FROM ONE MOVEMENT TO ANOTHER:

HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA AND POETIC REVEALING

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PREFACE

This project came into being largely as a result of the dissatisfaction I experienced

with my own education in cinema studies as an undergraduate. More precisely, the

frustration I felt was more often than not associated with the presentation and study of the

cinema's canonical texts. In other words, Hitchcock, Bergman, De Sica, Welles, Renoir,

and all the others were taught as *the* examples with respect to their traditionally assigned

periods, aesthetic schools, and national cinemas. At the time I grew suspicious of

canonical thinking that seemed to lead one to believe that Ford only made westerns, or

Godard and the French New Wave could be reduced to the use of jump cuts (or reduced

to anything at all) for example. I do not mean to suggest that canons are worthless, and

should be abandoned; that's hardly what I wish to accomplish. But instead it might serve

us well to cease thinking about this practice uncritically and as a settled matter.

During this time as my frustrations grew, I also became deeply fascinated with

avant-garde cinema, both as a cinephile and as a filmmaker. In other words, the cinema of

Stan Brakhage, Michael Snow, Maya Deren, Ken Jacobs, and so many others create the

perfect space for thought; that is, their films invite you to be a patient thinker, to dwell in

image and sound without any kind of predetermined trajectory for thinking in this

abstract space. I discovered that this is a cinema that also forces you to re-learn how to

think about moving images; to accept the virtue of abstraction, to never be settled in your

understanding of what can be or what can be thought. It is through this ethos of abstraction that I began to think about all cinema differently.

With this in mind, it should be no surprise why I was first drawn to Jean-Luc Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinema* years later. *Histoire(s)*is essentially an avant-garde project that simultaneously resists and partially reinforces all the canonized tendencies I grew to distrust. At the time, Godard's project articulated through cinema itself my own desire for a radical reconfiguration of what cinema history is and how it can be told. Through all of Godard's many montage sequences, superimposed images, and voice-overs, new possibilities for considering how to think about cinema history came into being for me. This re-orientation towards looking at cinema itself for revealing its own history in movement is perhaps *Histoire(s)* defining feature. It is with this defining feature in mind that my thinking here attempts to work through *Histoire(s) du cinema* and its possibility for the poetic revealing of cinema history.

In chapter one I examine the traditional discourses surrounding the formation historiography as a discipline through Hayden White's thinking. After establishing the tension between art and science in play within the work historiography, I then give consideration to how cinema studies as a discipline confronts these various tensions in its own historical accounts. Finally, I turn toward Martin Heidegger's thinking on re-presentation to expose many of the historical discourses at work in cinema studies as enframed in "settled" thinking. I then offer the suggestion that cinema studies needs to give greater consideration to cinematic movement as a tangible quality of the medium that resists its many "settled" historical claims.

In chapter two, I attempt to establish the primacy of movement within film theory/history via close readings of Sergei Eisenstein's thinking as well as Paul DeMan's theoretical understanding of nominal definitions in language. I then suggest that a shift toward the figurative is necessary through DeMan's notion of the vector in order to understand both movement and history. I close the chapter by suggesting that Godard's *Histoire(s) du Cinéma* might serve as an example of this vectoral approach towards representing history in movement.

Finally, in chapter three, I offer a close formal analysis of Godard's *Histoire(s) du Cinema* framed through an understanding of de Man's vector. Specific attention is given to the role of Godard's aesthetic ideas in *Histoire(s)* and their ability to reveal the poetic possibilities in superimposition and montage.

CHAPTER I

ON HISTORIOGRAPHY

"We have art in order to not perish of the truth"

-Friedrich Nietzsche*.*

Reflecting on the restrictive nature of disciplines of thought and the practice of

historiography, Hayden White posits that:

> Every discipline, I suppose, is, as Nietzsche saw most
> clearly, constituted by what it forbids its practitioners to
> do. Every discipline is made of a set of restrictions on
> thought and imagination, and none is more hedged about
> with taboos than professional historiography – so much so
> that the so-called "historical method' consists of little
> more than the injunction to 'get the story straight' and
> avoid both conceptual over determination and imaginative
> excess at any price[1]

White's succinct analysis of the rigid parameters of professional historiography offers

much to think about here. For instance, White's account of the "historical method"

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[1] Hayden White, "Fictions of Factual Representation," in *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism,* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985): 126.

characterizes a practice that appears to be stymied by its own self-imposed limitations. For historians there is a very specific way in which one "writes" history that does not allow much deviation in terms of form or style. White's thinking also highlights a very specific tension within the discipline of historiography between the impulse to "get the story straight" and "imaginative excess." In other words, the conventional ambition of historiography is to simply report the stories of time passed without any kind of imaginative intervention, embellishment, or stylistic flourish.

And yet, is not historiography an inherently generative intervention on history by the imagination? In order to "get the story straight," historiographers must make choices fraught with stylistic, methodological, political, and even artistic implications. Just as a brief example, consider Howard Zinn's *A People's History of America: 1492- Present*. Working as an alternate or "corrective" account of American history, Zinn attempts to gives representation to those whose race, gender, and class have been marginalized by more dominant narratives generated by historians. In other words, Zinn's project is to work against the hegemonic narrative of " American History" as white, rich, and male by offering a set of particular case studies that highlight events associated with those who have been underrepresented or absent from traditional historical accounts. Of course, Zinn's project announces its stylistic, methodical, and political orientations writ large, but Zinn's text offers a clear window to the way in which all historiography is generative in this vein. To put it another way, the impulse to "get the story straight" can be created through any number of ideological, methodological, or stylistic frameworks. With this in mind, it appears that the distance between the realm of empiricism and the realm of imagination in historiographic practice is much more proximate than its disciplinary

limitations might initially dictate. As we will see, the tension between what we might

call the scientific/empiricist drive and the artistic practice of historiography is nothing

new, but rather a longstanding issue for the discipline.

Historiography's true disciplinary nature is perhaps anything but concrete. As

Hayden White makes clear, when pressed on the status of their profession historians have

simply evaded clear definition:

> When criticized by social scientists for the softness of his
> method…the ambiguity of his sociological and
> psychological presuppositions, the historian responds that
> history has never claimed the status of pure science, that it
> depends as much upon intuitive as upon analytical
> methods…that historical judgments should not therefore be
> evaluated by critical standards properly applied only in
> mathematical and experimental disciplines. All of which
> suggests that history is a kind of art. But when reproached
> by literary artists … the historian falls back upon the view
> that history is after all a *semi-science*. [2]

When pressured to answer to the dual claim on their disciplinary origins, the historian

seems to position his work as a kind of elusive object; a science when necessary, artistic

practice when convenient. White's generalized take on the historian's resistance to

classify his or her place in the disciplines is perhaps suggestive of the uneasy relationship

between art and science in the work of historiography. Art and science, as defined by the

academy, are two distinct and frequently opposed disciplinary foundations. Art and

science both attempt to explicate the world at large, but their inquires differ in scope and

methodology in profound ways. Reflecting on Nietzsche's remark that opens this paper,

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[2] Hayden White, "The Burden of History" from *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*: 27.

it is art that gives us the possibility of life and all the variations of being in the world to write, speak, think, read, and create truths. In other words, the supreme tension between art and science for the academy lies in the way in which truth comes into being; for the artist, it is through a creative becoming, while for scientist it is a measurable and quantifiable phenomenon. With all this in mind, it should then not be surprising that the historiographer has something of a bad name across the disciplines. As Hayden White claims, because of the historian's inability to be the "mediator" between art and science, he finds "resentment over what appears to be the historian's bad faith in claiming the privilege of both the artist and the scientist while refusing to submit to the critical standards currently obtaining in either art or science."[3] In other words, because historians works under a completely different set of critical standards and take for granted the complicated position of their own practice across the disciplines, they find disapprobation from within both the arts and the sciences.

For White there are two specific causes for the assorted criticisms directed at the historian that come from other disciplines. First, the historian has "affected a kind of willful methodological naïveté" from its long standing practice of avoiding "monistic explanatory systems of a militant idealism in philosophy and an equally militant positivism in sciences."[4] Unlike philosophy, which is predicated on a set of monistic systems of thought such as materialism or phenomenology that attempt to give unity to their respective modes of inquiry, historians have resisted such hard line views in their methodology. However, as White notes, historian's suspicions of thought systems have in

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[3] Ibid., 28.
[4] Ibid.

turn led to a near refusal of critical self analysis.[5] This resistance to self-analysis is in part

due to the increasingly specialized nature of academic work: "the ordinary historian,

wrapped up in the search for an elusive document that will establish him as an authority

in a narrowly defined field, has had little time to inform himself of the latest

developments in more remote fields such as art and sciences."[6] Because of the insular

nature of academic discourse and the specific demands of their disciplinary practice,

historians have simply lost touch with what is happening in both art and science.

The second cause of the animosity directed toward the historian from other

disciplines is perhaps a direct result of the historian's lack of engagment with current

artistic and scientific practices. Many historians still perceive themselves as being the

mediator between art and science by offering a kind of "neutral" middle ground.

However, this position is something of antiquated thought, as White explains: "that

supposedly middle ground between art and science which many nineteenth-century

historians occupied…has dissolved in the discovery of the common constructive

character of both artistic and scientific statements."[7] As White explains, nineteenth-

century thinking posited a radical dissimilarity between art and science, largely founded

on the Romantic artist's distrust of science, and the scientist's incomprehension of art.[8]

With this in mind, the hostility directed toward the historian from other disciplines is

largely due to sustained nineteenth- century thinking that that simply has not been

corrected or updated within the historian's discourse.

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[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.

While the intellectual culture of the nineteenth century allowed for the clear division between art and science, modern criticism has been illuminated through psychology with a clearer understanding of the artistic and scientific processes.[9]

White notes that, through the study of human synthesizing faculties, psychology has offered a window to the ways in which artists express their vision of the world, as well as how scientists develop hypotheses about it. White goes on to explain that as we gain a better understanding of both art and science through more contemporary modes of thought it appears that "it is no longer obvious that the historian is especially qualified to play the mediating role."[10] As a result of their diminished function as mediator between art and science, White posits that "historians of this generation must be prepared to entertain the notion that history, as currently conceived, is a kind of historical accident, a product of a specific historical situation."[11] Of course, this "historical situation" is none other than the lingering cultural and intellectual discourses of the nineteenth century on art and science. As White succinctly notes, "if this is the case, then artists and social scientists alike are justified in criticizing historians, *not because they study the past*, but because they are studying it with *bad* science and *bad* art."[12]

But what specifically is the "bad" science and "bad" art to which historians adhere so strongly? When positioning themselves in the realm of the sciences, historians appear to have a limited point of reference, as Hayden White explains, "when historians speak of themselves as scientists, they seem to be invoking a conception of science…that

[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] White, 43.

has very little to do with the physical sciences as they have developed *since* Einstein and with the social sciences as they have evolved *since* Weber."[13] In other words, historians have been incredibly slow to recognize disciplinary advances such as the rise of cultural studies, particle physics, Neo-Marxism, and quantum mechanics just to name a few examples.[14] More troubling for White is perhaps the way in which historians practice "science." As White notes, " many historians continue to treat their 'facts' as though they were 'given' and refuse to recognize, unlike most scientists, that they are not so much found as they are constructed by the kinds of questions which the investigator asks of the phenomena before him."[15] Unlike scientists who understand that the "scientific method" is in fact a method that generates results, historians seem to neglect the idea that their "facts" are also generated from a method of inquiry.

The "art" of history fares no better under the current practices of the historian. When positioning themselves within the realm of art, White explains that historians "seem to have in mind a conception of art that would admit little more than the nineteenth- century novel as a paradigm"[16] This narrow conception of art inevitably leads to some problematic habits. As White notes, historians act as if "the major, not to say the sole, purpose of art is to tell a story."[17] Of course, there are many other points of artistic reference for the historian to latch onto or identify with, and yet the majority of these artistic possibilities go ignored by the historian: "they certainly do not mean to identify

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Despite White's objections to the historian's ignorance of more contemporary advances in the sciences he doesn't explicitly name them. The examples listed are culled from my own limited knowledge of contemporary physical and social science.

[15] Ibid.

[16] White, 42.

[17] White, 43.

themselves with action painters, kinetic sculptors, or existential novelists, imagist poets, or nouvelle vague cinematographers."[18] Positioning historiography within the same realm as *abstract* artistic processes would simply be too radical a proposition for the historian, despite the inherent abstractness of their profession. Even as the primary mode of historiographic discourse, there is nothing inherently bad in telling a story; however, its nineteenth-century incarnation is not necessarily the only means available to the historian for the task. As we will see, this mode of thinking does not find a home only in the discipline of history proper, but also within other fields that feature historiographic discourses that are central to the scholarly concerns of their field.

The Cinema and Historiography

Like their colleagues in the history department, practitioners of cinema studies also face a collection of similar problems when it comes to representing the history of their medium of inquiry. Over the last fifty years, cinema studies has generated a broad range of stylistic and synoptic means of writing a history of the seventh art. Approaches such as the production of "macro" historical accounts, the practice of "piecemeal history," and stylistic periodization have all offered a specific way of writing cinema historiography. To be clear, by no means are these three approaches the only available ways in which one can write film history.[19] For my purposes here I would merely like to identify them as the most dominant modes of cinema historiography at work in the

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[18] White, 42.

[19] There are of course, many, many more approaches one could highlight that are less pervasive. David Bordwell and Kirsten Thomspons identify five types of historical explanatory approaches in their seminal text *Film History: An Introduction* that includes: biographical, industrial or economical, technological, aesthetic, and social/cultural/political.

discipline. Moreover, these approaches employ a similar mode of historical story telling while at the same time adhering to the impulse to relay only the facts of history to their reader. And yet, despite being a discipline whose central object of study is an artistic medium, avant-grade avenues for representing history are nearly non-existent in cinema studies. In the space that follows I will demonstrate how approaches such as "macro" history and "piecemeal" history not only dominate historiographical discourses in cinema studies, but also privilege an explicitly "given" and measurable means of representing history.

First, what exactly are "macro" historical accounts? In cinema studies we can point to several examples of written histories that offer a totalizing account of the medium from its beginnings to its contemporary existence. For example, David Cook's *A History of Narrative Film,* Robert Sklar's *Film: An International History of the Medium*, and David Bordwell and Kirsten Thompson's *Film History: An Introduction* are but three examples of contemporary "macro" historical accounts of the cinema. In each instance, cinema history is divided into a set of temporal breaks that highlight technological innovations, genre developments, film style, the rise of specific national cinemas, or particular modes of production. More importantly, these temporal breaks serve as markers for the ordered periodization of cinema history.

There are of course several periods that macro histories name, but as Mark Betz notes, "one of most consistent periodizations of film history involves the technological break of sound… between films made before 1927 and those made after."[20] The

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[20] Mark Betz, "Exquisite Corpses: Art Cinema, Film Studies and the Omnibus Films" from *Beyond the Subtitle: Remapping European Art Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of

distinction between "silent" and "sound" cinema represents perhaps the largest and most well-established standardization at work within cinema historiography. It is with this distinction between "sound" and "silent" film in mind that David Bordwell founds his understanding of what he calls "The Standard Version" of film history[21]. Bordwell points to the origins of the "Standard Version" in Robert Brasillich and Maurice Bardèche's 1935 "macro" history *Historie du cinema*. As Bordwell notes, *Historie du cinema* "codifies central tendencies of the 'Standard Version'…the division into national schools, the emphasis upon celebrated creators, and the proposition that the history of film is best understood as a search for the distinct qualities of film as art."[22] According to Bordwell, Brasillich and Bardèche's *Historie du cinema* has also been incredibly influential in establishing the practice of periodization as a common way of thinking about film history that extends to other early historians such as George Sadoul, and to a lesser extent André Bazin.[23]

In addition, yet another "standard" set of temporal distinctions can be located in the break between pre and post World War II cinema as characterized by Gilles Deleuze in his two *Cinema* volumes. Despite Deleuze's resistance to characterizations of his thinking as historical, the *Cinema* volumes do organize his philosophy of the cinema around a set of fairly broad historical or taxonomic "images" that come to illustrate the pre and post-war "break." In *Cinema 1: The Movement Image,* Deleuze focuses largely

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Minnesota Press, 2009): 203.
[21] Davide Bordwell,"Defining and Defending the Seventh Art: The Standard Version of Stylistic History" in *On the History of Film Style* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997): 27.
[22] Ibid., 38.
[23] Ibid., 46.

on Soviet Montage, German Expressionism, slapstick comedy, and to some extent

"classical" Hollywood cinema. *Cinema 2: The Time Image* Deleuze shifts his thinking to

an almost exclusive examination of contemporary European Art Cinema. In other words,

in order for Deleuze to even make his broader argument about the transition from the

"movement-image" to the "time-image," he must rely his own odd paradigms for cinema

periodization. Taken together, Deleuze's *Cinema* volumes function as their own

unorthodox "macro" history that both resists and adheres to more classical parameters of

cinema periodization that have come before it.

As much as "macro" historical accounts attempt to offer totalizing historical

accounts of the cinema, there are of course always acknowledged gaps or omissions. As

a response to the lingering omissions offered by "macro" histories David Bordwell notes

that "piecemeal" histories offered a smaller scale with which to make a historical inquiry:

> In the 1970's younger historians began to doubt that one
> scholar could write a comprehensive history of style across
> the world. By concentrating more narrowly on a period, a
> line of development, or a single stylistic issue, they avoided
> the peaks-and-valley overview and began to study continuity
> and change on a more minute scale.[24]

In other words, "Piecemeal" historical approaches could encapsulate research such as a

close survey of the French New Wave, the stylistic development of deep focus

cinematography, or a historical analysis of the Hollywood films of 1939 for example.

Implicit within these smaller historical projects is a more granular approach to writing

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[24] Bordwell, "Prospects for Progress: Recent Research Programs" in *On the History of Film Style,* 118.

and thinking about the cinema. Additionally, "piecemeal" projects may also serve as a corrective to many of the larger assumptions about cinema periods on display in "macro" historical accounts. For instance, Bordwell notes that early cinema scholarship has especially benefitted from more granular approaches to historiography by calling into question the linear progress of cinematic techniques (among many other assumptions) that macro accounts championed. [25] "Piecemeal" history has become an increasingly popular and dominant mode of writing cinema historiography over the last thirty years, largely as a result of the success this approach has attained in updating, refuting, or filling in the gaps left behind by "macro" accounts.

From this all too brief account of cinema historiography, it would appear that all the major approaches named above share a kind of collective impulse to measure and refine, to varying degrees of specificity, cinema's history. With this in mind, it might be more appropriate to consider notions such as "macro" and "piecemeal history" as more strictly scientific in nature. In other words, the conventional practice of periodization that stems from "macro" accounts such as the "Standard Version" function more as a kind of "given" set of scientific principles that adhere to identifiable facts than a set of conceptual parameters open for revision. In other words, the prevalence of "macro" histories has produced a set of assumptions about historical periods that largely go unchallenged in any kind of similar scale. Moreover, "macro" historical accounts such as the "Standard Version" offer the unit of measurement from which cinema historiography does its various projects by telling a coherent story of the cinema; what does not measure up simply goes unconsidered or ignored.

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[25] Ibid., 121.

"Piecemeal" approaches are similarly scientific as well in the sense that their

primary function is to offer a set of highly granular and largely archive-driven

historiographic accounts of the cinema. In other words, "piecemeal" accounts may offer

specific revisions or corrections to "macro" accounts, but their historiographic impulse is

the result of a highly calculated need to fill the gaps left open by larger scale historical

accounts. In this sense, "piecemeal" history functions as a kind of measured additive

element to cinema historiography. It is in these granular accounts that we perceive the

production of the "new" historiographic accounts. However, this "newness" that we

might initially perceive is perhaps always in service to what has already been certified,

made intelligible, or represented as fact.

"Revealing" History

From Hayden White's opening assessment of historiography, it would appear that

the historian's gravest offense is the untimeliness of his thought. However, White's claim

contains much more troubling ramifications than merely suggesting that historiography

contains "antiquated" thinking. At stake in White's understanding of historiography is the

very place and function of representation itself. In other words, White's suggestion that

historiography is firmly entrenched in a specific way of thinking such as nineteenth-

century, scientific, artistic, or any other epoch, only hints at the extent to which all

historiography sets in place a world view that is determined in advance. We see this

"settling" effect at work in cinema studies as well, through the development of the

"Standard Version" and other similar historical accounts that look to measure, certify, or

compare. In the space that follows I hope to both elucidate on this initial claim though a close reading of Martin Heidegger's seminal essay "The Age of the World Picture," and in turn offer a working suggestion for unsettling cinema history from such "technological" thinking.

To begin, it is perhaps best to give consideration to what Heidegger means by historiography when he speaks of it. For Heidegger, the methodology of historiographical discourse "aims at representing what is fixed and stable and making history an object."[26] As Heidegger notes, history only becomes an object when it is past, and in turn this "past-ness" is what grants historiography the stability to channel "the always-has-been-once-already, the comparable."[27] Heidegger explains that it is through the constant comparison of "everything with everything" that we find what is "intelligible, … certified, and established as the ground plan of history."[28] In other words, historiographical explanation takes great pains to verify, evaluate, and interpret the past only to fit it within the realm of what *already* exists or can *already* be determined. As Heidegger notes, "the sphere of historiographical research extends only so far as historiographical explanation reaches."[29] For Heidegger, it is in this limited purview of the *already* that history is made object and the true problem resides.

But how precisely does Heidegger come to locate the "already-ness" that resides in representation? As Heidegger explains, "to represent means here: of oneself to set

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[26] Martin Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture" from *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1977) 123.
[27] Ibid.
[28] ibid.
[29] Ibid.

something before oneself and to make secure what has been set in place, as something set in place."[30] In other words, representation sets something in place always in advance of oneself and in relation to oneself. Heidegger goes on to note that this "setting in place" is largely the function of "knowing, as research," noting that "research has disposal over anything when it can either calculate it in its future course in advance or verify a calculation about its past."[31] To clarify, for Heidegger this kind of "knowing" is not something that is revealed through inquiry, but instead through re-presenting something that has already been determined in advance. It is through this "setting in place" of representation that history or nature becomes an "objectifying that masters…that drives everything together into the unity of that which is thus given the character of object.'[32] In other words, re-presentation as "setting in place" excludes other ways of knowing by determining the grounds of knowledge in advance.

With all this in mind, it perhaps becomes clear how historiography could "settle" across a discipline. The very way in which historiographers come to "know" the past as representation excludes any other possibility since it is already determined within the limits of historiographical explanation. In cinema studies, we can point to the various "macro" historical accounts serving as a similar kind of horizon for knowledge in the discipline. Moreover, smaller "piecemeal" accounts only serve to reinforce an already established horizon for knowledge. This kind of thinking at work in re-presenting history is but one of the larger concerns that Heidegger had about the function of "enframing" or "setting in place". Of primary concern for Heidegger were the larger ramifications of the

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[30] Heidegger, 149.
[31] Heidegger, 127.
[32] Heidegger, 150.

essence of technology on the modern world, and by extension the "technological" or "instrumental" way of thinking that also characterizes the modern age.

In his essay "The Question Concerning Technology," Heidegger gives consideration to technology as a far more sophisticated and deeply complicated concept than we might initially realize upon first pass. As Heidegger explains, technology is commonly thought of as wide assortment of instruments, tools, or machinery that humans invent, build, or exploit. But, Heidegger notes, this is only an "instrumental and anthropological" definition of technology.[33] In other words, in this limited definition technology is only a means to and end or a result of human activity. Rather than focusing on the more everyday nature of technology, Heidegger sets out to uncover the very "essence" of technology.

For Heidegger, the essence of modern technology lies in his understanding of the German word *Gestell* as an "enframing." Enframing is then "the gathering together of the setting-upon that sets upon man, i.e. challenges him forth, to reveal the actual, in the mode of ordering, as standing reserve"[34] In other words, enframing functions as a challenging-forth to human beings to reveal the truth (*aletheia)* as a kind of ready at hand resource to be collected. With this in mind, modern technology is also revealing that orders truth in rather troubling ways, through a challenging-forth that understands nature and human beings as a supply source, or a "standing reserve."[35] For Heidegger, the most problematic aspect of modern technology's enframing is that it "not only conceals a

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[33] Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology" from *Basic Writings* (London: Harper Perennial, 1977): 312.
[34] Ibid.,325.
[35] Ibid., 322.

former ways of revealing (bringing-forth) but also conceals revealing itself…i.e. truth properties"[36] This is the danger that Heidegger comes to see in the rule of enframing; the destruction of a more "original revealing" and " the call of more primal truth."[37]

However, as dangerous and destructive as enframing may potentially be, Heidegger offers the bold suggestion that it may also contain its own "saving power." Heidegger notes that the word "technology" carries with it two distinct meanings that deserve to be unpacked. Stemming from the Greek word *Technikon*, Heidegger posits that the word "technology" belongs to "technē."[38] Heidegger then explains that there was once a time when technē was not just the name for technology, "but also for the arts of the mind and fine arts. Technē belongs to bringing forth, to poiēsis."[39] Heidegger goes on to explain that in ancient Greece art did not derive from the artistic and was not known in aesthetic terms, but instead merely as technē:

> It was a revealing that brought forth and made present, and
> therefore belonged within poiēsis. It was finally a revealing
> which holds complete sway in all the fine arts, in poetry, and
> in everything poetical that obtained poiēsis as its proper
> name.[40]

"Truth" for Heidegger is a "revealing" (*aletheia*), the process of something "showing" itself. It is then in poetic revealing that Heidegger posits the ground for the possibility of understanding the world "as it is." With all this in mind, it should be clear that art's

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[36] Ibid. 333.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid., 318
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid., 339.

relationship with the world is, in Heidegger's view, very different from technology's more destructive tendencies. As Heidegger explains, art is considerably less concerned with measuring, classifying, and exploiting the resources of the world than it is with "taking part" in the process of coming-to-being and revealing the world "as it is."

Heidegger's understanding of both the destructive and saving powers of enframing (*Gestell)* are perhaps instructive for the larger discussion still very much at stake at here. If in fact cinema studies is suffering from a "technological" tendency in the way in which it writes its hisoriographic re-presentations (*vorstellangen)*, then perhaps a more poetic mode of "revealing" or "bringing-forth" must be employed. Cinema, whose defining feature as medium is *motion,* would appear to resist historiographic practices that adhere to what is measurable, settled, or already defined. In other words, it might be best to treat historiographic inquiries in cinema studies less like a science as Hayden White defines it, or an agent of re-presenting as Heidegger might position the practice and more like an experimental or avant-garde practice. Working against the need to classify, measure, or limit, I propose that historical accounts must turn to thinking the cinema "as it is" in its "poetic revealing" as movement. It is only by orienting our "thinking" and our "knowing" toward movement that we can think cinema and its history in its coming-to-being. With this in mind, we must now ask what is cinematic movement? And more importantly, how does it grant us a means to "unsettle" our previous understanding of how cinema historiography is re-presented?

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CHAPTER II

ON CINEMATIC MOVEMENT

From the very beginning the cinema has always been a strange-thing. Writing in

1896 Maxim Gorky offers an illuminating description of his first encounter with this

strange-thing via the Lumière Cinématographe:

> Yesterday I was in the kingdom of shadows. If only you
> knew how strange it is to be there. There are no sounds, no
> colours. There everything- the earth, the trees, the people,
> the water, the air – is tinted in a grey monotone; in a grey
> sky there are grey rays of sunlight; in grey faces, grey eyes,
> and the leaves of the trees are grey like ashes. This is not
> life but the shadow of life and this is not movement but the
> soundless shadow of movement.[41]

What is most striking about Gorky's description in this passage is not the image he paints

of the haunted - otherworldly aesthetic of the silent Lumière film, but rather his reliance

on figurative language to make sense of what is clearly not life or actual movement. .

The world that Gorky sees for the first time in the dark of a Parisian café is not the world

of the everyday, but a world of moving shadows that dance on the screen and seem to

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[41] Maxim Gorky, "The Lumière Cinematograph," in *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents, 1896-1939,* ed. Richard Taylor and Ian Christie, trans. Richard Taylor (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988): 25.

only offer a kind of "one-off" impression of the everyday world. Captured and later projected through the cinématographe, life and movement became "shadows;" though, we could just as easily say they became images or representations. In other words as an image, there is nothing real, actual, or living about life and movement in the cinema. This perhaps explains the reticence that seems to be present in Gorky's description of his first encounter with the Lumière films; it's simply not possible to account for this strange – cinema- thing within the framework of everyday language. With the language of the everyday unable to account for cinematic movement the only recourse left to Gorky was to think about the "soundless shadow of movement" through the figurative power of metaphor. To put it another way, Gorky's recasting of movement in the cinema as the "shadow of movement" perhaps fully connotes the mystery, oddness, and vague familiarity of his experience and at the same time lays the groundwork for additional speculation/thought. Like movement itself there is nothing static about the various meanings offered by metaphoric description.

While Gorky's first impressions of the Lumière cinématographe certainly offer an early indirect account of thinking cinematic movement figuratively, we perhaps find the clearest theoretical writing on the subject within Sergei Eisenstein's *Laocoön*. In the *Laocoön* Eisenstein attempts to make the case for cinema's medium specificity through an exhaustive critical study that compares the function of montage within literature, painting, and cinema. Central to Eisenstein's thinking about montage in the cinema is the distinction he refuses to make between montage cinema and cinema as a whole. As Eisenstein notes, "*all* cinema is montage cinema, for the simple reason that the most fundamental cinematic phenomenon – the fact that pictures move – is a montage

phenomenon."[42] All cinema is montage simply because cinematic movement is

dependant upon the animation of a succession of static frames at a certain speed to

produce the perceived effect of movement. Eisenstein names this phenomenon "micro

montage" in the sense that the succession of static frames necessary to produce cinematic

movement hinges on both the acts of juxtaposition and repetition needed to produce an

effect that we are able to perceive: namely, an image of continuous movement.

With Eisenstein's initial thinking in mind, it's clear that the most basic level of

cinematic movement is dependent upon the "tricking" of our perception by turning static

frames of movement into perceived continuous movement. Eisenstein calls this effect on

our perception the "cinematic phenomenon" and goes on to explain:

> the cinematic phenomenon -the creation of motion out of
> the collision of two motionless forms – we are not dealing
> with natural, physical movement but with something that
> has to do with the way our perceptions work. This is not
> only the primary phenomenon for cinematic technique, it is
> above all the primary phenomenon of the human mind's
> capacity to create images.[43]

In other words, like images, the movement we see in the cinema is not actual, physical, or

real, but rather suggestive and dependent upon our ability to perceive the rapid succession

of static frames as the continuous image of movement. As Eisenstein explains further

"what occurs is not movement; instead our consciousness displays its ability to bring

together *two separate phenomena* into a *generalized image* to merge two *motionless*

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[42] Sergei Eisenstein, "Laocoön," in *Eisenstein, vol. 2, Toward a Theory of Montage,* ed.
Michael Glenny and Richard Taylor, trans. Michael Glenny (London: BFI, 1991): 109.
[43] Ibid., 119.

phases into an *image of movement*."[44] Again, we don't experience actual movement in the

cinema, but instead create a "generalized image" of movement from the way in which our

mind interprets the rapid succession of static frames as continuous movement. We might

just as easily say that all cinematic movement relies on the principle of metaphor to

function, as a figurative formulation that must be perceived and constructed via thought,

rather than experienced as actual.

The distinction Eisenstein makes between actual movement and the image of

movement as the "cinematic phenomenon" is crucial and seemingly forgotten within

cinema studies. As Eisenstein warns in the *Laocoön*, "any other interpretation of the

basic phenomenon of cinema (and the corresponding conclusion to be drawn from it)

would not only be factually incorrect but would furthermore be purely Impressionistic"[45]

Perhaps this is the problem that explains our difficulty in describing cinematic

movement: we're simply too impressionistic in our accounts. Or, as Eisenstein phrases

such impressionistic thinking/seeing, "the dominance of the retina of our eye, i.e.

pictorial imprint, over the brain centres, i.e. over the *reflected image*, was an example of

this trend."[46] Central to the aesthetic and intellectual ideology of impressionism was the

privileging of immediate/instantaneous, subjective visual impressions over lingering

thought or recollection:

> The impressionists do not allow visual impressions to be
> corrected on the basis of experience or recollection, since to
> do so would be to lose the authenticity of the impression
> and with it the truth; thus the outcome would be some

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[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.

blurred compromise midway between true observation and mental interpretation. The artist who paints an eye, a vase, a house or a tree rather than the impression of light and colour emitted by those objects is prone, in the impressionists' view, to a similar delusion. He is thinking instead of seeing. Impressionism regards this kind of thinking as the artist's gravest sin[47]

In other words, artistic "authenticity" and "truth" rely on an immediate and singular perspective, as if the world could *only* be seen in the play of light and color. I don't mean to suggest that impressionists aren't capable of thinking, rather I want to highlight the seemingly sedimentary position of the "pictorial imprint" that is central to their artistic practice and intellectual ideology. The "pictorial imprint" so fundamental to the impressionist aesthetic is perhaps just that: an imprint or a fixed mark. The impressionist imprint is celebrated in its singular vision and totality as being a mark of uniqueness, a kind of artistic and intellectual tunnel vision if you will. To put it another way, we might say that impressionists privilege the fixed indexical sign of the pictorial imprint as a singular totality capable of describing the world or a moment.

Reading the Signs 101

But, how is this impressionistic practice any different from the signs that we typically ascribe to the task of naming movement in the cinema? The cinema's unique ability in the plastic arts to put objects, worlds, or bodies in motion has certainly been a central preoccupation for those looking to make any kind of medium specific claim about

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[47] Ibid., 120.

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the cinema. And yet, while movement is undoubtedly one of cinema's defining qualities,

it is also the most difficult to talk about in any concrete or fixed terms as evidenced by

Gorky and Eisenstein's thinking on the subject. Within the field of cinema studies, a

whole system of descriptive language has been developed to name the various motions,

stutters, transitions, and moving sequences as measurable and determinable natural units.

In other words, we might say that the common practice of categorizing, indexing, or

naming movement is an inherently impressionistic enterprise in which the image of

movement is made actual as an imprint or a fixed sign.

For example, reading any introductory film textbook will inevitably guide readers

to thinking about movement as an editing tool via rhythm, beat, and tempo. As David

Bordwell and Kristin Thompson point out in their introductory book *Film Art*:

> The rhythmic possibilities of editing emerge when several
> shot lengths form a discernable pattern. A steady, metrical,
> beat can be established by making all the shots
> approximately the same length…steadily lengthening shots
> can generate a gradually slowing tempo, while successively
> shorter shots can create an accelerating one.[48]

While it's quite obvious that cinematic movement can function as a kind of rhythmic

composition, which is an idea that Eisenstein took great interest in, Bordwell and

Thompson's understanding of this phenomenon simply ends with a counting of shot

frames and rhythmic changes. In other words, their project involves the location of

movement as an actual, quantifiable, and ultimately concrete sign/impression. At the

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[48] David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 7th edition (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2004): 303.

same time, isn't the very notion of mapping the conventions of musical rhythm, beat, and tempo onto the cinema a kind of metaphorical intervention in itself? As if we could ever escape figurative terms while making counted frames quantifiable/concrete units?

Describing camera movement also proves to be just as much an impressionistic practice for cinema studies. From Bordwell and Thompson's thinking, camera movements are capable of providing certain cues for understanding movement that can be read as actual: "it is difficult not to see camera movement as a substitute for *our* own movement. The objects do not seem to swell or shrink. We seem to approach or retreat from them. We are not, of course completely fooled. We never forget that we are watching a film in a theater. But camera movement provides several convincing cues for movement through space"[49] And yet, in order for Bordwell and Thompson's suggestion that camera movement may function as a substitute for own movement to work, we must assume that cinematic movements and our actual movements are one in the same. The problem of course is that they never are. Moreover, the conflation between actual movement and cinematic movement in this passage also forecloses the possibility that movement can be manipulated to "shrink" or "swell" since any movement in the cinema is inevitably an image of movement.

Additionally, this mapping of actual movement onto cinematic movement also produces specific ways of locating meaning in camera techniques such as pans, tilts, tracking shots, and dolly shots through a taxonomy of "convincing cues." In this schema, pans, tilts, tracking shots, and various other camera movements are reduced to the status of signs/imprints capable of generating a set of predetermined meanings/functions:

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[49] Ibid. 269.

"tracking and crane shots supply continually changing perspectives on passing

objects…pan and tilt shots present space as continuous, both horizontally and

vertically"[50] No doubt these brief descriptions offer the classic narrative for

understanding these particular cinematic movements, but they also take for granted the

contingency of meaning and figurative potential in various techniques available to

filmmakers in every variation of movement. In other words, the numerous classical

descriptions of cinematic movement give us names to images of movement and nothing

more; they can only be dead signs at best.

Deleuze's Movement-Images

As we've seen, classical descriptions of cinematic movement only reinforce a

static understanding of movement that misses the breadth of possible meaning contained

in motion. But how have thinkers outside of cinema studies thought of cinematic

movement? Of the numerous attempts to think cinematic movement perhaps the most

exhaustive study of the cinema's various movements can be found in the first volume of

Gilles Deleuze's two-volume project on the cinema. Central to Deleuze's understanding

of movement in *The Movement-Image* is his insistence that the logic of the "sensory-

motor schema" be the guiding principle from which a taxonomy of image-signs can be

deployed. In other words, Newtonian physics figures prominently not only in Deleuze's

taxonomy of image-signs that determine perception, emotion, and action, but also in his

understanding of the ontology of the image that recasts images as matter – light in

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[50] Ibid.

movement; or rather, a physics of thought/thinking in light. This is of course a much more abstract consideration of the cinema than what Bordwell and Thompson offer, but as we'll see, Deleuze's theory of movement also succumbs to a tendency to "settle" movement as a fixed sign.

Deleuze's ontology of the cinema aside, of principal interest to us here is his preoccupation with the creation of a taxonomy of image-signs in the *Movement-Image*. Borrowing heavily from both Henri Bergson and C.S. Pierce, Deleuze provides us with a staggering eighteen image-signs (more or less) over the course of both *The Movement-Image* and *The Time-Image*. For the sake of brevity I'd like to focus my analysis on Deleuze's first three image-signs of the movement-image: the perception-image, the action-image, and the affection image.

Stemming from a close of reading of Bergson's understanding of perception from *Matter and Memory* Deleuze creates the three principal image signs, each related as Ronold Bogue explains, "in a specific way to the interval of a living center of indetermination."[51] For Deleuze and Bergson this "centre of indetermination" is none other than the human brain. As Deleuze elucidates the brain acts as a kind of plane from which an interval of movements is produced: "the brain is nothing but this – an interval, a gap between action and reaction. The brain is certainly not a centre of images from which one could begin, but itself constitutes one special image among others"[52] From the interval or "gap between action and reaction" located on the brain a living image is produced that is directly tied to the sensory-motor schema as, "a kind of relay system,

[51] Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze on Cinema,* (New York: Routledge, 2003): *35.*
[52] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989): 62.

receiving the external movements of other entities and converting them into the movements of its own actions."[53] Deleuze points out that there are two sides to this gap between action and reaction on the brain: perception and action.

According to Deleuze, the perception of a thing and the thing itself becomes "one in the same image."[54] However, Deleuze also posits that in perception we perceive the thing, minus that which does not interest by way of a kind of selective re-framing of incoming movements. This is the perception-image. Deleuze goes on to elaborate on the subtractive function of the perception-image by saying, "it subtracts from the thing whatever does not interest it. But, conversely the thing itself *must* be presented in itself as a complete, immediate, diffuse perception"[55] It is only from a kind of objective total-frame that the perception-image performs its selective function.

On the opposite side of the gap, or outgoing interval between action and reaction is the action-image. Deleuze comments that the transition from perception to action is "imperceptible" and likens the action image to, "the incurving of the universe, which simultaneously causes the virtual action of things on us and our possible action on things"[56] Deleuze goes on to illuminate the function of the action-image through a linguistic analogy, "just as perception relates movement to 'bodies' (nouns), that is to rigid objects which will serve as moving bodies or as things moved, action relates movement to 'acts' (verbs) which will be the design for an assumed end result"[57] In

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[53] Bogue, *Deleuze on Cinema*, 35.
[54] Deleuze, *The Movement-Image, 63.*
[55] Ibid., 63.
[56] Ibid., 65.
[57] Ibid.

other words, the action-image anticipates possible movement or action as well as puts virtual action into motion; as a verb it makes or anticipates an action.

Finally, the affection-image occupies the interval between perception and action. As Deleuze explains, the affection-image "surges in the centre of indetermination that is to say in the subject, between a perception which is troubling in certain respects and a hesitant action…or, the way in which the subject perceives itself, or rather experiences itself or feels itself 'from the inside.' It relates movement to a 'quality as a lived state (adjective)"[58].   In addition, Deleuze also states that in the affection-image movement is absorbed and in turn works as "a kind of motor tendency on a sensible nerve, that is, a motor effort on an immobilized receptive plate."[59] We might say that the affection image works as a kind of surface, relaying incoming perceptions and outgoing action. As a surface capable of absorption, the affection image also bridges the gap between perception and action where sensation or feeling can be expressed.

While by no means a complete assessment of Deleuze's image-sign taxonomy, it's clear that each of the three basic movement-images performs very specific descriptive tasks pertaining to cinematic movement: once again via their short-hand linguistic labels, perception-image as noun, action-image and verb, and affection-image as adjective. Despite the flexibility and interplay between the various movement-images, Deleuze's taxonomy of image-signs remains at best purely impressionistic and ultimately beholden to a system of fixed image-signs. Like impressionist practices, Deleuze's taxonomy of image-signs (or any taxonomy for that matter) carry out an indexical function, that is

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[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid., 66.

maintaining and mapping a set descriptive criteria to images of movement. However comprehensive or "natural" Deleuze's taxonomy of image-signs may want to be, the problems of intelligibility still persist with every variation in movement. To be clear, it appears that any attempt to describe cinematic movement within a system of meaning (Deleuze's, Newtonian physics, Bordwell and Thompson's, etc.) is doomed to failure since movement is never static.

The Movement Metaphor

So, what is to be done? If taxonomies, systems, or categories of thinking about cinematic movement only lead us to more "static" signs surely we must still find a way to say something about cinematic movement? Perhaps, a possible remedy to this problem can be found in the beginnings of film theorization. It seems clear that we need a less "settled" account of cinematic movement in favor of a return to the metaphoric potential of thinking cinematic movement as the image of movement. In other words we need to reestablish the primacy of Eisenstein's sentiment that, "in cinema, movement is not actual, but is an *image of movement.*"[60] We might just as well say, "In cinema, movement is not actual, but is metaphorical." As Eisenstein warned earlier, any other account of cinematic movement would be impressionistic, or rather beholden to categories of signs.

To confront the problem of understanding cinematic movement's always present figurative potential I wish to draw from Paul de Man's discussion of 'nominal definitions" and "primitive words" from his essay "Pascal's Allegory of Persuasion." In de Man's thinking a primitive word does not function as a sign or a name, but instead

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[60] Eisenstein, "Laocoön", 145.

operates as a vectoral trope through which a figural signifying function is performed. The vector, as deMan sees it, can only gesture toward potential signification, never toward a fixed representation or a sign. With de Man's thinking in mind, to speak about *any* movement one must always speak in figurative language since figurative language itself functions as a kind of semantic movement. This is the politics of movement: dissipating vectoral force and figurative formulation, the signs are never fixed.

De Man begins his discussion of Pascal's *Pensées* in "Allegory of Persuasion" in a place perhaps all too appropriate for our discussion at hand here: by considering allegory. For de Man, attempts to define allegory, like cinematic movement for us, run into a great deal of difficulty. As de Man explains, "allegory is sequential and narrative, yet the topic of its narrative is not necessarily temporal at all, thus raising the question of the referential status of a text whose semantic function, though strongly in evidence, is not primarily determined by mimetic moments; more than ordinary modes of fiction, allegory is at the furthest possible remove from historiography"[61] In other words, in order for allegory to perform its figurative function it does not blindly imitate or mime its coded material; rather, it allows what is to be decoded to loom somewhere outside literal interpretation. As de Man explains via Hegel, allegory and enigma are hardly one in the same, and posits, "Hegel rightly distinguishes between allegory and enigma in terms of allegory's 'aim for the most complete clarity, so that the external means it uses must be as transparent as possible with regard to the meaning it is to make apparent"[62] We might

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[61] Paul de Man, "Pascal's Allegory of Persuasion," in *Aesthetic Ideology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996): 51.
[62] Ibid.

say, then that allegory is simultaneously veiled to our perception and at the same time obvious to those who look for it and can decode its material.

A bit later in the essay de Man goes on to explain the complicated function of allegory in relation to epistemology when he suggests, "allegory is the purveyor of demanding truths, and thus its burden is to articulate an epistemological order of truth and deceit with a narrative or compositional order of persuasion"[63] Since allegory works by providing both apparent and veiled meanings within a persuasive narrative its epistemology carries with it a dual function, always fluctuating between truth and deceit. Or as deMan puts it: "in a stable system of signification, such an articulation is not problematic; a representation is, for example, persuasive and convincing to the extent that it is faithful, exactly in the same manner that an argument is persuasive to the extent that it is truthful. Persuasion and proof should not, in principle, be distinct from each other, and it would not occur to a mathematician to call his proofs allegories."[64] Here we see de Man attempt to trouble the stability that epistemological claims imply; in a sense, they always perform a kind of persuasive function by way of the verification of their sign and claim to a "truth." However, de Man is quick to point out that allegory makes this alignment between epistemology and proof much more complicated. As de Man laments, "why is it that texts that attempt the articulation of epistemology with persuasion turn out to be inconclusive about their own intelligibility in the same manner and for the same reasons that produce allegory?" [65] In other words, the relationship between epistemology

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[63] Ibid., 52.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.

and persuasion can only be at best expressed in the referentially indirect terms of allegory because both epistemology and persuasion are unstable discursive modes.

In de Man's discussion of the distinction between nominal and real definitions in Pascal's thinking from the *Réflexions,* we perhaps witness this breakdown of epistemology and persuasion. In this section de Man begins locating the importance of geometry within Pascal's thinking where we only encounter definitions of name that are clearly designated and known in quantifiable terms. This kind of "stenography" as de Man describes it, performs the task of denomination without contradiction since nominal definitions are always clearly designated. On the other hand, real definitions are much more difficult to pin down. As de Man explains, "they are actually not definitions, but axioms, or even more frequently, propositions that need to be proven."[66] DeMan points out that the confusion between the two types of definitions is one of the classic problems within philosophy. But for Pascal, his reliance on geometry proves useful in maintaining the distinction between nominal and real definitions.

It should come as no surprise that deMan is quick to trouble Pascal's claim to geometry as a system capable of making such a distinction between the two definitions. As deMan explains, "as soon as it is enunciated, the apparently simple definition of definition runs into complications, for the text glides almost imperceptibly from the discussion of nominal definition to that of what is it calls 'primitive words,' which are not subject to definition at all, since their pretended definitions are infinite regresses of accumulated tautologies"[67] To put it another way, attached to "primitive words" is a pre-

[66] Ibid. 56.
[67] Ibid.

existing linguistic register that guarantees a basic intelligibility despite the fact that

definition remains an impossibility. DeMan goes on to explain that if primitive words

have a natural meaning as such, they would have to be universal "like the science that

operates with these words."[68] However, even Pascal doesn't believe this to be the case,

since it's impossible to say that everyone has the same idea about the definition of a

particular object. Instead Pascal qualifies his thinking by stating, "it's not the nature of

these things which I declare to be known by all, but simply *the relationship between the*

name and the thing, so that on hearing the expression *time*, all turn (or direct) the mind

toward the same entity"[69] To clarify, de Man comes to posit that Pascal's "primitive

word," "does not function as a sign or a name, as was the case with nominal definitions,

but as a vector, a directional motion that is manifest only as a turn, since the target toward

which it turns remains unknown. In other words, the sign has become a trope, a

substitutive relationship that has to posit a meaning whose existence cannot be verified,

but that confers upon the sign an unavoidable signifying function."[70]

There is much to consider in these brief lines that perhaps relates directly to the

impossibility of fixed or stable definition. First, in these lines deMan extends Pascal's

original thinking on the universality of recognizing the relationship between a name and a

thing to the realm of speculative or figural reading. We might say that deMan's turn

towards the physics of movement in describing the relationship between a thing and its

name is itself an act of figural speech; we first must know what a vector is, decode it, and

recognize its potential application within the realm of language. This adds yet another

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[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid. Pascal, as quoted in "Pascal's Allegory of Persuasion"

[70] Ibid.

layer to an already confounding problem of recognizing the relationship between a thing

and its name. Oddly enough, a vector in physics and mathematics is typically

characterized as having a quantifiable force attached to its directional motion/movement.

However, de Man's usage of the vector in this passage seems to forgo any notion of

concrete quantifiable force but rather only *suggests* the force of a directional movement

toward an unknown target. It is perhaps no surprise that de Man comes to recognize this

vectoral function of the sign as a kind of trope since it can only perform what we might

call a figural signifying function to a meaning(s) that cannot be quantitatively conferred;

in other words, it can only gesture toward potential signification, rather than any fixed

representation of a sign.

 Is this not what cinematic movement does? As cinematic movement is always

allegorical, metaphorical, or figurative de Man's understanding of the vector offers a

compelling framework to think cinematic movement as the image of movement. To put it

another way, words, like movement itself, de Man's vectoral trope is also grounded as a

semantically contingent force. Rather than acting as a "settling" enterprise such as

Deleuze's taxonomy of image-signs or the classical names we attribute to cinematic

movement, de Man's vectoral trope offers only a dissipating suggestive force that can be

contingently ascribed to movement in the cinema. Movements are not reduced to fixed or

static signs or re-presentations, but are instead always suggestive of the figurative

potential of movement.

Through the thinking advanced above, it is clear that cinematic movement is an

unsettling force, but how might a turn to towards cinematic movement come to trouble

cinema historiography? In other words, how might a history attuned to cinematic

movement take shape? One possible example of both deMan's vector and cinema history as movement is Jean Luc Godard's multi chapter video-art project *Histoire(s) du cinéma. Histoire(s)* is much less a history of the cinema than it is a moving archive of cinema history. Godard's project is a video labyrinth of memories and references from hundreds of films, texts, and works of art that are set in dialogue with one another through a variety of formal effects such as superimposition, juxtaposition, and movement. In the next chapter I wish to posit that *Histoire(s)* appears to offer something very different from a "settled" historical discourse that conventional "macro" histories ascribe to. Instead, *Histoire(s) du Cinema* presents cinema history as a nexus of "vectors" or trajectories of potential meaning.

CHAPTER III

HISTORIE(S) DU CINÉMA AND POETIC REVEALING

DeMan's understanding of the vector is especially important for our discussion of the

type of historiography that *Histoire(s) du cinéma* does. Rather than positing history as

any kind of fixed sign, *Histoire(s)* fully embraces the unsettled possibility of thought and

figurative potential of history as a vector told through video superimposition, montage,

and *moving* images. With this in mind, *Histoire(s) du cinéma* offers the promise of

encountering the unexpected, both in thought and in the images it produces. With this in

mind, I would like to devote the space the follows to a closer exploration of Godard's

project, by focusing on a number of sequences and images from *Histoire(s) du cinema*

that point to the possibility of thinking about history in movement.

While one could locate a seemingly infinite number of examples, I'd like to point

to a sequence early in the opening chapter "Toutes les Histoires," to illustrate a common

example of how Godard unsettles the practice of periodization common to "macro"

historical accounts through montage. The sequence begins with a transition between

scenes from F.W. Murnau's silent feature *Faust* and Vincente Minnelli's

Hollywood musical *Band Wagon*. In the scene from *Faust* we see the character

Mephisto appear in a burst of flames before Faust, who is shown sleeping on the ground

in a long static shot accompanied by block text that reads, "LE CINEMA SUBSTITUTE"

superimposed over the image. In response to the sudden appearance of the new mystical

visitor in the frame, Faust jumps up from ground in surprise. We then briefly see the

image of actress Cyd Charisse from *Bandwagon* seated at a bar wearing a black trench

coat superimposed over the image of Faust rising to his feet. Godard then dissolves back

to the scene from *Bandwagon* where we are shown a medium shot of Cyd Charisse as she

gets up from her seat at the bar and takes off her coat to reveal a stunning sequined red

dress. Another dissolve back to *Faust* shows us Mephisto tipping his hat to Faust.

Godard then dissolves back to *Bandwagon* once more, and we see Cyd Charisse in a

medium shot dance across the bar toward a dapper looking Fred Astaire. Cyd Charisse

seductively circles around Fred Astaire with her dance and then puts her arms around his

head as she stands in front of him. In the same medium shot, we then see Fred Astaire

raise his arm to reveal that he is holding a revolver of some kind. Godard then dissolves

back to the scene from *Faust* and we once again see superimposed block text over the

image that reads "CINEMA SUBSTITUTE." Finally, Godard cuts to black and then cuts

back to the scene from *Bandwagon* with the same text superimposed over the image.

There is much to unpack here, but primarily I'd like to highlight the ways in

which this sequence does the work of deMan's vector. In other words, what does this

juxtaposition point to? The most obvious thread of thinking present in this montage

sequence is the narrative connection that both *Faust* and *Bandwagon* share. In

Bandwagon, the main troupe of performers attempts to put on a modern Broadway

restaging of *Faust* that ends up going terribly awry. In the resulting chaos from the stage production love blooms between Fred Astaire's Tony and Cyd Charisse's Gabrielle. However, I believe this narrative connection is less important than what this sequence unsettles in terms of historical representation and the very function of its images. To put it another way, how does the juxtaposition of a silent film and a color Hollywood film open up new possibilities for thinking? Do we need to think in terms of historical period at all?

To show an act of revealing in the cinema, which I believe the sequences from both films demonstrate, it doesn't matter if one film is shot in black and white and the other is shot in color; or if one film is shot at twenty four frames per second and the other at eighteen. What I am saying is that both *Bandwagon* and *Faust reveal* something in their respective frames when taken together: the production of a new abstract thought. The transition from an image of the devil appearing (Mephisto) to a red dress under a coat carries with a certain abstract potential for meaning. In other words, one possible way of reading this montage sequence is that it points to the popular phrase "devil in a red dress" by virtue of the two juxtaposed images. However, I believe the linking involved here does not settle on Cyd Charisse with this distinction, but perhaps grants all of cinema this title. Placing images from chronologically distinct eras next to one another in this playful manner smooths over the tendency we have to think of them historically, at least temporarily. In other words, when combined we can unquestionably locate all of their distinct and periodized differences, but Godard's montage also points to their combined production of a new thought; an unforeseen verctoral force as the phrase "devil in a red dress."

As much as montage points to new vectoral possibilities, Godard's use of various superimposed images throughout *Histoire(s)* perhaps allows for even more unexpected ways of thinking. While there are hundreds, if not thousands of possible examples of this type of technique, I'd like to draw from a pair of sequences that use superimposition to make some rather intriguing historical claims. The first sequence, comes from the section "une vague nouvelle" and begins with a black and white still image of Sergei Eisenstein seated at an editing bench looking at a film strip. Superimposed onto this image in the left corner of the frame, is the non-static close up of Anna Karina's face from *Une femme est une femme*. In this sequence we see her rest her head on hands and look up into the distance. As this sequence unfolds, we also see sumperimposed block text over both the Eisenstein image and the Karina image that transitions from BEAU MONTAGE, to MONTAGE MON BEAU, to finally MON BEAU SOUCI. Finally, Godard then cuts to a composite sumperimposed image of Ana Karina and an image of the sleeping lion statue from Eisenstein's *Potemkin*.

Unlike a dissolve that only briefly allows for the simultaneous meeting of the arriving and departing images, a composite superimposition like the one described above offers a realm of true co-existence for the collective images or texts that share a frame. With this in mind, it becomes much more difficult to locate well-defined spatial or temporal orientations within the composite image itself. Rather than attempt to separate and measure the different individual particulars at work in this composite image, Karina, Eisenstein, Godard, I'm much more interested in sussing out what their combined presence says. In other words, what does this composite image point to? What does it say about its own odd historical configuration?

As striking as the images of Karina and Eisenstein are, I'm first intrigued by

Godard's use of textual superimposition. There is a larger idea at stake here, a thought

about "BEAU MONTAGE" or beautiful montage. What is beautiful montage? What

brings this into being? The textual reference in this sequence to Godard's *Cahiers du*

cinma essay "Montage, Mon Beau Souci" perhaps illuminates this question. Writing on

the use of montage in *Cahiers du cinéma*, Godard notes:

> Cutting on a look is almost the definition of montage…It is,
> in effect, to bring out the soul under the spirit, the passion
> behind the intrigue, to make the heart prevail over the
> intelligence by destroying the notion of space in favour of
> that of time.[71]

In other words, montage allows for a poetic revealing, the bearing of the soul and

primacy of the heart through a look. Of course, the "look" on display in Godard's

sequence is Karina's look that seems to initially point to nowhere specific. However, in

cutting from Karina's look to the new composite image of Karina and Eisenstein's

Potemkin lion, Godard's theory is put into action. This is beautiful montage: from a look

to a thought.

But, what larger ideas might this look point to? Why do Ana Karina and the

Potemkin lion meet in the same frame? One possible way of reading this sequence would

suggest that Godard is attempting to draw a kind of superficial equivalence between

himself and Eisenstein. In other words, both are theorists and practitioners of montage

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[71] Jean –Luc Godard, "Montage, Mon Beau Souci" *Cahiers du Cinéma*, No. 65 (December 1956).

who see its potential for abstract thought when employed artistically.[72] On the other

hand, the composite image of Ana Karina and the *Potemkin* lion is much more

confounding. Both images are well known within their respective historical periods, each

a famous symbol within a movement or aesthetic school (French New Wave and Soviet

Montage respectively). And yet, both Karina and the lion statue appear to sleeping in the

sequence that Godard shows us. Perhaps then the larger point at stake is the notion that

montage is the element that brings life to the image, and in turn animates its existence; or

in Godard's terms gives cinema its "heart." However, this is not just an aesthetic claim,

but rather a historical claim for the virtue of montage as well. In other words, the

theoretical and historical shift from "montage" cinema to "mise en scene" as documented

by Andre Bazin and other critics marked a certain loss for montage as an art form.

Godard's brief sequence here, and the larger aesthetic project of *Histoire(s) du* cinéma

challenge this assumption writ large. For Godard, montage is the "heart" of cinema.

There is no substitute.

Yet another example of Godard's use of superimposition can be found in the "une

'vague nouvelle' chapter that also features a pair of symbolic figures of the French New

Wave. For instance, in this sequence New Wave supporter Henri Langlois finds his

equivalent with the Lumière brothers via video superimposition and the New Wave's

reverence for Borzage, and Murnau is found once more after being buried deep the

archive.

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[72] In many ways, *Histoire(s)* du cinema may very well be Godard's bid for recognition alongside Eisenstein as a serious practitioner of "intellectual" montage. In other words, the ideas that Godard attempts to draw out in his many montage sequences are just as rigorous and inventive as anything we might see in *Octobter*, or *Potemkin.*

The image of Henri Langlois, one of the founders of the Cinémathèque Française, appears several times throughout *Histoire(s) du Cinéma* in several chapters, however never as prominently as they do in" une vague nouvelle." For example, midway through this chapter we find a composite video superimposition comprised of a color Lumière cinématographe poster that features an angel on the left and the black and white image of Langlois posed with a cinématographe on the right. Rather than being layered on top of each other the composite image presents its component images (the angel/Langlois) as determinable spatial equivalents. The component images in the angel/Langlois image seem to co-habitate with spatial boundaries that are largely well defined, split, as they are, down the middle of the frame. To this end, the juxtaposition of Langlois and the Lumière angel produces a historical vector; a figurative representation of not only historical co-mingling but also of a suggestive variation in meaning.

 For example, if we read the spatial division in the frame as equivalential then it's possible to assume that the composite image suggests that both Langlois and the Lumière are of divine origin. Aesthetically speaking Langlois has never looked more saintly than he does here juxtaposed with an angel. In other words, this is Godard's creation scene, the site where both the Lumière brothers and Langlois gave birth to a cinema (Langlois the New Wave and the Lumière's early cinema respectively).

Aside from this video superimposition, the specter of Langlois appears again later in chapter 3B during a Godard voice over that recounts the coming into being of the New Wave. Over an image of Napoleon in a small sailboat at sea from Abel Gance's *Napoleon* we hear Godard say, "One evening we went to Henri Langlois' house and then there was light..it had nothing to do with Saturday movies…because those films were for

everyone. Not for us. Everyone but us. Because true cinema was the kind that couldn't be seen. That was the only kind."

Very shortly after Godard's statement we "see" the founding cinema of the New Wave that was un-seen through a brief sequence of Frank Borzage's *The River (La femme au corbeau)* where we find the image of a man on his back floating toward Mary Duncan who sits on a nearby rock on a river shore. During this sequence Godard's narration once again seems to support the invisible status of the New Wave's cinema when he says, "But we would never see *La femme au corbeau*. We had to love it blindly. And by heart."

In other words, this is Godard's story of the New Wave's origin, founded not only in the "belief" of Langlois' pedagogy but also in a kind of cinephiliac reverence for a body of cinema that remains "un-seen" as an absent presence; out of reach to those who don't "see", or don't "believe." Godard's characterization of the New Wave's religiosity towards "invisible" cinema is further supported during a city sequence from Murnau's *Sunrise* where we hear yet another voice over by Godard elaborate on his thinking where he states, "because already forgotten. Still banned. Always invisible. Such was our cinema. And it stayed with me. And Langlois confirmed it. That is the precise word."

What is most striking about Godard's succinct creation story of the New Wave is that it is without question very different from any of the popularized historical discourses of the New Wave's beginnings. Oddly enough, the notion that one could see the beginnings of the New Wave in the citations or references of Rossellini, Hitchcock, Hawks, Renoir etc, in the films of the New Wave appears to be troubled here. Godard's origin story points to something elusive, something "always invisible." But how can we

account for the appearance of images and sequences from a cinema that is positioned and named as "invisible?" Firstly, we would do well to perhaps add some degree of nuance to Godard's figurative use of "invisible" here; obviously we can see the images, instead we might say these "invisible images" of *The River* and *Sunrise* are under seen or at least buried deep in the bowels of the archive. It is important to point out that Godard is largely talking about a reverence for "lost" or incomplete films, films that can typically only be seen as fragments or stills. They are "invisible" in the sense that their existence isn't immediately apparent; like myths waiting to be retold once again.

However, *Histoire(s) du cinema* appears to do something much more complicated than simply make apparent images that are often in the margins of the archive. Might we say instead, something vectoral happens here? In these sequences isn't the "invisible" cinema of the New Wave already recast as something of an abstraction? The figurative re-arranging of the fragments of this "invisible" cinema in Godard's frame manage to create a new nexus of suggestive forces that open up a multitude of historical vectors. In the example here, we find a different reading (another story) of the New Wave's beginning, one vector of many in the historical plurality that *Histoire(s)* gives representation to.

Towards an Apprenticeship

Late chapter 3B we find Godard sitting on a bench reading a book near a doorway with an image of *Vertigo's* redwood forest superimposed over him; a man and a woman walk past Godard and we hear Godard say "did you like that?" The man then responds,

"yes, interesting stuff," however the woman remarks in disagreement, exclaiming, "tons of pictures of works, never any people!" The man than offers the answer, "that's the New Wave. Auteur Theory. By authors. Works!" Godard then lifts his head out of his book to agree with man saying, "your friend is right mademoiselle. Works first, the men after." The women later returns again only to accuse Godard of "having no heart," to which Godard retorts, "we can film work, not hearts." In a fairly lengthy speech Godard claims that we are living in a period where we have "too many hands and not enough hearts" and the real challenge (of artistic production, labor practices, etc.) is to ultimately work with our hearts. Godard then goes on to claim that he knows no era "that lacked work for all its hearts." Immediately after this claim, we see a brief montage of images of Jaques Becker, Roberto Rossellini, George Fanju, and Jean Pierre Melville . In response we hear the voice of the woman from the previous sequence ask "all the same, Becker, Rossellini, Melville, Franju, Jacques Demy, Truffaut. You knew them?" as their images flash before us once more. We then finally hear Godard reply, "yes, they were my friends."

I find this sequence remarkable, and quite moving for a several reasons. Firstly, I think it's worth reading the exchange between Godard and the couple as a direct critique of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* writ large. Which is to say, *Histoire(s)* unabashedly conforms to notions of auteur worship and certainly draws its many images and ideas from works that are canonized in this way. But, this is a critique that Godard seems to be fully aware of himself and even embraces. How could it not be? As confounding as *Histoire(s)* is at times in registering its meaning it is still Godard's "heart" that is largely on display throughout this entire project.

Granted, this is an overly sentimental statement, but I think it deserves to be

mulled over. Why would we ever need more heart? What would this entail? The heart is a

resilient organ, a tough muscle, it has to be in order circulate blood through our bodies.

But, more importantly it is the organ that animates us and allows our bodies to move. If

we remember correctly, montage is also the "heart" of Godard's cinema and it is through

montage that Godard animates the past for us; wakes it from its slumber and unsettles its

being. In other words, it is through this artistic practice that cinema and its history comes

to life in movement. What White, Heidegger, and now Godard seem to suggest all along

is that a poetic way of seeing, making, and being in the world is necessary if any concept

of possibility or difference is to be sustained.

And yet, "heart" in this context means much more than merely an abstract notion

of animation, but also affection, a sensitivity, or even love. In other words, we must be

sensitive to our craft as thinkers, historians, or filmmakers as well as to the poetic

revealing at work in art and across the whole of being. This sensitivity to our craft could

of course take shape in many different ways, but perhaps its most instructive form could

be found in the notion of apprenticeship.

But what precisely is meant by an apprenticeship? In Gilles Deleuze's *Proust and*

Signs we perhaps find a proper model. For Deleuze signs are "the object of a temporal

apprenticeship, not of an abstract knowledge."[73] In other words, signs are learning

objects that we come to know over time. As Deleuze illustrates, "one becomes a

carpenter by becoming sensitive to the signs of wood, a physician by becoming sensitive

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[73] Gilles Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000),
        4.

to the signs of disease." As Deleuze notes, "everything that teaches us something emits signs; every act of learning is an interpretation of signs or hieroglyphs."[74] To put it another way, it is the task of the apprentice to interpret or think about the signs around him or her and be sensitive to their presence.

Deleuze then goes on to explain that love is also one of several circles in Proust's Search that is central to apprenticeship. To love someone or something is to "individualize someone by the signs he bears or emits. It is to become sensitive to these signs, to undergo an apprenticeship to them"[75]. In other words, the beloved also appears as a sign that is an unknown world to us that must be interpreted. Deleuze proposes that an apprenticeship of signs also involves pluralism for loved beings. As Deleuze notes, "what is involved, here, is a plurality of worlds, the pluralism of love does not concern only the multiplicity of loved beings, but the multiplicity of souls or worlds in each of them. To love is to try to *explicate*, to develop these unknown worlds that remain enveloped within the beloved."[76] To put it another way, the various worlds of my beloved are never solely mine to explore. It is entirely possible that others might have experienced my beloved's various worlds before me. Ultimately, my relationship with my beloved is never static, but instead reveals itself to be a kind of unfolding through the explication of new worlds in my beloved.

It is in this way, as an apprentice, that we must become sensitive to the signs of movement and difference if we are to think about history as anything but merely re-

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[74] Ibid., 4.
[75] Ibid., 5.
[76] Ibid., 7.

presentation. Godard's *Histoire(s)* leaves us with a potential model for thinking cinema history in movement as a poetic revealing. In other words, Godard's *Histoire(s)* demonstrates that there is always more to ask about our history, always more to seek. As apprentices to movement there are entire worlds of meaning still left to explore and find new possibilities in, even in what has previously been "settled" or demarcated as "known." It is possible for all of us committed to thinking about cinema history to be apprentices like Godard's friends: Becker, Truffuat, Franju, Rossellini, Melville, etc. This does not mean that we must all become filmmakers, but merely have a "heart" oriented towards the poetic possibilities of revealing the world, whether through historiography, philosophy, or the cinema itself.

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Scope and Method of Study: Thesis

This thesis attempts to consider how historiography can be understood and visualized in

its plurality through the various aesthetic and stylistic features of cinema. Working

against more traditional notions of historiography in cinema studies, I offer the

suggestion that scholars should give greater consideration to cinematic movement as a

tangible quality of the medium that resists its many "settled" historical claims. By

establishing the primacy of cinematic movement within film history I posit that a shift

towards more figurative or poetic representations of history are necessary in order to

understand historiography as it really is; in other words, in its multiplicity. I suggest that

Jean-Luc Godard's expansive *Histoire(s) du cinéma* offers such a way of visualizing and

thinking the multiplicity of histories at work in cinema studies. Through a close reading

of *Histoire(s)*, specific attention is given to the role of Godard's aesthetic ideas and their

ability to reveal poetic possibilities through video superimposition and montage.

Ultimately, *Histoire(s)* reveals a pluralistic account of cinema history where disparate

historical periods converge and are re-thought in Godard's images.

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