous avez placé vos efforts d'écriture sur lui. La fable est synonyme d'une tension entre l'histoire et ses contraintes de causalité et la proposition d'images qui fonctionnent comme suspension de l'histoire. Or cela n'est pas spécifique du cinéma. En quoi la notion de fable vous semble-t-elle décisive pour penser le cinéma aujourd'hui et les contradictions qui vous y repérez depuis l'origine?

JR: La notion de fable est une notion centrale de la logique représentative au sein de laquelle elle définit la connexion des actions qui définit le poème et, à sa suite, les arts auxquels il sert de norme. Elle est de ce fait essentielle pour mesurer la façon dont une forme d'art nouvelle se situe par rapport à cette logique. Le cinéma a été d'emblée pris entre deux logiques opposées : d'un côté, selon la logique représentative, la fable était ce qui le distinguait de la simple attraction populaire. De l'autre, elle le séparait des formes de nouveauté artistique qui répudiaient la fable et qui voyaient dans l'art des images en mouvement l'art susceptible de réaliser directement la volonté d'art dans des formes sensibles, en congédiant histoires et personnages. L'histoire du cinéma est pour moi celle de cette tension entre deux logiques. Cette tension n'est pas simplement entre l'histoire et l'image qui l'arrêterait. Ce que j'essaie de mettre en relief dans mes analyses, c'est un dédoublement de la fable: il y a une intrigue visuelle qui vient altérer l'intrigue

narrative ou même une tension entre deux intrigues visuelles. C'est ce que j'analyse dans la *Mouchette* de Robert Bresson. Le plan y joue deux rôles différents qui induisent deux intrigues visuelles différentes. D'un côté il tend à s'évider pour jouer le rôle d'un pur signe dans un enchaînement- un regard et un geste ou un geste et son résultat. Il se met ainsi au service narratif d'une histoire de traque dans laquelle l'adolescente n'est qu'une proie. De l'autre, il se densifie en servant de cadre à une performance déviante du corps de Mouchette : moitié résistance aux messages et regards des autres, moitié invention de gestes habiles qui sont sa performance propre et définissent une ligne narrative différenciée de celle de la traque, même si l'une et l'autre restent entrelacées jusqu'au bout.

C: Dans le prologue de La fable cinématographique... le cinéma était plus directement mis en rapport avec un cadre conceptuel préexistant, celui qui concernait le partage du sensible et les régimes de l'art, tandis que dans ce livre, s'il y a un retour à des questions que traversaient déjà La fable cinématographique..., elles sont reprises plus explicitement de l'intérieur de l'expérience cinématographique, qui est pour vous celle du cinéphile et de l'amateur — vous vous référez à une politique de l'amateur -, plutôt que celle du philosophe ou du critique de cinéma... Voulez-vous préciser la nature de votre travail philosophique par rapport au cinéma, et comment envisagez-vous les rapports entre philosophie et cinéma?

JR: La politique de l'amateur dont je parle dans ce livre entre en consonance avec l'ensemble de mon travail: une pratique de la philosophie qui s'écarte de la conception dominante d'une philosophie qui donnerait le fondement ou la vérité de telle ou telle pratique — politique, artistique ou autre. J'ai pratiqué au contraire une philosophie qui remet en question le partage des disciplines et des compétences, en même temps que le partage entre les pratiques et les métadiscours qui prétendent en rendre raison. Il n'y a donc pas pour moi *un* rapport entre philosophie et cinéma mais divers nœud philosophiques qui peuvent être constitués à partir de tel ou tel

des aspects du cinéma: par exemple, dans l'article sur Hitchcock et Vertov, le rapport du cinéma à la philosophie est implicite de la littérature qu'il adapte; dans celui sur Bresson, de la consistance de l'idée d'une langue des images; dans celui sur Rossellini, de l'incarnation de la pensée dans un corps du philosophe, etc. Aucun de ces nœuds ne relève d'un savoir spécifique qui s'appellerait théorie ou philosophie du cinéma.

C: Vous parlez du privilège qui a pour vous la rencontre avec un film. Qu'est-ce qui définit cette rencontre, qui se donne paradoxalement sous le signe de l'écart, i.e., dans l'impossibilité d'identifier totalement le cinéma soit à l'art, soit à la théorie, soit à la politique?

JR: Il ne faut pas donner un caractère trop religieux à cette idée de rencontre. C'est quelque chose qui est en partie lié à ma génération: j'ai grandi dans un monde où le statut du cinéma comme art, les critères d'appréciation des films, la hiérarchie des metteurs en scène, tout cela était mal assuré. Il n'y avait pas de canon constitué. Et les rapports entre jugements artistiques et jugements politiques étaient eux-mêmes flottants: la grille brechtienne qui était alors dominante servait très bien pour critiquer les images médiatiques mais elle ne donnait guère de repères pour juger les films comme tels. Dans ces conditions, c'était l'effet produit par un ou des films qui servait souvent à donner le sentiment d'un propre du cinéma ou à établir une connexion entre les émotions du cinéma et les affects politiques. Cette situation de fait rejoint une question de méthode. Précisément parce que le cinéma n'est pas un langage, qu'il ne définit pas un objet de savoir relevant d'un ordre systématique de raisons, son apprentissage se prête particulièrement à l'application de la méthode d'émancipation intellectuelle: «apprendre quelque chose et y rapporter tout le reste.» On «apprend» le cinéma en élargissant le cercle de perceptions, d'affects et de significations construit autour de quelques films.

C: C'est au sein de trois écarts qui s'est déployé votre rapport au cinéma : entre cinéma et art, cinéma et politique, cinéma et théorie. La cinéphilie, en brouillant les discernements admis sur le cinéma, incarne pour vous le premier de ces écarts, l'écart entre cinéma et art; en même temps, elle vous permet aussi de rendre sensible les deux autres écarts: si la cinéphilie met en cause les catégories du modernisme artistique et introduit selon vous la compréhension positive de l'impureté de l'art, c'est aussi à cause «de sa difficulté à penser le rapport entre la raison de ses émotions et les raisons qui permettaient de s'orienter politiquement dans les conflits du monde.» Quel rapport entre ces deux écarts initialement vécus au sein de la cinéphilie, où l'on passe d'une relation intime entre art et non-art — déterminé par la difficulté à saisir les critères qui permettraient de distinguer l'un de l'autre — à l'impossibilité de concilier la justesse d'un geste de mise en scène avec les affaires politiques et sociaux qui bouleversent la société? Dans quelle mesure la théorie se montre-t-elle incapable de résoudre ces écarts, et devient, pour vous, à l'inverse, le lieu qui les rend manifestes?

JR: En un sens l'écart cinéphilique prolongeait une vieille tradition, celle des artistes et critiques opposant les performances exactes des arts mineurs aux légitimités culturelles constituées. Ces écarts qui appartiennent au goût ont toujours de la peine à se rationaliser. Mais, en la circonstance, cet écart du goût est venu coïncider avec le grand bouleversement théorique que résume le mot de structuralisme et qui prétendait renouveler en même temps les paradigmes de la pensée, de la science et de l'art. La passion cinéphilique s'est donc trouvée prise dans les grandes rationalisations des années 1960 qui voulaient tout unifier dans une théorie générale. Et ces théories elles-mêmes prétendaient correspondre à l'effervescence politique du temps, aux mouvements anti-impérialistes et décolonisateurs, à la révolution culturelle, etc. Il y avait effectivement un grand écart entre jugement de goût, théorie et engagement politique, difficile à combler avec la seule notion de mise en scène qui cherche elle-même à dissimuler l'hétérogénéité du

produit filmique, à le rattacher artificiellement à une volonté artistique unique. A l'inverse la conscience de cet écart pouvait effectivement nourrir une pratique tout autre de la «théorie,» une pratique qui saisisse son objet comme le produit d'une rencontre entre des logiques hétérogènes.

C: Il y a la rencontre avec un film, mais vous faites aussi mention à l'expérience d'y retourner, de revoir un film ou plusieurs films soit pour les comparer aux souvenirs qu'on en a — par exemple, «l'impression fulgurante» laissée par un plan ou celle plus générique laissée par une œuvre qui nous a séduit -, soit pour mettre en cause une interprétation donnée antérieurement. Pouvez-vous expliciter votre rapport au cinéma à partir de ces retours, qui marquent autant de transformations, déformations et prolongements de l'objet matériel film par le souvenir et la parole, et donnent à voir les variations de votre pensée à l'intérieur du territoire du cinéma? De quelle façon la recomposition instable des perceptions, affections et traces laissées par les films rencontrés, a été influencée par le changement de soucis théoriques, politiques et philosophiques le long des divers moments de votre vie? Quel rapport entre les films vus et revus, la pensée du cinéma, et votre travail dans le champ politique et esthétique?

JR: Il y a là la conjonction entre une nécessité structurelle et une raison contingente. La première relève de la logique du régime esthétique de l'art. La notion d'art s'y définit moins par un savoir-faire que par l'appartenance à un univers sensible. Les codes et les normes de la logique représentative y sont remplacés par un autre type de «preuve» de l'art constitué par le tissu des souvenirs, récits, commentaires, reproductions, reprises et réinterprétations. Ce tissu est ainsi en perpétuel mouvement: le théâtre antique, la peinture hollandaise, la musique «classique,» etc. y vivent de la métamorphose constante des modes de perception dans lesquels ils peuvent entrer. Il en va de même pour le cinéma. Mais il y a un problème pratique: le cinéma, qu'on dit être un art de la reproductibilité

technique a longtemps été un art où les œuvres n'étaient pas accessibles par les voies de la reproduction. On ne savait pas si on reverrait jamais un film, il se transformait dans votre souvenir, dans les textes qui en parlaient; vous étiez surpris à le revoir très différent de ce que vous aviez en tête, d'autant plus que les cadres de la perception individuelle et collective avaient changé entre temps. C'est ce que j'ai évoqué à propos de mes différentes visions d'*Europa '51* (1952): la représentation du peuple communiste, celle du monde marginal qui le borde, les gestes de la femme de bonne volonté qui essaie de naviguer entre l'un et l'autre, son regard sur la vitesse brutale de la chaîne, le rapport de sa démarche avec l'explication communiste du monde ou avec les rationalisations psychiatriques, tout cela était susceptible pas seulement de jugements mais aussi de regards complètement différents à l'époque de la Révolution culturelle, à celle des leçons du gauchisme, à celle de Deleuze, etc..

C: Dans l'essai sur Hitchcock et Vertov, les deux metteurs en scène désignent deux façons antagonistes de venir après la littérature. Qu'est-ce que cela veut dire dans un cas et dans l'autre? L'essai en question, comme l'indique le titre même, va de Hitchcock à Vertov, i.e., de la soumission de la machine cinématographique à la machinerie fictionnelle et sa logique aristotélicienne jusqu'à l'utopie cinématographique du refus de l'art qui raconte des histoires, et revient à Hitchcock à travers Godard qui justement dans les Histoire(s) du cinéma (1988-98) cherche à libérer, d'un geste vertovien, les plans du maître du suspense des intrigues dans lesquelles ils sont piégés... Cependant, selon vous, l'analogie s'arrête là. Qu'est-ce qui distingue la façon de congédier les histoires de Vertov de celle de les défaire de Godard?

JR: Le projet de Vertov appartient à la logique du modernisme historique : supprimer les histoires et les personnages, ce qui veut dire aussi : supprimer l'art lui-même comme pratique séparée. Ses films sont censés être des performances

matérielles reliant toutes les performances matérielles dont la connexion constitue le communisme comme réalité sensible. Ce communisme esthétique de la compossibilité de tous les mouvements est une façon de mettre à distance le modèle d'intrigue historique dont l'Etat soviétique se trouvait dépendant : le modèle de l'action stratégique appuyé sur la foi en un mouvement de l'Histoire. Hitchcock, lui, remet le mouvement des images au service des histoires, c'est-à-dire aussi qu'il ramène les machines à leur statut d'instruments de machinations narratives. Godard veut libérer les images pour rendre le cinéma à sa vocation première et expier sa mise au service des histoires, c'est-à-dire aussi de la mauvaise Histoire, celle des dictatures du XXe siècle. Mais les fragments qu'il isole ainsi, même s'ils s'enchaînent aussi vite que ceux de Vertov, n'ont plus rien à voir avec ces énergies que Vertov voulait déchaîner. Ce sont des images, habitantes d'un musée imaginaire à la Malraux et ce sont des témoignages, des ombres qui nous parlent des enfers de l'Histoire.

C: De quel(s) écart(s) parle-t-on dans votre analyse de Mouchette (1967), où vous essayez de montrer que la recherche par Bresson d'une pureté cinématographique détachée des références au théâtre et à la littérature, des conventions théâtrales et littéraires classiques, avaient déjà des précurseurs justement dans la littérature et le théâtre?

JR: Bresson est emblématique d'une idée de la pureté du cinéma comme langue des images. Et il fait de la fragmentation le moyen d'éviter la représentation. Le paradoxe est que cette idée d'une langue des images aboutit à une théorie «linguistique» du montage où chaque plan est supposé être l'élément d'une articulation de type discursif. Il en résulte une surenchère sur la liaison causale et organique des éléments. Or celle-ci est justement le cœur de la logique représentative. C'est comme si le modèle aristotélicien du poème comme «arrangement d'actions» était ramené au plan même de la combinaison des éléments signifiants. L'image y perd son indépendance, sa durée propre et sa

capacité d'engendrer diverses séries aléatoires. C'est alors le corps de l'acteur — du modèle, dit Bresson — qui doit réintroduire cette potentialité. Il le fait par son écart avec le jeu expressif psychologique traditionnel. Mais cet écart par lequel Bresson veut distinguer le «cinématographe» du «théâtre filmé,» ce sont en fait les réformateurs du théâtre qui l'avaient initiée.

C: En quoi le geste cinématographique de Minnelli se confond et se sépare simultanément, dans votre analyse de The Band Wagon (Tous en scène!, 1953), dans le texte «ars gratia artis: la poésie de Minnelli,» du geste du metteur en scène moderne d'avant-garde, avec lequel vous le comparez, qui rêve de la dissolution des frontières entre les arts, de l'équivalence du grand art et des spectacles populaires de divertissement?

JR: *The Band Wagon* est une adaptation d'un spectacle de Broadway. Minnelli appartenait, lui-même, à une famille de gens du spectacle, de gens pour qui le divertissement populaire est un art. Et il inscrit son travail de metteur en scène dans cette continuité. C'est ce qui lui fait donner tout son relief dans ce film à la confrontation entre l'artiste de music-hall et le metteur en scène d'avant-garde. Ce dernier professe le grand credo avant-gardiste: l'art est partout. Il est affaire de performances et non de sujets nobles ou bas. Mais ce credo est d'abord une manière pour l'art de se signifier lui-même en se montrant capable de tout absorber et de rester toujours égal à lui-même. Le résultat en est une surcharge dans le spectaculaire. Minnelli procède différemment. D'un côté, il suit la logique des genres: la comédie musicale qui est d'abord une question de numéros musicaux et chorégraphiques ou le mélodrame qui se définit d'abord par les émotions que son sujet peut produire. Mais, à partir de là, il met en œuvre la capacité qu'a le cinéma de déplacer la logique des genres en incluant l'émotion sentimentale dans la performance et la chorégraphie ou le feu d'artifice visuel dans l'épisode mélodramatique. L'art est affaire de métamorphose et non d'auto-démonstration. En

cela ses films sont bien fidèles à la devise de la MGM : *ars gratia artis*, l'art pour l'art. Celui-ci vaut pour le film «populaire» alors qu'on veut toujours le réserver à l'œuvre pour esthètes.

C: Les essais sur les Straub et Pedro Costa rendent évident qu'un film n'est pas un message politique et ne se mesure pas à son thème ni à des rapports bien intentionnés concernant ce qui est filmé. Par où passe exactement pour vous leur politique du cinéma?

JR: La politique des films n'est pas une stratégie univoque pour produire des effets de conscientisation ou de mobilisation, passant par des moyens bien définis – comme le montage le fut un temps. C'est un assemblage complexe de plusieurs choses: des formes de sensibilité, des partis pris par rapport à l'ordre du monde, des choix concernant la durée du plan, l'endroit où mettre la caméra, la manière dont les corps filmés se rapportent à elle, mais aussi des choix de production, de financement, de matériel, etc. Ces assemblages donnent lieu à divers types d'ajustement. Straub et Costa sont tous deux du côté des opprimés. Tous deux travaillent en dehors du circuit dominant, utilisent des acteurs non-professionnels et font des films en écart avec les logiques fictionnelles dominantes. A partir de là les méthodes diffèrent. Straub construit des films autour de textes littéraires sans jamais les «adapter.» Ces textes fonctionnent de deux manières différentes. Au départ, ils fournissaient, à la manière brechtienne, une explication ou un jugement sur ce que vivaient les personnages. Mais, de plus en plus, ils définissent une certaine altitude ou noblesse de la parole, et les acteurs amateurs, campés dans un décor qui condense les puissances de la nature, sont là pour tester la capacité de l'homme du peuple d'énoncer cette parole, de se tenir à sa hauteur. Cette dualité est exemplairement présente dans l'extrait de *Dalla nube alla resistenza* (*De la nuée à la résistance*, 1979) que je commente où un berger et son fils discutent, en suivant Pavese, sur les raisons de l'injustice. Pedro Costa, lui, évacue entièrement

l'explication et aussi l'aspect héroïque du décor et de la parole. Il s'enfonce avec sa caméra légère dans le cadre de vie et dans la temporalité des immigrants ou marginaux qu'il filme, d'abord dans le bidonville puis dans les nouveaux logements sociaux. Il s'attache à faire apparaître leur capacité propre à créer une formulation et une attitude qui soit à la hauteur de leur destin. La noblesse dont tous sont capables, il cherche à l'extraire directement de leur vie, de leur décor et de leur histoire. Le film a l'air d'un documentaire sur leur vie alors que tous les épisodes en sont en fait inventés au fur et à mesure du travail comme une forme de condensation et d'impersonnalisation de leur expérience. Les méthodes diffèrent, mais, dans les deux cas, ce qui est au centre de la politique des cinéastes, c'est non pas la dénonciation d'une situation mais la mise en évidence de la capacité de ceux qui la vivent.

FILM-PHILOSOPHY CONFERENCE
(LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY, 6-8 JULY 2011)

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Towards the end of *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought*, it seems somewhat surprising that George Lakoff and Mark Johnson should, after several hundred pages of cognitive science and its potential effects on linguistics and analytic philosophy, invoke the work of Michel Foucault with regard to their project. And yet, Foucault it is whose name appears in their argument. The Frenchman has, they say, been their forerunner in arguing throughout his works that

we are greatly constrained in the way we can think. The cognitive unconscious is a principal locus of power in the Foucaultian sense, power over how we can think and how we can conceive of the world. Our unconscious conceptual systems, which structure the cognitive unconscious, can limit how we can think and guarantee that we could not possibly have the kind of autonomy that Kant ascribed to us.¹

Now, although Lakoff and Johnson's work perhaps sits uneasily within many philosophers' definitions of what philosophy is, or, perhaps better, what philosophy is supposed to do, their work at the very least points to an attempt to find common ground between philosophy and cognitive science.

What is interesting, though, is that in doing this Lakoff and Johnson come briefly to validate "continental" philosophy, as embodied here in the work of Michel

Foucault. That is, rather than simply finding common ground for cognitive science and philosophy in its “analytic” mode, they also find common ground for these two *and* analytic philosophy’s “other,” the “continental” work of Foucault et al. — a “philosophy” that some philosophers prefer to term “theory” so as to avoid confusion between the supposedly rigorous, analytic work that they do and the ostensibly more speculative work of Foucault and his ilk.

At the risk of over-generalising, a reason for continental philosophy to seem speculative is because it accepts — by virtue of too much exposure to psychoanalysis? — the importance of the unconscious in human behaviour and, indeed, in human understanding. Since the unconscious is, well, unconscious, you have to speculate about it since it is invisible and/or inaccessible. Conversely, analytic philosophy, in insisting that there should be no speculation but instead the application of rigorous analytical methods, by and large is forced to, or simply does, exclude the unconscious from thought, which in turn leads to a system that excludes the body in favour of an autonomous mind of the kind ascribed above by Lakoff and Johnson to Kantian philosophy.

Lakoff and Johnson’s self-imposed task, then, has been to show that one cannot do without the unconscious at any level of human behaviour, including what we take to be our highest abilities, including rational conscious analysis. Even Kant’s philosophy is unwittingly built upon the kind of spatial and temporal metaphors that humans derive from their physical/embodied existence in the world. Every which way we look at it, Lakoff and Johnson seem to say, we cannot escape the fact that we have bodies and without them there is no rational consciousness. Language? Embodied. Logic? Embodied. Philosophy? Embodied!

The reason for this foray into the work of Lakoff and Johnson is because a common discussion at the fourth annual Film-Philosophy Conference seemed to be the perennial question of whether film can “do” philosophy. And in considering the

various views put forward in answer to this question, it seems apparent that the answer depends on what you believe philosophy is, or what it is supposed to do.

Now, let us make no bones about it. The Film-Philosophy Conference of 2011 seemed predominantly to be an enclave for film scholars whose “philosophical” bent is continental to say the least, and “analytics” like Gregory Currie, who gave an important keynote address, seemed somewhat outnumbered. As such, one might presuppose (almost certainly unfairly) that the majority of attendees would argue for film’s ability to “do” philosophy: after Deleuze and others, film offers up to us new concepts that encourage us to think (for ourselves), and original thought, together with the creation of concepts, is a/the fundament of philosophy.

However, others might continue to see philosophy as a purely rational exercise in proving the correctness of certain axioms, a view seemingly shared at this conference by Veronika Reichl² and Igal Bursztyn,³ among others. As such, philosophy relies upon language and while film might feature human figures that speak in language, film itself is not a language. Currie himself has argued that cinema is not and cannot be a language, predominantly because it cannot *mean* in the same way that language means: film is always ambiguous or reliant upon the context of a particular image (that context being the other images that precede and follow it, as well as the techniques used to link those images together, such as fades, dissolves, and cuts) in order for a meaning to emerge. A word, meanwhile, has an *acontextual* meaning.⁴ Table means table regardless of the words that surround it, while the “meaning” of a close-up only really comes into being when we understand why it is there through the other images that surround it.

My argument here is not that either conception of philosophy is right or wrong, but a basis for the difference between the two seems to be that the former accepts the role of the unconscious in thought while the latter does not. That is, if for the “continentalist” philosophy is original thought and the creation of new concepts,

then consciousness must always in this model be brushing up against its dark other, the unconscious, in order for novelty to emerge into consciousness at all.

Meanwhile, the latter may well accept that there is an unconscious part of the mind, but it is entirely inaccessible, indeed inadmissible in thought, which remains the realm of the conscious mind alone.

What work by Lakoff and Johnson and other pioneers of the cognitive trend seems to suggest, though, is that the boundary between conscious and unconscious thought is necessarily blurred, not least because so many of our conscious thoughts are based unthinkingly upon the way in which we orient ourselves bodily and experientially in the world.

It may be here that we are not just dealing with different definitions of philosophy but, more particularly, with different definitions of the unconscious. Again without wishing to overgeneralise, the “analytic” philosopher sees the unconscious as never-to-be-made conscious, and for beneficial reasons, since if ever we did, for example, have consciously to control our heartbeat and body temperature, then we would probably perish rather rapidly because our body is simply better at doing that kind of stuff than our mind is. Meanwhile, the “continental” philosopher might term unconscious simply that which is “unthinking” in our behaviour (for example, an uncritical enjoyment of action films) — and that to make us think critically about such things is “a good thing.”

Given the prominent role that the brain plays in homeostasis, however, it might yet prove hard to separate the unconscious from the unthinking in as clear-cut a manner as all that; the body does not “look after itself” without input from the brain, and the mind is not separate from the body. If we cannot tell where one ends and the other begins, perhaps this is because they are on a(n indivisible?) continuum.

If the boundary between mind and body has been (definitively?) blurred by the cognitive turn, then, so too has the boundary between mind, body and world, because our bodies are distinctly *in* (or with) the world. In other words, the continuum does not end at the body, but instead we have a world-body-mind continuum the beginning and ending of which it is similarly hard for us to recognise/assign.

It is perhaps for this reason, then, that many papers at the 2011 Film-Philosophy Conference took in phenomenological approaches to cinema as part of their outlook. For, if the world forms part of a continuum with body and mind, then cinema, being in the world, forms not just part of that continuum, but cinema, bearing such a close resemblance to that world, may in fact form an important part of that continuum. That is, what unthinkingly we see in the world may be viewed unthinkingly because films show but do not encourage us analytically to contemplate such things, and what we rethink, or analyse in the world may be as a result of film's ability to show that which unthinkingly we normally observe in a manner that brings us to thought.

In the opening keynote address, for example, Lucy Bolton⁵ provided an engaging phenomenology of women's laughter, which took in many examples from a wide variety of films, exploring how laughter can function as an indicator of various characteristics (a giggle can signify immaturity, a cackle can signify a threat, etc.). The talk focused in particular on the ability for laughter to forge communities, as per Marleen Gorris' film, *De Stilte rond Christine M. (A Question of Silence, 1982)*, in which a group of previously unconnected women spontaneously group together to murder the male owner of a women's fashion boutique. Charged with murder, the women, together with a female psychiatrist who pronounces the women sane, and various other women present in court as witnesses to the trial, begin to laugh when a male prosecutor suggests that the crime had nothing to do with the sex of the

perpetrators, nor the sex of the victim, nor the victim's job. All of the women laugh hysterically before being dismissed from court. In Bolton's eyes, this is evidence of laughter signifying that which language cannot express, an expression of thoughts and feelings that defy the male-dominated dialogue of the Law — which can then feed back into the audience watching the film. Here, then, is a "rationalization" of an irrational phenomenon, the bringing into conscious thought of an aspect of cinema perhaps too often viewed unthinkingly. And in a world in which gendered male rationality holds power, laughter is, as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri suggest, a vital means of joyful resistance.⁶

The phenomenological approach then extended into other papers, not least through discussions of Martin Heidegger. In an instructive panel on film-phenomenology, Kate Ince⁷ looked at feminist phenomenology in the films of Agnès Varda, arguing that Varda's emphasis on embodiment suggests an "enworldedness" that might, similar to Bolton's take on female laughter, have feminist political potential. Meanwhile, Heidegger featured prominently in presentations by Farhad Sulliman Khoyratty⁸ and Suzie Mei Gorodi.⁹

The former of these involved a fascinating overview of cinema in Mauritius, which then posited the Mauritian Muslim context as grounds for viewing the "fallen" (and Muslim) courtesan films of Bollywood cinema "against the grain," as it were. That is, the Mauritian context of viewing Bollywood films featuring "fallen" Muslim courtesans, such as Amiran (Rekha) in Muzaffar Ali's *Umrao Jaan* (1981), brings about a sense of the courtesan as "present-at-hand," wherein the "typical" meaning (or her being "ready-to-hand") is subverted and she is considered for what she is, and can be conceptualised anew rather than read through pre-existing paradigms.

Gorodi, meanwhile, looked at Gary Hill's video *Blind Spot* (2003), in which a man secretly caught on camera leaving his house comes to realise that he is being

filmed and so offers to the camera “the bird” (or what legal scholar Ira P. Robbins refers to as *digitus impudicus*¹⁰). Starting out as a strobing flicker film, in that every frame of action is matched by a darkened frame, the film quickly slows such that each frame becomes increasingly drawn out, and for each duration of a frame’s stillness, an equal duration of blackness is added. In a manner akin to Khoyratty’s paper, Gorodi argued that this confrontation with stillness and darkness (in which we become uncertain as to whether each new onset of darkness signals the end of the film or not), makes us “see,” or “reveals,” the encounter with the film. That is, we do not just watch *Blind Spot* as we do a narrative film — a guy comes out of a doorway, spots that he is being filmed and offers his middle finger in anger. Instead we have an (embodied) encounter with the film that demands thought.

Finally, it was the phenomenological tradition that informed the approach to genre offered by Havi Carel and Greg Tuck in their plenary discussion.¹¹ In their consideration of genre and style, Carel and Tuck took the concept of *Stiftung*, or institution, as elaborated in the works of Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, to argue that “genres are not simply different narrative modes, but self-reflexive manifestations of the inherent creative potential of instituted forms.” That is, genre is dynamic in that films always are arising that expand or modify a genre’s tenets, even if a genre has at its core several key and constant-seeming features, as per *Stiftung*.

The ramifications of the embodied mind can also be seen in the turn towards animals as a subject of research. If human minds are embodied and human bodies are enworlded, then what precisely is the difference between humans and animals? The plenary panel presented by André Dias,¹² Catherine Wheatley¹³ and John Mullarkey¹⁴ all looked at animals and /in film in their own way: Dias considered Frederick Wiseman’s *Primate* (1974) as an example of a film in which the images, featuring human experimentation on a gibbon, are more powerful /philosophical

than any verbal consideration of the images can be; Wheatley looked at the way in which “animal thinking” has long been considered a part of theological considerations, which in turn are beginning to find their way into continental philosophy; and Mullarkey looked at the work of animal scientist Temple Grandin to argue that humans have complex responses to phenomena that are not just Pavlovian/ physical, nor uniquely intellectual, but somewhere between or combining both of these: affective thoughts, which are “all the more potent because they are imagistic.” In other words, all three papers in the panel in their own way sought to suggest that not only might we have more in common with animals than we think, but that images can also induce modes of thought that combine both the “animal” and the “higher” functions of human thought.

This logic of questioning the boundary between human and non-human and between human and world also informed the illuminating talk given by Felicity Colman on Henri Bergson and cinema.¹⁵ Taking as her point of initiation a startling sequence featuring penguins irrationally walking not to water but across the Antarctic and to their doom in Werner Herzog’s *Encounters at the End of the World* (2007), Colman offered up an intriguing account of the role of Bergson in Gilles Deleuze’s writings on cinema, before looking at how the evolution of cinema has “altered the terms of perceptual reality.”

Incidentally, we might say that a similar logic of animals and enworldedness seemed to inform Richard Ashrowan’s talk on alchemical transformation and the filmic process,¹⁶ as well as his film/moving image installation, *Alchemist* (2010), which also played as part of the conference. In that film, we see performance artists and latter day shaman “becoming” with the landscape that surrounds them in the film, as untranslated Latin texts regarding alchemy are read — but not explained. Rather than a “rational” / linguistic relation, then, the film seemed to want to connect with viewers on a more physical level — involving the sort of “haptic”

imagery that Kathleen Scott also explored in relation to Lars von Trier's *Antichrist* (2009) during the conference.¹⁷

Perhaps it was also a sense of being in the world that informed David Martin-Jones' final plenary session on Deleuze's cinema books and how their applicability to contemporary filmmaking depends upon our ability to study and to analyse films in the context of their production and distribution histories, as well as in terms of our understanding the stories that they tell. Recapping and expanding upon work from his illuminating *Deleuze and World Cinemas*,¹⁸ Martin-Jones looked at Nelson Pereira dos Santos' *Como era gostoso o meu francês* (*How Tasty was my Little Frenchman*, 1971), a film that tells the story of a Frenchman taken captive by the Tupinambá tribe in Brazil in 1594 and "raised" to be eaten in a cannibal ceremony.¹⁹ Martin-Jones argued that a reading of the film must take into account Latin American discourses (and not just continental philosophy), as well as global developments that have helped to make clear the Eurocentric nature of Deleuze's approach to cinema.

Sadly, to make explicit reference to the above is to overlook other presentations on a wide variety of topics by established and up-and-coming scholars, the pick of which might include Sarah Forgacs' discussion of Catherine Breillat's *Romance* (1999) and its relationship to the body,²⁰ David H. Fleming's expansive consideration of the cyberstar,²¹ Carly Lane's discussion of risk in Andrea Arnold's *Red Road* (2006),²² and talks on Deleuze and cinema by Matthew Holtmeier (on Deleuze and hodology²³), by Richard Rushton (on Deleuze and politics²⁴), and by Dennis Rothermel (Deleuze and cinematic thinking²⁵). This, in turn, is to overlook many of the talks that I could not attend — a hazard of any contemporary conference of notable size and in which panels run in parallel.

However, in relation to summarising the conference itself, I would like to end by mentioning Gregory Currie's challenging keynote on film images and

representation.²⁶ Currie argued convincingly that images are not objective, but that what film depicts is objective (which is not to say real). Point of view shots are perhaps an anomaly, but Currie foreclosed this contention by saying that these are objective renderings of how a character sees the objective world. In other words, according to Currie, point of view is not “on the screen” but rather “in the mind of the viewer.” To support Currie’s case, cognitive research suggests that ‘untrained’ spectators seem to have trouble “understanding” point of view shots more than they do understanding, say, shot-reverse shot sequences.²⁷ If this is the case, the shot itself does not have “point of view-ness,” and is not therefore subjective, but whatever subjectivity the shot supposedly portrays is the “invention” of the spectator.

However, Currie’s argument seemed to have trouble dealing with emotions when the issue was raised by Sarah Dillon. That is to say, if I see a shot of a sad person, I see an objective shot of a sad person, but it is not just in me, the viewer, that this sadness resides. The sadness is also the subjective state of the person I am seeing. In other words, cinema might be able to convey to us not just objective, but also subjective states.

This is no true criticism of Currie, who makes a compelling case, who should be lauded for pursuing the issue (not least in the face of a “continental”-friendly crowd), and who might, for example, find some support from research into mirror neurons.²⁸ The mirror neuron system, which is the capacity for neurons in the brain of an observing human to fire that are the same as those of the observed conspecifics carrying out certain similar tasks and/or conveying similar emotions, might suggest that the emotion is not, or at least not simply, a subjective state.

I shall be interested to see if/ what Currie does publish with regard to this debate, not least because this will allow me better to understand what he meant, in contrast to my imperfect understanding of his case in the arena of live discussion. But as it stands it seems to me that at least one thing is missing from his argument,

whichever way we look at it. If a shot in cinema can convey a subjective state, and if the understanding of subjective states is therefore not uniquely in the mind of the spectator, then the spectator is always only in relation to the image — which in turn means that the spectator is enworlded. And if mirror neurons in part did explain our ability to feel emotions based upon not subjective but purely objective phenomena (the appearance of the other human in the image that we are observing), then the functioning of mirror neurons still suggests a relationship with the image, as well as with the human in the image, a form of intersubjectivity that similarly extends into a sense of enworldedness (and embodiment if we accept that mirror neurons fire unconsciously and yet affect our conscious interpretation of/response to the image of the sad person).

If, as per Lakoff and Johnson's reading of Foucault, we are "greatly constrained in the way that we think," not least by our bodies, then stretching our minds is no meagre pastime — and Currie certainly encouraged us to do this. However, if our bodies constrain our thoughts, then perhaps it is also by putting our bodies to the test and finding out what they can do, not least what they can do in relation to/with the world and the technologies, including cinema, that surround us, that we can reach original thought. A mind-body parallelism would suggest that to stretch the body is to stretch the mind. Perhaps in bringing the "analytic" and the "continental" into debate, the fourth Film-Philosophy Conference, brilliantly organised by David Sorfa of Liverpool John Moores University and his team, will have helped us move towards a more holistic understanding of both film and philosophy.

NOTES

1. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 537.

2. Veronika Reichl, "Theoretical Thinking through Animated Film" (paper delivered at the Fourth Annual Film-Philosophy Conference, Liverpool, UK, 6 July 2011).
3. Igal Bursztyn, "Applying Philosophy to Cinema: Spinoza and Maimonides" (paper delivered at the Fourth Annual Film-Philosophy Conference, Liverpool, UK, 6 July 2011).
4. See Gregory Currie, *Image and Mind: Film, Philosophy, and Cognitive Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
5. Lucy Bolton, "Giggling Girls and Cackling Crones: A Phenomenology of Women's Laughter" (paper delivered at the Fourth Annual Film-Philosophy Conference, Liverpool, UK, 6 July 2011).
6. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Common Wealth* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009) 382-383.
7. Kate Ince, "Feminist Phenomenology and the Film-World of Agnès Varda" (paper delivered at the Fourth Annual Film-Philosophy Conference, Liverpool, UK, 8 July 2011).
8. Farhad Sulliman Khoyratty, "The 'Fallen' Bollywood Courtesan: Temporality (*Zeitlichkeit*) in the Being-in-the-World of the Mauritian Muslim" (paper delivered at the Fourth Annual Film-Philosophy Conference, Liverpool, UK, 8 July 2011).
9. Suzie Mei Gorodi, "Questions Concerning Film Encounter" (paper delivered at the Fourth Annual Film-Philosophy Conference, Liverpool, UK, 8 July 2011).
10. Ira P. Robbins, "Digitus Impudicus: The Middle Finger and the Law," *UC Davis Law Review*, 41 (2004):1403-1485.
11. Havi Carel and Greg Tuck, "Genre, Style and *Stiftung*: Letting the Right Ones In" (paper delivered at the Fourth Annual Film-Philosophy Conference, Liverpool, UK, 6 July 2011).
12. André Dias, "Autopsy 'in Vivo': Biopolitical Features Regarding Wiseman's *Primate*" (paper delivered at the Fourth Annual Film-Philosophy Conference, Liverpool, UK, 7 July 2011).
13. Catherine Wheatley, "'A righteous man regards the life of his beast': Film, Faith and Fauna in Philip Groning's *Into Great Silence* (2005)" (paper delivered at the Fourth Annual Film-Philosophy Conference, Liverpool, UK, 7 July 2011).
14. John Mullarkey, "Cinema: The Animals that Therefore We Are (On Temple Grandin's *Thinking in Pictures*)" (paper delivered at the Fourth Annual Film-Philosophy Conference, Liverpool, UK, 7 July 2011).
15. Felicity Colman, "Notes on Cinematographic Evolution" (paper delivered at the Fourth Annual Film-Philosophy Conference, Liverpool, UK, 7 July 2011).
16. Richard Ashrowan, "Coniunctio, Separatio, Putrefactio: Alchemical Transformation and the Filmic Process" (paper delivered at the Fourth Annual Film-Philosophy Conference, Liverpool, UK, 6 July 2011).
17. Kathleen Scott, "'Freud is dead, isn't he?': A Haptic Reading of *Antichrist*" (paper delivered at the Fourth Annual Film-Philosophy Conference, Liverpool, UK, 7 July 2011).
18. David Martin-Jones, *Deleuze and World Cinemas* (London: Continuum, 2011).
19. David Martin-Jones, "How Tasty are Deleuze's Cinema Books?" (paper delivered at the Fourth Annual Film-Philosophy Conference, Liverpool, UK, 8 July 2011).
20. Sarah Forgacs, "Rewriting the Body, Reclaiming the Feminine: Catherine Breillat's *Romance* (1999)" (paper delivered at the Fourth Annual Film-Philosophy Conference, Liverpool, UK, 7 July 2011).
21. David H. Fleming, "The 'Method' Meets Animation: On Carbon Actors, Digital Performance and Transforming Identities in *Black Swan* (2010)" (paper delivered at the Fourth Annual Film-Philosophy Conference, Liverpool, UK, 7 July 2011).
22. Carly Lane, "Thriving by Casualties: Risk and Redemption in *Red Road*" (paper delivered at the Fourth Annual Film-Philosophy Conference, Liverpool, UK, 8 July 2011).
23. Matthew Holtmeier, "The Modern Political Cinema: Pre-Hodological Space as a Cinematic Ethics" (paper delivered at the Fourth Annual Film-Philosophy Conference, Liverpool, UK, 8 July 2011).
24. Richard Rushton, "Deleuze and Cinema, Deleuze and Politics" (paper delivered at the Fourth Annual Film-Philosophy Conference, Liverpool, UK, 8 July 2011).
25. Dennis Rothermel, "How Deleuze Thinks About Cinema" (paper delivered at the Fourth Annual Film-Philosophy Conference, Liverpool, UK, 7 July 2011).
26. Gregory Currie, "What Do Film Images Represent?" (paper delivered at the Fourth Annual Film-Philosophy Conference, Liverpool, UK, 7 July 2011).
27. See Stephan Schwan and Sermin Ildirar, "Watching film for the first time: How adult viewers interpret perceptual discontinuities in film," *Psychological Science* 21-7 (2010): 970-976.
28. See, e.g., Vittorio Gallese, "The 'Shared Manifold' Hypothesis: From Mirror Neurons to Empathy," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 8:5-7 (2000): 33-50.

**CEM MIL CIGARROS:
OS FILMES DE PEDRO COSTA**

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Ed. Ricardo Matos Cabo. Lisboa: Orfeu Negro, 2010.

Pedro Costa é o realizador mais internacional da quarta geração de cineastas portugueses.¹ A importância da sua obra procede tanto da sua permanente procura de novas formas e estratégias de expressão cinematográfica, primeiro em celulóide e depois em vídeo digital, como também da relevância política e sociológica dos temas que trata: Costa foi o primeiro a pôr em cena “a figura do operário cabo-verdiano sem documentos,” como diz Jacques Lemièrre,² um personagem a partir do qual o cineasta vai desenvolver toda uma saga centrada na “sorte dos explorados, daqueles que vieram de longe, das antigas colônias africanas, para trabalhar nos estaleiros de construção portugueses, que perderam a família, a saúde, por vezes a sua vida nesses estaleiros, aqueles que se amontoaram ontem nos bairros de lata suburbanos antes de serem expulsos para habitações novas, mais claras, mais modernas, não necessariamente habitáveis,” em palavras desta vez de Jacques Rancière.³ Portanto, e depois de ter sido objeto de atenção em numerosas publicações e festivais internacionais,⁴ a obra de Pedro Costa já clamava por uma monografia crítica escrita em português como a presente *Cem Mil Cigarros*.

Esta publicação considera a trajetória de Costa no seu conjunto mesmo nos textos dedicados a um único filme, pois considera os seus trabalhos como partes de uma mesma saga formal e temática. O editor do volume, Ricardo Matos Cabo, anuncia na introdução que “o livro foi organizado sob o signo do reencontro dos autores com a obra de Pedro Costa, [...] um percurso [...] que abrisse passagens,

relações e circulações de temas e formas recorrentes nos filmes (e entre os filmes).”⁵ Esta atenção ao conjunto surge em muitas passagens do livro, como quando Jonathan Rosenbaum afirma que “todos os filmes de Costa parecem ser sobre pessoas de fora e famílias improvisadas”⁶ ou quando Philippe Azoury diz que “é assombroso apercebermo-nos hoje até que ponto *O Sangue* foi pensado como uma derradeira homenagem ao cinema e, em certa medida, como o modo do seu adeus. Um primeiro filme quer dizer aqui um prólogo ao cinema de Costa. Que só começará a revelar-se verdadeiramente a partir de *Ossos*.”⁷ Esse é o “relato oficial” no que a maioria de autores deste livro concordam: a história dos dois órfãos de *O Sangue* já adiantava a paisagem emocional e o tratamento cinematográfico que Costa iria desenvolver nas duas décadas seguintes para retratar a sua extensa família cabo-verdiana na Trilogia das Fontainhas, também conhecida como Trilogia de Vanda.⁸

A distribuição dos trinta artigos que compõem este *Cem Mil Cigarros* não faz um percurso cronológico estrito pela obra de Costa senão apenas um seguimento aproximado. A maior parte destes textos é de carácter geral, cumprindo com a premissa de relacionar os filmes entre si, mas também há alguns que estabelecem essas relações a partir de um só título. De acordo com a minha conta, há oito artigos gerais e outros três que analisam de maneira conjunta o díptico *No Quarto da Vanda / Juventude em Marcha*, enquanto há quatro artigos que falam especialmente sobre *O Sangue*, três sobre *Casa de Lava*, outros três sobre *Ossos*, dois sobre *No Quarto da Vanda*, um sobre *Juventude em Marcha*, outro sobre o díptico *Tarrafal / A Caça do Coelho com Pau* (embora já um tríptico com *O Nosso Homem*), e mais quatro que abordam o método de trabalho do cineasta através da análise de *Onde Jaz o teu Sorriso*, o seu documentário metacineamatográfico sobre Jean-Marie Straub e Danièle Huillet. Por último, o livro termina com um artigo que explica as possibilidades artísticas destes filmes fora da sala de cinema, “Do Filme à Exposição: As Instalações

Vídeo de Pedro Costa,” onde João Nisa comenta a conversão dos filmes em instalações para museus.

Todos estes artigos estão assinados por críticos, teóricos e mesmo cineastas de diferentes países, entre os que se salientam nomes bem conhecidos que escrevem há anos sobre Pedro Costa, como os franceses Jacques Rancière, Jean-Pierre Gorin, Nicole Brenez e Luce Vigo, os estadunidenses Jonathan Rosenbaum, Tag Gallagher, Thom Andersen e Andy Rector, os canadenses Mark Peranson e James Quandt, o australiano Adrian Martin, o japonês Shiguéhiko Hasumi, o italiano Paolo Spaziani e o português João Bénard da Costa, de quem aparecem dois textos, um de caráter geral, “O Negro É Uma Cor ou o Cinema de Pedro Costa,” e outro centrado na análise de *No Quarto da Vanda*. Esta diversidade geográfica dos autores supõe um estudo polifônico desde latitudes e tradições críticas muito diferentes, acorde com a difusão internacional dos próprios filmes através dos circuitos de festivais de cinema, cinematecas, museus, e mesmo instituições acadêmicas.⁹ De novo, como diz Ricardo Matos Cabo no artigo inicial, esta variedade de olhares sobre os filmes de Pedro Costa tem como função “sedimentar e fixar ressonâncias de magnitude diversa, possibilitadas por uma visão retrospectiva da sua obra, num momento particular de produção crítica acerca do seu trabalho.”¹⁰

Muitos destes textos explicam precisamente a recepção internacional dos filmes, devolvendo os seus autores à posição originária dos espectadores, isto é, descrevendo os “primeiros encontros” entre críticos e filmes quase como uma autobiografia cinéfila onde é preciso contar o *quando* e o *como* desses primeiros visionados, como fazem Jonathan Rosenbaum em “Algumas Erupções na *Casa de Lava*” ou Thom Andersen em “Histórias de Fantasmas” antes de começarem com as suas respectivas análises críticas. Nessa mesma linha, outros autores preferem realizar leituras pessoais dos filmes, volvendo a contar o seu argumento para reinterpretar em palavras as suas imagens, como é o caso de Rui Chafes em

“Condenados à Morte, Condenados à Vida,” um texto que é quase uma adaptação literária da atmosfera e de alguns momentos de *O Sangue*, ou Philippe Lafosse em “Mas Porquê?! (Observações),” que vai mais longe ao reproduzir muitos diálogos de *Onde Jaz o teu Sorriso?* intercalando-os com os seus próprios comentários.

Estas releituras pessoais levam em muitos casos à repetição de uma mesma ideia ou percepção, mas sem resultarem nunca redundantes. Pelo contrário, as sobreposições ajudam a destacar as seqüências mais relevantes de cada um dos filmes, assim como também confirmam o poder de certas imagens-fetichismo além de fronteiras nacionais ou culturais: é o caso do começo expressionista de *O Sangue*, ao qual se referem Johannes Beringer e Philippe Azoury, do *travelling* alongado de *Ossos* comentado por Shiguéhiko Hasumi e Mark Peranson, da única conversa entre Vanda e Nhurro em *No Quarto da Vanda* analisada tanto por João Bénard da Costa como por Andy Rector, ou da visita de Ventura à Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian em *Juventude em Marcha*, presente nos textos de James Quandt, Jacques Rancière e Andy Rector, entre outros muitos exemplos.

No entanto, os textos mais úteis do ponto de vista da pesquisa são aqueles que analisam em diferentes perspectivas o conjunto da obra de Pedro Costa, ou pelo menos o díptico *No Quarto da Vanda / Juventude em Marcha*. Por exemplo, em “O Negro é uma Cor ou o Cinema de Pedro Costa,” João Bénard da Costa analisa a forma como o cineasta empregou a cor enquanto elemento expressivo desde o seu primeiro filme, estabelecendo paralelismos formais com vários referentes pictóricos. O mesmo faz Mark Peranson com o som em “Ouvindo os Filmes de Pedro Costa ou Pedro Costa Realizador Pós-Punk,” explicando por sua vez, através de referências musicais à cultura popular, a sensibilidade com que o cineasta trabalha as texturas sonoras dos seus filmes, além da pura escolha de peças musicais. Tag Gallagher, pelo seu lado, compara em “Straub Anti-Straub” a montagem de Pedro Costa com a de Straub e Huillet, questionando uma filiação que muitos outros autores vão dar

por certa sem uma análise prévia. Esta contínua tentação de procurar uma filiação para o cineasta português é evidente na primeira página do artigo “A Vida Interior de um Filme,” onde Adrian Martin compara explicitamente Costa com John Ford, Jacques Tourneur, Jean-Luc Godard, Jean Epstein, Fritz Lang, Nicholas Ray, Carl Th. Dreyer e F. W. Murnau.¹¹

Também Andy Rector relaciona *Juventude em Marcha* com o cinema de Straub e Huillet em “*Pappy: A Rememoração dos Filhos*,” mas argumenta melhor os seus pontos em comum com *The Grapes of Warth* de John Ford pelo retrato que os dois filmes realizam dos emigrantes expulsados das suas terras e deslocados para lugares hostis. Este texto destaca ademais a dimensão histórica e mesmo historiográfica do cinema de Costa, primeiro como testemunho visual das transformações urbanas que se produziram nestas últimas décadas em Portugal, representadas pela destruição do bairro das Fontainhas e a posterior deslocalização dos seus vizinhos ao Casal da Boba, e depois já como sintoma sociológico das relações de classe na contemporaneidade. Esse mesmo interesse em realizar uma leitura espacial da Trilogia das Fontainhas aparece também no artigo já nomeado de Thom Andersen, enquanto a análise política em termos de classe é o ponto principal do artigo de Jacques Rancière, “Política de Pedro Costa.”

O texto de Rector, como ele próprio informa no seu final, já fora publicado anteriormente a este livro no seu blog *Kino Slang*, à semelhança do que acontece com outros artigos como o de James Quandt (“*Still Lives*”), o de Shiguhiko Hasumi (“*Aventura: Um Ensaio sobre Pedro Costa*”) ou o já comentado de Tag Gallagher. O problema em termos de pesquisa é que, exceto no caso de Rector, não há referências claras à publicação original desses textos para realizar uma citação correta dos mesmos, sobretudo no caso da identificação da língua original. Assim, não há nenhuma referência à publicação anterior do texto de Gallagher na revista *Senses of Cinema*, enquanto as referências aos artigos de Quandt e Hasumi não estão bem

relacionadas na bibliografia final com as traduções incluídas neste livro.¹² Contudo, estas ausências são falhas específicas que não diminuem os méritos de uma publicação que já é uma leitura obrigatória (e muito prazenteira) para os estudiosos da obra de Costa. Ademais, a sua capa com a carta de Ventura manuscrita em amarelo sobre um fundo verde, assim como o papel acetinado e uma generosa seleção de imagens em cor, converte também a obra *Cem Mil Cigarros* num belo objeto que reivindica o valor estético dos livros em papel nos tempos do livro digital.

NOTAS

1. A velha classificação dos cineastas portugueses em quatro gerações surgiu em Jacques Parsi, "Cinéma português," *Trafic* 32 (1999). Porém, essa mesma classificação já foi acrescida da chamada "Geração Curtas". Alguns dos textos que teorizam sobre esta quinta geração são de Augusto M. Seabra, "Saudações às 'Gerações Curtas'," em *Geração Curtas: 10 Anos de Curtas-Metragens Portuguesas (1991-2000)* (Vila do Conde: Curtas Metragens, CRL, 2000); ou também Daniel Ribas, "Último cinema português: experimentación formal e narrativa," *A Cuarta Pared* 1 (2011). Consultado o 26 de Setembro, 2011: <http://www.acuartapared.com/?p=78>.

2. Jacques Lemièrre, "Terra a Terra. O Portugal e o Cabo Verde de Pedro Costa," em *Cem Mil Cigarros: Os Filmes de Pedro Costa*, ed. Ricardo Matos Cabo (Lisboa: Orfeu Negro, 2010), 101.

3. Jacques Rancière, "Política de Pedro Costa," em *ibid.*, 53.

4. Os filmes de Pedro Costa têm sido programados pelos festivais de Cannes (*Casa de Lava* na secção Un Certain Regard de 1994 e *Juventude em Marcha* na competição oficial de 2006), Veneza (*Ossos* em 1997, onde ganhou o prémio para a melhor fotografia por Emmanuel Machuel) e Locarno (*No Quarto da Vanda* em 2000, onde ganhou o prémio do jurado da juventude e mais duas menções especiais), para citar só os mais importantes.

5. Ricardo Matos Cabo, "As Casas Queimadas," em *Cem Mil Cigarros: Os Filmes de Pedro Costa*, ed. Ricardo Matos Cabo (Lisboa: Orfeu Negro, 2010), 9.

6. Jonathan Rosebaum, "Algumas Erupções na *Casa de Lava*," em *ibid.*, 127.

7. Philippe Azoury, "Órfãos," em *ibid.*, 85.

8. Os filmes que formam esta trilogia são *Ossos* (1997), *No Quarto da Vanda* (2000) e *Juventude em Marcha* (2006), mas no momento em que escrevemos esta recensão já se pode considerar a existência de uma segunda trilogia relacionada com a primeira, post-Fontainhas e post-Vanda, formada pelas variações sobre a mesma história que propõem as curtas *Tarrafal* (2007), *A Caça ao Coelho com Pau* (2008) e *O Nosso Homem* (2011).

9. Os filmes de Pedro Costa estrearam comercialmente em França (todos), Holanda (*O Sangue, Casa de Lava* e *Ossos*), Japão (*Ossos, No Quarto da Vanda, Juventude em Marcha* e *Ne Change Rien*), Espanha (*Ne Change Rien*) e Estados Unidos (*Ne Change Rien* de novo), provavelmente neste último caso por efeito da retrospectiva *Still Lives: The Films of Pedro Costa* organizada em diversas cidades estadunidenses pelo próprio Ricardo Matos Cabo entre junho de 2007 e maio de 2008, e de que este livro é um resultado e complemento.

10. Ricardo Matos Cabo, "As Casas Queimadas," em *Cem Mil Cigarros: Os Filmes de Pedro Costa*, ed. Ricardo Matos Cabo (Lisboa: Orfeu Negro, 2010), 9.

11. Adrian Martin, "A Vida Interior de Um Filme," em *ibid.*, 91.

12. A referência ao texto de Quandt aparece na secção dedicada a *No Quarto da Vanda*, mas não está no começo nem ao final das páginas correspondentes. O mesmo, ou pior, ocorre com o texto de Hasumi: a obra coletiva da que faz parte aparece na bibliografia final, mas não há nenhuma referência que permita saber que esse texto se encontra nas páginas desse livro. Deixo aqui as referências

originais completas destes artigos para os interessados:

Tag Gallagher, "Straub Anti-Straub," *Senses of Cinema* 43 (2007). Consultado a 26 de Setembro, 2011: <http://www.sensesofcinema.com/2007/feature-articles/costa-straub-huillet/>.

Shiguhiko Hasumi, "Adventure: An Essay on Pedro Costa," em *Pedro Costa: Film Retrospective in Sendai 2005 - Program Book*, ed. Naoto Ogawa e Tamaki Tsuchida (Sendai: Sendai Mediateque, 2005), 17-33.

James Quandt, "Still Lives: The Films of Pedro Costa," *Artforum* (September 2006).

**MAGNÍFICAS OBSESSÕES:
JOÃO BÉNARD DA COSTA,
UM PROGRAMADOR DE CINEMA**

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Antonio Rodrigues. Lisboa: Cinemateca Portuguesa, 2011.

Como se pode ler na breve apresentação, Antonio Rodrigues decidiu fazer este estudo num contexto de homenagem a João Bénard da Costa enquanto um dos últimos representantes do *programador cinéfilo*, e de uma espécie de programação “à antiga, vindo da cinefilia, da paixão pelo cinema.” O estudo propõe-se, ainda, nas palavras do seu autor, centrar-se “no trabalho de João Bénard da Costa como programador de cinema, sozinho ou em colaboração com outros, na qual incluo a de escritor sobre cinema.” De fora, de forma assumida, ficaram “as outras actividades suas ligadas ao cinema, como o seu papel na Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian no domínio dos subsídios à produção de novos filmes ou a sua presença como actor em diversos filmes, sempre com o pseudónimo de Duarte d’Almeida” (12-13). Ainda que se centre na parte mais activa e intensa da vida de Bénard da Costa, trata-se de um estudo parcelar que não valoriza como poderia, no meu entender, o percurso pré-Cinemateca, nomeadamente o período cineclubista e os tempos em que esteve ligado à primeira fase da revista *O Tempo e o Modo* (1963-1969).

Dividido em cinco partes, o estudo começa por recapitular “o que foi a sua descoberta do cinema através da cinefilia e o que é e foi a cinefilia,” prossegue com caracterização da relação entre Bénard da Costa e Henri Langlois, “o programador dos programadores” que co-fundou a Cinemateca Francesa e a dirigiu durante décadas, e dedica os três capítulos finais às práticas programadoras propriamente

ditas: os anos da Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian (1969-80); os anos em que acumulou essas funções com a de subdirector da Cinemateca Portuguesa (1980-91); e os anos em que foi director em exclusivo desta última (1991-2009).

Antonio Rodrigues não é (nem aparenta querer ser) um académico – mundo que proíbe o “*engagement* pessoal e a noção de prazer” (12) – e isso espelha-se exemplarmente na obra que assina: a bibliografia citada é muito reduzida (basicamente só cita os catálogos publicados pela própria Cinemateca e alguns textos de João Bénard da Costa), faz pouco uso de fontes documentais e orais, apresenta uma visão assumidamente subjectiva e preocupa-se pouco (ou, por vezes, mesmo nada) com o rigor na confirmação de factos e opiniões.

Ao longo do estudo são frequentes os exemplos de considerações onde o autor parece confiar em demasia na sua memória ao ponto de não confirmar sequer o rigor das mesmas. E não me refiro, como acontece noutras passagens, a informações cuja confirmação pudesse ser de difícil acesso ou onde o testemunho oral fosse a única fonte. Na página 43, Antonio Rodrigues afirma que “João Bénard da Costa foi apresentado a Langlois por José Novaes Teixeira, crítico português exilado em Paris, no Festival de Cannes de 1970.” Ora, o tal crítico português não se chamava José mas Joaquim e não estava exilado mas radicado em Paris desde 1948.

Na página 52, o autor arrisca, “salvo erro,” que *O Passado e o Presente* (1972) terá sido o primeiro filme que o então Manuel de Oliveira (Manuel grafado com *u*) assinou como Manoel (grafado com *o*). O autor enganou-se porque esse primeiro filme seria *Amor de Perdição* (1979). Mas também errou na causa dessa mudança: “além de arcaica — e talvez por isso — a grafia com *o* em vez de *u* parece ter conotações aristocráticas.” Ora, se o autor se tivesse documentado, poderia ler o ensaio de Fausto Cruchinho¹ onde o professor de cinema analisa detalhadamente o processo e esclarece que “essa pequena alteração semântica traduz, para além duma afirmação de vontade artística, um desejo de indústria, quase sempre afastado do cinema feito em Portugal.”

Na página 51, é assumido, sem dúvidas, que Bénard da Costa

entrou para os quadros da Fundação Gulbenkian em 1969 [...]. Mas a participação da Fundação no cinema mudou de dimensão em 1969 [...]. Um Serviço de Cinema foi acrescentado ao já existente Serviço de Belas-Artes, com uma função específica: subsidiar três a quatro filmes por ano, a partir de um plano preciso elaborado em 1968 com uma cooperativa chamada Centro Português de Cinema. [...] Ou seja, a Fundação Gulbenkian passou a financiar a produção de filmes — de um certo tipo de filmes — e é evidente que João Bénard da Costa viria a ter influência neste processo, como chefe do seu Serviço de Cinema, em estreita colaboração com o presidente da Fundação, José de Azeredo Perdigão.

Ora, o que a história diz é bem diferente: a relação de Bénard da Costa com a Gulbenkian data do início de década, nomeadamente como bolsheiro da Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian (1960-63) e como membro do Centro de Investigação Pedagógica da Gulbenkian (1964-66); e, mais relevante para o caso, não é “evidente” que João Bénard da Costa ou José Azeredo Perdigão tivessem exercido qualquer influência na escolha dos projectos produzidos pelo Centro Português de Cinema (CPC), uma vez que a cooperativa era completamente autónoma na gestão dos seus recursos e nas opções de produção. A influência de Bénard da Costa e de Perdigão ao nível da escolha de projectos só se verifica nas encomendas, como é o caso de *Pousada das Chagas* (1972) de Paulo Rocha, ou após o fim do período de três anos de financiamento da Fundação Gulbenkian ao CPC, nomeadamente no projecto do Museu da Imagem e do Som e nas dezenas de apoios directos à produção durante os anos 80.

As omissões também tornam este estudo mais frágil. A figura de Luís de Pina,

segundo director da Cinemateca (entre 1982 e 1991), raramente é citada e a sua acção completamente ofuscada apesar de ter sido o responsável máximo da Cinemateca durante cerca de uma década, precisamente a primeira década de programação regular e de autonomia administrativa e financeira. A Cinemateca Júnior, um projecto de programação para crianças que funciona desde 2007, também não merece a atenção especial nesta obra. Finalmente, o Arquivo Nacional das Imagens em Movimento, centro de conservação da Cinemateca, inaugurado em 1996, não merece destaque neste estudo, apesar de o autor reconhecer recorrentemente a importância para a programação do acesso às cópias e da sua qualidade de projecção.

Como bem documentam as passagens a propósito da exibição do então proibido *Roma Cidade Aberta* no ciclo Rossellini organizado na Gulbenkian em 1973 (54-56), a propósito do “mundo conspiratório das pequenas sociedades secretas dos que programam os filmes e sabem onde e como obter cópias” (75-77) ou sobre a realização e funcionamento das reuniões plenárias anuais — os “psicodramas” — entre João Bénard da Costa e a equipa de programação da Cinemateca (120-122), um dos aspectos mais positivos deste estudo é precisamente a revelação destes interessantes exemplos da *petite histoire* que ajudam a compreender algumas questões relevantes ligadas ao exercício da programação de João Bénard da Costa e da própria Cinemateca Portuguesa. No entanto, Antonio Rodrigues parece imitar João Bénard da Costa e os seus “erros factuais típicos, isto é, típicos das armadilhas das memórias dos cinéfilos” (67) e, apesar de aparentemente ter consciência que este aproveitamento das fontes orais é uma importante mais-valia para o seu estudo, abstêm-se do olhar crítico que enriqueceria o estudo. Noutros casos, não concretiza exemplos que despertam curiosidade e parecem relevantes no contexto da obra: “a tentativa aberta de tirá-lo do cargo” (150-151), as contradições e desencontros com a equipa de programadores colaboradores (80-82) ou uma conversa privada com um

responsável de outra cinemateca europeia acerca da Cinemateca Portuguesa ser uma “fábrica de catálogos” (89). Se teoricamente o uso de fontes orais seria uma excelente oportunidade para registar testemunhos directos de protagonistas que poderiam ajudar a conhecer mais da história individual de João Bénard da Costa enquanto programador e cinéfilo e da própria instituição que dirigiu durante décadas, a forma como são tratados neste estudo retiram-lhes inequivocamente um valor historiográfico que poderiam assumir.

Finalmente, o caso particular do cinema português no universo cinéfilo de João Bénard da Costa. Antonio Rodrigues confirma que, apesar de saber “que uma cinemateca portuguesa tinha de mostrar este cinema (além de restaurar e preservar estes filmes),” Bénard da Costa não tinha grande consideração pelo cinema português, excepção feita a Oliveira e à “constelação do Cinema Novo (...) com as quais João Bénard se identificava, que defendia e que ajudou” (111-113). O autor acredita que os ciclos de autor dedicados a nomes clássicos do cinema português — António Lopes Ribeiro, Leitão de Barros, Arthur Duarte, Chianca de Garcia e Jorge Brum do Canto — não foram certamente uma opção de Bénard da Costa porque este teria “perfeita consciência de que não se tratavam de verdadeiros *autores* e de que, com honrosas excepções, os filmes não eram bons” (111-112). De resto, já na Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian só tinha dedicado um ciclo ao cinema português, no caso, um ciclo de oito sessões com dez filmes sobre o cinema dos anos 40 (63).

Mesmo no caso dos cineastas da “constelação do Cinema Novo,” que Antonio Rodrigues refere sumariamente, este estudo não revela que Bénard da Costa alimentava muitas dúvidas sobre a validade estética de muitos cineastas e obras desse período e que essa opinião pessoal influenciou de forma decisiva a programação da própria instituição durante as décadas de vigência da sua direcção. Se a retrospectiva de 1985 tentou ser o mais abrangente possível (talvez por ter sido feita no período de Luís de Pina e coordenada por Manuel S. Fonseca e José Manuel

Costa), as retrospectivas individuais feita a autores portugueses da “constelação do Cinema Novo,” já com Bénard da Costa como director da Cinemateca Portuguesa, apenas incidiram sobre autores por quem este cultivava assumidas “relações afectivas”: Fernando Lopes e Paulo Rocha em 1996 ou João César Monteiro, postumamente em 2005.

Assumindo um tom memorialista e celebratório em torno da figura do programador e cinéfilo João Bénard da Costa, o autor não quis, ou não foi capaz, de olhar criticamente para o trabalho do programador. Apesar de raros reparos — como a exaustão e monotonia provocada por certos ciclos na programação regular (134) — Antonio Rodrigues demonstra estar muito próximo da figura que estuda, nomeadamente ao nível da cumplicidade cinéfila, o que prejudica uma análise mais imparcial e crítica. Mesmo nos reparos, o autor deste estudo consegue “desculpar” e justificar as opções do programador-cinéfilo, como se verifica nos casos da antipatia por Bette Davis e da obsessão por Jennifer Jones e nas consequências que esses gostos pessoais e altamente subjectivos implicavam para a reconstrução da história do cinema. De resto, a própria forma como Antonio Rodrigues se refere ao homenageado — trata-o recorrentemente pelos nomes próprios e não pelo apelido — acusa a falta de distância necessária para um estudo mais isento.

Finalmente uma palavra ao editor do livro, no caso a própria Cinemateca Portuguesa. É compreensível a necessidade da instituição homenagear o mais influente director da sua história, mas esta opção “hagiográfica” não terá sido a mais conveniente, pelas razões anteriormente apresentadas. Exigia-se um trabalho mais objectivo e rigoroso na recolha de testemunhos dos colaboradores e na pesquisa exaustiva na documentação da própria instituição que pudesse dar um importante contributo crítico e distanciado para conhecermos melhor a actividade programadora e o imaginário cinéfilo do “Senhor Cinemateca.”

NOTA

1. Fausto Cruchinho, "Manoel de Oliveira ou Manuel de Oliveira?," *Senso 1* (1995): 55-62.