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Movement-Image in Experimental Archive Cinema

Abstract: In this paper, by applying three-mode division of *image-movement* by Gilles Deleuze to three case studies from the artistic practice of experimental archive cinema, I will attempt to point to three modes of reading/watching archive documentary film images, by which I tend to recognize also three different instances of reading/watching certain historical events, represented by images in these films. The three films, which I analyze following these guidelines, are *Frammenti elettrici* [*Electric Fragments*], by Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci-Lucchi, 2001–2005; *Блокада* [*The Block*], by Sergei Loznitsa, 2006; and *Respite*, by Harun Farocki, 2005.

Keywords: *movement-image*; *affection-image*; *action-image*; *relation-image*; archive cinema; experimental film; history; document

In memory of Angela Ricci-Lucchi and Harun Farocki

Introduction

Henri Bergson defined duration (*durée*) as a flow of matter that shrinks to form space and expands to form time.

The concept of time, by Bergson's insight, is crucial for understanding the human experience. Experience does not change only in the spatial but also in the dimension of time. According to Bergson, every observation emerges from the consciousness that observes. Every state of things is filled with the observer's lived-through time. Parallel to observing the change in space, the observer is also subjected to a change. That other change can be called a *lived-through change*. Bergson himself named it *pure duration* [*durée pure*]. A lasting experience is the one in which different spatial impressions are being merged in an organic unity. Moreover, earlier impressions in this experiential situation are being retained and connected to new impressions.

Bergson's theory of experience is of exceptional importance for the examination of imagination in film and literature. Some life experiences can be seen, through

units of measurement, exclusively as spatial events – for example, to calculate the time necessary to move through a certain space physically. But human experience, according to Bergson, cannot be reduced to a reductionistic understanding of time, because imagination is connected to a concrete experiential flow, which is impossible to single out and encompass by purely spatial changes in the world.

In the study *Cinema 1* and *Cinema 2*, Gilles Deleuze hypothesizes *shot* as a basic unit for analysis. A shot is a junction of two dimensions, in which change happens. On one hand, a shot is composed from a series of spatial characteristics; a moving image is a set of elements forming a closed unity. On the other hand, a shot is bound to the dimension of time. The spatial unity evolves while the camera records the setting presented to it. In the film, the closed unity is continuously open and, as such, it becomes a dynamic unity for two reasons: because the camera and/or the presented setting moves, and because film editing makes possible the first shot to precede the second, which is contrasted with the first.

Deleuze's typology of film images

In the movement of matter Bergson saw that everything is an image and that every image directly affects every other. Between the images, an interval is formed: a duration that exists only in our consciousness, and there is formed a difference between matter and conscious perception of the matter. In the interval between activity and passivity emerges a *living image*. The living image contains: perception, affection and action. Perception is information, substantive, quantity, a selection of activity and passivity, and comes from the outside. Affection is directed towards the inside, to the lived experience, to the inside image, to quality. It is an adjective. Activity comes from prediction of future activity, whereby all other images become images in relation to our perceptions, affections and activities. Activity is a verb. According to this, Deleuze defines film image as an *image-movement*, as a basis for film duration, for it implies a complex set of elements:

The image of the cinema being, therefore, 'automatic' and presented primarily as movement-image, we have considered under what conditions it is specifically defined into different types. These types are, principally, the perception-image, the affection-image and the action-image. Their distribution certainly does determine a representation of time, but it must be noted that time remains the object of an indirect representation in so far as it depends on montage and derives from movement-images.¹

¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1. The Movement-Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), ix.

Deleuze co-opts a Bergsonian epistemological view on knowledge as “image perception”, as well as Peirce’s theory of experience based on typology of images.² At the first level, the *movement-image* emerges as the *perception-image*. The *perception-image* may appear in a film as objective (hallucinations, impressions, dream images), subjective (intervals, in-between shots that link two perceptions, perception of perception, vagueness) or as a perception of a whole (speeding-up, slowing-down, blinking, still frame), and mainly these can be recognized as formal and stylistic procedures of the early avant-garde film practice. In other words, the *perception-image* may be seen as a consciousness of the camera observing itself.

The *affection-image* is positioned between the *perception-image* and the *action-image*. It is a link, which produces affective charge for the action to be realized. It brings quality to the perception by occupying the hiatus between action and reaction, in which the outside action is being absorbed, and from which the reaction is taken inside. At the level of time processing, the *affection-image* emerges as slowing-down or speeding-up in the time interval, and it is linked to the modes in which consciousness cooperates with memory and anticipation. The *affection-images* appear most frequently in close-ups, then in the shots of space areas of pure potentiality (color, composition, abstraction). Regarding the films of German Expressionism, those of Michelangelo Antonioni’s and Robert Bresson’s are rich in *affection-images* and in their entirety they may be viewed as such.

The *action-image* Deleuze defines using two components: surroundings and behavior. The surroundings actualize, and the behavior materializes. The *action-image* is a relation between surroundings and behavior, and all their variants. All qualities and all power are now actualized in the *action-images*, in any concrete space-time. All affects and impulses emerge as concrete, in the light of a certain action, in certain behavior, in certain character, which they subsequently arrange or disarrange. The *movement-image* has its own structure: opening situation (S), conflict that creates action (A) and resolution in a new situation (S). The *action-image* is an organic conception in its entirety, which organizes space and time, and succession of shots. The *action-image* as a whole defines a majority of Hollywood narrative films, historical films, dramas, and even documentaries.

The *movement-image* reaches its peak and enters a crisis after the Second World War, Deleuze concludes. It was not capable of dealing with the totality of the situation any more, but only with a dispersive reality. Characters multiplied and became interchangeable. It lost its definition as perception, affection or action. The art of wandering – the camera ‘set on its own way’ – replaced the story, and plot was full of clichés.

² In his phenomenology, different from Husserl’s ‘pure phenomenology’ Charles Sanders Peirce establishes a hierarchy of ‘Firstness’, ‘Secondness’ and ‘Thirdness’. Firstness denotes the raw qualities of a subject’s being precisely what it is, and is not amenable to observation. Firstness is a quality of ‘redness’ before any red exists in the world. Secondness is a mode of being in which one thing consists in how a second object is; this category of being corresponds to the actual fact of the existence of objects that exist alongside others and are defined by their relationship with them. Thirdness denotes a mode of being in which the future fact of secondness will take on a determinate general character: this is the level of thought and of the establishment of patterns and laws. David Macey, *Dictionary of Critical Theory* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 294.

At the end of the Second World War the *movement-image* was being replaced by the *time-image*. However, even before the *time-image*, Deleuze introduces a border type of film image: the *relation-image* or *mental-image*. It is the first indicator of crisis, for it uncloaks the clichés that lie at its basis. With the *relation-image*, we come to a level of the mental, intellectual construction:

[...] the mental image would then be less a bringing to completion of the action-image, and of the other images, than a re-examination of their nature and status, moreover, the whole movement-image which would be re-examined through the rupture of the sensory-motor links in a particular character.³

The *relation-image* always takes a step further, because actions and affects are being compared one to another, and then abstracted to a symbol, to a stance toward the overall relations between actions, affects, and actions and affects together. On the basis of this division into the *action-image*, the *affection-image* and the *relation-image*, in the next chapter I will attempt an analysis of three contemporary experimental pieces of archive cinema.

Three case studies

The theory of experience and imagination by Henri Bergson was to enable Deleuze in his film studies to step away from critical investigation of film images as false representation of the world. His typology of film images is not connected to the semiotic division into the signifier and the signified. For Deleuze, it was not important to reach the hidden meaning of film images in order to uncover them, but to make a transition from the discourse on representation of the world by means of the film, to generative potentiality of the film, wondering how the film image creates the world.

I wish to pose the question: how does 'a film image of history' create the world? What mental projections are initiated by documentary film footage of a certain time projected onto another? How do certain narrative and montage strategies establish new relations of temporality and space?

Archive film practices came into existence by virtue of the quantity of accumulated images during the 20th century. Moving images became a relevant medium for understanding the past. Fiction as well as historiography uses narrative strategies in order to make the structures of historical events 'objective'. The classical narrative film often follows the same principle, in an attempt to conceal the construction of historical knowledge. On the other hand, avant-garde and experimental film practices were making attempts to emphasize a poetic dimension of history, to challenge the constructiveness of certain events and spark discussion. The films that I am speaking

³ Deleuze, *Cinema 1. The Movement-Image*, 205.

of here are contemporary films, exclusively created from documentary film footage discovered in marginalized archives, and the experimentalists who are taking them over and are questioning the role of historiography, official public archives, and creating new ones.

Case study No. 1

The film fragments of Angela Ricci-Lucchi and Yervant Gianikian⁴ under the title *Electric Fragments* [*Frammenti elettrici*], is a series of shorter and longer films, which contain parts of private, family amateur film footage from the beginning of the 20th century. They witness the journeys of European bourgeoisie to colonies, their encounters with other cultures, their everyday life and cultural patterns. They represent a sort of ethnographic record. The duo Ricci-Lucchi and Gianikian for decades collected and structured these types of films into a specific film archive. In their own words, they always intended to make them an “archive of humanity in its diverse forms”.⁵ By the contents, they represent a catalogue with commentary on ideology, racism and imperialism.

For the *Electric Fragment No. 1*, the ‘cinematic basis’ is found footage, in which an anonymous camera operator shoots members of Roma population, the returnees from Nazi camps at the end of the Second World War. The exact place is undetermined, except that from one in the opening title, with the preceding information on approximate dating, we learn that it is situated in northern Italy. On the screen are the faces of Roma children, who play in the front yard of a big house, and nearby there are fascinated observers – we suppose, the owners of the house and the estate. Restless children are being ‘set right’ for shooting in front of the camera. The title of the fragment is *Rom (the man)* [*Rom/Uomo*]. In the second fragment there is amateur footage, also dating from the end of the 1940s, but originating from Vietnam. It implies the camera operator, a colonial French soldier, or more than one, who during leisure time shoot ‘the otherness’ of Vietnam and the Vietnamese. Here, on one side, we see work in the fields by Vietnamese peasants, on the other, the enjoyment of French soldiers on the riverbank. The film is subtitled ‘VIET NAM’, with the clear indication of separation, between the syllables. *Fragment No. 5* is based on a collected material from Senegal and the Ivory Coast, and the viewer can detect its date only via short shots with luxurious, modernist hotels built in the 1960s and 70s. The rest of the footage, the ‘cameraman-tourist-ethnologist’ captured images from the life of the local population. The difficulties in dating the material may also indicate a conscious suggestion by the authors, in their not showing ‘enough’ shots of modernity.

⁴ Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci-Lucchi are Italian filmmakers who make film assemblages and found-footage films from amateur film materials shot in first two decades of 20th century, mainly focusing on The Great War and colonialism. The most famous are long feature collage films: *From Pole to Equator* [*Dal Polo All' Equatore*, 1986] and *Barbaric Land* [*Pays Barbare*, 2012].

⁵ Miriam De Rosa, “On Fragmentation,” in *Research Forum Alternative film/video 2012–2013*, ed. Greg de Cuir Jr., (Belgrade: Academic Film Center, Student City Cultural Center, 2014), 28.

Ricci-Lucchi and Gianikian revise their shots, which they sometimes use in different films, and construct basic substance, in which there is rooted an iconographic system of these artists. They use the so-called 'analytical camera', a specific operating device, by which they shoot again an already recorded footage and perform actions on the film material, including enlarging the image, entering the image, slowing it down, and or coloring it. In their films, Ricci-Lucchi and Gianikian produce unities of *affection-images* by using *perception-images* – manipulations of the very material of the film itself. Thus they deal with a certain 'doubled gaze', because the films made from archive material consist of perception of already existing images. So that we always have a general *perception-image*, a perception of the whole (*gramme*), as Deleuze puts it. Nevertheless, this does not deal only with physical intervention in the film material, but also with potentiating its specific 'electric qualities', as the title of the series suggests. The authors wish from the *Fragments* an effect of making the viewer upset, to cause an electric shock.⁶ But they do not wish to create empty 'electric sensations', but the sensations that would lead to "flashing up' of a past long since written resonates in [...] the notion of the 'dialectical image' – the historical moment of its coming into legibility – but also with the double temporality of auratic experience."⁷ Looking at history as very distant (an added ambient music boosts this impression), using the *affection-images* inside the *perception-images*, they repeat it and actualize it, like a trauma. And it is always the history of the Western and imperial gaze.

Case study No. 2

The film by Sergei Loznitsa,⁸ *Block*, from 2006, is a film that in the fashion of classical narrative films, unconditionally submerses viewers into the historical event through the *action-image*. The film consists of footage made by Soviet camera operators during the 872 days of the blockade of Leningrad, from September 1941 to February 1944. Originally, the footage is silent, but the film was adapted with sound later, in order to simulate real synchronous sounds of what we can see on the screen. The film begins with the scene of preparation by the Red Army for an anti-aircraft attack. It follows a scene of captured Nazi troops being marched through the streets of Leningrad. Then the alert starts, followed by the first bombing, and the viewer 'steps into the story' of the siege. The most shocking are the shots of the winter: the citizens transport the corpses of their loved ones to the mass grave. Exactly in that scene there is the one and only moment when the author, giving up on 'real sounds' simulation and setting only the sound of a howling wind under the close-ups of the mourners, enters the

⁶ De Rosa, "On Fragmentation," 29.

⁷ Miriam Hansen, *Cinema and Experience: Sigfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin and Theodor W. Adorno* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012), 148.

⁸ Sergei Loznitsa [Сергей Лозница 1964–] is a Ukrainian film director. In his documentaries he refers on important historical events. The last documentary with international recognition was the film *Maidan* [Майдан, 2014] which focuses on Ukrainian demonstrations in 2013–14.

affection-image. In the third quarter of the film, anti-aircraft fire intensifies, and the liberation is near. In the end, as at the beginning, we see a scene of massive violence. But this time it is followed by the lynching of the Nazi prisoners after the victory of the Red Army. The film *Block* contains all the elements of classical narrative cinema and despite the particular blows of the *affection-images* (or just because of them), there mainly dominates the *action-image*. In the unity of time, place and action, and the character/characters, the viewer follows the struggle for survival. Regardless of the characters not being introduced to us – like incidental passersby – all of them merge to one, tormented citizen, in a continuous collective action. As such, that citizen inevitably points to all those of all the besieged cities in history, with whom the viewer identifies. The history, thus, has become a closed circular motion. It is interesting that the identical archive film material of the siege was used in numerous documentary and Soviet propaganda films and that the author's intention probably was to 'liberate' this footage from ideological charge, which was induced to it through the suggestive voice of the narrator and/or the dramatic background score. Filling it now with the 'realism' of the authentic sound, Loznitsa 'set in motion' another ideology – an ideology of the eternal now.

Case study No. 3

The third case study belongs to the work of the *relation-image*. It is about the film *Respite* by Harun Farocki,⁹ from 2005. *Respite* consists of black-and-white footage taken in Westerbork, the Dutch refugee camp, built in 1939 for the Jews that were leaving Germany. After the occupation of the Netherlands, in 1942, the Nazis changed the function of the camp and it became a 'transit camp'. The footage that we see originates from the film ordered by the commander in charge of the camp, in 1944, and it was recorded by the photographer Rudolph Breslauer. In the footage can be seen prisoners of the camp, who dismantle and reassemble mechanical parts, do body exercises, perform a theatre show, work in the field, etc. The footage also shows a train boarding with the prisoners. All the participants in the film, as well as the camera operator himself, were to be later transported to Auschwitz and killed – something the viewer learns from the intertitles. As well as the original film, Farocki's appropriation does not contain sound. His interventions in the original image are simple. By repeating the shots, he periodically inserts intertitles with short texts. Thematically, this film would belong to the group of films on the Holocaust, but it is actually something else. It does not seek, unlike the documentaries, to open itself to the truth of the historical reality, but it reexamines the source of such truth. After the first shots the titles explain what was seen. After describing the shots, Farocki goes into details and forensically

⁹ Harun Farocki [Harun Farocki, 1944–2014] was German film director, writer and teacher. He worked on all kind of films, but he is most remembered by great number of film-essays in which he dealt with topic of politics of image under the great influence of Berthold Brecht, Vilem Flusser, Günther Anders, Jean-Luc Godard. He was one of the found-member and writer for German magazine for film criticism *Filmcritic*.

examines the images. He establishes the date of the filming and identifies some of the recorded people. In the shot with the trains, Farocki marks them as heading to the death camp, recognizing identical shots used in other films on the Holocaust. Then he re-edits the scenes from the life of prisoners, which we see in a completely different context – that of their impending mass murder in Auschwitz, which we do not see. We learn that the scenes are documents of the life that directly preceded it. In that manner, as the film unfolds, intertitles begin to speak of the invisible, the out-of-image. We realize that penetrating the meaning of the images is impossible. Farocki then begins a dialogue with the suggested image of the executions, and by repeating the shots from the working process of the camp prisoners, poses the question of their allegorical meaning: about the disposability of human material at the high degree of industrialization in capitalism. War and the mass extermination of people become the climax of that industrialization. Thereby, Farocki does not move away from the historical document. He has not transferred the viewers to ‘some other time’, different to the one that they are watching.

The images of the prisoners’ everyday life were not used in the films on the Holocaust, because they were not functional in the historical interpretation of the genocide. The scenes of the people boarding a train and shots with the corpses and tortured bodies in Auschwitz, could only become a part of a montage unity. Farocki revealed to us that the scenes of work and leisure were filmed the same day as the scenes of the embarkment.

According to our interpretation, Farocki uses the *relation-image* and the *mental-image*. We see the *action-images* (working, embarkment, etc.), the *affection-images* (close-ups, smiles, etc.), but all of them are framed by the *relation-image* or the *mental-image*, that Farocki generates in us, by using short textual suggestions to the image that is *outside*, that is to follow, that is invisible, but very persistent in our consciousness. The film works also as a sort of a test, by which the viewer guesses – what is in the picture? – while Farocki poses questions through titles, to himself as well as to the viewer. The film is the *relation-image*, because it sets a few different dynamic relations. The first one is formal, between the images and the titles that interrupt them. The second, between the images that we see and the ones that we do not see. The third is a didactical relation between the author and the viewer, while they view the material critically ‘together’. And the fourth is the virtual one that separates, that brings into question historical events and their visual referents and opens a time hiatus – a space for a new actualization.

Conclusion

In the paper “Movement-Image in Experimental Archive Cinema” I attempted to apply the typology of the *movement-image* by Gilles Deleuze to contemporary experimental archive cinema. My aim was to apply Deleuze’s idea of cinema as a creator

of the world and not only its exponent, to a specific film category as well. In the case studies' analysis I desired to show that the work of these images within the experimental archive cinematography often diverge from the work of the historiography, which film documentary archive often exclusively perceives as historical references, aspiring to 'objectivity'. These films manipulate images/historical documents in various ways, and question our understanding of historical events, because they question the construction of the archive material itself.

Translation from Serbian: Ana Marković

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