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The relocation of cinema¹

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Tacita

In October 2011, the British artist Tacita Dean presented her work *Film* at the Tate Modern in London.² Dean's installation is a film short projected in a continuous loop onto a large screen in a dark space furnished with seats for visitors. The written explication at the entrance to the room draws attention to the presence of all these elements: '35mm colour and black & white portrait format anamorphic film with hand tinted sequences, mute, continuous loop, 11 minutes. Large front projection; projection booth; free standing screen; loop system; seating.' In her article in the *Guardian*, Charlotte Higgins described *Film* as 'pay[ing] homage to a dying medium'.³ In addition, *Film* is undoubtedly an act in defense of film stock – that same film stock which Kodak announced (on 22 June 2009) it would cease to manufacture after 74 years of production, due to a steep decline in sales.

Beyond the preservation of a medium-support, *Film* seems to also invoke the preservation of a medium-device: in the Tate we find a projector, a reflective screen, a darkroom, a bench on which to sit – all things which are becoming increasingly rare in the age of digital images. In essence, Dean attempts to restore all the essential elements of the cinema, those which characterise its technical foundation. Paradoxically, she sets these elements before us as components of an artistic installation; she gathers and reunites them for the purposes of a work intended for a gallery or museum. It is no accident then that visitors to Turbine Hall do not hold the same expectations or display the same behavior as they would if they found themselves at the British Film Institute Southbank (which is not far from the Tate) to see a

Woody Allen retrospective in one of its small theaters, or even at the Imax theater to see *Mission: Impossible – Ghost Protocol* (Brad Bird, 2011). This audience did not go to Turbine Hall to experience what is usually called *cinema* – which is to say, a set of images and sounds that provide a particular representation of the world and a particular relationship with a spectator. The audience went there for *art*. Immediately a question arises: did Dean, in her attempt to preserve a medium (a support, a device), end up sliding out of the field of cinema as media (a form of representation and spectatorship)?⁴

Film acquires its own exemplarity thanks to its preservation of a medium without necessarily saving the media. If we are dealing with an attempt at rescuing cinema, the failure of the endeavor makes plain the tragedy of the situation. If, instead, as I believe, we are dealing with a transfer of cinema to another terrain (that of art), then the gesture becomes productive. Some traditional components (the machinery, film stock) are seen from a point of view that goes beyond them. This allows for cinema to be interrogated, almost provoked, so that it gives rise to new stances, which have lain dormant until now. In other words, in *Film*, art's relocation of cinema would aid it in outlining a new terrain. However, whether Tacita is fighting for cinema's preservation or dreaming of its liberation, one point is clear to me: only by contemplating its own death can cinema now find new reasons to live.

As a near counterpoint, if we exit the Tate, or the British Film Institute (too easily identifiable as a 'temple' in which canonical works are preserved), we find many episodes in which cinema-as-media not only continues to live but expands beyond its habitual territories, even absent its medium. For example, at almost the same time as Dean's exhibit was inaugurated, a group of Londoners re-appropriated a space alongside a canal under a highway overpass and transformed it into a kind of outdoor movie theater where films were projected for the neighborhood residents.⁵ In August 2011 the gardens in front of Paris' Trocadero (the old site of the Cinémathèque) hosted the Moon Light Festival with open-air screenings.⁶ Some months prior to this, in Cairo's Tahrir Square, a space that had already been active during the Arab Spring was reanimated with a projector and a large screen on which videos of various kinds were shown.⁷ Indeed, the diffuse presence of cinema-as-media goes well beyond these episodes.

We can now watch films on various new devices: Blockbuster offers us a catalog of titles for our DVD players; Netflix offers streaming titles for our televisions and computers; other companies propose new releases for our smart phones; we can watch video sequences on YouTube. Similarly, we find films on airplanes as well as in cafés and bars, even if mingled with sports

and news. The film industry itself supports these new forms of distribution.⁸ In addition, there is an enormous profusion of images and sounds that uses a cinematographic language even in less traditional formats: we find cinema in television series, documentaries, advertisements, musical clips, didactic presentations, etc.; we encounter it, disguised in such ways, in waiting rooms, stores, public squares, along streets, on urban media-facades, etc. Finally, there is a vast array of online content that still has something to do with cinema – whether it be a trailer or a parody, a video diary or a travelogue. We may download this content onto our iPad or cell phone, wherever we are, as long as we are connected. The enormous diffusion of screens in our daily life – including those of the latest generation, which are well-integrated into domestic and urban environments, interactive and multi-functional, in the form of a window or tabletop⁹ – produces a permanence of the cinema. This diffusion allows cinema to continue to survive, even as it adapts to a new landscape.

Therefore, we find ourselves confronting a minor paradox: we have an artist defending the medium, i.e. emphasising a particular configuration of support and device, even to the detriment of the media; also, there is an evident tendency, to which industry, consumers, and fans are not immune, to promote the survival of the media, i.e. a mode of representation and spectatorship, even while renouncing the medium. It is precisely this paradox that allows us to begin to think about the state of cinema today beyond the facile proclamations that announce its death or celebrate its triumphs. What is happening to cinema in a moment in which it is losing essential components and gaining unprecedented opportunities? What is it becoming at a moment in which all media, due to the processes of convergence, seem to be spilling out beyond their usual routes and embarking along new paths? What is cinema, and moreover, where is it?¹⁰

I will begin to respond to these questions by analysing four points, in order to trace out the terrain. First of all, a media, singular, is not just its medium – it is not only a support or a device. A media is also and foremost a cultural form; it is defined by the way in which it puts us in relation with the world and with others, and therefore by the type of experience that it activates. By *experience*, I mean both a confrontation with reality (to gain experience) and the capacity to manage this relation and to give it meaning (to have experience). From its very beginnings, cinema has been based on the fact that it offers us moving images through which we may reconfigure the reality around us and our own position within it. Cinema has always been a way of seeing and a way of living – a form of sensibility and a form of understanding.¹¹

Second, experiences circulate and are also reactivated in sites other than their canonical location. The cinematic experience is no exception. We can find it outside of the traditional darkened theater, on other screens; and though it is certainly not the same, it still retains many of its characteristic traits. It is precisely this *relocation* of the experience that allows cinema to survive. Third, there is no doubt that the new contexts push the cinema-as-media toward transformation. The material conditions underpinning a media experience (and its technical basis in specific) play an essential role. Nevertheless, the experience can remain the same in some respects inasmuch as it conserves its *form*, its configuration. In other words, inasmuch as it continues to correspond to a certain *idea* that we have about cinema – an idea that emerges from our habits, memories, and also from our intuition of what it means to ‘see a film’.

Finally, the conservation of an *idea of cinema* in the face of the new and anomalous situations we now find ourselves in has a cost: it involves rethinking the past as such that it appears necessary and compatible with the present, and perhaps also with the future; that which has been must present itself as the presupposition and the model of that which is and that which perhaps will be. Only in this way can the idea of cinema maintain a kind of continuity, and can we refer to new experiences as ‘cinematographic’. This leads us to a final paradox: not only is the history of cinema something that we are continuously rewriting under the pressure of the present, but it is also taking form while simultaneously confronting the danger of cinema’s demise. It is a glorious history – but also one which is ever more irremediably posthumous.

Cinema and experience

The cinema, from the moment of its birth, has been considered a particular form of experience. Obviously, it also involves a technical device; indeed, the earliest theoreticians were fascinated by the presence of a ‘machine’. Jean Epstein’s famous portrait of the movie camera comes to mind:

[t]he Bell and Howell is a metal brain, standardized, manufactured, marketed in thousands of copies, which transforms the world outside it into art ... [A] subject that is an object without conscience – without hesitation and scruples, that is, devoid of venality, indulgence, or possible error, an entirely honest artist¹²

Then there is Blaise Cendrars' description of the projector:

[a]bove the spectator's head, the bright cone of light wriggles like a dolphin. Characters stretch out of the screen to the lantern lens. They plunge, turn, pursue one another, crisscross, with a luminous, mathematical precision.¹³

It is no coincidence then that in a key text of early cinema theory, 'The Birth of a Sixth Art', Ricciotto Canudo writes of 'a new kind of theatre, a scientific theatre, built with precise calculations, a mechanical mode of expression'.¹⁴ Nor is it a coincidence that in Europe during the first three decades of the 20th century, one of the most common epithets for the cinema was 'the mechanical art' – a term that is found in the title of a book by Eugenio Giovannetti, which is rich in proto-Benjaminian ideas.¹⁵ Cinema is undoubtedly a device geared toward conserving images on film and restoring them, projected onto a screen – cinema is undoubtedly a medium.

Nevertheless, the 'machine' is not valued for what it is but rather for what it can do and for what it makes the spectator do. Béla Balász, in one of the more crucial pages of *The Visible Man*, speaks of cinema as 'a technology for the multiplication and the dissemination of the products of the human mind'.¹⁶ The printing press is a technology too – but while it has 'in time rendered men's faces illegible', cinema rehabilitates our visual abilities and restores our familiarity with the language of the body. 'Every night millions of people sit in the cinema and through their eyes lives the experience of events, characters, sentiments and emotions of every kind, with no need of words.'¹⁷ The emphasis is placed on the way in which the device mobilises our senses and places us in relation with reality – on the type of experience that it brings to the surface.

This experience owes much to the 'machine', but not everything. It relies on a technology but it also finds sustenance elsewhere. For example, the exaltation of vision is undoubtedly linked to the fact that cinema works off of images, and furthermore, it presents them to us in a darkened room, which augments our concentration. As Giovanni Papini recalled, '[cinema] occupies a single sense, the view, [...] and this unique focus is ensured even further, in an artificial manner by the dramatic Wagnerian darkening of the theatre, which prevents any distraction'.¹⁸ However, if we are compelled to watch, it is also a result of our curiosity and our obsessions. Epstein noted that '[w]e demand to see because of our experimental mentality, because of our desire for a more exact poetry, because of our analytic propensity, because we need to make new mistakes.'¹⁹ Walter Serner, in an extreme and fascinating text, speaks of a 'desire to watch' which has always pushed

humankind to attend the most terrifying spectacles and has kept us from backing away from blood, fire and violence.²⁰

The filmic image inspires confidence. It does so because it is a photographic reproduction capable of capturing that which normally escapes us. In speaking about the eye of the movie camera, Epstein noted that ‘this eye, remember, sees waves invisible to us, and the screen’s creative passion contains what no other has ever had before: its proper share of ultraviolet’.²¹ And yet, if spectators trust the filmic image, it is also because it reflects ‘the real, only incontestable superiority of man over animals – his ability to arrest life, the triumph over the ephemeral and over death’, as Canudo wrote.²²

Cinema also activates our imagination, and it does so because the image on the screen lacks its own physicality. Georg Lukács observed that ‘the world of the “cinema” is a life without a background and perspective, without difference of weights and of qualities’, and therefore it is open to pure possibility, even when treated as if it were real.²³ However, the imagination is given free access because cinema possesses a language, elaborated autonomously and through borrowings from other arts, that clears plenty of space for ‘fancy’, as Victor Freeburg noticed.²⁴ There is a sensory excitement that holds the spectator in thrall. It is stoked by cinema’s capacity to restore and show us the movement and the intimate composition of things. In speaking about the close-up, Epstein confessed: ‘I look, I sniff at things, I touch.’²⁵ However, this same excitement is also reflective of the spirit of the times, which causes people to be constantly tense. Karel Teige observed that ‘[e]ven the calmest among us, the contemporary inhabitants of the electric century, are bombarded daily with a myriad of fierce sensual emotions and frenzied bits of information.’²⁶

Nevertheless, cinema offers us a knowledge of the world. This is because its mechanical eye captures the subtle logic that animates reality in a way that no human eye is able to do. Dziga Vertov praises ‘the use of the camera as a kino-eye, more perfect than the human eye, for the exploration of the chaos of visual phenomena that fills the space’.²⁷ And yet, according to Sergei Eisenstein, the decomposition and re-composition of visible phenomena which form the basis of such knowledge constitute a process that art and literature – as well as ideographic writing – have been practicing for a long time. Cinema brings this process to its climax, but with a long tradition behind it.²⁸

Finally, cinema makes us feel like members of a community. The sense of belonging that accompanies the watching of a film is born of the possibility of projecting the same film in the same moment in many places.

As Luis Delluc affirmed, '[t]he semicircle in which the cinema spectators are brought together encompasses the entire world. The most separated and most diverse human beings attend the same film at the same time throughout the hemispheres.'²⁹ However, this sense of belonging is also tied to an ancestral desire to create a state of communion in which to live out collective feelings and values, as Elie Faure imagined;³⁰ just as it is linked to the capacity of the modern crowd to share interests and foci of attention to the point of forming a true public opinion, as Oscar V. Freeburg reminded us.³¹

Therefore, cinema is not only a 'machine', it is also an experience in which other factors (cultural, social, aesthetic) play a role. It is one of the technical devices that, between the 19th and the 20th centuries, changed our way of coping with the world.³² However, it is also something that goes beyond the presence of a technology and that involves anthropological needs, traditional forms of expression, the trends of the day, as well as the emergence of new languages. It is an apparatus, and yet it puts us in contact with a pristine world, with 'the visible things in the fullness of their primeval force'.³³ In other words, cinema is without doubt a medium – but this is not the true mark of its identity. If anything, cinema is a *media*, which is to say, a point of mediation between us and reality, and between us and others. It is the form of this mediation, to which many and different stances contribute, that truly characterises cinema.

The film theory of the first two decades of the 20th century consistently developed this 'experiential' approach. In the 1930s things changed a bit, and the medium took the upper hand. In his influential book, *Film*, Rudolf Arnheim observed that technical limitations, linked to the support and the device, are precisely what push cinema toward its own specific language; it is only taking in account the medium that the best expressive solutions may be found.³⁴ But the 'experiential' approach would remain present, making a deep impression in those same years in the work of Walter Benjamin and Sigfried Kracauer,³⁵ to then re-emerge with even more strength in successive decades in the writings of André Bazin³⁶ and Edgar Morin³⁷ (which, not coincidentally, was based on a retrieval of phenomenology, psychology, and anthropology).

What this approach tells us is that cinematic images on the screen surprise us and take hold of us; they engage our senses, often to the point of pain; they lead us directly to reality, forcing us to see it again and as if for the first time; they simultaneously feed our imagination, opening us up to all possibilities; they request adherence to that which is represented; they

provide a knowledge and an awareness; and they make us live in unison with other spectators. If cinema is experience, this is the form that it takes.

‘The home delivery of Sensory Reality’

A peculiar trait of this phenomenon is that once it is experienced in a darkened movie theatre, it can also emerge elsewhere, even far from the presence of a screen. In his essay-novel *Shoot* (which later became *Notebooks of Serafino Gubbio, cinematographer*), Luigi Pirandello’s protagonist states: ‘Already my eyes, and my ears, too, from force of habit, are beginning to see and hear everything in the guise of this rapid, quivering, ticking mechanical reproduction.’³⁸ Referring to the same years in which Pirandello wrote his novel, Jean Paul Sartre recalls in his autobiography the weaving of his childhood with the cinema, and confesses finding the atmosphere of those first movie houses even on the most unexpected occasions:

[w]e had the same mental age: I was seven and knew how to read; it was twelve and did not know how to talk. ... I have not forgotten our common childhood: whenever a woman varnishes her nails near me, whenever I inhale a certain smell of disinfectant in the toilet of a provincial hotel, whenever I see the violet bulb on the ceiling of a night-train, my eyes, nostrils, and tongue recapture the lights and odors of those bygone halls.³⁹

In a beautiful essay about climbing Mt. Etna, Epstein recognises something in the spectacle of the volcanic eruption that is typical of cinema: ‘To discover unexpectedly, as if for the first time, everything from a divine perspective, with its symbolic profile and vaster sense of analogy, suffused with an aura of personal identity – that is the great joy of cinema.’⁴⁰ Epstein also reminds us that the day before, while descending the mirrored staircase of a hotel in Catania, Sicily, he experienced an analogous and opposite impression. His image reflected in a thousand profiles had offered him an unforgiving vision of himself, exactly as happens on the screen, on which we see things without the usual filters: ‘The camera lens [...] is an eye without prejudice, without morals, exempt from influences. It sees features in face and human movements that we, burdened with sympathies and antipathies, habits and thoughts, don’t know how to see.’⁴¹

Finally, Michel de Certeau, years later, when the status of cinema was already changing, observed that watching a Jacques Tati film enables us to see Paris with different eyes, as if the city continued to live on a screen:

[s]o, leaving the film theater, the spectator notices the humor of the streets, as if she shared Tati's gaze. Film made possible a humorous vision that could not have been elicited without it. The same goes for the reading of a poem, meeting somebody, the effervescence of a group. If the register of perception and comprehension changes, it is precisely because the event has made possible, and in a certain sense made real – it has permitted – this other kind of relation with the world.⁴²

Let us try to better frame this capacity of the filmic experience to be reborn elsewhere, even far from the darkened theater, and let us do so through another text from the 1920s, which touches upon media more generally. Paul Valéry advances a powerful observation (which, not coincidentally, Benjamin quoted in the epigraph to the third version of his 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction') in writing about music and the gramophone.⁴³ Through the means of reproduction and transmission, 'it will be possible to send anywhere or to re-create anywhere a system of sensations, or more precisely a system of stimuli, provoked by some object or event in any given place'.⁴⁴ This means that we would be able to relive, elsewhere, emotions that seem confined to a particular terrain – including emotions apparently linked to specific fields, like music or literature, etc.

Works of art will acquire a kind of ubiquity. We shall only have to summon them and there they will be, either in their actuality or restored from the past. They will not merely exist in themselves but will exist wherever someone with a certain apparatus happens to be.⁴⁵

The result would be a system that allows for the reactivation, on command, of all possible kinds of experience. 'Just as water, gas, and electricity are brought into our houses from far off to satisfy our needs in response to a minimal effort, so we shall be supplied with visual or auditory images, which will appear and disappear at a simple movement of the hand, hardly more than a sign.'⁴⁶ And in this way there would be born 'a company engaged in the home delivery of Sensory Reality'.⁴⁷

Valéry offers us an important compliment to the observation that the filmic experience can be reborn far from the movie theater. It is possible to re-purpose all experiences in new environments. The specificity of a medium, qua system of transport, lies in its ability to move these experiences freely. If necessary, a medium may also lift them from another medium (as does the gramophone, when it steals a sound from a musical instrument). This means that the typical range of action of a media (in Valéry's case,

music) can be further extended. Media can find other instruments, another medium, in order to venture beyond their own borders. The new medium does not represent a betrayal, but rather an opportunity: it gives the media the chance to survive elsewhere.

Cinema possessed all the prerequisites for following this same route. It was ready to transplant, within new contexts, the ‘system of sensations’ that distinguishes it. The problem is that when Valéry was writing, there did not yet exist another medium capable of physically transporting images outside the darkened theater. There were portable projectors – in schools, in the squares of little rural villages, even on planes – but nothing capable of going beyond the projector, like the gramophone did with the orchestra and radio with gramophone. Cinema could live again in countless other situations (just as it causes us to relive emotions experienced in life, but in a distilled and exasperated form). Indeed, it seemed that cinema itself wanted to do so, but was simply waiting for the means to do it completely.

The means would arrive later – when the great theories of the two first decades of the century had become a memory for many, and when ‘classic’ cinema had finished its grand parabola. This moment would coincide with the arrival of television, VHS, DVD, the personal computer, the tablet, home theaters, etc. It is a moment that the aptly-titled volume *Expanded Cinema*⁴⁸ would attempt to grasp and anticipate in part in the early 1970s. We now find ourselves living in this moment.

The relocation of cinema

Let us return to our original description of the increasing presence of cinema in our daily lives, often far from its traditional support and apparatus. I would like to use the term *relocation* to refer to the process in which a media experience is reactivated and re-purposed elsewhere in respect to the place it was formed, with alternate devices and in new environments. Newspapers: no longer necessarily made of paper, I am now able to peruse their pages on the screen of my iPad – but even from this new site, it continues to allow me to experience the world as an infinite suite of news. Radio: no longer a domestic appliance or transistor-powered device but rather an extension of my television or tablet, and yet it continues to supply the soundtrack of my life. Cinema: no longer limited to a darkened theater dependent on rolls of film stock running through a projector, but now available on public screens, at home, on my cellphone and computer, and still ready, in these new environments and with these new devices, to

offer excitement of perception, a sense of proximity to the real, access to fantasy, and investment in that which is represented.

In all these cases the 'system of sensations' that traditionally accompanies a media finds a fresh outlet. Thanks to a new medium an experience is reborn elsewhere, and the life of a media continues. It is in this way that we can think of 'being at the cinema' and 'watching a film' even in front of a digital screen.⁴⁹ The idea of relocation tends to stretch beyond that which Bolter and Grusin call *remediation*. Remediation is the process through which 'one medium is itself incorporated or represented in another medium'.⁵⁰ It is a strategy advanced with particular regard to electronic media, and it can lead either to a re-absorption of the old medium within the new one (Bolter and Grusin mention the digitised family photo album on the PC, as well as some video games that conserve the characteristics and structures of the films on which they are based) or a remodeling of the old medium by the new one (here the example is the shift from a rock concert to a CD-rom). In the remediation what matters is the presence of a device and the possibility of refiguring it. Instead, relocation involves other aspects which, in my opinion, are more decisive.

Relocation emphasises the role of experience. A given media is defined by a specific type of watching, listening, attention, and sensibility. Therefore, it is not the permanence of its physical aspect but rather the permanence of its way of seeing, hearing, and sensing that assures its continuity. A media survives as long as the form of experience that characterises it survives. Also, relocation emphasises the role of the surrounding environment. A given media is also defined by the situation in which it operates or which it creates – an experience is always grounded. Therefore, it is not the mere re-appearance of a device that counts but rather the manner in which it literally takes place in the world. The concept of relocation makes clear that, before all, the migration of a media outside its prior terrain involves a type of experience and a physical or technological space.

This attention to the displacement of an experience as opposed to the simple replication of a device leads us to confront two other problematic issues. The first is the relation between *flows* and *locality* that Arjun Appadurai references in his book *Modernity at Large*.⁵¹ What characterises our era is the presence of a series of 'cascades' that profoundly redesign the surrounding landscape: goods, money, people, ideas, and media are redistributed and rearranged continuously within variable circuits. Their stop-off in a certain place not only involves new equilibria, it also tends to literally create new localities (it establishes sites, just as temples and cities were once founded) within which we can even relocate the trace of a history.

The second problem is described by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari with the terms *detrterritorialization* and *reterritorialization*.⁵² Capital, modes of production, power, institutions, etc. often break away from a structured system, wander through a no-man's land, and then perhaps take root in a new territory. In this movement, what counts is a twofold process: the liberation from a bond, the untying of these entities from that which anchors them; and, the form that the landscape assumes thanks to these migrations (the environment of arrival is not necessarily as organised as the point of departure, but rather tends to assume a rhizomic form). The reference is obviously to the dynamic of drives: libidinal charges can be bound or freed and they can configure systems that are either more compact or more labile. *Detrterritorialization* and *reterritorialization* therefore obey a psychic model.

These two references are useful for better understanding the logic of relocation. Appadurai helps us see how relocation participates in a larger process, which sees the world becoming ever more mobile and ever more labile. Within this process, a media will always have the possibility of finding a new place in a new environment – it will always take part in a new 'scape'. As for Deleuze and Guattari, they suggest that every transfer occurs not only for purely functional reasons but also brings drives and connections into play. A media may also be pushed into movement by a desire, and it is in relation to this desire that it either remains nomadic or allows itself to be trapped in a place. In other words, through the work of these scholars, we come to understand that relocation implies a question of place and a set of drives. From this perspective, returning to cinema, we could say that it is a house (as Siegfried Kracauer claimed⁵³) in addition to a pleasure palace (as Laura Mulvey understood so well⁵⁴). Relocation leads us to examine what types of domains are currently in play.

Naturally, behind the notion of relocation we find many of the issues that Benjamin began to focus on in his discussion of the concept of reproduction⁵⁵ – we only have to leave the door open to not simply the loss of aura, but also its possible re-conquest. Just as we also find the processes of convergence that are redesigning and redefining the media landscape,⁵⁶ we only need to think of them not simply as industrial processes but as mechanisms that create new assemblages and put new desires into play. In the following sections I will explore the notion of relocation in its implications and consequences, starting from the theme that it evokes more than any other and which must be untangled first.

Almost

Relocation acts such that an experience is reborn almost the same as it was. The 'almost' here can mean 'not at all'. Continuing with cinema, in its migration, it encounters new types of screens, starting with the four that now dominate the landscape: digital television, computer/tablet, cell phone displays, and media-façades. These screens offer visual conditions that are quite different from those of the traditional movie screen. For instance, the screens on mobile devices do not offer any sense of isolation from the surrounding environment, so that one easily loses concentration on what is being shown. There is also the size of the images, which in some cases (such as on smart phones or tablets) renders their spectacular nature hard to appreciate.

On computer and smartphone displays, the icons work as instructions more than as depictions of a reality. Many of these screens host a plethora of products (from films to commercials and documentaries to music videos), creating an effect of superimposition which makes it difficult to isolate any strictly cinematographic properties. The ways of seeing carry their traces. Spectators activate a multitasking form of attention, which leads them to follow more than one object simultaneously; they skip over the details in an attempt to grasp the complex whole; they abandon themselves to the flow, not demanding to isolate singular elements; and finally, they assume a more active role, switching between these various conditions. Spectators do the same when they watch a film: they adapt tactics learned from television, the computer, the cell phone, and social networks. In this case, what they live is an *experience of cinema-beyond-cinema*.

But there is also another outcome that I would like to take into consideration here. Despite these new inflections, vision often remains 'cinematographic'. It triggers what we may call a *back-to-the-cinema experience*. Indeed, these same spectators succeed in isolating themselves in an environment, in recuperating the magnificence of images, in concentrating on a story, and in enjoying the reality that reappears on the screen. They accomplish this because the context in which they move does not constitute a pre-defined and rigid structure that unilaterally determines the spectators; rather, they are an 'assemblage' of heterogeneous and flexible components of which the spectators are also part, and in which they play a role. Consequently, differences can be set aside in favour of elements that are closer to a traditional sphere. Cinema returns to being cinema. This move sometimes also applies to something that is not cinema but perhaps would like to be: spectators can adopt the same attitude toward sports or

video games, based on the fact that also in sports and in video games, just as in a film, the world is rendered into a high-intensity story and spectacle.

So ‘almost’ can mean ‘not at all’, but it can also mean ‘nearly completely’. The problem is that, in the relocated experience, what counts are not so much its *material conditions* as its *form*. Material conditions make themselves felt; they constitute the concrete terrain on which the experience gains its footing, and they are what give a form its thickness. However, insofar as the elements at play compose an ‘assemblage’ (and therefore an open and multi-faceted whole), what makes itself felt above all is the *configuration* of the components at the moment in which we experience them. It is this configuration that tells us what this complex whole is or can be, or in which direction it operates or can operate. Also, it is this configuration that makes the situation appear cinematographic, and allows us to live it cinematographically.

Compared with a model, the situation is intrinsically imperfect, as every individual is with respect to its type. Moreover, it is distorted due to the presence of components tied to contingency and chance. The very fact that this configuration can be traced pushes any imperfections and deformations into the background and helps the nucleus of what we are living to emerge. This is how the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ of the situation in which we are immersed emerges; this is how its principle of intelligibility and its nature surface.

‘Almost’ means that necessary elements are present even if the details are not.

The idea of cinema

The traits that define the form of our experience of cinema are those that we have found cited in the early theories of cinema: a relationship with images in movement, mechanically reproduced and projected onto a screen; a sensory intensity, tied most closely with the visual; a constriction of distance with the world; the opening up of a fantastical universe which is just as concrete as the real one; and finally, the sense of collective participation. These are the characteristics that allow other situations to appear or to be understood as cinematographic. However, these traits do not come to light only in theory – we extract them from our habits.

Film theatres still exist and we continue to attend the cinema; every time we do, we experience the same cardinal elements and engage in the same behaviors. In essence, we can count on a consolidated experience

that at every step confirms what cinema gives us and what it asks of us. Serafino Gubbio suffers from this consolidated experience; after experiencing cinema, he finds it everywhere.

There is also our memory as spectators.⁵⁷ We remember what cinema was and we use our idea of it in order to test the experience we are currently living. Memory of cinema is a question of generation; it could dissolve in the near future. While fragile, memory is and will be the spring of a desire to retrieve the past. As we read earlier, Sartre offered us an excellent example of how a certain *cinematographicity* may be found even while on a train trip, thanks to the presence of lived moments and nostalgia for them.

Additionally, the work of the imagination comes into play. In front of an unforeseen situation (for instance a screen, the nature of which we do not immediately grasp, displaying images in motion), we hypothesise that it has something to do with cinema and we try to interpret it in this key. In this case the qualifying traits take the form of a conjecture. Epstein, quite radically, attempts this step while standing before an unsettling spectacle on the summit of Mt. Etna – this, after having done the same the day before in another surprising context: a mirrored staircase.

A habit, a memory, an imagination – the traits that qualify the experience of cinema also emerge in these situations. I must add that they are not a pre-established and stable ‘canon’. They began to spring up in the very moment that cinema appeared; they floated to the surface as cinema has advanced along its own development; they have re-adjusted and re-defined themselves according to the paths the cinema has embarked upon; they have become an individual and a collective patrimony; they have materialised to the point of becoming a reality in themselves; and today, they project themselves onto new situations while at the same time entering deeply into them in order to evidence a continuity with precedents (still constituting, as we will see, an open and flexible whole).

These traits define the *form of an experience*, which is to say, its components and foundational structure; they exist independent of single occurrences and also, they form part of the composition of these occurrences. More than applying to a given situation, they belong to it.⁵⁸ In any case, these traits define the experience that we live as well as defining that which allows us to recognise the experience for what it is every time that it shows up, even in less canonical forms. They signal an essence and function as a scheme of reference.

We can also say that these traits offer us a real *idea of cinema*.⁵⁹ They tell us what cinema has been along the arc of its development, where to find it, and even what it is becoming.⁶⁰ (I ought to write ‘ideas’ in plural

because of the variety of experiences that cinema elicited. Nevertheless, I use the singular to underline the core of this variety, the common ground of different experiences.)

To have an *idea of cinema* is fundamental. Thanks to it, we return to that which we are living and we understand what it is. In other words, it tells us that we are experiencing something and what it is that we are experiencing; it allows our experience to reflexively acquire self-consciousness. Every experience, in order to really be one, must align excitement and knowledge, astonishment and recognition. It is an experience not only because it surprises us and takes hold of us, but also because it makes us understand that it is an experience and a particular type of experience. Of course, this circuit is often interrupted, and we often experience things unconscious of experiencing them. We are often like the soldiers that Benjamin wrote about, who returned mute from the front, incapable of communicating what they had seen, victims of a shock that made them lose the meaning of their existence.⁶¹ Inexperience is always waiting in ambush, even (and especially) in more intense situations. The presence of an idea triggers this situation; it reunites a sensory richness with a path of re-elaboration, an *Erlebnis* with an *Erfahrung*.

More precisely, this self-reflexive moment implies two joint aspects. First of all, thanks to an idea of cinema, we grasp the nature and the role of the elements we are dealing with; we recognise them for what they are, however they present themselves. In this respect, an idea of cinema is like a compass that, even in the most complex situations, helps us find the cardinal directions we need in order to orient ourselves. It is no accident that it emerges particularly in film theory, for it is theory that restores cinema's aggregate of coordinates.⁶² Balász understood this well. He wrote that theory 'is the road map for those who roam among the arts, showing them pathways and opportunities'.⁶³

Beyond identifying the components of the situation, the *idea of cinema* also establishes the identity of the situation we are dealing with. It specifies the terrain within which we are moving; it confirms the fact that we are living a cinematographic experience. The idea of cinema allows the situation to be subsumed into a general category; or, put another way, it assigns to it the label that defines its nature. In essence, it not only tells us 'we understand that this is cinema', it also says 'this should be understood as cinema'. It gives a name and body to a reality, and therefore, it allows us to take it for what it is.⁶⁴

It is no accident that André Gaudreault, in re-tracing the process that led to the birth of cinema, attributes more importance to the moment in

which the *idea of cinema* emerged than to the introduction of the technology of cinema. The appearance of a technology simply opens the path to a series of possibilities. After this initial appearance there must follow a phase in which procedures are established, possibilities are channeled, and practices are made recurrent. This is the moment in which *automatism*, to use Stanley Cavell's term, comes into play, and in which the medium assumes the purpose and rules that distinguish its functioning. It is only in a final phase that the media (and not simply the medium) is constituted as such: there is a recognition of the *personality* that cinema has assumed and an awareness of its *potential* as a form of expression.⁶⁵

It is in this final phase that cinema acquires a collectively perceived identity and is transformed into an institution. Gaudreault writes of a 'second birth'. I would like to suggest that it is more accurately a 'baptism', thanks to which something that exists in a vague form acquires a name, and therefore becomes what it is. The *idea of cinema* allows for this baptism – the media blossoms into full life, it *becomes* cinema.

The reinvention of history

Let us return for a moment to our point of departure. What happens when this *idea of cinema* is applied to borderline situations, as those that are born of relocation often are? What happens when it is measured against an *almost* that wants to seem like a *nearly completely*, even though it tends to be a *not at all*?

The *idea* attaches these situations to cinema. It helps us to see what these situations contain that can be placed within a traditional context (identification) and at the same time, it affirms their belonging to a precise dimension (legitimation). It is thanks to this double feat that we can solve spurious situations such as many of those created by the relocation of cinema, and we can recognise as cinematographic experiences such as watching a film at home, on a journey, in a waiting room, on a DVD player or on a computer, and chatting about what we are watching on a social network, after having downloaded it from the internet, perhaps in fragments or in the form of those audio-visual products (videos more than films) that we find on YouTube.

This operation comes at a cost that cannot be ignored. In order to place these situations within the sphere of our *idea of cinema* – in order to bring out the form of the cinematic experience in these phenomena – we are compelled to force the schema and ignore certain elements. We take these

situations, these experiences, and we minimise the distortions in favor of the canonical. We set aside the fact that we are not in a movie theater, that perhaps we are not seated, that we may be surrounded by a distracting environment, that the screen is fluorescent instead of reflective, that the duration of the film is not the traditional one, perhaps even that what we are viewing may not actually be a film; instead, we accentuate the fact that, as before, we are viewing mechanically-reproduced images, that our senses have become attuned, that we are measuring ourselves against reality, that we are calling to account a concretised fantasy, etc. We remain attached to the *idea* and to the *form*. We manipulate a bit that which we have in front of us in order to render it more compatible. We say, or we think: 'It is cinema after all, even if it does not seem so.'

However, in the name of compatibility, we also slightly manipulate the *idea* and the *form*. We force it into relation with the situation in which we find ourselves, so that the situation does not seem overly-modified. We end up blurring out some aspects of our mental model and highlighting something else. In short, we construct a somewhat *ad hoc* model.

In particular, we work on the terrain on which the *idea* and the *form* were manifested. We look back at the past (or at least at tradition) and we attribute the traits we need to face the present. In other words, we rewrite the history of cinema – not in the sense that we falsify the data, we simply *rearticulate* it. We redistribute its internal weights, reformulate the relations between its various components, re-define its essential junctions. We reorganise it such that it continues to be the birthplace of the *idea* and the *form* of cinema, which we are now using in order to continue labeling as 'cinematographic' the situations we are now encountering. Only in this way are we able to connect past and present without closing the former within a now distant niche and leaving the latter in vagueness. We alter the terrain a bit, but we construct a bridge that allows us to recognise the shore on which we have landed.

When I say 'we', I not only intend to mean the spectator but also the scholar, the critic, and even the industry itself (which perhaps has the most at stake in assuring that the media-cinema survives its change of medium). I am thinking of the technology suppliers for home theaters that insist on the possibility of matching the quality of image and sound found in the movie theater, while not mentioning the social aspect of the movie theater. On a historical level, these suppliers highlight one aspect but blur out another, so that the model of the experience attainable at home appears aligned with a long-standing canon.⁶⁶

Similarly, we encounter directors who find ancestors that allow their films to latch onto a tradition. Fantasy serves as a good example. This genre often has more in common with graphic novels, video games, or theme parks than with other movies. However, if looking back to cinema history, they refer to a figure such as Méliès and exalt him as the ‘father’ of the seventh art, placing in parentheses the presence of other trends in the same epoch, and *voilà*, these fantasy productions become the ‘heart’ of cinema. This is what Martin Scorsese has done with *Hugo* (2011), so that, even if influenced by and open to many different paths, it seems to fit perfectly within the stream of an established tradition.⁶⁷

Additionally, there are critics who reconstruct remote influences, transforming new aspects into the development of old institutions. For instance, Kubrick can become the father of 3D.⁶⁸ There are historians who look back at history with the eyes of the present and find, rightly so, that cinema has always been projected either outdoors, inside museums, or in the home.⁶⁹ The new viewing environments thus find a perfect justification. Also, there are historians of theory that recuperate hypotheses on cinema that were never realised or that never went anywhere, but that seem to be in resurgence today.⁷⁰ It is in this manner that contemporary experimentation finds its roots.⁷¹

I want to be clear: many of these direct and indirect re-visitations of the past are quite fruitful. They enlarge our knowledge of the cinema, including aspects that have been unjustly ignored. Take many current historiographic studies, for example. They consistently contribute to the discovery of the ‘tributaries that join up to become the mighty river we know as the cinema’, to use Thomas Elsaesser’s words.⁷² Better yet, consider the attempts to reformulate the genealogy of cinema. As Anne Friedberg made clear in 2000,⁷³ they represent a necessary moment of awareness for the discipline.

My point, however, is another. By juxtaposing a series of diverse operations, what I would like to suggest is that a grand discursive strategy has been enacted, aimed at rendering the past and the present instrumentally compatible. This involves a reading of the present in light of a model of cinema that we have inherited – but it also involves a re-reading of the past in light of what cinema has become in the meantime. We recognise complex situations as cinematographic because we bring them back to what cinema has already lived. We also define the cinema’s previous iterations in relation to its capacity to enlighten what is happening to it now. In other words, we attribute to the past the premises of the present, but we build the past (and we build it as premise) on the basis of the present. The effect is to re-design history and, above all, to change its conception.

The model to which we refer for reading new situations is the result of our retrospective gaze, as opposed to an inheritance. Therefore, what ought to be a precedent (and likely a cause) is in reality a consequence. Film history loses its linearity. Yesterday and today no longer pass the relay baton; rather, they exchange places, in a mutual action and retroaction. Continuity, which is nevertheless necessary, is a simple construct. What we have is an open field with tracks and paths that move in every direction.⁷⁴

Dialectical situations and retrospective causality

Just such a conception of history brings us back to Benjamin, and specifically to an extraordinary passage in the appendix to ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Technological Reproducibility’:

[t]he history of art is a history of prophecies. It can be written only by beginning from the point of view of a completely current present, since every age possesses its own new, though non-inheritable, occasion of interpreting exactly those prophecies that the art of past epochs contained within itself.⁷⁵

So the past offers examples that cast light on the present, but these examples may be focused only by the present. Moreover, only the present can make prophecies of these cases, as they do not provide clear statements, since in themselves they are not prophecies.

Benjamin is clear: ‘No one of [these prophecies] in reality has ever fully determined the future, not even the most imminent future. On the contrary, in the work of art nothing is more difficult to grasp than the obscure and nebulous references to the future that the prophecies – never occurring singly, but always in a series, no matter how intermittent – have brought to light along the course of the centuries.’⁷⁶ If these cases become prophecies (and therefore antecedents of what is happening nowadays), it is only because particular conditions now exist which make possible the attribution of an exemplarity to the past. ‘In order for these prophecies to become comprehensible, the circumstances which the work of art has often already covered centuries or even just years before, must first arrive at maturation.’⁷⁷

This point of maturation is coincidental ‘with certain social transformation that changes the function of art, and [...] with certain mechanical inventions’.⁷⁸ What explicitly allows a reconsideration of the past in light of the present, and an insight into the present in light of the past, are the

images that Benjamin, in his great fresco of the Paris *Passages*, identifies as 'dialectical'. They are those 'flashing images'⁷⁹ that succeed in making 'legible' both yesterday and today, linking them together outside of the usual parameters of consequentiality. Thanks to these images, yesterday is consigned to today's consciousness: 'the historical index of the images not only says that they belong to a particular time; it says, above all, that they attain to legibility only at a particular time'.⁸⁰ And it is thanks to these images that today can be made knowable to itself: '[e]very present day is determined by the images that are synchronic with it; each "now" [Jetzt] is the now of a particular recognisability.'⁸¹

Dialectical images make us look back and around, giving a meaning to what is seen. They simultaneously provide a vision and a perspective; therefore, they can be assimilated to the point of enunciation. The mutual illumination of past and present that dialectical images permit undermines the idea of consequential development: yesterday does not determine today anymore than today determines yesterday. Rather than a time line, we should speak of a constellation: '[i]t's not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now [Jetzt] to form a constellation.'⁸²

At issue here are prophecies that are only retrospectively recognised, elements that assure the legibility of both yesterday and today, and a link between past and present that is not characterised by chronological linearity but by a constellatory configuration. Benjamin's lesson is clear and it deftly explains the idea of cinema history we have in mind when we find ourselves implicated in the processes of relocation. When a new situation begs recognition as cinematographic, we ask the past to shed light on it while simultaneously reading the past in light of this new situation; we see in this situation the maturation of preceding conditions, while we construct, in parallel, what should be its premises. We use yesterday to define today, while also creating a yesterday because today asks to be defined; therefore, we break the sense of a chronology (though we pretend to respect it) and make of each moment the consequence of the other.

In essence, faced with provocative new situations (not those that leave us indifferent, but rather those that function as 'dialectical situations', following Benjamin's model of 'dialectical images'), we mobilise an idea of cinema. Therefore, we build a place in which to look at what is in the light of what has been; and yet we cannot do so except within a constellatory temporality, far from a progressive and causal logic, and, on the contrary,

closer to a back and forth that moves us in many different directions and opens many different paths.

I would like to add two observations (marginal notes, really). First of all, this idea of history to which cinema refers in the epoch of its relocation operates in other fields as well. Mieke Bal and her ‘preposterous history’ are one example. In her analysis of a series of contemporary works that quote Caravaggio and the Baroque, Bal notes that the source becomes such inasmuch as the work authorises it to do so. This leads to a reversal of the chronological order, ‘which puts what came chronologically first (‘pre’) as an effect behind (‘post’) its later recycling’.⁸³ Here we also see the breaking down of chronology in favor of a complex rearticulation of the field.

The second observation is more relevant. Behind this conception of history there is a deep rethinking of some traditional notions such as genealogy, causality, origin, or repetition, that punctuates the 20th century. For instance, let us take the Freudian concept of *Nachträglichkeit* (translated as *afterwardness* or *deferred action*). It emphasises how the cause of a trauma is brought to light and is also constituted by the presumed effects that it creates.⁸⁴ There is also the way in which Deleuze redefines identity, reducing it to an ‘optical illusion’ linked to the accumulation of repetitions;⁸⁵ or the way in which Jacques Derrida empties out the idea of origin, erased from the intervention of a constant, and constituent, deferment.⁸⁶ The relocation of cinema (even considered in the modesty of its sphere of action – it is, after all, simply a media in a fight for survival) gives rise to problems that have direct bearing on this conceptual field.

Strategies of survival

Between 1946 and his death in 1948, Eisenstein embarked on an ambitious project: writing a history of cinema.⁸⁷ His idea was to place it within the frame of the history of the arts – not as their final result but rather, on the contrary, as the agent capable of drawing out from the other artistic fields that which they are not able to display on their own: particularly, an anthropological need to capture ephemeral phenomena. In this project cinema is seen as an active, dynamic force that breaks down a consolidated situation and draws new aspects from it. I would say that cinema is what relocates the old arts, leading them out of a bottleneck in which they would otherwise risk extinction.

If we compare the Eisensteinian scenario with what is currently taking place we must reverse the terms somewhat: today it is cinema that is being

relocated and which is seeking a way out of its own bottleneck. It is cinema that has been placed under discussion and that must find a new terrain in which to assert its own lesson. In any case, we had already established that cinema currently finds itself in a perilous situation: the loss of medium (the darkened theater, film stock) could confirm the end of the media. It is precisely in order to face up to this danger that we recall an idea of cinema and use it to attribute a 'cinematographicity' to borderline situations, even at the cost of a biased re-reading of history, convinced that it is the permanence of this idea – the permanence of a form of experience – that guarantees the survival of its media.

This context evokes a strong sense of death. We reactivate an *idea of cinema* precisely because we are aware of the risky condition in which cinema finds itself. It is the possibility (and perhaps even the imminence) of its demise that motivates and moves us. Above all, the idea of cinema ends up functioning as a medicine or an exorcism. It is the cure that is administered to the patient, whose case we hope is not terminal. It is the rite we celebrate in an attempt to ward off an impending disaster. In any case, it is something that, at most, aids survival.

Of course, in its relocation, we could also see cinema's most vital gesture. In fact, we could think, following Eisenstein, that cinema is today doing to itself what it did in the past to the other arts – searching out a new terrain in order to be able to look inward and find new and unexpressed stances. In the living room, in public squares, on the computer, alongside other media, and mixed in with other languages, it could be attempting to become what it has never fully been, but could be. In this sense, its shift would make a real renewal possible, not simply the desire for mere survival.

However, even in the case of a rebirth, we continue to deal with the presence of a death. There is no palingenesis without closure. Cinema is looking straight into the eyes of its demise. This is the fact from which we must inevitably begin. It is a pervasive sentiment in the present that projects itself inevitably onto the future. Tragedy is and will always be waiting in ambush. Relocated cinema is and will always be in the shadow of a death.

It seems evident then that the history of cinema that we are so anxiously rewriting in order to see its continuation already has the air of a final testament. And the identity that cinema so proudly affirms, even in the most controversial situations, surrounded by a cloud of anxiety, already sounds irremediably posthumous.

Notes

1. This text is based on a presentation delivered in Bremen in January 2012 and completed and revised during a permanence at IKKM, Weimar, in May 2012. I want to thank Winfried Pauleit for inviting me to Bremen and Lorenz Engell and Bernhard Siegert for offering me a prestigious fellowship. I am grateful to all that have given comments and remarks to help in better developing my ideas, including, among others: Thomas Elsaesser, Sigrid Weigel, Alexander Horwath, Stefanie Schulte Strathaus, Volker Pantenburg, Malte Hagener, John Caldwell, Weihong Bao.
2. The exhibition was held from 11 October 2010 to 11 March 2012 and was part of the Unilever Series. *Film* was accompanied by the catalogue *Film: Tacita Dean*, in which a number of critics, artists, theoreticians, and filmmakers comment upon the importance of the film and of the analog image in the digital age.
3. Higgins 2011. See: <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2011/oct/10/tacita-dean-film-turbine-hall>.
4. The distinction between *media* (which refers to 'technologies of communication') and *medium* (a physical support, the plural of which is *mediums*) is suggested in Krauss 1999, p. 57 (footnote 4). W.J.T. Mitchell and Mark B. N. Hansen advocate for the use of *media* as a collective singular noun, to highlight the presence not only of a technical device but of an instance of mediation common to all means of communication (see: Mitchell & Hansen 2010, p. xi). I go one step further here, using the word *media* as a singular noun to define a mediation which assumes a specific form and which, even when embodied in a technical device insofar as it is a general instance, goes beyond the device in itself.
5. See: <http://mas-studio.tumblr.com/post/9049039925/folly-for-a-flyover-by-assemble> (accessed January 2012).
6. See: <http://whattoseeinparis.com/cinema-parks-paris/> (accessed January 2012).
7. See: <http://cairobserver.com/post/12731480069/cinema-tahrir-returns> (accessed January 2012).
8. See the persuasive analysis in Caldwell 2005, pp. 90-97.
9. For example, the video 'A Day Made of Glass', which illustrates a series of screens imagined by Corning: http://www.youtube.com/watch_popup?v=3D6Cf7IL_eZ38&vq=medium; or, the video 'Productivity Future Vision', released by Microsoft Labs: <http://www.microsoft.com/en-us/showcase/details.aspx?uiid=59099ab6-239c-42af-847a-a6705dddf48b>; or, the presentation of Samsung's screen/window: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTVPVobDrms> (accessed 29 January 2012).
10. This question appears in the title of Malte Hagener's essay, 'Where is Cinema (Today)? The Cinema in the Age of Media Immanence' (Hagener 2008, pp. 15-22). A re-reading of film theory in terms of a topology, instead of an ontology, is proposed in Hediger 2012, pp. 61-77.
11. 'Experience' here refers not only to an exposition of images (and sounds) that engages our senses, but also to an awareness that is consequent to such an exposition. We 'gain experience' of things when we encounter them and we 'have experience' because we have encountered things. On the experience of cinema, see two diverging approaches in Sobchack 1992 and Hansen 2012. See also Harbord 2002, pp. 14-38 and Casetti 2009, pp. 56-66.
12. Epstein 1984 (orig. 1921), p. 244. Parallel and opposed to Epstein, see also the praise of the camera eye in Vertov 1984.
13. Cendars 1984 (orig. 1919), pp. 182-183.
14. Canudo 1984 (orig. 1911), p. 60.
15. Giovannetti 1930. See also this passage by Epstein: 'Here the machine aesthetic – which modified music by introducing freedom of modulation, painting by introducing descriptive

geometry, and all the art forms, as well as all of life, by introducing velocity, another light, other intellects – has created its masterpiece. The click of a shutter produces *photogénie* which was previously unknown.' Epstein 1984, p. 244.

16. Balász 2010 (orig. 1924), p. 9.
17. Ibid.
18. Papini 1907, p. 1.
19. Epstein 1984 (orig. 1921), p. 239.
20. 'This frightful lust in watching horror, fighting and death ... is what yanks the people in the movie theatre as possessed.' Serner 2004, p. 18.
21. Epstein 1984b, p. 244.
22. Canudo 1984b (orig., 1926), p. 296.
23. Lukács 2004 (orig. 1911, 1913), p. 12.
24. Freeburg 1918.
25. Epstein 1984, p. 237.
26. Teige 2008 (orig. 1924), p. 147.
27. Vertov 1984 (orig. 1923), pp. 14-15.
28. Eisenstein 1949, pp. 28-44
29. Delluc 1984 (orig. 1921), p. 257.
30. Faure claims that humankind has always needed 'a collective spectacle...able to unite all classes, all ages, and, as a rule, the two sexes, in a unanimous communion exalting the rhythmic power that defines, in each of them, the moral order'. Faure 1923 (orig. 1922), p. 15.
31. Freeburg focuses on the capacity of film to transform a crowd into a public, able to articulate a deliberate expression: 'This deliberate expression is called public opinion.' Freeburg 1918, p. 8.
32. 'The telephone, automobile, airplane and radio have so altered the limits of time and space within which civilizations have developed, that today man has ended up acquiring not so much a quickness of understanding unknown to the ancients, as a kind of ubiquity. Film seems the artistic reflection of this new condition of life, both material and spiritual.' Luciani 1928, p. 76.
33. Lindsay 1922, p. 290. The idea that cinema brings us back to a primitive condition, and offers us an 'originary' experience, is largely present in early debates. An example is provided by Canudo: '[cinema] is bringing us with all our acquired psychological complexity back to the great, true, primordial, syntetic language, visual language, prior even to the confining literalness of sound.' Canudo 1984b, p. 296. On the relevance of the 'primitive' in film theory and in art theory during the 1920s and 1930s, see Somaini 2011.
34. 'An essential condition of a good work of art is indeed that the special attributes of the medium employed should be clearly and cleanly laid bare.' Arnheim 1933 (orig. 1932), p. 44.
35. An excellent reconstruction of those years is in Hansen 2012.
36. Bazin 2005 (orig. 1958, 1959, 1961, 1962).
37. Morin 2005 (orig. 1956).
38. Pirandello 2005 (orig. 1915), p. 8.
39. Sartre 1964, pp. 122-123.
40. Epstein 2012, p. 289.
41. Ibid., p. 292.
42. De Certeau 1987, p. 210.
43. Valéry 1964 (orig. 1928), pp. 225-228.
44. Ibid., p. 225.
45. Ibid., pp. 225-226.
46. Ibid., p. 226.
47. Ibid.

48. Youngblood 1970.
49. Research on the migration of cinema and on the dissolution of its borders has exploded recently. I want to mention the book and 'Screen Attachments. New Practices of Viewing Moving Images', a special issue (edited by Katherine Fowler and Paola Voci) of the online journal *Screening the Past* (#32, 2011).
50. Bolter & Grusin 1999, p. 45.
51. Appadurai 1996.
52. Deleuze & Guattari 1977 (orig. 1972).
53. In particular, when he included cinema among the 'shelters for homeless'. See Kracauer 1998 (orig. 1929), pp. 88-91.
54. Mulvey 1989.
55. Benjamin 2003 (orig. 1936), pp. 251-282.
56. For a discussion of convergence and its accompanying cultural transformations, see Jenkins 2006.
57. On the role of memory in our experience of cinema see Kuhn 2002.
58. The idea that form does not apply to a situation but rather emerges from it, forcing it in a certain direction, has been brilliantly discussed in all its conceptual implications in Carbone 2010 (orig. 2004).
59. I use the phrase 'idea of cinema' in the same way in which Benjamin uses the term 'idea' in discussing the German Baroque tragedy, i.e. as something that unites a field (of experiences, rather than of works) in a more effective way than a prototype followed by various copies, or an archetype placed before a series of realisations. The idea *un-veils* the nature of a situation or of a work, remaining simultaneously within it. Benjamin 1977 (orig. 1928). A useful reading of the 'Prologue' can be found in Carbone 2010 (orig. 2004).
60. The need and effectiveness of an 'idea of cinema' has recently been displayed in Andrew 2010. What seems to me to be the importance of Andrew's book is the intersection of the experiential (he demonstrates the mission of film 'to discover, to encounter, to confront and to reveal [...] through a double of that world' [pp. xviii and xix]) and the technological (with attention to the moments of filming, editing, and projection).
61. This image appears in Benjamin 1972, p. 219.
62. I strongly insisted on this nature of theory in my essay 'Theory, Post-theory, Neo-theories: Changes in Discourses, Change in Objects' in *Cinemas*, 17, 2-3, Spring 2007, pp. 33-45.
63. Balász 2010, p. 3.
64. We have here a *recognition* in its twofold meaning: as *agnition*, thanks to which we awaken an identity that is in some ways hidden; and as *ratification*, thanks to which something is confirmed, approved, or standardised. In recognition we rediscover something we knew and we accept something the identity of which we did not fully understand. The two distinct meanings of the word *recognition* are made clear respectively in sentences such as, 'Argo the dog recognized Ulysses' and 'the presidential candidate recognised his defeat in the election'.
65. 'This implies, on the one hand – that of reception – a recognition of the "personality" and often increasingly specific use of the medium, and on the other – that of production – a consciousness of its potential for an original, medium-specific expression capable of disassociating the medium from other media or generic "expressible" that have already been distinguished and are being practised.' Gaudreault & Marion 2005, pp. 3-15.
66. A good example is the following text, taken from a website dedicated to home theater technology: 'Going to the movies is a very common and most popular recreation especially for young professionals living a very stressful lifetime of running corporate affairs. However, for many who cannot afford to use up time going to and from cinemas, the answer to this recreational endeavor might be just within your own family room. Buy the sight and sound of cinemas

- with your very own home entertainment system. The best home theater set up may indeed include top quality components that could bring forth the entire movie theater experience without needing to drive out of your house towards the movie theater spending some time and energy tiding high-traffic. This contemporary invention will allow you the relaxation and feel actual life cinemas deliver. Getting the basic components such as the giant screen and speakers with distinct and flicker free images from a top quality DVD may provide the almost real movie theater experience.' See (accessed March 2012).
67. Of course, Scorsese is fully authorised to make such a movie. His work belongs to the history of cinema and he is committed to saving the filmic patrimony. It is nonetheless interesting to note how many reviews take this angle. For example, there is the following: 'Taking their cue from Brian Selznick, author of the popular source novel, Scorsese and screenwriter John Logan focus their attention on French director Georges Méliès, best known for the 1902 silent "A Trip to the Moon." Méliès, an early master of cinematic legerdemain, paved the way for the modern film fantasists, from Ray Harryhausen to Terry Gilliam to the James Cameron of *Avatar*. Méliès mix of music-hall magic and in-camera tricks, Scorsese reminds us, was, and remains, the stuff that dreams are made of.' Glenn Lovell, 'Hugo: A Clockwork Fantasy', *Cinemadope*. See: <http://cinemadope.com/reviews/hugo-%E2%9C%AE%E2%9C%AE%E2%9C%AE/> (accessed March 2012).
 68. An example of this is James Cameron's interview in the *Telegraph*, in which his output is ascribed to a precocious fascination with *2001: A Space Odyssey*. 'As a teenager Cameron was so astounded at Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* that he saw it 10 times and became inspired to experiment with 16mm filmmaking and model-building. From his earliest film-making days – he first gained recognition for writing and directing *The Terminator* in 1984 – he has been a leading science-fiction auteur and special-effects visionary.' Hiscock 2009.
 69. See, for example, Wasson 2005 and Griffiths 2008.
 70. See the special issue of *Cinema&Cie*, 2 (Spring 2003), edited by Leonardo Quaresima, on 'Dead Ends/Impasses', in which contributors trace early discourses on cinema and three-dimensionality (Paola Valentini), or cinema and hypnosis (Ruggero Eugeni), and simultaneously analyse recent realisations that look back to pre-cinema (Leonardo Quaresima).
 71. I myself would like to contribute to this exercise by remembering an observation by Karel Teige from 1924 that is a kind of anticipation of today's co-existence of cinema at the theater and on DVD: 'In the meantime, the Pathé Baby device enables the introduction of the *home cinema*. Chamber music. [...] It is entirely proper to make a distinction between public art (poster, frescoes, street music, etc.) and private art, lyrical poetry, and intimate, lyrical films.' Teige 2008 (orig. 1924), p. 153.
 72. Elsaesser 2004, pp. 85-86.
 73. Friedberg 2000, pp. 438-452.
 74. Elsaesser, in his project of a film history as media archaeology, speaks of a research that 'would become a matter of tracing paths or laying tracks leading from the respective "now" to different pasts, in modalities that accommodate continuities as well as ruptures'. Elsaesser 2004, p. 99.
 75. Benjamin 1972, p.1046.
 76. Ibid. The sentence ends with these words: 'in ways that clearly differentiate inspired works from those less successful'.
 77. Ibid.
 78. Ibid.
 79. 'The dialectical image is an image that emerges suddenly, in a flash, [...] held fast – as an image flashing up in the now of its recognazibility.' Benjamin 1999 (orig. 1982), p.473.
 80. Ibid., p.462.

81. Ibid., p.462-463.
82. Ibid., p. 473.
83. Bal 1999, p. 7.
84. Freud 1953-1974, vol. 17, pp. 1-122.
85. Deleuze 1994 (orig. 1972).
86. Derrida 1976 (orig. 1967).
87. Eisenstein 2012. See also Somaini 2011, pp. 383-408.

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