IMAGE TO INFINITY: RETHINKING DESCRIPTION AND DETAIL IN THE CINEMA

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In the late 1980s, historian Hayden White suggested the possibility of forms of historical thought unique to filmed history. White proposed the study of "historiophoty," an imagistic alternative to written history. Subsequently, much scholarly attention has been paid to the category of History Film. Yet popular concerns for historical re-presentation and heritage have not fully addressed aesthetic effects of prior history films and emergent imagistic-historiographic practices. This dissertation identifies and elaborates one such alternative historiographic practice on film, via inter-medial study attending to British and American history films, an instance of multi-platform digital historiography, and an animated film – a category of film often overlooked in history film studies.

Central to this dissertation is Gilles Deleuze's development of varieties of the Movement Image. Deleuze's Movement Image includes the "discursive image," a form which has not yet broken the coherence of sensori-motor connections between the object perceived and the affective response of the viewer. Related to the "discursive image," I propose that the "descriptive image" can capture what the larger category "representation" and the cinema-specific "spectacle" cannot.

Drawing from literary and art-historical conceptions of the differences between "descriptive" and "narrative" forms, I propose that in the history film, the "descriptive image" functions as a meta-critical aesthetic, insisting that viewers perceive naturalized relationships as instead contingent. I argue that, rather than a "mature form" of realism, the "descriptive image" is a form of critical realism. Descriptive

images are characterized by: long takes of long shots; the co-presence and co-equivalence of objects; a point of view neither neutral nor attributable to a character; and expressions of scope or forms for framing that assert that the given view is only one view from the set of possible views.

Thus I examine exemplary texts that demonstrate a difference between "narrative understanding" and "descriptive understanding." These texts, despite their material differences, similarly present mixed historiographic forms, and enable us to see what studies of history on film, in their interest in re-presentation over presentation, have often missed: "descriptive images" allow us to differentiate the event of the film from an inadequate copy of an historical event.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There is a now well-known story of reporter Jon Ronson's visit to Stanley Kubrick's home, after Kubrick's death but before his materials were re-homed in what is now the Kubrick archives. Kubrick had intended to store research materials, objects from filming and personal obsessions (fan mail, a prop head in a box, bottles of ink). Unsatisfied with the dimensions of available archival boxes, Kubrick designed his own to less "restrictive dimensions." I will always be grateful to Marcia Landy for encouraging me to make boxes of my own specifications – Chinese boxes, Pandora's boxes even. I am in awe of Marcia's intelligence and intensity, and her generosity humbles me.

Finally, I offer endless thanks to Kevin Patterson, my partner and best friend, who has been willing, all these years, to make a home among those boxes, whose tolerance for complexity is as valued as is his constancy and who, if I asked him to, would build boxes with less "restrictive dimensions" if only because I asked.

I. INTRODUCTION

All cinematic fictions are stretched more or less tightly by this knot of denegation. But historical fiction . . . takes things further, and brings into play a movement of denegation to infinity.

— Jean-Louis Comolli

A. INTRODUCTION TO DESCRIPTION (CONTRA NARRATION)

While history films, in their thematic, structural and atmospheric diversity, do not constitute a genre, it seems possible to articulate a cinematic historicizing impulse. Scholars who have begun to articulate this common cinematic-historical impulse across generic boundaries include Marcia Landy (*Historical Film: History and Memory in Media* 2000), Adam Lowenstein *(Shocking Representations: Historical Trauma, National Cinema, and the Modern Horror Film* 2005), Anton Kaes (*From Hitler to Heimat: The Return of History as Film* 1992), Vivian Sobchak (*Persistence of History: Cinema, Television, and the Modern Event* 1996), and Phillip Rosen (*Change Mummified* 2001). Collectively, these scholars indicate a pressing need to re-envision the relationship between history and cinematic seeing, and recognize that sometimes when we speak of history on film, we are speaking of particular historicizing tendencies of film as a medium, and sometimes we are speaking of problems for the philosophy of history on film.[1]

History itself is a form that can and must be expressed multiply: It does not correspond to "reality," it is logically dependent on other forms, and it is always necessarily incomplete. A mixed-modal approach allows us to demonstrate how a word and an image each is alternately

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[1] As Hayden White writes in *Metahistory*, "there can be no 'proper history' which is not at the same time 'philosophy of history" (xi).

accused of a surplus and a paucity of meaning and how that problem is, in turn, an allegory for history-telling itself, for the very practices denoted by "historiography."

In the 1990s, Fredric Jameson identified the anti-historical impulse of the post-modern, evident in both cultural production and criticism. In the intervening years, the situation has revealed itself to be endlessly complicating. Jameson argued then that in Lukácsian literary terms, description had detrimentally replaced narration, but this was not the last word on historical representation in that period (1992, 41). In his own time, Lukács had observed the literary formation of description as representative of, and appealing to, incomplete selves inhabiting an incomprehensible world. Jameson argued that the elevation of the pure perceptive capacities of the post-modern, which identifies the Self as "mere text" or "sheer text," rejects any totalizing vision of the past or present, while modernism(s) continued to attempt to occupy the place "vacated by religion, still draw[ing] its resonance from the conviction that through the work some authentic vision of the world is immanently expressed" (1992, 75). Jameson has since pluralized his notion of modernism to modernisms, which is consistent with literary scholarship of the moment, though he persists in distinguishing modern and post-modern (Personal interaction 2009).[2] Yet if, in those early years of the period of the post-modern, objects eclipsed the status of understanding in general, the theoretical and critical question of the moment still seemed to be, "What are we to do with history?" Cinema

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[2] I find Jameson's distinction between the modern and the post-modern increasingly fragile, particularly with respect to the place of "figuration" (hence a preference for late-modernism).

studies returned to prominence issues of historical representation and a renewed interest in the history film.[3]

Following a period of perceived ahistoricism in both film production and criticism, determined largely by concerns for ontological questions and by issues of spectatorship, a return to concerns for the representation of history, historicity, and historiography could be seen to function as a corrective to that ahistoricism – or could be read as an almost obsessive fixation on a lost object. Are "we" (that is, "we" in the United States and Britain, a knowing limit of this dissertation),[4] obsessed with history?[5] For Paul Ricoeur, contemporary historicality in the humanities was the weight of the past, Marx's "nightmare on the brain of the living" (2006). Certainly in the public sphere, the backlash against ahistoricism was related to the teleology of "development" rather than a Marxist critique.

It is not my desire to review historical representation in general, but rather to indicate alternative historiographic practices on film. Nevertheless, a brief discussion is necessary, beginning with the most fundamental question: What do we (pre)suppose about historical images as images? After Georg Simmel, we know historical representations pertain to both

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[3] Books on film and history, both by historians and by cinema scholars, now number at least 1,000 (Hughes-Warrington 2007, 6). This number includes historian Robert Rosenstone's most recent book, *History on Film/Film on History* (2006) which, despite identifying visual tendencies, focuses on narrative (unsurprising given the history discipline's reliance on narrative over other forms – see below). A future *Blackwell Companion to History on Film*, edited by Rosenstone and Constantin Parvulescu may multiply perspectives. In this same period, filmmakers themselves have turned explicitly to questions of the representation of history on film. Jean-Luc Godard's multivolume *Histoire du Cinema* (*Moments Choises des Histoire(s) du Cinema* 2004) and Peter Greenaway's cross-media *Tulse Luper Project* (*Tulse Luper Suitcases: A Personal History of Uranium* 2003-present) are among these. See chapter 4 of this work for more on Greenaway, (anti)history and description.
[4] This dissertation privileges American and British film and Western Marxist cultural study not to participate in the mythologization of "the West" but in part because it is a feature of these sites to venerate the Beginning, Middle and End of emplotment and to contest the value of description contra narration.
[5] It would certainly not be the first time, but rather a return. See Nietzche's "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life": "I believe, indeed that we are all suffering from a consuming fever of history and ought at least to recognize that we are suffering from it" (60).

repetition of the historical event and the possibility, or impossibility, of difference (Simmel 1977), and we know that "difference" is not inscribed in a unity but is, rather, described in the *details*. As readers and viewers of history films we experience both the weight of the past *and* the possibility of alternatives through historical narratives and historical images that project difference, images that stylistically jam perceptions of causal relations.   There is still more to be said, then, about the kinds and qualities of images and more work to be done to historicize ways of seeing. The question Lukács posed to Sir Walter Scott's (1771-1832) works in *The Historical Novel* resonates: Is the goal of historical fiction to see the past with contemporary eyes or to see the present through historical lenses?

Cinematic images of history are particularly worth consideration given the cinema's status as a popular form and given film's privileged tripartite relationship to time: "Film time" comprised of at least the setting; diegetic time elapsed; and the time of the film's unspooling before viewers (now, in the digital age, a metaphorical unspooling).[6] But it is the multiplicity of film's tenses, ever present and already past, that makes it such a ready form for history telling. Thus, film's complex relationship to time and history has prompted important and insightful work on all three. What is perhaps missing is an understanding of description as a meta-critical aesthetic with significant contributions to make in the development of historical consciousness.

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[6] The latter is a trade off for the individuated time of the viewing of a still painting or sculpture and the "private" time of reading for a fixed and often public time of film viewing. See Paul Ricoeur (1981).

B. THE HISTORY OF THE "TANGLE" AND THE TANGLE OF HISTORY

Historian Hayden White considered the possibilities for a form of historical thought unique to filmed history in the essay "Historiography and Historiophoty." His intention at the time was merely to imagine the possibility of such a thing as "historiophoty," an imagistic alternative equal to written history. As a result, the essay does not lay out a program for its development or its study, but does enable much future work on history and film (1988, 1193).[7] White's concern at the time of that essay was the possibility for a complementary visual practice to historiography, a practice neither of invention nor of mere translation or adaptation from the written history to the imagistic. He refuted prior assertions that a verbal history must always precede a visual approximation, and suggested that such assertions missed the potential for the production of a particular kind of historical explanation and argumentation – and not just augmentation – that could only be conducted in the form of the image:

> We are inclined to use pictures primarily as "illustrations" of the predications made in our verbally written discourse. We have not on the whole exploited the possibilities of using images as a principal medium of *discursive* representation, using verbal commentary only diacritically, that is to say, to direct attention to, specify, and emphasize a meaning conveyable by visual means alone (White 1988, 1194).

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[7] White's essay was written in response to Robert Rosenstone's piece in the same publication as part of an *American History Review* Forum; Rosenstone ought to be credited, too, with raising the very issue of history on film for the history discipline at that moment.

If White unwittingly provides a reductive vision of what it is that an "illustration" can and does do for the text it illustrates, this passage nevertheless directs attention to cinematic and sequential images themselves and their own rhetorical potentialities.[8] White counters Ian Jarvie's argument (as does Rosenstone) that historiography automatically includes debates over interpretation of historical events in a way that historical films, which instead promote a single interpretation, do not.   Yet we should also note that the inclusion of debate, of difference, is not necessary to the form of historiography, but is rather a practice – a matter for style – in both the case of historiography and historiophoty. All too often historiography resorts to narrative and its admittedly compelling explanatory power when description is warranted instead.

Subsequently, White's work has encouraged an understanding of history films as attempts at "accounting" for, and arguing over, the past, and accounting for the present with respect to the past, not merely as attempts at rendering it. But rendering in any form is already a practice of accounting. This upsets that notion of the necessary verbal precedent of the image more than White's argument does.   If sociologist Pierre Sorlin has asked, "how do we emplot the past?"[9] I ask, instead, how can film describe, and decorate – and perhaps, display – the past as a way of imagining seemingly natural and necessary relations differently?   What of the

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[8] However, White seems to accept Roland Barthes's position that a single still image cannot form an argument, an argument that Barthes arrived at first via C. S. Peirce (White 1196).

[9] Sorlin focuses on the emplotment of history, valuing temporal and causal relations over associative and spatial ones. It might be helpful to think here of Genette's recall of E.M.Forster's "famous distinction between story ("The king died and then the queen died") and plot (". . . of grief")" (Genette 1988, 20). Rosenstone, trained as an historian, focuses on narrative, too, and this is not surprising given that discipline's reliance on narrative constructions. In *History on Film/Film on History* (2006) Robert Rosenstone argues that "the history film speaks in a language that is metaphoric and symbolic, a language that creates a series of proximate or possible relations rather than a reality that is literally true – though it does also intersect with the literal" (Rosenstone 2006, 49).

possibility for historical relations *conceivable* by "visual relations"? To borrow a Nietzschean structure, "What is the use of Decorative and Descriptive Images for the Understanding of History?" In thinking about decoration, description, and display, I am not suggesting that we set narrative aside inside the narrative cinema – but I am suggesting that we shift the foreground to the background, if only temporarily.

The History Film has increased in importance since that debate in the late 1980s. Nevertheless our popular set of questions about the relation of image to thought has a limiting effect on our ability to understand prior history films and emerging imagistic-historiographic practices, including new media forms for history. Thus in the remainder of this chapter I turn to classical rhetorical terms,[10] to a recuperation of terms and conditions dismissed by the modern (and missed in the post-modern). [11] What is at issue in this dissertation is the dynamic relation of pictures to the world represented on one side and the relation of images and the world to which they *present* on the other. Description and decoration in the cinema function alternatively to the narrate/describe binary of literature, neither reproducing a discontinuity of "authentic reality" (Lukács, Kracauer) nor confirming any such "authenticity" (Bazin), thus creating an epistemological distance.   As we will see, an immoderate moderation between modernism and realism is not an act of removal from the ethical realm.[12]

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[10] A return to a classical conception is perhaps an implicit argument that style has *not* "assassinated" rhetoric.
[11] Recent efforts to think through "Bad" Modernisms (both in the sense of counter-practice and cooptible practices) do provide alternatives to this position. See for example Walkowitz (2006).
[12] A path not taken here, for obvious reasons, but certainly a useful alternative, is the hermeneutic approach of Gadamer. For Gadamer, the function of decoration is that of an endorsement of a particular form of life: ". . . the concept of decoration must be freed from this antithetical relationship to the concept of the art of experience and be grounded in the ontological structure of representation, which we have seen as the mode of being of the work of art . . . Ornament or decoration is determined by its relation to what it decorates . . . Ornament . . . belongs to the self-presentation of its wearer . . . But presentation is an ontological event; it is

In an essay on Bengali filmmaker Satyajit Ray, Moinak Biswas remarks that

[i]t is customary to study the development of realism in cinema in terms of the

development of narrative codes, but it is when description becomes a part of its

competence and enters into a tangle with the work of narration *per se* that

cinematic realism attains a mature form (Biswas 2006, 44).

The difference in cultural contexts cannot be ignored – Biswas's subject is Ray's realism in post-

independent India, while the films of this study were produced by and principally for the United

States and the United Kingdom, and any claim to "maturity" is problematically teleological.

Nevertheless, my study shares concerns with Biswas for films in which description "enters into

a tangle" with narration.

In his essay on Erich von Stroheim, Andre Bazin presents the great discoveries of

cinematic narration: Bazin urges his reader to recall that Griffith's genius was in editing, the art

not of showing but of telling, "not just reproducing but describing." Stroheim's genius, for

Bazin, was in negating Griffith's discovery: "He will return the cinema to its main function; he

will have to relearn how to *show*. He assassinated rhetoric and language so that evidence

might triumph" (Bazin 1982, 8). While basing a preferred style for the cinema on ontological

claims, Bazin is nevertheless emphasizing questions of style and of language. Here Bazin

returns to the literary distinction between showing and telling, representing and describing, as

alternate possibilities also available to the cinema. It is somewhat paradoxical that a "virtually

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representation. An ornament, a decoration, a piece of sculpture set up in a chosen place are representative in the
same sense that, say, the church in which they are found is itself representative . . . " (qtd in Berger 24).
Gadamer suggests from his position that Lukács has misunderstood the realm of the aesthetic in considering its
greatest achievement to be pointing toward a universal/essence rather than what it can present *to* the senses.

continuous" cinematic narrative form (one with less editing, an aesthetic based on the long take) is aligned with literary narrative interruptus.[13] Yet *this* form of Bazinian cinematic realism[14] is closer to literary naturalism – borrowing literature's terms, showing rather than telling. This reflects both a literary critical tradition and the historical position on the photographic image; the photographic image has an evidentiary relationship to the Real. But is it also to argue that anything that qualifies this relationship diverts film from its ethical imperative, or is this a conventional and convenient error? Bazin's "showing" and "telling" are in a dialectical relationship, but there is also, in my appraisal, the middle path that is more critical and reflective.

Tom Gunning recently proposed that we "get away from [disciplinary emphasis on] indexicality" by way of movement (which is also very much a return to the concerns of the Cinema of Attractions), and this is certainly supportable given Bazin's "Montage Interdit!" But Gunning is also eager to have us reconfigure our understanding of cinematic realism beyond Bazin: "Specifically, we need to ask in a contemporary technical and stylistic context: what are the bounds that cinema forges with the world it portrays?" (34). I wonder if the curiosity of Gunning's construction "bounds that cinema forges" is a symptomatic error – either on Gunning's part or on the part of the article's editor. Does film forge "bounds" or "bonds" with the world? Is the cinema on the inside or the outside? As a screen, it is both at once. If we wish to think about those bounds or bonds the cinema forges with the historical world, we

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[13] Here, of course, we might think of Flaubert or Proust for example.
[14] An emphasis on the indexicality of the photographic film image since the popularization of a particular understanding of Andre Bazin's notions of cinematic realism has prevented more complex considerations of the "realistic" in the film image and has limited the terms of the debate.

must rethink, as scholars, our own relationship to realism, that act of "transference" we call representation, and the possibilities in presentation.[15]

Gunning's argument is appealing – particularly as new media trouble the index and interest in long-ignored Animation Studies increases, as I will indicate in chapter 5 of this work. Yet there is still so much more to be said about the photographic image and the status of *things* therein first, elements to be explored in a dialectic of stillness and movement, and a conception of stillness as not merely a negation of motion. My work is a work on and of the mechanical regime. But it proceeds with a view from the digital, historicizing *looking* and also our own sight and historical insight. In these pages is an appraisal of an aesthetic of sensible gaps in even classical narrative structure, narrative paucity and visual fullness, perceptible divides in modern narrative historical films and the bounds they forge with the historical world. This is the cinema of decoration, description, and display. This cinema must be differentiated from the practices of showing and telling. While it includes magnificent images, it is no mere 'beautification' of the image, not (pejoratively) a "cinéma du look" (as with the French films that bear that distinction). Nor is it a cinema of transcendence. Even more so than "excess," the decorative and descriptive cinema has quite a lot to show us about the "bounds forged" between cinema and the historical world.

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[15] Gunning argues that film theorists writing since Peter Wollen's 1972 *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* have been too eager to reduce Bazin's "realism" to indexicality itself. It is problematic enough to have equated the Peircean index with the trace, both "natural" signs, arising from non-arbitrary relationships with the signified, even as one identifies the former as pointing out of the existence of something in space and the latter as "heteromaterial" and existing in an alternate space. But where had Bazin's notion of the *act* of the "*transference* of reality of the thing to its reproduction" gone? What had happened to Wollen's own caveat to an understanding of Bazin's realism as equivalent to indexicality: ". . . where Peirce made his observation in order to found a logic, Bazin wished to found an aesthetic?" (Gunning 2007, 32). We must see Bazin's effort to understand the relationship between the image and the real beyond the terms of a now-reduced conception of Peirce's sign system.

To consider the terminology of this study and the appropriateness of such terminology to the visual – the language of "description," the notion of "visual description" – we should note the primary vocabulary that moves between the disciplines of visual and linguistic arts. W.J.T. Mitchell has made a suggestive list of words literary scholarship has borrowed from the visual arts, including words such as "imitation," "representation," "expression," "style," "background" and "foreground" and even "pictorial itself" (Mitchell 1980). Moving in the reverse direction, from literary to visual studies, we find description and, as I'll propose in chapter three of this work, the hybrid "historiating," a derivative of the 19th Century "historiated," defined in the Oxford English Dictionary thus: "Decorated with figures of men or animals . . . as illuminated or ornamental initial letters etc") (Historiated). The historiated initial is narrative and extra-narrative in a single figure, perhaps a capital letter that incorporates a vignette, suggesting a less-definite relation between the world before us and the world as presented by the written text.[16] These are forms that are *more* than adequate to the content, and problematically so, both for the reader and the critic. These images and the impulses they betray far predate the post-modern, for decorated texts from medeival illuminated manuscripts to illustrated Victorian works through the fine press movement adopt the historiated initial. This is a point – the internal multiplication of the image – that seems to be missed all too

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[16] The art-historical "Historiated Portrait" involves an obvious concealment, an incomplete disguise, a display of historical doubling, a partial transfer of the attributes of a well-known or even notorious figure to a then-known portrait sitter, will be discussed in Chapter 3. This image, as we will see, is a further demonstration of the liminality identified above.

frequently in scholarship on post-modernity, an ahistoricism on the part of many who indicate concern for ahistoricism.[17]

We must note that descriptive modes have been adopted for varying purposes – not in response to unitary social concerns so much as out of an awareness of kinds of exhaustion with particular modes of historical thinking. I do not intend to argue that "descriptive" images or acts of display prove a singular point regarding the material conditions from within which those film images have emerged so much as I intend to indicate the lack in other models for understanding them. Yet the descriptive film image is a critical formal intervention. The politics of such images are not necessarily predetermined in any ideological direction,[18] nor are they merely a reaction, a return to a pre-capitalist stylistics, although they certainly share features with the (neo)Baroque. The descriptive images which I will identify as critical are not inherently progressive, but they do help us to see something else – something about conceiving material life and living history.

To be "descriptive" in the conventional view, an image would have to get away from – or get outside of – time, impossible (perhaps) for the medium which, together with music, is an Art *of* Time[19]. Yet in a less conventional view, filmic "description" makes good sense. Speaking with Michel Ciment about his turn to the past in *Barry Lyndon* (1975), Stanley Kubrick indicates that description is not merely possible for the cinema, but is one of its particular aptitudes:

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[17] For which scholarship in Contemporaneity might provide some corrective.

[18] Possible associations between the descriptive film image and calligraphism must be considered, for example. Yet just as it is not automatically progressive, the descriptive image should not be immediately critiqued as Right or reactionary.

[19] Following Bazin ("Death Every Afternoon" 2003) as well as Deleuze's *Cinema* books.

[*Barry Lyndon*] also offered the opportunity to do one of the things that movies

can do better than any other art form, and that is to present historical subject

matter. Description is not one of the things that novels do best, but it is

something that movies do effortlessly, at least with respect to the effort

required of the audience (Castle 2005, 441).

Yet *is* description one of the things of which the cinema is capable, let alone does

"effortlessly"? It has been commonplace to reject a notion of "descriptive" cinema out of hand

on the grounds that literary description is, by nature, *virtual* while the photographic film image

is in some measure *actual,* even though the reception of the image is reliant on the virtual –

experiencing the effect or essence of an object or condition that is otherwise absent.

Nevertheless, the photographic film can't help but be specific, a necessary feature of the very

definition of description. Narratologists argue then that the amplification and specification

that, in literature, qualify as a "descriptive" tendency, is an immediate consequence of the

photographic qualities of the cinematic image. That is, while the verbal-descriptive of a written

work performs specification with an adjective, film and photography do it already. While the

"decorative" relies on type or kind, the cinema can't do that and for the same reason; it can't

help but specify (Chatman 1980, 127).[20] Critics suggest, too, that a descriptive image is an

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[20] For narratologist Seymour Chatman, there is the further complication of the spectator's lack of control over the passage of time. He argues that a spectator's dwelling on the visual details of a narrative film is immaterial to the perception of the film and often, even, impossible: "Pressure from the narrative components is too great. Events move too fast. The contemplation of beautiful framing or color or lighting is a pleasure limited to those who can see the film many times or are fortunate enough to have access to equipment which will allow them to stop the frame" (Chatman 1980, 122). This once-rarity is now a ubiquity, but the point that film unspools at a usually fixed (and comparatively fast) rate, while attention to a still image is extended by the reader of the image over time, is an important – if obvious – point. See Laura Mulvey's *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (Mulvey 2006).

exception, and there is no doubt that *Barry Lyndon is* an exceptional work.   Such an exception is even seen as deviant.[21] This deviance is one part associated with conventional adherence to particular forms of arguments for cinematic and literary specificity (categorical) and one part adapted from literary debates concerning material histories and decoration, description and display.

In this dissertation, I identify a selection of British and American films that pose questions regarding a difference between narrative understanding and descriptive understanding. These films, positioned between popular and avant garde cinema, present mixed historiographic forms and require us to look through the lens of "description" at what studies of history on film, in their interest in *representation* over *presentation*, have often ignored.   Finally, seeing descriptive historical films as acts of display allows us to differentiate the event of the film from an inadequate copy of an historical event, a project already begun by my contemporaries but still incomplete.   "Descriptive" seems to capture what the larger category "representation"[22] and the more cinema-specific "spectacle" cannot. This dissertation argues that the cinema of description and decoration challenges conventional ways of conceiving of relationships between images and history.   My project is, then, a project of uncovering and of recovery.

The films I consider seek to maintain the coherence created by narrative, but insist that the description not be subordinated to narrative, asserting the images' own heterogeneity.

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[21] Continuing with Chatman as example, we find this: "Indeed, there are movies (like Terrence Malick's recent *Days of Heaven*) which are criticized because their visual effects are *too striking for the narrative line to support*" my emphasis (Chatman 1980, 122). This is a charge we will see levied against David Lean and Peter Greenaway in the following chapters.
[22] See Gadamer "The Temporality of the Aesthetic." (*Truth and Method* 1975).

While narrative integration theoretically reduces the anxiety and openness associated with the aleatory, the forms of detail, description and display can provoke another, deeper anxiety about our location within the historical world, as we will see.   What is more, the terms "decorative" and "descriptive" perhaps give us ways of thinking about troubling aspects of the photographic film image itself, both epistemologically and ontologically.   In the remainder of this introductory chapter, I consider cinematic description, decoration and display in relation to theory and criticism of the same in literature and in painting.   In subsequent chapters I offer case studies of exemplary films.

C. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE THINGS OF HISTORY –THE 'DANGERS' OF DESCRIPTION

> *Happy are those ages when the starry sky is the map of all possible paths – ages whose paths are illuminated by the light of the stars. Everything in such ages is new and yet familiar, full of adventure and yet their own . . . Thus each action of the soul becomes meaningful and rounded in this duality: complete in meaning – in sense – and complete for the senses . . ."*
>
> *—Georg Lukács, Theory of the Novel*

If we are to think through the status of description in the cinema in relation to history films, we must first think through the history of *anti*-description in literature and film.   If my list of "history film" scholars (in Part 1 of this chapter) seems long, Cynthia Sundberg Wall's recent list of scholars who have considered the role of description in literature is far longer:

Plato, Aristotle, Horace, Puttenham, Chapman, Sidney, Dryden, Locke, Hume,

Addison, Lessing, James, Lukács, Jean Hagstrum, W.J.T.Mitchell, Svetlana Alpers,

Naomi Schor, Barbara Stafford, John Bender, and many others have considered

how the act of narrative visualization is possible epistemologically, how it works

psychologically, what it means ideologically (2006, 14).

The length of the list is important because it indicates an on-going awareness of the

significance of the relation of the particular to the general for both ethics and aesthetics, even

if, as yet, no one is quite sure what to do with it. Wall cites the comically aware title of the

fourth chapter of Henry Fielding's sparsely described *Tom Jones* – "*The Reader's Neck brought*

into Danger by Description" – as an example of a conscious literary antagonism toward

description.[23] Nevertheless, description is perennially valued for its opposition to classical

philosophy's universalizing tendencies.

One of the problems of literary description is that it can get scholars back into the bind

of the copy (that is, of description as representation rather than as an individuated event of

presentation). Yet if there is such a "danger" in description (or a triple-threat: in addition to the

problem for the scholar, for the writer, it "chills" the reader; for the reader, it misleads by

directing attention away from the narrative, perhaps even encouraging inattention), there is in

description the capacity for unthinking causal relations asserted by plot: Description transmits

difference.[24]

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[23] "The classical strain of anti-description, or, perhaps better, of curbing description, survives healthily in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; the Russian formalists and the Anglo-American New Critics had little time for description, Marxists distrusted its materiality, and the discourse linguists of the 1970s and 1980s theorized it into the mere background of gestalt theory. And that is why I think of literary description as a foundling" (Wall 2006, 202).

[24] Here I do not limit myself to the structuralist sense of difference in that I am not only interested in relations and *meaning* produced differentially, but in the presentation of things in and for themselves, therein being also post-post-structuralist.

Georg Lukács's contributions to the debate over decoration and description are significant for the current study, not only because he originated the narrate/describe binary but also because the reverberations of his criticisms are still felt. This dissertation is not a work of exegesis but one of identification and analysis, and discussion of Lukács serves to locate my position historically and intellectually rather than to fully elucidate his.   For Lukács, narrative was preferable to description because it approaches the search for meaning *as* a search, never forgetting that the making of meaning is a, perhaps the, human objective. "Description" and "decoration," accept "mere existence," a surface without a depth. Thus while narrative seeks to "enter the sphere of 'authentic being,'" that realm wherein ethical action is possible (Aitken 2006, 70), novelistic description results from and accepts the condition of complete alienation. Description, always digressive and necessarily incomplete (for representation cannot be exhaustive but must be selective), accepts that the totality has become both unrecognizable and unrepresentable[25] – or even that the Periclean question "What World is this?" and the contemporary amplification "and what is to be done in it?" no longer suit. Description in the novel, for Lukács, indicated that "some vital relationship to action and the possibility of action has broken down" (Aitken 2006, 77).

Symptomatic rather than diagnostic of the condition of contingency, part of a "self-destruction" of reality, description for Lukács levels fields: "Narration establishes proportion, description merely levels" (1970, 127). If all things, all objects, all details are equally valued and independent (thus inexpressive of a unified whole) nothing is *specifically valued* – an indication

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[25] Here it should be clear that I am working with the Lukácsian version of totality, and not the Althusserian view.

of the truth of the representation. Yet when Walter Benjamin writes of the Trauerspiel that

"[a]ny person, any object, any relationship can mean absolutely anything else. With this

possibility a destructive, but just verdict is passed on the profane world: it is characterized as a

world in which the detail is of no great importance," he is not accepting a fragmentation of the

world but suggesting that the representation of the insignificant detail is an ethical aesthetic

response to the modern condition (2003, 175). Benjamin expresses similar sentiment

elsewhere, including his work on film.

The 1930s Expressionism debates are not far from the 'early' Lukács of the *Theory of the*

Novel and are consonant with the contemporaneous *Historical Novel*. In all cases, however, his

argument is far more nuanced than it first appears. The conflicts between Lukács and Bloch

within the infamous "realism debates" on the ground of expressionism now seem exaggerated.

Though Lukács rejected expressionism and other forms of modernism, which are

problematically conflated throughout the published portions of the wider field of debate

(debate which included Adorno, Benjamin, Bloch, Brecht, and Lukács), he identified an

expressive capacity existing already in realism itself. That expressive capacity of realism is the

key to understanding Lukács's position in the debates, and is necessary for our understanding

of description.[26]

The discrepancy between Lukács and Bertolt Brecht, on the other hand, might have

been resolved differently.   Brecht might have agreed with Lukács in terms of the expressive

capacity of realism were it not for the seeming impossibility of producing a *critical* realism as an

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[26]For the sake of simplicity, we must set aside Bloch's spiritualism, which informed the debates to a high degree
(and set Bloch's position against Kracauer's as well, as we will see).

alternative to the mundane. John Baldacchino indicates that in Brecht's response, "[t]he issue

of realism is not as much theoretical as it is entirely practical. Realism is an act, and in its act as

a form of art it is intrinsic to the form of art's position in history . . ."(89). Naturalism would be

both easier to produce and comprehend than an effective critical realism together with its

antagonisms.[27]

Despite the precisely contrary position Lukács took toward literature, he suggested that

film is uniquely capable of a *critical* naturalism, though the differences between media were

underplayed in the debate described above (Jameson 2008, 435). Lukács was able to suggest

such a possibility, in part because the image may be already dialectical.[28] In "Thoughts on an

Aesthetic for the Cinema," first published in *Frankfurter Zeitung* in 1913, Lukács implies that the

cinematic image is an exception to his concerns for causality. If the goal of the Lukácsian critical

realist novel was the world "drawn . . . simply as a seen reality [which incorporated the

totality]," cinema was uniquely capable of presenting a world seen, as reality, without an

explicit endorsement or denial of a totality (152). "Description," defined for Lukács as

presentation of detail in relation only to other material things and *not* in relationship to a

totality, the characteristic "fault" of naturalist literature, did something automatically different

– and positive – on film.

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[27] Rebecca Walkowitz suggests that modern novels have demonstrated awareness of this antagonism: ". . . as Lezra
and Said acknowledge, it is not easy to be both critical and heroic. How does one resist social postures of
euphemism and blinding generalization – postures, Woolf felt, that led to acts of imperialism and militarism, such
as the First World War – without resorting to literalism or to narrow description? . . . As these questions suggest,
as the phrase 'critical heroism' implies, one must risk being bad – uncertain, distracted, and unsuccessful – in order
to keep being good" (Walkowitz 2006, 121). While in some accounts Woolf's work is quietist, failing to address
directly the horrors of the modern world in form or in content, Walkowitz argues that her works succeed as a
"dissenting individualism" (142) tying anti-heroism to political alternative.
[28] Even if Lukács had argued that "an intellectual problem cannot be expressed by a picture" (Aitken 2006, 74).

That essay, one of just a few Lukács would write on film, resonates with much of the work on the specificity of the photographic cinema from the nineteen-teens and twenties. What is of special interest here is the way the essay suggests already that cinema formed a counterpoint to the novel. The sensuousness of the cinematic image, a consequence of its photographic indexicality, was its key feature, and film's ever-presentness was paramount: "The world of the 'cinema' is thus a world without background or perspective, without any difference in weight or quality, as only the present gives things fate and weight, light and lightness" (Lukács 2001, 14). In this, Lukács prefigured Siegfried Kracauer's assertion of film's capacity to "redeem" physical reality, though for Kracauer this "redemption" would pertain to the material world rather than the theological or quasi-theological.[29] Indeed, the resonances with Benjamin and Kracauer alike ought not to be missed. Lukács described film, this "new and beautiful thing," as embodying the fantastical possibilities of the modern world in a series of machines, from camera to projector: "*Everything is possible*: this is the worldview of the 'cinema'" (2001, 15). Most profoundly, the camera presented the pure demonstration of historicality. In this moment, Lukács's appraisal of film is technological: the photographic film image's indexicality ties it directly as possible to nature, but the radical capability within was not the production of a copy of the world as it is but a disjunction, not representation but pure presentation.[30]

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[29] Barnouw notes that Kracauer's first concern for photography is actually the un-redeemed (52) suggesting that this redemption is a melancholic project.

[30] Some of the cinematic capabilities Lukács pointed to as demonstrations of this (trick and composite shots, for example) have been identified retrospectively with a surrealism of the cinema itself, taking a cue from Benjamin.

If elements of Lukács's appeal for a circumscribed realism were jettisoned in the following years, it seems strange that his concern for "decadence" has been preserved so carefully,[31] even if nearly-repressed, in academic debates over the social power of images.[32] And indeed it is possible to view descriptive, decorative or decadent elements as merely evidence of reification.

Jameson offers a thoughtful and thorough assessment of the critique of aesthetic "decadence":

> The concept of 'decadence' is the equivalent in the aesthetic realm of that of 'false consciousness' in the domain of traditional ideology analysis. Both suffer from the same defect: the common presupposition that in the world of culture and society, such a thing as pure error is possible. They imply, in other words, that works of art or systems of philosophy are conceivable which have no content, and are therefore to be denounced for failing to grapple with the 'serious' issues of the day, indeed distracting from them (2008, 439).

It was the seriousness of the threat of Fascism which then-cemented notions of the decadent and now-dates the 1930s concerns (for we observe today a far more diffuse operation of power): a world capable of being comprehended seemed a fiction. The world itself, and not its representations, seemed errant. Advocates of anti-realist modes argued that these forms demonstrated the fallacy in the hope of a unified community of humankind, a hope

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[31] Andrew Darley describes the reception of "sensuous" images: "In so far as they tend not to concern themselves with representation or meaning in anything other than a formal sense, then they are viewed as wasteful – decadent even. And yet is this really so – is it not possible to mount a positive case for such an aesthetic?" (Darley 2000, 6).

[32] With the exception of the Melodrama. See discussion in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

put to death for continental scholars by Auschwitz and everything after.[33] As we know, such a

perspective as that advanced by Adorno and Horkheimer encouraged non-narrative

alternatives in literary criticism and philosophy, though the effect seems not to have been felt

in the history discipline itself, which continued to favor production of linear, explanatory

narrative.

D. HISTORY FOR STRANGE REALISTS: KRACAUER'S "DECADENCE" AND DESCRIPTION

No sooner do we emancipate ourselves from the 'ancient beliefs' than we are led to eliminate the qualities of things. So the things continue to recede.

–Siegfried Kracauer

For Siegfried Kracauer, the value of textual fragmentation was the revelation of the very

problem of fragmented life itself. Arts that present to us *other* fragments call to our attention

to the condition of fragmentation and make us aware of our own perception. This would result

in an enlargement of the perception of a world that, for Kracauer, was "endangered" (Barnow

2005, 84). Kracauer's desire was for a conceptualization of the world that was the appropriate

ethical response to the historical condition of modernity.

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[33] Auschwitz meant synechdocally, of course, though this hope might also have died in view of the very nearness and inhumanity of the trenches of the first World War. Studies of the novel suggest that it was the *19th Century* that saw the incoherence of events in themselves, leading to a necessity for external justification (and thus intensive moralization/melodrama as compensation). This complicates the suggestion that the novel presents a "unity," an issue for literary studies too large to pursue in the space of this (principally) visual studies dissertation.

Here we observe a contradiction. On the surface the positions of Kracauer and Lukács

seem antithetical to one another. After all, for Kracauer the problem with decoration is the

companion problem to excessive attention to unity: both deplete the instant itself of an

inherent meaning in favor of an abstraction akin to the abstraction of capitalism.[34] Narrative

unity was suspect because it maintains causal relations and demonstrates a dangerous

nostalgia; decoration was indictable for maintaining merely spatial, abstract relations,

producing a geometric unity rather than a unity of meaning (thereby demonstrating a valuation

of rationalism over reason). It was the combination of the two which, for Kracauer, provided

fertile ground for extremism. [35] Kracauer's belief in the despotic nature of ornamentation and

decoration is consonant with Lukács's, reflecting Lukács's earlier concern but with a

difference.[36]   As mediators of contingency, ornamentation and decoration function for

Kracauer as devices for absolute power (1995).

Theodor Adorno's assessment of Kracauer as the "strange realist" is appropriate. It is a

category to which I believe both Lukács and Kracauer belong,[37] even if Kracauer would rightly

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[34] For which critical move Kracauer is no doubt indebted to Simmel.

[35] In this linkage he was not alone: W.J.T. Mitchell points to Joseph Frank's 1945 "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," which argues that spatial/geometrical form is antithetical to temporality and subsequently and necessarily Fascist.

[36] Particularly in *From Caligari to Hitler*. See also Patrice Petro's essay "From Lukács to Kracauer and Beyond: Social Film Histories and the German Cinema" for more on the Lukács/Bloch debates of the thirties and their sequelae in the scholarship of German film (1983, 47).

[37] Ian Aitken's appraisal of Lukács's commitment to realism in his *Realist Film Theory and Cinema: The Nineteenth Century Lukácsian and Intuitionist Realist Tradition* is helpful:

"It is clear . . . that, although Lukács is considered to be a proponent of a 'realistic' aesthetic, it would be more accurate to define his aesthetic system as one based on a synthesis of the classical idea of mimesis and the Hegelian ideal of organic totality. Lukács refers to this synthesis as 'realist,' but it could equally, and perhaps more helpfully, be described as 'mimetic organic'" (Aitken 2006, 79).

disassociate his position from Lukács's, both ideologically and methodologically.[38]   Both

Kracauer and Lukács (like Simmel) must have believed in a coherent a priori world in order to

justify and anchor their discussions of modernity and fragmentation even if many of their

conclusions are opposed to one another. Kracauer's position changed over time from a belief

that literary and film forms should symbolize the ethical to a belief that aesthetic forms should

reveal the fragmentation of daily life and that any effort at unity would necessarily be

reactionary (Schlupmann 1987). We can formulate the question as Ernst Bloch might have

formulated it in relation to his defense of Expressionism in the 1930s: "What if authentic reality

is also discontinuity?" (Bloch 1980, 22). Lukács found a discontinuous world theoretically

groundless and politically and psychologically disabling, both as an approach to the world and

as a literary method, while Kracauer responded to a discontinuous world by producing his own

"microhistories" and continued in the hope that the representation of fragmentation would

enable conceptual and social re-integration.

But if we can get outside of the narrative unity via distraction, why can we not get

outside of it via attention to forms of multiplied signification in those very spatial relations

(particularly given the problems they pose for causality)? Here, Kracauer's oeuvre is a bit self-

contradictory or at least incomplete. If the modern critical position required an awareness of

estrangement, was film to create such awareness via distraction, or was there another possible

route through a different kind of *attraction*? I argue, then, what Kracauer did not: that non-

narrative forms of understanding can be accomplished through a particular form of dispersal of

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[38] Dagmar Barnouw describes correspondence between Ernst Bloch and Kracauer in which Bloch continually
appealed to Kracauer to identify similarities and accept solidarity among a divergent group of intellectuals,
particularly Lukács, Kracauer and himself. Kracauer resisted these appeals (2005, 67).

attention.   Decoration and description each has a cunning relationship to verisimilitude, in not trying to generate a fixed meaning, whether literal or allegorical, from what is observable.

Kracauer's position developed over time into a more moderate one than that of those who advocated for high rather than vernacular modernist responses to fixed (state) histories that asserted the inevitability and irrevocability of actions or events.   Despite Kracauer's increasing will to associate his position with Adorno et al., Kracauer appears, rather, to occupy a middle position between Lukács and that of Adorno and the Frankfurt Group.[39] For Adorno, art would have to reject reality in order to "vindicate" it by the absence of a singular objective world in representation or reproduction (Baldacchino 1996, 119). This perspective runs counter to Lukács's assertion that art is duty-bound to reflect a unity in reality (such as it is) as a contribution to the production of ethical subjects, an assertion that demonstrates a *desire* for a particular kind of realism, a *hope* for a totality both in the form of literature and the form of life.

Kracauer's attention was turned not to production but to reading and reception, and this is consistent with his concern for the everyday. Kracauer's ontological assessment of film (as opposed to film's relation to specifically the social) only emerges fully in the 1960s – more so in *History: Last Things Before the Last* than in *Theory of Film* –while in the 1960s, we see the beginning of an interest in reception on Lukács's part.[40]   Kracauer's concern is for ethical reception-positions with respect to everyday texts and environment (*The Mass Ornament* 1995); Kracauer would argue, for example, for the capture of incidents rather than events.

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[39] Lukács argued that Modernism amounted not to radicalism but to solipsism; Adorno defended "art's 'right to solipsism'" (Baldacchino 1996, 121).
[40] The former had, until recently, been overshadowed by the Weimar essays.

Yet Kracauer *was* prescriptive in his arguments regarding artistic photography. Art photography's return to the premodern pretends to forget the intricacies, instants and accidents of modernity. In *The Mass Ornament* Kracauer passes this judgment on artistic photography:

> The artistic photographers function like those social forces which are interested
>
> in the semblance of the spiritual because they fear the real spirit: it might
>
> explode the material base which the spiritual illusion serves to disguise. It would
>
> be well worth the effort to expose the close ties between the prevailing social
>
> order and artistic photography (1995, 53).

"Art photography" operated against the supposed specific nature of the photograph – indexical and instantaneous, unstaged and opening imaginatively onto an unbounded world. All of this indicates the critical value of *darstellung* over *vorstellung*, a world pictured and not a world-as-picture.

The implication is that the artistic photograph is incapable of taking a critical position on the world as a photograph that embraced the "photographic spirit" would be able to do. "Incidentally," Kracauer writes in *Theory of Film*, "it was not primarily the many painters in the ranks of the photographers who voiced and implemented such [painterly] aspirations" (Kracauer 1997, 6). In his assessment of the art photograph, however, "presentation" and "representation" are confounded. This gets us to a sense of the symbolic possibility of everything, which is valuable, but it gets us away from presentation – display – as an event.[41]

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[41] Benjamin does not resolve the problem. Would that he were to function as a middle term, but Benjamin does propose as an antidote to the cause-effect relations of disciplined history an "aesthetic model."

Kracauer's complaint is consistent with Laszlo Moholy-Nagy's contemporary assertion that "painterly photographs" would prevent viewers from seeing "the world with entirely different eyes," which would be the role of technological and aesthetic developments (Moholy-Nagy 1969, 29).[42]

E. DECORATION AND DESCRIPTION, AND THE GEOMETRICS OF HISTORY

Decoration and description (and their relative, ornament) are not anti-mimetic approaches. Henri Focillon describes the most extreme ornamentalism, ornamental "monstrosities"of the Baroque:

> They live with passionate intensity a life that is entirely their own; they proliferate like some vegetable monstrosity. They break apart even as they grow; they tend to invade space in every direction, to perforate it, to become as one with all its possibilities . . .They are obsessed with the object of representation; they are urged toward it by a kind of maniacal 'similism.' But the experiments into which they are swept by some hidden force constantly overshoot the mark . . . Never has abstract form a more obvious – although not necessarily a more powerful – mimic value (1992 58).

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[42] Yet it is also clear that Moholy-Nagy is ambivalent about firm distinctions between arts on the basis of their rhetorical capacities, as we will see in discussion of the figural, below.

Focillon's poetic (rather than purely analytic) text attempts to get at the heart of form, and arrives at a "labyrinth":

> In other words, what I may call 'the system of the series' – a system composed of discontinuous elements sharply outlined, strongly rhythmical and defining a stable and symmetrical space that protects them against unforeseen accidents of metamorphosis – eventually becomes 'the system of the labyrinth,' which, by means of mobile syntheses, stretches itself out in a realm of glittering movement and color. As the eye moves across the labyrinth in confusion, misled by a linear caprice that is perpetually sliding away to a secret objective of its own, a new dimension suddenly emerges, which is a dimension neither of motion nor of depth, but which still gives us the illusion of being so (67).

I introduce Focillon's *Life of Forms* here to indicate that there have already been other ways of seeing ornament and decoration than as forms of containment (spatial unity in service to fascism). Ornamentation may first be perceived as containment, and this is a sense we will preserve in the coming chapters, but it is not automatically ideologically conservative. Ornamentation is not merely an abstraction applied to a geometrical grid (and it is for this reason that while it was useful for Kracauer's attempt at a diagnosis of the German condition, his appraisal is not altogether accurate).[43]

"Fragmentation" and its varieties become more helpfully a question of figuration when understood through Gilles Deleuze. The "descriptive" cinematic image will not merely take us

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[43] Recall that Kracauer's complaint is specifically the relationship between pure geometrical representations and fascism.

the long way around to Deleuze's Time Image, wherein the image opens out onto consideration of time itself, nor to merely a special (late) case of the Movement Image. It is something different – belonging to the space between the time and movement images, a form Deleuze identified, if only briefly, in *Cinema 1: the Movement Image* (1986).

In *Cinema 1*, Deleuze develops six varieties of the Movement Image: the perception-image, affection-image, and action-image, and the impulse image, the relation image, and reflection image.   Between the Action Image and the Relation Image, Deleuze describes the Reflection Image as an "indirect reflexive relation," in which a "plastic representation" refers to a "real situation" (Bogue 2003, 93). Deleuze frequently returns to narrative and thematic concerns when we would prefer a more extended formal consideration, for example, in *choosing* the highly specific examples from Eisenstein's *Strike* (1924) and *Que Vive Mexico* (1979), in insisting that we are not "posing any general problem about the relationship of the cinema and language, of images and words" (Deleuze 1986, 183).   But the prospect of its existence outside of these examples, the existence of a "deformation, transformation or transmutation of the action-image," is suggestive, particularly because that "deformation" can be found in narrative rather than experimental film, or especially because it can be found within narrative cinema – Sergei Eisenstein surely thought so as well. That "deformation" is the "figure."

Deleuze writes, "Figures are these new attractive, attractional images, which circulate through the action-image," and he turns to French Grammarian Pierre Fontanier's taxonomy of figures (1821-1830) to explicate them:

. . . these figures are represented in four forms: in the first case, tropes strictly speaking, a word taken in a figurative sense replaces another word (metaphors, metonymies, synechoches); in the second case, imperfect tropes, it is a group of words, a proposition which has the figurative sense (allegory, personification, etc.); in the third case there *is* substitution, but it is in their strictly literal sense that the words are subjected to exchanges and transformations (reversal is one of these procedures); the last case is that of figures of thought which do not pass through any modification of words (deliberation, concession, support, prosopopoeia, etc.) (183).

This fourth figure is, for Deleuze, the "discursive image," a thought-image which has not yet broken the coherence of sensori-motor schema (Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* 1989). Ronald Bogue describes the "discursive image" as "the *direct* reflection of an *indirect* relation between action and situation, the explicit presentation of what is implicit and presupposed in all the figures of the reflection-image" (Bogue 2003, 97), which is, for me, located between rhetorical allusion and "ornamentation." The analytic promise of the "discursive image" – the "cinematic counterpart" to Fontanier's fourth figure (Bogue, 95) – is not fully delivered in *Cinema 1*, and in *Cinema 2* Deleuze folds the "discursive image" back into a *precursor* of the crisis of the Action Image. In this dissertation I hope to suspend that moment and extend its reach.

Descriptive and decorative images function similarly to Deleuze's discursive image. They are not merely symptomatic of the same idealism as the affection image, but do not belong entirely to the *crisis* of the movement image, engaging with the impossibility of ethical

action, a "cinema of the seer and no longer of the agent" (Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* 1989, 2). Movement is indeed a quality of the sign itself in this case, involving "proprioceptic" experiences,[44] but what distinguishes the Movement Image retrospectively is that it still posits agency and consequential action and conveys sensible (in both senses of the term) spatial relations, without forming an organic pair with any actual space. The crisis is not an eruption but a faltering – causes and reasons are split, and substantive action seems no longer possible; in the "discursive image" sensible relations between object and representation maintain. My interest here is in the moment just prior to the openness onto Time, in oblique images occupying fully their two dimensions. I don't propose, then, to complete the set or resolve all outstanding issues but rather open us onto ongoing aesthetic, philosophical, and ethical considerations. [45]

In *Cinema 2* Deleuze refused that such an *effective* distinction as I propose here existed within "the old realism":

> It may be objected that the viewer has always found himself in front of
> 'descriptions,' in front of optical and sound-images, and nothing more. But this
> is not the point. For the characters themselves reacted to situations . . . What
> the viewer perceived therefore was a sensory-motor image in which he took a
> greater or lesser part by identification with the characters (Deleuze 1989, 3).

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[44] Deleuze adapts Bergson and appropriates more contemporary neuroscience for these formulations.
[45] David Rodowick posits that "the movement image and the time-image are historical in the sense of presenting two distinct audiovisual regimes, which may be distinguished by, among other criteria, the passage from a Hegelian philosophy of history to a Nietzschean or genealogical historical thought . . ." (Rodowick 2001, 177).

But this is also not beside the point. If, in my terms, "narrative" images and "descriptive" images differ in their relationship to action and in their mode of figuration, the descriptive image remains closer to an affection image.

Deleuze's movement image comes into its own only when the camera itself begins to move, and the descriptive and decorative images I describe develop in another direction, but perhaps it is true that they could only do so *after* the movement image – one part of the crisis of the movement image. A static camera *after* the possibility of camera movement transfers its dynamism to the object to be seen. Hereafter, it doesn't take a free movement of the camera to decenter the viewing subject, to desubjectivize both the view and the act of viewing, or to reveal the connection between the representation and the historical world it depicts. Description is indeed capable of the same.

Deleuze turns to the monadology of Leibniz to confront the difference between a subject and an individual point of view.   It is important to note the difference between the subject and the individual, the private and the monadic. The monad has radical consequences for perception: because there is no vacuum in nature, every monad expresses the world. The body in this perspective becomes a special lens for seeing the entire universe. The radical understanding here is that every substance perceives, represents, and expresses or presents every other in its being. Deleuze notes the "sterility of sense-events" (1993, 32). They have sacrificed their "life-quality" for a sensual, perceptual experience, and these images are not fully accounted for in *Cinema 1: The Movement Image* or *Cinema 2: The Time Image*, though I would argue that the "discursive image" comes closest.

The ingenuity in both works has to do with their investment in two pre-narrative concerns: movement and temporality. For Deleuze, narrativization is one by-product of a drive to regularize experience, not the cause of the drive itself; the Movement Image's dependence on cause and effect relations lends itself to narrativity. If D.W. Griffith initiates the representation of an organic Whole – a world decomposed and recomposed according to a logic of spatio-temporal continuity – for Bazin (and later, as we will see, for Peter Greenaway), this organicity results from a desire for cinematic narrativity. For Deleuze, by contrast, this organic conception allows for cinematic narrativity, which is not an essential drive, but a by-product of a drive to regularize.[46]

We are moving from a psychological subject to a particular historical configuration, which has become the "point of view" of perception, rejecting organic relations between milieu and action ("unity" for prior literary study of realism). For Deleuze the "optical situation" of the crisis of the movement image rethinks subjectivity: "As for the distinction between subjective and objective, it also tends to lose its importance, to the extent that the optical situation or visual description replaces the motor action" (Deleuze 1989, 6). Yet this visual description maintains the independence of the object from the prehension of it that belongs to the "old realism."

Thus Deleuze appeals to Leibniz to resolve the problem of the relation of the general to the particular without recourse to "unity" (1990, 113). The difference, argues Leibniz, is that between a "heap of stones" (having no dominant monad), "*unum per accidens*," and a

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[46] See Bogue for an elaboration of Griffith's organic unity in Deleuze (49).

compound structure, like a catalogue of objects – exhaustive and finite despite infinite possibilities.

In identifying the historical view of the Baroque, Deleuze's formulation of Walter Benjamin's "allegory" is illuminating:

Walter Benjamin made a decisive step forward in our understanding of the Baroque when he showed that allegory was not a failed symbol, or an abstract personification, but a power of figuration entirely different from that of the symbol: the latter combines the eternal and the momentary, nearly at the center of the world, but allegory uncovers nature and history according to the order of time. It produces a history from nature and transforms history into nature in a world that no longer has its center (1993, 125).

Benjaminian allegory is a useful comparison to the concept of the discursive figure, for in allegory Benjamin perceived both the figure at hand and an aesthetic mode of historical thinking.[47] This is not unlike the duality of the "discursive figure," above, and it must be distinguished from Fontanier's "imperfect tropes," which includes the commonplace understanding of allegory. Deleuze expands and enriches Benjamin's conception of allegory, proposing three characteristics of the emblematic: "figure, inscription or proposition, and individual point of view" (127). We see from the total of Deleuze's work the necessity for the

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[47] See Stéphane Mosès's *Angel of History: Rosenzweig, Benjamin, Scholem* (2009).

distinction between subject and individual point of view, and it is a useful distinction for understanding the receptive position posited by the decorative and descriptive.[48]

The "decorative" and the "descriptive" images supply missing terms between Deleuze's minor form, the "discursive image," and Deleuze's version of the Baroque. Yet the term "(neo)Baroque" is not wholly adequate to the images I consider either, and both Baroque and neo-Baroque are used so frequently and so flexibly that they have diminished analytical power.[49] In her text on contemporary film and (neo)Baroque images, Angela Ndalianis notes that "the (neo-)baroque complicates classical spatial relations through the suggestion of the collapse of the representational frame" (152). Among other differences, these images do not attempt to "escape" the frame: "Rather than providing a statically ordered perspectival arrangement, the center continually shifts, the result being the articulation of complex spatial conditions" (152). The discursive, on the other hand, develops through complex vertical relations, those between the object represented and the "real" conditions to which they attest.

For Angela Ndalianis, following Rosemond Tuve, the Baroque did not seek similitude: "[r]ather, imitation and representation evoked alternate 'realities' that reflected the ability of

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[48] John Baldacchino tries to get to a similar position once again vis-à-vis realism via Lukács: "If we are to subscribe to Lukács's appropriation of Spinoza's definition of the emotions and apply it to subjectivity, we have a working hypothesis for realism as the translation of the subject's relationship with the objective world into a realist representation of this relationship" (90). In such a reading of Lukács, the stress falls not on the objective world but on the beholder's relationship *to* it, a thesis which is provocative but not entirely satisfying. Yet it is helpful that he suggests that the figural keeps the *contradiction* viable: "The figural is a flexible act of signification whose metanarrative translates difference in an intelligible form," allowing realism to be both the form and the force of "variety and antagonism" (Baldacchino 1996, 93). The figural is then, in itself, a search for a form of viewing between a subjective and scientific view.

[49] Cinematic use of an already slippery term makes it even more slippery unless it is, as some argue, that cinema is the Baroque form. Nevertheless, the list of "Baroque" directors is suspiciously lengthy. Emmanuel Plasseraud provides an illustrative list: "Il est notoire égalment que c'est surtout dans les monographies consacrées à certain auteurs, d' Orson Welles à Luc Besson en passant par Raul Ruiz que leur 'baroquisme' est évoqué. Tout comme dans les analyses de films, de Fellini, Sternberg, Greenaway, etc." (Plasseraud 2007, 15).

the image to capture a 'sense impression' or to 'reproduce emotions'" (159). The Baroque

displaces narrative and "instead invokes the experience of transcendence or heightened

emotions" (159). It almost seems, then, as if observable similitude was a byproduct of what

was akin to an expressionist effort. Yet where expressionism is invested in "heightened

emotions," instead we must turn our attention from emotion to *perception* itself, which

Ndalianis describes as "an open rapport that exists between spectator and spectacle" (160).[50]

Rather than the shadow and mystery of the Baroque, the descriptive, like the discursive

image, operates according to an internal closure that indicates an openness of the world

outside the image. The descriptive parts ways with the Baroque, then, because it is profoundly

material, which is both a different style and a different ontology.

F. QUALITIES OF VISUAL DESCRIPTION

Descriptive images rely on the surface in a way that is not uncomplicatedly "painterly,"

although "descriptive" accords with particular developments in painting. The images are

dominated by co-presence and co-equivalence of the objects presented, and as I've indicated,

this has analogues in literary description. This co-presence and co-equivalence of things on the

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[50] See also Plasseraud's *Cinéma et Imaginaire Baroque* (2007).

same plane of representation recalls, too, Benjamin's "just verdict," as above. "Visual description" nuances our reading of the images.[51]

Though "descriptive" arts are associated with the development of the camera obscura, the suggestion that it adopts the camera obscura's "monocularism" misunderstands these images and that technology – it is not the penetration of space belonging to renaissance perspective that is preserved. In her text *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century*, Svetlana Alpers catalogues features of the "descriptive art of the North" in contrast with "narrative" Italian sculpture and painting of the same period (1983).[52] While Heinrich Wölfflin termed the Dutch genre paintings "painterly" (*malerisch*) and the art of the South "narrative" (Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History* 1950, 3), Alpers elects our favored terms, "descriptive" and "describing."[53] In the Dutch works (for example, those of Huygens, van Eyck, Vermeer), Alpers finds:

> the frequent absence of a positioned viewer, as if the world came first . . .; a play
>
> with great contrasts in scale . . .; the absence of a prior frame . . .; a formidable
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> sense of the picture as surface . . . on which words along with objects can be
>
> replicated or inscribed . . .; an insistence on the craft of representation . . . (xxv).

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[51] Recent studies of cinema and painting (and individual films and paintings), including Angela Dalle Vacche's *Cinema and Painting* (1996), have insisted on interrelationships between the arts rather than antagonisms, attempting to situate film in an art historical context from which it had long been excluded as a popular, industrial, reproducible form, and this is a useful effort. But in Dalle Vacche's text, an interest in abstract art and cinema precludes a development of a concept of visual description, though it seems clear that she *could* develop work along these lines, for Art History proper indeed has much to say to film studies on the subject.

[52] Art Historian and Musicologist Karol Berger argues that Alpers's classifications are similar to his own "narrative" and "lyrical," but I disagree, and they are by no means identical (Berger 2000, 199). What is more, a broader notion of "lyricism" gets even further away from the Description I articulate here.

[53] Wölffin further distinguishes "painterly" from "draughtsmanly" art, to which we will return in later chapters (12).

Alpers associates these traits with an insistence on presence and a will to confirm "knowledge" about the world seen (xxv) rather than a desire to represent significant acts or elucidate concepts. For Alpers, "descriptive" art offered neither the mere exercise of mimetic faculties nor eclecticism for its own sake but a way of recognizing a diminished importance of human activity. "Descriptive" counters a narrativizing impulse, rejecting a viewership in which a temporal sequence is imagined.[54] "Narrative" paintings remind or require a viewer to mentally reconstruct the image's central *act* (as still images, the act is that which is "invisible" and is therefore dependent on viewer creation or recall).[55] "Descriptive" art addresses the visible world in an alternative fashion, expressing only what it is that can be perceived in an instant, however long the production of the image takes and how long the image endures. Brigitte Peucker writes that for "descriptive" art, "meaning by its nature is lodged in what the eye can take in – however deceptive that might be" (Peucker 2003, 297). It is not accidental that this descriptive approach coincides with the invention of the camera obscura and develops with the lens – a merging of the artistic and the scientific. At the micro and macro level, the field of human action changes concomitantly with changes in the perceptual field.

Yet if we are to accept this set of characteristics of "descriptive" art, and its pertinence to the cinematic-descriptive, I would replace "representation" with presentation, that mode most appropriate for a "world [that] came first" (xxv). The attentive viewer sees an intriguing paradox about these 17th Century images and descriptive images thereafter: In a locale where

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[54] Though it is certainly possible that the presence of human figures in the center of a work may nevertheless trigger such a mode of viewing.
[55] See Lessing's assertion that painting is incapable of representing action (Lessing 1874).

optical devices allow for technically-mediated views, artists pursue *versions* of objective reality[56] which leave evidence of their own formation.[57]

Giuliana Bruno reads Alpers differently; this results from a less stark distinction Bruno makes between "narration" and "description" than I do and results in an entirely different sense of cinematic description. While Alpers opposes the narrative art of Italy to the descriptive art of the north, Bruno introduces to the discussion the Vedutismo (view paintings) of Italy (particularly those of Canaletto and Panini and later, Vasi) as a style adopted from visiting artists from the North. The Vedutismo, for Bruno, perform the "narrative dramatization of sites" (and sights) (174). Bruno's emphasis on "narrative dramatization" is necessary for her loose thesis that the cinema emerged from a "topographical sense." Bruno argues that a desire for mobile vision preceded the advent of cinema, and this, together with her emphasis on the connections between modernity, urban living and architecture reflects a turn to Benjamin's *Arcades* and concerns for the spectating body (1993). "Protocinematic activity is the narrativization of space itself," she writes, and sequential images from panels to Trajan's column and the column of Marcus Aurelius support this. Yet this argument leads Bruno to suggest that all visual modes lead to the narrativization of space, and to such propositions as "[t]he cartographic impulse of film derives from a narrative twist on the notion of 'the art of describing'" (Bruno 2002, 181). This "narrative twist" clarifies neither what it means to consider "the art of describing" in terms of the cinema nor what can be meant by a descriptive cinema itself. Bruno relies too heavily on the notion of vicarious mobility and not enough on

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[56] In another essay, Alpers associates this 17th C vision with 19th C realist painting ("Describe or Narrate? A Problem in Realistic Representation," 1976)
[57] Sometimes even, as Alpers indicates in the case of the 17th C artists, a literal inscription.

the weight of the static view of the picturesque and the panorama on the mobile film strip, and too little on the paradox.

For David Rodowick, "the figural" emerges as the alternative to now-outmoded discursive practices (which would include, necessarily, decoration, description and display), an alternative emergent in high modernist works and ubiquitous in post-modernity. The figural, for Rodowick, is in some ways continuous with prior forms that combine linguistic sign and image in one space, but only in new media is the dimension of temporality added. The figural, he argues, is a specific consequence of the emergence of "New Media," which also produces its most salient examples, in the hypertextuality and hybridity made possible only by the digital. We have only to re-encounter Moholy-Nagy's "Typophoto" and "Poly-Cinema" to see that this belongs, at least, to the modern world: "[The typophoto] may appear as an illustration beside the words, or in the form of 'phototext' in place of words, as a precise form of representation so objective as to permit of no individual interpretation" (1969)(Moholy-Nagy 1969).[58]

For Rodowick, the figural relates to an historically specific operation of power, which Rodowick identifies with Deleuze and Guattari's "control society" while the discursive belongs to a less-diffuse operation of power of an earlier regime. This assertion results from Rodowick's sense that "late capital" is not so late after all but is remaking itself in the non-material space of the digital even as he writes.[59] From his vantage point, the hybridity of the age of the digital is both a fundamental problem and a source for multiplying possibilities (38-39). Rodowick

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[58] The comprehension of which Moholy-Nagy equates with the experience of the city and reception of mixed-sensory input. The phototext requires and relies on instantaneous comprehension of word and image, while poly-cinema would manifest simultaneity. The digitial figure embodies both.

[59] This is a point with which I do not think Jameson would disagree, though Rodowick rejects the term "late capital" as quaint and a bit naïve, or at least misleading.

suggests that a reappraisal of humanism – and humanism's core tenet, that "man" is the measure of all things – is already underway, resulting from post-modernity (x). The figural is a kind of concept out of time: in an effort to historicize the figural, the possibility remains open that perhaps we have only ever been modern. How distinct, for example, are the figural and the emblematic, or the figural and the Hegelian hieroglyph? Each of these is a spatial form that conveys concepts. If the figural is, as Rodowick suggests, both "nonrepresentational" and unrepresentable, splitting signification and sense, these are characteristics we see in acts of description, decoration, and display – of "old media" too. Admittedly a return to an interrogation of these discursive forms is anachronistic, yet in looking at our past we can approach how humanness can appear now.

I do not see either the problems or the possibilities as exclusively the provenance of digital media.[60] I do not doubt that a *desire* for digitization characterizing a "figural era" is a useful corrective to uncomplicated conceptions of post-modernity. In one (utopian) view, the figural abolishes an oppressive unity. In another, the figural arises from the abolition of Enlightenment-originated unities. In a third, the figural creates a complete cycle of reference within itself, a closed interpretive loop, a feature of the very hybridity of the figure itself, while the "descriptive" and "decorative," as we will see in the following chapters, do not create a closed interpretive loop but multiply their relations internally.

This work seeks to comprehend the role of the descriptive image in historical representation on film via a series of case studies of exemplary texts. In the following chapter, I

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[60] For a fuller discussion of the relation of the description to the digital, see Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

consider the "scenographic" aspects of the discursive image via the poetics of David Lean's "far horizon." In chapter 3, I show that description moves beyond the "discursive" in the dynamic between specification and particularity in an analysis of Stanley Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon* (1975). Figuration and the question of specification and precision must be elaborated as well, and I return to them by way of a consideration of the visual aspects of Peter Greenaway's *Draughtsman's Contract* (1982) and *Tulse Luper Project* (on-going) in Chapter 4. I conclude with an analysis of the trajectory of Winsor McCay's *Sinking of the Lusitania* (1918) and suggest lines outward for the multiplanar descriptive image. For these films, the narratives are determined by foregone conclusions, but the images are less conclusive: the descriptive cinematic image opens up onto an unbounded whole, bringing with it a non-causal but compensatory enclosure.

2. DECORATED SOLDIERS AND DESCRIPTIVE VISTAS: THREE FILMS BY DAVID LEAN

Of the two kinds of composition into which history has been thus divided, the one may be compared to a map, the other to a painted landscape. The picture, though it places the country before us, does not enable us to ascertain with accuracy the dimensions, the distances, and the angles. The map is not a work of imitative art. It presents no scene to the imagination but it gives us exact information as to the bearings of the various points. . . It is remarkable that the practice of separating the two ingredients of which history is composed has become prevalent on the Continent as well as in this country.

—Thomas Babbington Macaulay, Critical and Historical Essays

David Lean's films have been described as "picturesque," particularly those films he made with cinematographer Freddie Young.[1] For Heinrich Wölfflin, 'picturesque' indicates the object-itself viewed otherwise, while what he calls the painterly tends toward the decorative. I propose that "decorated" and "descriptive" are more useful terms to understand Lean's images and the perception they allow than the conventional and limiting "picturesque." In chapter one I proposed that we attend to the discursive image, the "direct reflection of an indirect relation between an action and situation" (Bogue 2003, 97) and develop a more complete conception of that category. Lean's films are exemplary of the scenography belonging to that category and make necessary the intervention of such a critical concept.

In traditional landscape painting, the notion that history disappears is common, but this idea is lacking in nuance. This lack becomes apparent when we consider the representation of landscape by a mode more commonly associated with *moving* views. Indeed landscape itself, whether as a genre, art form or mode,[1] presents two problems for historical specificity. The first is its tendency toward abstraction; it can be seen as a form of philosophical speculation—a

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[1] Which of these "landscape" *is* forms the center of W.J.T. Mitchell's *Landscape and Power* (2002).

connection if not with eternity then with the temporality of the *natural world*, in which change occurs far more slowly than in the social/historical world. The second problem is that landscape art ordinarily denies the conditions of commerce in the production and circulation of the image, compounding this with a failure to represent the laboring subject.

The exclusion of the laboring subject and exclusion of the landowner, it is true, may suggest a romanticization of the territory as well as of conditions of the viewing subject. Yet only if we believe in an autonomy of landscape (the natural world) from its viewer *and* an autonomy of vision from historical conditions, and maintain a faith in the "actuality" of the pictured landscape, can we really see this kind of seeing as unhistorical, not perceiving the landscape in and for itself as the most important element, but adopting a different convention for organizing perception. If we review the representation of landscape, instead, as a *refusal* how can it be considered anti-historical in a pejorative way?

In the expository landscapes of Lean's films, the ground displaces the figure. On occasion, absent human forms no longer provide a necessary reference for comprehending space – it is the viewer's eye alone that becomes the measure of all things. I will identify crucial moments in *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), *Ryan's Daughter* (1970) and *A Passage to India* (1984) where this is so, moments that reveal that these are not the films of happenings, but of the moments when *nothing* narrative happens. These splendid shots are acts of suspension: not the suspension of the freeze frame, which results from the mechanical duplication of a singular image across multiple film frames in the analogue film. Rather, these are long takes where change is almost imperceptible and perception becomes felt. Here, I will discuss principally

long shots and long takes of landscapes in relationship to human figures, breaks in narrative coherence and moments of disquieting duration.

Thomas Lamarre cites Stephan Oetermann's study of the panorama in a way that helps illuminate Lean's cinematic panoramas and intersects with our concerns for alternative geometries of perception:

> Oettermann finds that the panoramic liberation of the eye 'is also a complete prison of the eye,' and the horizon comes to enclose the viewer. Put another way, he is attentive to how the apparently transcendent viewing position attributed to the Cartesian subject of geometric perspective transforms into an experience of imprisonment and enclosure, within a sense of the limited and fallible nature of the human body (Lamarre 2009, 172).

Within that enclosure there is, nonetheless, an adventure of perception and acts of cognition and recognition. If panoramic perception is an act of beholding, it is not an elated beholding by the Enlightment subject, but a beholding of pastness, in sights of mourning.

David Lean's lavish *Lawrence of Arabia*, World War I-era spectacle *Ryan's Daughter* and *Passage to India* offer test cases for both the "decorative" and the "descriptive" elements in tension with mimesis. *Lawrence* takes as its subject a "true" "historical" "epic," the events of which impacted the cultural and global political landscape from the post-WWI period through the present moment, while *Ryan's Daughter* portrays a banal Bovaryian romance and a spectacular landscape, suspended in the political backdrop of an abortive Irish Republican Rebellion. *Passage to India* adapts Forster's verbal mastery to cinematic splendor – all the while subverting the landscape's potential for sublimity in a moving picture picturesque. Despite the logocentricism of the source works at hand, Lean's work is highly pictorial.   This is not surprising – a frequent inversion for filmic adaptation of literature – but what *is* remarkable is Lean's adherence to the texture of things and not some "deeper" order of meaning (for example, symbolization).

These three films are often too-easily categorized as historical epics, but this nomination does not exhaust considerations of the films' grand scales. In these films, it first seems that scale evinces an automatic monumentalism of history (Nietzsche) – yet the films lack a subject to match, either within the diegesis in the figure of the protagonist or outside of the frame in the form of the spectator. Absent from the films are the superior egos of the past and any firm belief in the greatness of the present.

The events and locales of the films, though not historically distant from the moments of the films' productions (in the examples here, from World War I to a little over 50 years later)

are exoticized and re-imagined.[2] They have become a part of a cultural imaginary, however *actual* those moments were. While there are specific conventions for realism within the epic film mode,[3] just as there is for any mode or genre, the problem of the Historical film is particularly problematic: tying History to the visible (even if it is constructed and fictionalized) can be considered a positivist project. Yet such positivism can paradoxically be undone through decorative and descriptive elements.

In the most overtly hostile review of David Lean's critically panned *Ryan's Daughter*, and perhaps of his work generally, caustic critic Pauline Kael comically misses the aesthetic values of Lean's work, describing Lean's (together with several times collaborator screenwriter Robert Bolt's) "characteristic gentle-man technician's tasteful-colossal style" (Kael 116). With classic bite she wrote, "tasteful and colossal – in movies, at least – are basically antipathetic. Lean makes respectable epics, and that's contradictory and self-defeating" (116).[4] *Ryan's Daughter*, she pronounced, was "*Ecstasy* blown up to the scale of *The Decline of the Roman Empire*" (116). This "blow up" was both metaphorical and physical: *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (dir. Anthony Mann 1964) was shot in 70mm and *Ryan's Daughter* was filmed by

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[2] Not merely a post-colonial critique, but here intended as a specifically Lukácsian criticism as well, though it is the Post-Colonial one that has received the most attention since Cultural Studies reformed empty formal evaluations.
[3] I identify the Historical Epic as a mode because it is not a fully-fledged genre (however much we may wish to argue that it is so – see, for example, *History on Film/Film on History* by Rosenstone and my appraisal of it in the introductory chapter). I also argue this because the epic functions as melodrama does, in a variety of spaces and structures (see Singer on Melodrama).
[4] Kael was no fan of Lean's earlier films, complaining that Lean's *Lawrence* "did nothing to solve the T. E. Lawrence enigma." I contend that solving this enigma is the intention of *neither* Lean's film *nor* Lawrence's own work. It seems to Stephen Ross and to other fans of the film that the primary achievement of *Lawrence* is not narrative, but is rather the experience of Lean's "most sublime vision" (12).

frequent Lean-collaborator Freddie Young entirely in Super Panavision 70mm. It was the last

film to be made so for 20 years.[5]

A 1970 *Variety* article identified Lean as possibly the last of a dying breed of filmmakers,

to whose metaphoric death Lean himself may have contributed: "Is David Lean to be called

'Last of the Big Spenders'?" (1970).[6] Lean wouldn't make another film until his award-winning

masterpiece *Passage to India* (1984), a timely return to the pre-history of Thatcherite Britain.[7]

Too many are tempted to blame Lean's gap in production on Kael's evisceration of *Ryan's*

Daughter in addition to the changing economy of the United Kingdom and foci of film

production, though we might also blame Lean's failed efforts to get even larger projects off the

ground, projects such as *The Bounty*, finally directed by Roger Donaldson in 1978.

To be sure, Lean's last films are spectacular – but, Kael remarks, they are the spectacular

bridled: "Bolt and Lean are doing something essentially crazy and extravagant without a

craziness in themselves to match it; they're working on a gargantuan scale with restraint" (Kael

116). One might add, in Lean's case, a particularly bourgeois British restraint, and Kael does

(123). She writes, "Those crafts give Lean's movies their distinctive look of impersonal, glorified

realism – like a face-lift of the world" (123). That "facelift" seems, in her review, to amount to

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[5] This criticism has to do with a broader argument regarding scale and aspect ratio, begun with efforts at standardization, intensified and institutionalized in the 1930s, and persisting through CinemaScope and beyond. See Kenneth McGowan's 1956 essay "The Screen's 'New Look' . . ." (McGowan 1956) and Charles Barr's "CinemaScope: Before and After" (Barr 1963). More recently, the digital sequences of Disney's fantastical *Tron* (1982) were shot in Super Panavision, but the next film to be entirely shot in SuperPanavision was *Far and Away* (Ron Howard, 1992). Other notable uses of Super Panavision include *Hamlet* (1996, entire) and *The New World* ("hyper-realistic" sequences only; Terrence Malick, 2005).

[6] Any complete investigation into the "death" of the "Big Spenders" would of course also need to take into account the beginning of a shift in the European economy, the effects of which were felt throughout the 1970s, and the increasing significance of television, which became a full-fledged crisis for cinema by 1980.

[7] The 1980s saw a rise in the Heritage Film (see Andrew Higson, and chapter 4 of this work) as well as the split in the British cinema between Heritage Films and formally critical films (Peter Greenaway, Derek Jarman, et al) identified by Andrew Higson and by Marcia Landy (237), some of which films are pursued in subsequent chapters.

an aesthetic crime.[8]   Kael's hostility to Lean's films is evident, yet her complaint is not idiosyncratic but symptomatic of a common misrecognition of Lean's films as principally interested in narrative.

The politics of Lean's films are, at the narrative level, often progressive, or at the least confounding.   Lean's *Lawrence* – and the rest of his films – could be argued as being formally quite conservative, falling largely within the Prestige tradition and flirting with the Heritage film. Yet *Lawrence* is revelatory of the anxiety of Western Domination in the post-World War II context (Grindon 3), and *Great Expectations* (1946), for example, is certainly faithful to the class concerns of the Dickens novel.

In a 1972 "Defense of David Lean," Steven Ross considers Lean a "victim" to changing tastes.[9] He notes particularly the depreciation of the value placed on the Prestige Film, denoting the conservative British style that fell out of favor with the rise of politically-committed auteurist filmmaking on the continent in the 1960s and socially critical naturalism. These "tastes" would persist through the 1970s, though the spirit of the Prestige Film would be revived in the Heritage Film in the 1980s. Ross describes Lean's falling stock in the seventies as "a case of a director who conformed to the critical standards of his era, reaped the benefits of such conformity, then became one of the most maligned victims of the vicissitudes of critical priorities" (Ross 10)*.*   Ross's defense of Lean's body of work entails a determination of "thematic coherence" in the films taken together, though this very defense confirms the importance of the categories by which Lean is harshly judged in Ross's own appraisal – theme

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[8] Against socialist realism. Yet I wonder if this facelift is rather an attempted quasi-Hegelian turn.
[9] Tastes may be changing again, as 2007 and 2008 films have been compared favorably with Lean's films (including Pixar's also-Kubrickian 2008 CGI offering *Wall-E* and Sergei Bodrov's celebrated 2007 *Mongol*) – and Lean said in interview in the eighties that he'd ultimately "done alright." It seems, too, that Event Cinema may again be the best hope for the box office (evinced by the continuing spate of 3D films since 2008).

and narrative. Lean's portraits of British antiheroes (and anti–heroines, as in *Passage to India*) evince a contradictory embarrassment over the legacy of the British Empire and nostalgia for its heights. For Ross, the problems of Lean's heroes are more universal/existential, revealing "the paradox of simultaneously presenting the sublime possibilities of existence with the peculiar pathology involved in reaching for the sublime . . ." (17). For Ross, this accounts for the films' scale.[10]

Kael's remarks on *Ryan's Daughter* are consonant with the critique embedded in Andrew Sarris's designation of Lean as a director who is "Less than Meets the Eye" (Ross 12).[11] Even if we are to dismiss Kael's or Sarris's criticisms individually, together they recall our question for film criticism more generally: How are we to assess realistic elements somehow absolved from narrative responsibility in otherwise narrative-intensive films?

In response to criticism in the press, Lean conceded that at times he had been "over-emphatic," particularly when it came to the coordination of Maurice Jarre's score with the films' images. Perhaps in the case of *Ryan's Daughter* specifically, Lean and screenwriter Robert Bolt had "occasionally made a point only *too* well or *too* explicit," (my emphasis) committed as they were to Event Cinema (Ross 14). Lean defended his process as a "search for *unity*" (presumably "unity of effect" or "atmosphere" and not a Kantian or Lukácsian unity), but such a schematic as "unity" would identify emphatic elements as too-obvious and therefore errant. Yet his films reveal an alternative judgment.

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[10] Lean's never-made films -- *Gandhi*, which would have been another joint venture with producer Sam Spiegel (Columbia Pictures Corp.), and an adaptation of Joseph Conrad's *Nostromo*, which would finally have begun filming in January 1991 (Brownlow 2009, 137) -- undoubtedly would have continued these explorations.
[11] By this I understand Sarris to mean the producer of visually spectacular representations of narratives that are often either unoriginal (including literary and theatrical adaptations) or uninteresting.

In an interview with the BBC's Mark Tully on location in India in 1984, Lean responded once again to this charge of over-emphasis on the visually spectacular, this time in relation to his actors:

> Tully: It is often said that as a director you are, in a way, more concerned with the visual than with the performance of the actors.
>
> Lean: Balls! I like spectacle. When I say spectacle I don't think you can just put on a load of spectacle and expect it to be successful with the public. Of course you've got to have a foreground action, and it's awfully easy for critics to say, "Oh, the action . . . the background swamped the foreground," but I don't think I've done that (Tully 1984).

This is language to which Lean frequently turned, for both literal and metaphoric value: in order to describe, naturally, the visual, and to describe the relation between characters and their milieu.[12]

One is left wondering: If Lean *had* "done that,"—that is, "swamped" the foreground (figures, or characters) with spectacular background images – what would be lost? What would be gained? Should Lean have conceded that his films' visuals do *not* serve their narrative – that is, that they make their "point" only too well or too explicitly with not only scoring but also images that function like punctuation? Would such a concession (or confession) support the notion that in a narrative film, a film's visuals ought to serve that narrative in a particular way?

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[12] "People, for instance, go out on the beach and they see this huge beach and they photograph various shots and they forget that the camera hasn't photographed what they have been seeing all day long. And so every now and again it's very necessary to show it, damn great long shot, you know. But you've got to be very careful that the background doesn't become the foreground. And people, of course, are the foreground" (Gelms, 46).

We miss, in the idea of a background that can swamp a foreground, the very *provocation* embedded in a severability of figure and ground within a realist aesthetic.

Kael derides the meticulous lensing of the sand and seashore in *Ryan's Daughter* – the desert is the subject of *Lawrence*, she insists, and the snow the subject of *Dr. Zhivago* (1965) – and asks "What story could [Lean and Bolt] possibly tell that could conceivably be commensurate with this technology?[13]"(116). What story, indeed! Certainly not the story of *Ryan's Daughter*, even *if* the story of *Lawrence* or the narrative of *Passage to India*. But perhaps that *is* the point.[14]

These contemporary popular criticisms assume that film is primarily *not* a spectacular technology or art. One might fairly argue that the narrative is the measure of all things, especially when we are speaking of commercial, fictional, narrative cinema – we are not, after all, in the realm of experimental or "art" film (at least, not in this chapter), but this requires us to examine assumptions about the way cinema works. Lean has admitted to an interest in the specifically cinematic-imagistic in a way ideally associated with the cinema of the silent period.[15] In his auteur study, *Beyond the Epic: The Life and Films of David Lean*, Gene Phillips writes that "For his part, Lean was not enthusiastic about the advent of sound" because it promoted the involvement of theatrical actors and directors untrained in the visual arts. Like Hitchcock, Lean showed concern that *talking* pictures remain, first, *pictures* (20).

Fredric Jameson describes the (for too many years popular in cinema studies) argument for two separate cinematic histories, one for silent and one for sound – one for the

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[13] Regardless of Kael's intent, we might usefully think of technology in both the first definition (systematic application of an Art) and the connotation of the mechanical.

[14] It would be worth considering panorama as an optical and epistemological problem, though that must be left for another work.

[15] This requires the view that the silent period is *not* invested in narrative that itself requires interrogation.

predominantly imagistic and the other for the predominantly narrative, but he also indicates that the coming of sound film only *seemed* to put an end to the "operatic" or the "gestural" (Jameson 174).[16] Lean's films support the idea that this cinema perseveres in the form of the decorative and descriptive.

Are Lean's images and their director himself guilty of virtuosity for its own sake or, in Lukácsian terms, decadentism – or perhaps, even, dilettantism? Is virtuosity a meditation on medium to the neglect of considerations of the Real? These questions are evocative of the criticism Siegfried Kracauer leveled at art photography – that art photography "wants to incorporate the soul about which it knows nothing."[17] Criticisms like Kael's and Sarris's share with Kracauer (accidentally) a firm belief in a pact between photography and the profilmic. The problem, for Lean's contemporary critics, seems to have to do with what Lean had done to physical reality itself: In obsessive "set construction and in perfectly focused, salon-quality cinematography," (Kael) he'd delivered a reified realism. In my sense, he had offered metacritical descriptive images instead.

Subject to 1970's film criticism, writing on Lean and his films is oriented to one of two aspects – the first concerned with whether or not Lean can be considered a "genius," and the second, whether or not the films (and Lean himself) belong entirely and unabashedly to the bourgeoisie. Now it seems clear that it is short sighted to see the work of the "poet of the far

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[16] We might find Lean's spectacular films one of the places where Tom Gunning's otherwise useful distinction between the Cinema of Attractions and Cinema of Narrative Integration dissolves and Bordwell's binary narrative/spectacle is revealed as a dialectic instead. In Lean's films, the Cinema of Attractions remains – and there's something spectacular about this belatedness.

[17] This suggests that art photography not only participates in advancing capitalism but also betrays the object photographed in doing so. Yet Kracauer's anti-fetishism reveals a kind of fetishization of the form: For Kracauer, photography's "purpose" is to be found in its relationship to the accidental, aleatory, incidental (S. Kracauer) though this doesn't exhaust its capacities, as in Chapter 1.

horizon"[18] in these terms alone without asking how his work can illuminate other images' relationship to the real, without asking "What does Lean do to, with, or against realistic vision?" It is far more complex a question than it first seems, and it is far more compelling. Its answer has to do with the presentation of the "descriptive" and "decorative" possibilities in the (Super)panoramatic and picturesque film image.

Realism (in the singular) is most often conceived of as posing its perspective as determinate, as final, but Lean's oeuvre indicates alternative referential possibilities. Lean's films stretch cinematic conventions for realism with lingering moments of non-necessity, in the suspension of images. If the "problem" of Realism is that it presents to us the struggles of life (as we know it) as natural and therefore inevitable, these sorts of films do *not* share that problem. Rather, they successfully de-naturalize themselves *and* the problems they convey. In the extraordinary specifics and the grandeur of the natural landscapes of *Lawrence*, *Ryan's Daughter* and *Passage to India*, Lean's films posit a world that pre-exists the cinematic beholder (a world-in-itself and not a world-for-us) in a way that undercuts narrative development. The films strain against a particular positioning of the spectator and leave the viewer aware that the film presents varying *aspects*, even as sequences seem so over-determined that they bear the weight of an artificial necessity.

Moments of suspension of activity require a pensive perception without being discontinuous with the narrative, requiring a viewer, perhaps, such as Peter Wollen's spectator, who is struck suddenly by the still picture: "In a film . . . it is the still image (Warhol, Straub-Huillet) which seems paradoxical in the opposite sense: the moving picture of the motionless

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[18] *Variety* obituary 1991.

subject" (Wollen 110). In these moments, the cinematic spectator, ordinarily perceiving space at the pace of 24 frames per second and subject to the temporality of the narrative, has plenty of *time*: time to contemplate the cinematic image as such.[19]

If one is to discover decorative and descriptive images in the films of David Lean, it could be argued that these are texts of "pictorial" and "decorative grandeur," to paraphrase Lukács on the Historical Novel, that they are symptomatic of an era's "deprivation" of "greatness" rather than arguments *regarding* that evacuation of "inner greatness" (that is, indications of contradictions). Yet decorative and descriptive images are not a jettisoning of dialectical vision.

If in language the detail "frustrates" (Aitken 89) the attempt for the specific element of the text to rise to the general condition, and results instead in amassing a catalog of objects themselves at the level of the surface, how does this *not* occur in the photographic film image, particularly images interested in the surfaces of things?

We must approach the Lean problem from another angle.

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[19] This recalls for me Heinrich Wölfflin's consideration of "vision" not as a specially privileged association with the real but as "imaginative beholding."

B. *"CONSTRUCTING THE TAJ MAHAL OUT OF TOOTH PICKS"*

Before *Lawrence*'s revival and its recent remastering in celebration of Lean's centennial (2008), Lean's work had been the subject of a Museum of Modern Art retrospective (New York, Oct 29-Nov 3 1970), an American Film Institute Salute (1984), a weekend tribute by the Director's Guild (1984), a *Lawrence* restoration for Cannes and a Retrospective by the Odeon Theater in 1989. Lean's films have recently been repopularized, on the occasion of his centenary, with a Lean Retrospective at Film Forum the very week I completed the first draft of this chapter (Sept 12 2008), screening restored prints of 10 of Lean's early films.[20]   The screenings and events celebrating these restorations insist on the difference between Lean's early, intimate (so-called "British") films and the later epics (including those made with Hollywood producer Sam Spiegel) to suggest that Lean should not be identified solely as a maker of epics, the films for which he is certainly best known. Yet Lean's films, often well-loved publicly, have just as often been the subject of critical derision and academic disinterest. As lovely as they are romantic (*Brief Encounter*, with Noel Coward, 1945) and British-imperialist (*Lawrence*, *A Passage to India*), they are equally loved and hated (and sometimes both by the same viewer).

When Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia* was revived in remastered 70 millimeter, a new generation of filmgoers was introduced to the *scope* of Lean's vision (perhaps to cinematic landscape itself). Lean's vision might be described as an outmoded Victorian vision, anti-modernist in its privileging of spatial indexicality over temporal indexicality, even as the viewer cannot escape the sense of *time* and the contemplative space that endurance of an image

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[20] Restored by the British Film Institute, sponsored in England by Granada and Canal Plus.(The David Lean Foundation).

opens up. A viewer who had found Lean's film "unwatchable" on a television monitor, long and narratively non-compelling, described the experience of the film in its intended scope to this author as "sublime," consonant with Ross's assessment of the subjects of Lean's films.[21]

In his time as an editor, Lean might have been unmatched. As a director, Lean has been described as "cold" and excessively calculating. The former characterization we might challenge (and the current retrospectives hope to do so): his collaboration with Noel Coward on *Brief Encounter*, for example, may be elliptical, but this is not at all the same as "cold." That film is certainly impassioned; it is a meditation on the impossibility of expressing transgressive passion in the film's particular historical context, with dramatic emphasis on the furtiveness of the encounter.[22] Lean himself might not have rejected the latter characterization, "calculating," were it to have been put to him: the director frequently described himself as a "film technician" (Lean). Like Stanley Kubrick, Lean is and was well- known for his exorbitant budgets, his precision and his perfectionism. Actor Robert Mitchum has famously said that "[w]orking with David Lean is like constructing the Taj Mahal out of tooth picks."

It is well-documented that Lean's first enthusiasm was for still photography and for Pathescope home movies while his strict Quaker upbringing allowed him only his own furtive

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[21] This requires a distinction between the *experience* of the "sublime" and a style aimed at re-presenting the sublime. On this matter, Patrizia Lombardo usefully intervenes with the reminder that the sublime does not indicate "higher things" but things *beyond*: that is, *para* – beyond the threshold, and also *sublimus* -- on the side. This is Kant via Lyotard – wherein we are aware of ourselves represented, and aware of ourselves with respect to the size of the world. Lombardo fails when she uses a panoramic film-image of Niagara Falls (Hathaway 1970s) as exemplary of the sublime when trying to distinguish between the spectacular and the sublime. A film image cannot be sublime in Kant's sense of the sublime. The sublime requires the sense of the incomprehensible, the incircumscribable, the unframed. It must open onto an unbounded outside. A film image, though not bounded by its frame, is still bounded by the device. It does not spill out onto a beyond, which is perceived as one of the differences between viewing a painting and viewing a projected image in the dark – the rejoinder to this argument supplied as early as Arnheim.
[22] Though the argument could be made that we owe the film's contained passion to Coward and not Lean, or as Richard Dyer does in his monograph on *Brief Encounter* in the BFI series, we might downplay any sort of auteurist argument regarding the film, which its ambivalent position as a "woman's film" encourages us to do.

encounters with the cinema.[23] The 1927 Quota Act provided opportunities for work in a nascent and not yet-competitive British film industry, within a particularly industrial model, through Gaumont-British Studios. It was within that system that, despite familial displeasure, Lean made his start in newsreels in 1930.[24] Harlan Kennedy considers the relationship between Lean's cutting job and his expansive films to be a "puzzle" solvable by an understanding of the effects of the Quota system:

> In the heyday of the British quota quickie, when theaters had to field a proportion of British film fare far exceeding what the industry could decently assemble, Lean was hired to stretch and pad thin narrative material into feature-length program-fillers. In his hands, films would fatten through the ingenious plundering of stock footage, the artfully prolonged close-up, or the now-you-see-it-now-you-don't recycling of identical shots (Kennedy, 78).

The Quota Act Revision of 1938 began to make possible what would be termed Quality Films, in opposition to the quick film product churned out to meet the requirements of the 1927 Quota act. This revision promoted an emphasis on the distinctly "British" to counteract the already-apparent American domination of English-language filmmaking. In this time, Lean's war films brought him to national and international attention, particularly 1942's *In Which We Serve*, which Lean co-directed with Coward.

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[23] See for example, Phillips (14) and Organ (viii).
[24] Following that opportunity, Lean was granted extraordinary further opportunities: Alexander Korda allowed Lean, then a near-novice, to try to edit a film, which Lean drastically over-cut, according to Korda (1934). This is ironic given the charge against Lean that his grandest films, comprised of long takes, are about an hour too long. His suspenseful Dickens adaptations are excepted from this charge, a particular example being the subsequently-imitated cutting when Pip first, and again later, enters Miss Haversham's home.

If we are to seek a consistency in Lean's film style it is a kind of exaggerated descriptive realism, exaggerated in visual reach and in the expenditure of resources to produce a second-order articulation of the real, it begins here.[25]   The Dickens adaptations including *Great Expectations* (1946) are at once realistic and dense with gothic architecture and imagery, and with what has subsequently become gothic/horror film convention.   Lean's adaptations, as with many popular British films of the period, were authorized and legitimated in advance by their source material, literary (Dickens adaptations, Forster's novel) or historical (*Lawrence*), though there are also those based on popular novels (popular-historical *Dr. Zhivago* by Russian novelist-poet Boris Pasternak and *Bridge on the River Kwai* by Pierre Boulle).

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[25] In the post-war period, British Realism emerged as part of a broader post-WWII mimetic (re)turn. If escapist Hollywood product dominated the box office, British realism – "restrained realism" (Cook 11) –drew from but also departed from documentary style developed during the war.

C. "POET[RY] OF THE FAR HORIZON": PICTURESQUE FIGURES AND PAINTERLY LANDSCAPES

One of the ways we can see Lean's uncommon priorities is in the similarities and differences between Lean's *Lawrence* and Lawrence's "Lawrence" of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, a "decorated" text. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars*, particularly the 1926 subscribers' edition, is a multi-modal, multi-generic (or generically ambivalent) aesthetic project, comprised of 250,000 words and plates of commissioned portraits and vorticist images, a project at the seam between Victorianism and an emergent literary modernism.   Lawrence's book contrasts the representation of bodies with the presentation of ideas, calling attention to textual materiality and material being, while Lean's film depicts a concrete historical (if enigmatic) body (that is, Lawrence himself, embodied by actor Peter O'Toole). Produced less than forty years after Lawrence's own work, Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia* yields new problems and possibilities for Lawrence's project, exemplified in the differences between the book's and the film's modes of figuring humans and landscapes.

   Lawrence opposed any filming of his book or biography in his lifetime. Despite his misgivings, he agreed to allow Alexander Korda to make a film, but he later changed his mind. Korda agreed to delay the film until after Lawrence's death; Lawrence died just three months later (Phillips, 268). Lawrence's rejection of film and photography as the technologies by which to convey or supplement his story, despite his own abilities as an amateur photographer and despite the availability of photographs from the campaign (and footage from Lowell Thomas's

With Allenby in Palestine and Lawrence in Arabia, 1919) makes his own project into not only a curiosity but also something of an ontological problem.[26]

In the language of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, the desert's expanse and the sky's infinity are contrasted with the daily marches and camel rides, the color and texture of fabric, bloodied and bloodying hands, and what Lawrence in the end describes as the liquescence of dead and decaying bodies –"fluid" and "jellying" in trenches (Lawrence 1991, 657). Yet despite a materiality of the body conveyed by such linguistic choices, Lawrence rejects fleshed-out body images in favor of metaphor and absurdist graphic pen illustration.

In Lawrence's text, tensions between body and landscape are maintained in unexpected choices regarding what to image in words and what to depict visually in images. Scenarios are realized in various modernist line drawings, and the desert itself is shown sparingly, preventing the perceived sense of vicarious tourism produced by pen-and-ink travel images of the century before. Lawrence actively considers viewing positions *and* reading positions along with his own subjectivity.

Thus while many Lawrence scholars (for example, Psychiatrist-Biographer John Mack and literary and cultural critic Kaja Silverman) suggest that Lawrence's homosexuality (whether latent or manifest) and masochistic impulses determine his psyche which in turn determines the form and the content of his text (for Silverman, suggesting much about masculinity more broadly), this does not exhaust considerations of the text as such. In the introduction to his book, Lawrence writes:

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[26] Lawrence's near-contemporary Gertrude Bell (sometimes lauded as the "female Lawrence") included photographic images in her 1907 *The Desert and the Sown*. Bell's text, however, made explicit claims to the ethnographic mode, while Lawrence was pursuing the limits of the epic.

In these pages the history is not of the Arab movement, but of me in it. It is a narrative of daily life, mean happenings, little people. Here there are no lessons for the world, no disclosures to shock peoples. It is filled with trivial things, partly that no one mistake for history the bones from which someday a man may make history, and partially for the pleasure it gave me to recall the fellowship of the revolt (1991, 24).

As early as the introduction, Lawrence locates the "me" of which he writes on the side of the bodily and the quotidian. By doing so, Lawrence does not deny the scope and significance of the epic mode but sets that scope against the banality of modern life. He attempts, through autobiography, to overcome subjectivity rather than to reinforce it,[27] identifying his local place in history, even if that place and time is at the center of the formation of a nation. He indicates his own discontinuity and seeks self-correction, even as he appeals through the text to something transcendent. In its episodic nature and its very heft, Lawrence's text works against linear narrative and the choice of images to accompany the text are compatible with this. I would argue that this is the central tension in the text taken as a whole to which Lean's film is faithful.[28]

A crucial element of *Seven Pillars* is the size of the human figure in relationship to his expansive milieu, a tension between them set up at the outset. Of the desert and its vastness (and his companions' and his position within it), Lawrence writes at the start,

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[27] In another work it would be useful to consider the Lucacksian differences between particularity and specificity in relationship to Lawrence's formation of a textual self.
[28] See both *In/Fidelity* (Mellerski and Kranz) and *True to the Spirit* (McCabe et al. eds 2011).

For years we lived anyhow with one another in the naked desert, under the indifferent heaven. By day the hot sun fermented us; and we were dizzied by the beating wind. At night we were sustained by dew, and shamed into pettiness by the innumerable silences of stars (29).

In Lawrence's text, Prince Feisal raises even greater questions about immanence and transcendence, man and idea. He constitutes a central problem for Lawrence's text and subsequently for Lean's. Through Lawrence's Feisal, we see that men for Lawrence are inescapably corporeal, singular, and historical, but that this immanence is always in tension with a kind of transcendence (though not of the spiritual-eternal nature but of the philosophical or aesthetic). In "The Last Preaching," Lawrence observes Feisal's almost physical transformation from the man into the Idea. Lawrence writes of his appraisal of Feisal at the end of the campaign:

Of course it was a picture-man, not flesh and blood but nevertheless true, for his individuality had yielded its third dimension to the idea, had surrendered the world's wealth and artifices. Feisal was hidden in his tent, veiled to remain our leader: while in reality he was nationality's best servant, its tool, not its owner. Yet in the twilight nothing seemed more noble (1991, 547).

In his description of Feisal as veiled, as yielding his "third dimension"—Lawrence images a kind of disappearing act or a disembodiment. Lawrence's text insists on the veil here not only as a limitation of our vision but also as a critique of the abstraction of material bodies from

their historicity.[29] Here, Lawrence describes with disappointment a Feisal veiled to appear to his people as the abstract Ideal which they served, even as Lawrence and Feisal knew this Ideal would ultimately serve the very concrete Western European political ideal of the partitioning of the Middle East into French and British spheres of influence.[30]

Feisal's "veiling" in Lawrence's text is a metaphorical partial-disappearing act possible in written language qua language. By contrast, the very act of adaptation to the cinema can be viewed as an act of "embodiment." We mustn't lose sight of the fact that something strange happens on the way to figuring the historical figure on film in the body of an actor. Jean-Louis Comolli suggests in "Historical Fiction: A Body Too Much" that the advantage of this happening for a progressive history-on-film is a kind of automatic reflexivity.[31] In this case, the very body of Peter O'Toole guarantees the absence of the historical Lawrence – but perhaps it *describes* Lawrence or Lawrence-ness, a function of such features as the very blueness of O'Toole's eyes.[32] Unlike in the case of O'Toole-as-Lawrence, Feisal's representation is decidedly to Feisal's disadvantage. This is not merely a result of the casting of English actor and film icon Alec Guinness as the Arab Prince. In Lean's film, we lose the potential for Feisal to approach an ideal because Lean's (and Guinness's) Feisal is ever the politician, and the film's concluding

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[29] Early in this same text, he writes of the Arabs: "They were incorrigibly children of the idea, feckless and colour-blind, to whom body and spirit were forever and inevitably opposed. Their mind was strange and dark, full of depressions and exaltations, lacking in rule, but with more of ardor and more fertile in belief than any other in the world" (42).

[30] France's François Georges-Picot and Britain's Mark Sykes oversaw this partitioning of the Middle East into French and British areas of direct control and territories of influence, hence negating Lawrence's promises to his Arab counterparts of an independent Arabia.

[31] See, too Leger Grindon *(Shadows on the Past* 1994). I've argued similarly in previous work on *Lawrence* and adaptation. Grindon describes Commoli's position thus: "Commoli measures the historical subject as a means of dismantling the illusion of cinema. Commoli argues that the multiple interpretations clinging to any historical episode (the personalities, legends, iconography, and so forth) give the viewer a reference that undermines any implicit claim to verisimilitude" – and identifies the awareness of this artifice as advantageous (4).

[32] Promotional materials for the film emphasize this.

negotiations prove him to be the Western-modeled bureaucrat. What is more, he is materialized in cinematic space and time in ways that oppose Lawrence's depiction of Feisal as symbol—perhaps as one part of the automatic difference between written language and the indexicality of film— and this closes off to us Lawrence's own vexing of the status of historical people. In the written and illustrated text, we may have both Lawrence the author and the figure, or we may have neither.[33]

In Lawrence's text, Feisal moves between the man and the idea. Lawrence's depiction of Feisal in iconic form indicates the tension between material being and the capacity for representation. Kamilla Elliott reminds us of Christian Metz's argument that "[t]he cinema is the 'phenomenological' art *par excellence*," that the "signifier is coextensive with the significate, the spectacle its own signification, thus short-circuiting the sign itself" (Elliott 218). I evoke this not to reinstate the percept/concept divide, but to suggest rather our need to interrogate such a division. In this case, it seems that Lawrence chooses to contrast images with imagery in order to leave ontological and epistemological questions open, while Lean's film does not or cannot.

To accompany his text, Lawrence selected drawn portraits and comic and vorticist images, reproduced under the art direction of Eric Kennington.[34] That Lawrence positioned the images he and Kennington selected at the back of the text in each copy of the Subscriber's edition suggests to Gregory Graalfs that Lawrence was displeased by the contrast between the Victorianism of his text and the modern style of the portraits (Graalfs 56). Charles Grosvenor writes that Lawrence had communicated to Bruce Rogers that "[t]o combine representational

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[33] *Lawrence* has this in common with the concerns of the following chapter. War films might productively (and perversely) be reconsidered as "costume dramas."
[34] The extent to which Kennington directed, and Lawrence did not, is debatable and debated in the literature.

images (above all in colour) with the formality of type seemed to me an impossible achievement" (165). Even so Grosvenor justifies the positioning of the portraits always in the appendix to the dramatic elements of the text. Neither Grosvenor's nor Graalfs's assessment of the significance of the portraiture to *Seven Pillars* is entirely satisfying, for neither considers the dialectic between positivism and idealism visible in the images.

Of his decision to employ portrait artists, Lawrence himself writes, "It seemed to me that every portrait drawing of a stranger-sitter partook somewhat of the judgment of God. If I could get the named people of this book drawn, it would be their appeal to a higher court against my summary descriptions" (1927, 15). Lawrence writes in 1921 that "words, especially an amateur's words, are unsatisfactory to describe persons. It seemed to us that it would be balanced somewhat by an expert view, from another angle: and so Kennington went out to correct my men" ("Notes" 1927, 15). This indicates that Lawrence was interested not in evidence which photography, given its indexical status, might provide, but in alternate interpretations that might function as "correct[ion]".

The portrait images are important for their ability to signify without representing. Among the most striking observations Lawrence makes of Kennington's portraits is their demonstration of the relationship of the particular to the general.[35] Lawrence admits to practical reasons for such generalizations as he observes in Kennington's portraits.[36] Lawrence counts among the virtues of the Kennington portraits that "some are quite typical" and that

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[35] Or is it a contrivance? It is impossible to know whether this consideration preceded, and hence guided, the production of the images.
[36] Kennington did not speak the language and hence had no access to the psychology of the characters he studied; and of necessity he had been abandoned by Lawrence, his would-be guide.

"often Kennington has reached behind the particular, and made them also types." For Lawrence this dual capacity is most important.

This assessment of the images surely supports Edward Said's (and subsequently others') readings of Lawrence's text and Lawrence himself as Orientalist,[37] even as this typifying capacity of the images applies for Lawrence to the images of the British figures as well – but it also reveals something about his conception of modes of representation in his moment. This typification is not the same as the Hegelian "concrete universal," nor Lukács's "typicality" (a reframing of Hegel's category) but it does suggest that the human is first and only social.

Strangely, Lawrence de-emphasizes this rationale by insisting on the psychological accuracy of the portraits: "I saw first one and then another of the men whom I had known, and at once learned to know them better." ("Note" 1927). For Lawrence this quality permits us to observe these works individually as works of art and which makes them so significant to writer and reader/viewer of the text, if not sympathetic (ibid). In either case, whether figural or psychological, Lawrence's portrait images cannot be described as narrative, instead they fix their subjects, decontextualize them, and abstract them. They recall Bazin's notion that the filming of an object is equivalent to the subtraction of dimension and the addition of duration. No longer historically situated subjects, the portrait-sitters become timeless. Thus the portraits simultaneously fix subjectivity and efface it. Here we must recall that Lawrence later wrote "while I like decorated books, I do not like illustrated books."[38] If this is so, nothing subtends the image--not even the historical person who sat for each portrait.[39]

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[37] See Said's convincing but also limiting argument in *Orientalism* that Lawrence is *the Orientalist par excellence* (even above Sir Richard Francis Burton), a position endorsed by Kaja Silverman and David Mengay.
[38] Letter to Bruce Rogers qtd. in Grosvenor, 161.
[39] See discussions of historical and historiating portraiture in the next chapter.

In Lean's film, the values indicated by the illustrations are necessarily reversed. The camera literalizes and concretizes human bodies in their glory and grotesquery. Robert Bolt argues that this is inescapable: "'Others' lives became toys to break and throw away' is a statement, but a poeticized statement: it is all metaphor. To put it on the screen you have to uncover what it means in terms of concrete action . . . take a picture of that, and show it; the comforting blanket of metaphor has gone" (1995, 34). For Bolt, the cinematic image --or that of an essentially realist cinema--is not capable of the kind of metaphor possible in words.

Whether *Seven Pillars* fails to capture the desert's vastness or knowingly subverts expectations by limiting expression of an endless desert, the film *Lawrence* indulges in them, but not to the expected ends. Images of the openness of the desert landscape, endless as the sea to which the film's characters and Freddie Young's cinematography compare it, contrast with the sense of almost claustrophobic enclosure of the later British scenes. Our first view of the desert appears as a painting, until the sun rises with the orchestration; so, too, does our second view but for the movement in the far distance of two small figures, barely more than black dots on the pastel horizon. Throughout the film, still and mobile frames capture a desert both hyper-real and unreal. Bolt suggests that the purpose of the film *Lawrence* is to *show* both the historical figures and the desert that is their setting with the unparalleled possibilities in cinematic technologies – particularly, in this case, in Cinemascope. Bolt writes, "in a deeper sense than that of the plot, the background to the story is the Desert. Words cannot trap that

landscape. The camera almost can, and did. It is the essence of the saga," (1995, 34) turning

into a virtue the complaint that the desert is the subject of the film.[40]

We might develop through such sequences a sense of how the landscape works in

relation to the body generally in the modern era. I am reminded of Kracauer's description of

the way the modern subject dissolves affectively into the landscape: "The dejected individual is

likely to lose himself in the incidental configurations of his environment, absorbing them with a

disinterested intensity no longer determined by his previous preferences" (Kracauer qtd. in

Jameson *Signatures of the Visible* 210). This seems at first to be nearly the relationship Lean

could develop between his figures and their landscape, and his viewer and the landscape she

views. But Lean's descriptive film proposes a contemplative rather than a dejected spectator.

For the film, more significant even than the landscape itself is the *communication* of *scope*,

which requires an awareness of the size of the human form.[41] In a famous example from

Lawrence, Freddie Young ingeniously employs a 450 mm lens from a thousand feet away to

produce the mirage shot of Sherif Ali "materializing out of the heat waves, capturing and

compressing the rising vibrations" (Young in Crowdus 1995). In a less well-remembered but

equally evocative sequence, a thin band of bare desert ground shares the screen only with what

appears to be Lawrence's own "indifferent" sky. The scope and depth of the shot are

ambiguous until a foot breaks the frame in medium close-up. Immediately we are aware that

though we know the character Gasim struggles alone in the endless desert, we are not seeing

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[40] "David Lean took himself off to Jordan with John Box, the Art Director. There they found the desert to be as Lawrence loved it and described it in his book, a landscape almost unimaginable to those who have not seen it, and not seen before on film." (Columbia Pictures Corp.)

[41] Among *Culture and Value*'s aphorisms, I recall one that seems particularly pertinent here: "A curious analogy could be based on the fact that even the hugest telescope has to have an eye-piece no larger than the human eye." (Wittgenstein, 17).

the endlessness of the desert itself but only one low-angle shot of it. Lean thus adapts

Lawrence's description of the "sand haze" and in one moment our sense of or expectation for

cinema's optical mastery of space is inverted. The desert is endless (sublime, even?). Our own

vision – even cinematic vision, even 70 mm Super Panavision – is not.[42]

I wonder the extent to which the descriptive elements of Lean's *Lawrence* might evince

what Kracauer has called in the *Mass Ornament* an "incomplete demythologization." For

Kracauer, the problem of modernity is not "the advanced state of disenchantment but rather

that this disenchantment has not advanced far enough" – that is, that modernity is an

incomplete project (1995, 17). This is a question relevant to nearly all of Lean's films: Do they

adequately depict an incomplete modernism or are they symptomatic of it? I would suggest

that they describe it.

Giuliana Bruno proposes that "[a]s a form of panoramic wallpaper, cinema had its

spatial roots in the new 'fashions' of spatiality that marked the rise of modernity" (171). The

landscape film image, for Bruno, relates to a craving for "spatial expansion" tied to 18th century

travel literature and imagery. But for Bruno, as I indicate in the introductory chapter, this has

to do with a personal desire and a privileging of memory that I do not believe accounts for the

panoramatic landscapes I consider here. Lean's films demonstrate a problem for this

connection between cinematic vision and spatial desire (or at least an approach to satisfaction

of that desire). For Bruno, film language is a travel language, and the language speaks a desire

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[42] This recalls for me the experience of thought as analogous to the experience of the limitation of perception –
"Thus thought eludes both subject and object in the following sense: You may contemplate the world outside, but
there will always be a horizon farther than your thought can reach. You can reflect within yourself, yet there will
always be an interiority beyond the reach of your thought. These are two incomparably distant infinities which
meet, nevertheless, in an absolute horizon. Because the irrational interval no longer forms part of any sequence or
of any whole, it posits for itself an autonomous outside and gives itself its own interiority" (Rodowick 180).

for the moving landscape image.   Bruno would have the landscape film be a form of "psychogeographic transport" (185). But the landscape film can speak a desire for viewing *as viewing*. Cinema can be panoramic in all dimensions, and certainly, the passion for film has to do with a "fascination for views," but the landscape film neither evinces nor satisfies a "desire" or "hunger" for varying vistas.

The picturesque is one form of a consideration for place, but there is a trade-off between the picturesque and the sublime. Bruno writes, "At stake in the comparison between the picturesque and film expressed through, but also beyond, phenomenology is the delineation of a modern haptic spatiality. In film, as in the picturesque garden, space exists not as a thing-per-se but as a thing-for-us" (195) but I think not – or at least, not in the case of Lean's panoramatic and picturesque vistas.

The problem for Lean's much-maligned *Ryan's Daughter* isn't just the scale itself, and it isn't quite accounted for by notions of "virtuosity" alone. In *Ryan's Daughter* the narratively microscopic collides with the visually spectacular, a visual *attraction*. *Ryan's Daughter* is the filming of Bolt's original story "inspired" by Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*.[43] *Ryan's Daughter*, however, seems to be Lean's illegitimate child of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (making it at least the fifth adaptation of that text), seeking and by some appraisals failing to find a kind of uniquely *visual* reason for being. It is an illustration of an analogous tale to *Bovary*– or is it a decoration? In any case, it is not a retelling.

At heart, the film is an adultery tale, and a conventional one at that, barely invested in the national politics involved when Irish-Catholic Rosy Ryan engages in an adulterous affair with wounded and traumatized British officer Major Doryan stationed outside the fictitious village of Killary on the Dingle Peninsula.[44] The historical backdrop – gun-running of the IRA in the period immediately after the Easter Uprising in 1916 – and the affair are both shocks that the film's seeming sentimental attachment to the central figure Rosy Ryan represses. While Lean's *Dr. Zhivago* had been publicized as "A love caught in the fire of revolution," *Ryan's Daughter* was tagged thus: "A story of love . . . set against the violence of rebellion." Revolution is contrasted with rebellion, and the ellipses in the latter tag-line suggest an inorganic relationship between the love story and its milieu.

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[43] Yet in interview Lean suggests that *Ryan's Daughter* is wholly original: "We [Lean and Bolt] found ourselves on [*Lawrence* and *Zhivago*] having to shoot scenes in cable-ese. We got sick of this and were slaughtered by the critics for it . . . so we said let's start from scratch, without a great big thing on our backs, and that's how it happened" (Blume, 37).

[44] With its $14 million budget, the film infused a million pounds into the depressed economy of the Peninsula.

If elements of the film that Lean has described as "over-emphatic" had been associated with Rosy Ryan more definitively, the film might have achieved something of the style of Flaubert's *Bovary*[45].   But in Lean's film, these overblown images, from outside the consciousness of the character, are not similarly *associable* with a character's internal state (save two strange – and strained – sequences to be discussed below).   Lean shifts the drama of the doomed romance and the anti-heroine's fatal romantic conception of the world to the décor, but here the décor is the natural world framed decoratively, rather than the familiar melodramatic world of interiors.

One might argue that the evidently intertextual *Lawrence* already provides more for Lean to accomplish than *Ryan's Daughter* could, the connection to the latter film's hypotext either unclear or unclaimed. A less substantial narrative, *Ryan's Daughter* expresses the limits of an alternative valuation of the visual for which conventional cinema studies terminology – *excess* – cannot account.   The film, like *Lawrence*, provokes consideration of another filmic register, posing aesthetic and epistemological questions pertaining to the belated movement image.

Ryan's Daughter begins with Maurice Jarre's overture over a still panoramic of the sky and rocky coast, saturated with purples, peaches and black. The image is indeterminate, painterly. This shot, as well as the score, should be considered part of the text and not paratextual, announcing that the film belongs to a now-quaint category of Event Cinema. Credits appear: "David Lean's film of 'Ryan's Daughter'" is inscribed on a moving sky, a process by which written language is converted into image. This is accompanied by Jarre's score and

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[45] Which novel, burdened with description and detail, Lukács identifies as anathema to the critical realist novel.

the sound of wind. The syntactical formulation of the credit "David Lean's film of . . ." is immediately distancing, particularly when a moment later *Ryan's Daughter* is credited to Robert Bolt as an original screenplay, far different from claiming to have filmed a well-known and culturally legitimated work with an easily-identified author (say, had *Great Expectations* been described as "Lean's film of Dickens's *Great Expectations*") even if the work is considered (outside of the text) to be a relative of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*.

From the start, Lean's "film of" never pretends to be anything else but cinematic. The viewer is struck by the awareness that one could pleasurably watch morning develop above the coastal landscape, shown in slightly varying dissolves, were it not for the expectation that this is to be a narrative film. No human figure disrupts our view of the landscape for more than six minutes, until Rosy Ryan (Sarah Mills) emerges, over the hills, chasing a parasol that the wind has destined for the sea. Later, the close up of weather-beaten and well-worn men's shoes (we do not know yet who these men are, so they are presently objects without subjects, like Van Gogh's famous peasant's shoes, though we later learn that they belong to Parish Priest Father Hugh Collins and Michael, silent witness to all that ensues).[46] In that moment before Rosy reaches for them, the shoes are an oddly placed focal point. This enacts a reversal of the "source" work's formal priorities – for Flaubert we have what can be described as the "photographic" and "disinterested" description of details while Lean's details are perceptibly odd in relation to the natural world. Michael's approach is even odder – uncomfortably comic, misshapen Michael clowns for Rosy to her disgust and our dismay.

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[46] A relationship which would have been made stranger and stronger if the original title of the film, *Michael's Day*, had been retained.

Soon it is evident that Rosy is *Ryan's Daughter*'s Madame Bovary: When Father Hugh realizes that Rosy has been reading romantic literature, he asks "Have you nothing to do?" to which she responds, despondent, "Precisely that." There has been nothing for her to do. This world has nothing for us to do in it: Lean's viewer has nothing to do but look and listen – not even to *watch* in ways common to identificatory cinematic spectatorship as Lean's detailing delays both narrative progression and emotional attachment. It is a world of inaction, but it is not a disinterested image. The spectator is not asked by the form of the image to identify in any way, even if the film – like Lean's other epics – has pathetic moments. The landscape is not –for-us (as Bruno would sometimes have cinematic landscapes be) but it is for landscape's sake, for panorama's intervention into perception. The argument could be made that the long take of the long shot identifies the setting as coastal Ireland, in all its parochialism, but the film's scope is far too broad for that alone.

At the start of the film, we are given neither an analogous narrative nor grammatical structure to the start of Flaubert's novel. A member of Charles Bovary's secondary school cohort begins the novel "Our class was in session when . . .," even as "photographic" details are recounted. "Although he was not broad-shouldered, his short school jacket of green cloth with black buttons must have been tight about the arms . . ." are not the kinds of details attributable to the memory of a former schoolmate, as Stephen Heath points out. This voice evolves later into an indirect omniscient narration of Emma's interior world, promoting an ironic distance (Heath 1992). Shortly after the marriage of Charles and Emma Bovary, ". . . Emma tried to find out exactly what one meant in life by the words *felicity, passion, rapture* that had seemed to her so beautiful in books" (Flaubert 34). The passage cited above is no stray description, a

single passage difficult to attribute to a character internal to the text, but an indication of an

intention that persists throughout the work – to convert a mobile world into static text, in the

awareness of the irony of having done so.[47]

In *The Uses of Uncertainty*, Jonathan Culler explores the strange status of description in

the novel:

> In one sense there is nothing remarkable about [the opening sentences of Part
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> II]; they present a series of details which the reader may take as realistic 'filler'
>
> and pass over quickly. But if he does Flaubert the honour of considering his
>
> sentences more closely, he cannot but find them decidedly odd . . . It is not
>
> simply that each sentence appears to fritter itself away, as it runs down towards
>
> the minute and trivial; that is almost a by-product of the spectacle mounted by a
>
> prose style determined to show how grammatical devices enable it to link
>
> together a set of disparate and trivial facts (2006, 60).

He observes a second "curious feature" which is that "[t]he sentences have no apparent

function": neither setting nor symbol. For Culler this may reveal a belief that reality trumps

meaning, but it is important to note that this reality is conveyed in "purely visual" terms (61).

Were Culler a film scholar, he might call the associations within the sentences graphic matches

(though graphic matches conveyed in the word).

The opening of Lean's film is distant too, but it is un-ironic, and while there is later

something of the Greek chorus about Kirrary's young citizenry – whom Father Hugh yet damns

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[47] So it is that while I accept that these passages seem proto-cinematic, I would argue that they are not proto-montage (as is often, for example, argued in the case of Charles Dickens) or proto-Montage (not poetic "Montage lists" as identified by Eisenstein) but rather proto-collage, properly belonging to the arts of description.

for their cruelty to Michael – we viewers are the primary "we" witnesses to the events as they unhurriedly unfold. In extreme long shots, we see Rosy walk along the beach, a tiny figure compared with the beach and the ocean waves that dominate the frame. An even more extreme long shot captures the approach of Charles Shaughnessy (Robert Mitchum) and Rosy, and the camera slowly zooms in on the two, though the two figures are not positioned in the center of the frame. We catch their conversation, but it is clear a moment later when the film cuts back to a long shot of the beach that their dialogue is insignificant, a distraction, even, from the splendid vista, even as it ranges from the foolishness of the British government (and "all governments") to the riches a parochial teacher offers his pupils. Later we see Rosy step barefoot into Shaughnessy's footprints in the sand, a juvenile romantic gesture. The waves come to wash the gesture and its trace away, and one is reminded again of Lean's preference for the silent cinema, for "pictures" first.

This sense recurs later in the film during the pivotal coastal storm, when extreme long shots and alternating views capture the power of the storm and confuse our sense of scale. Intercutting the arriving Republicans with the crashing waves and weather provides a reference for the viewer regarding that scale, but the storm is still presented as incomprehensible, though not sublime.[48] Kirrary's citizenry gathers on the rocky shore rescuing German munitions from the splintered crates washed up and battered by the storm at sea, galvanized by the presence of Republican hero and outlaw Tim O'Leary. The presence of human figures is necessary for our awareness of the magnitude of the storm: we determine size, even of catastrophe, in relation

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[48] Recalling for me, again, both Niagara and *Niagara*, fn 23.

to the measure of man.[49] Lean forms closer shots as townspeople bring in the guns that were

set to arrive, wooden cases crashing on the rocks. Yet only Jarre's jarring (and jarringly British)

March cues us that this is a moment of human victory: the support of the Republicans by the

town's people allows the Republicans to rescue the ammunition. Yet gunrunning does not a

revolution make, and indeed no revolt takes place in the film. One could argue that Lean's film

is surprisingly sympathetic to Catholic Ireland, but the politics of the film are ambivalent,

uncertain about the Irish uprising, and the Irish themselves are often portrayed as crude,

boorish, and only reactively Catholic.[50] That someone has been spying on the rebellion (and

that that someone is not Rosy Ryan, as presumed, but her father) reflects poorly on the

characters and the cause. In moments of presumed sympathy with the Irish cause (the scene

above included) such a sense of sympathy for the Irish is mitigated rather than reinforced by

the epic nature of the film's images and sounds. It is as if, for the film, Republican freedom

fighting could never have happened in any time or place, even Ireland of 1916, even though we

know it has and that it was, in fact, the most important Irish uprising of the century. The story

and its figures are almost too quaint for the scope of the seascapes, not unlike the affair

between Rosy and Major Doryan itself in comparison with political tensions.

Two outstanding scenes are closely attached to internal states of characters and a third

more uniquely moves that state onto the portrayal of the natural world. The first of these is

Major Doryan's first appearance, which recalls a relatively commonplace expressionism. The

shot cuts from Michael's quizzical gaze to a brooding Major Doryan, who cuts an imposing

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[49] An inheritance from the Enlightenment, we might suppose. See Rodowick.
[50] Alec Guinness's refusal, as a devout Catholic, to perform in the film, supports this, as does Irish popular press complaints of filmmed "oirishness."

figure in front of a foreboding sky, his brows furrowed as clouds gather behind him. This contrasts sharply with the next, in which Jarre's bright march played over his passage through Killary to the camp where he's been reassigned for recovery from his war injuries, both physical and psychological, an ironic difference. But it is the difference between the first liason between the married woman and the major and the most extensive, their famed passionate embrace in the woods, that provides a gap that allows us to see the film and its work differently.

In the first, Michael thumps his black shoe rhythmically against the bench, motivating an extradiegetic march on the soundtrack and provoking a panic attack that sends Major Doryan psychically into the trenches again – as images of the bar and bombing are intercut, and Doryan is presented passing from the first, the bar, to the second, the war. He's subsequently drawn into an empty space – a non-space – by Rosy's caress and by her kiss. As the light increases, it is clear that they are in the bar, under the table, hiding from his memories in her emptiness.

In the second scene, their passion meets the bright light of the exterior, day. The scene makes extensive use of shallow focus, but sometimes it is the branches in foreground and sometimes the bodies of the lovers that are in focus. There is something more than euphemism at work in the sound of the wind and the rhythmic movement of the branches overhead, haloed by the sun. Rosy had hoped, out loud to Father Hugh before her marriage, that sex would make her "a different person." It had not, but *this* scene, more primal, has. A spider's threads connect two trunks, a dandelion blows, branches part to reveal bright sky, and these are edited together to create a sequence in which non-subjects *act*. An insert of a bomb falling recalls once again the trauma of the war and also, indeed functions euphemistically; after sex, death. The lovers part, and Rose returns home to Charles Shaughnessy.

Both of these scenes could be described as outdated, but the difference between them deserves consideration.[51] In contrast with the preponderance of the film, small elements feature prominently, functioning independently from the film, from the camera. Where *Ryan's Daughter* succeeds is not in revelation of subjective interiors or the inside of an uprising but in extraordinary extreme long shots that frame Ryan's daughter's world in *contrast* with the macro-lensing of natural elements in a play with ways of seeing best described as descriptive.

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[51] For more on the impossibility of *not* being outdated, see chapter 3 on the costume drama.

E. PICTURESQUE HISTORY: *A PASSAGE TO INDIA*

Lean's *Passage to India* (1984) is an exception among E.M. Forster adaptations, the only non-Edwardian Forster adaptation of its era.[52] Forster's novel was first adapted to the stage by Santha Rama Rau in 1960. Suspicious of the medium – or so it is said – Forster would not grant rights for *Passage to India* to be filmed, though he ultimately sold the rights for television through Rama Rau for John Maynard's BBC *Play of the Month* program, and a version was produced under the direction of Waris Hussein (Burton).[53] A film version was later approved by the fellows of King's College overseeing Forster's literary estate.[54]

Lean began his adaptation of Forster's novel with Rama Rau's script. Rama Rau's desire to interpret the work as anti-colonial above all else is apparent. Rama Rau perceived an urgency that made Forster's work relevant to contemporary (1960s and 1980s) decolonization efforts worldwide. Lean ultimately rejected Rama Rau's draft in favor of "his own" script, commencing a debate over contributions of Rama Rau's script to the final screenplay (Burton).[55]

Lean's film never settles on a consistent aesthetic – and perhaps this relates to the film's generic instability. In her essay "Filmed Forster" Marcia Landy identifies in *Passage to India*

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[52] Of five Forster adaptations, three were Merchant Ivory productions, characteristically focused on interiors (psychic and physical) and dramatic décor. See chapter 4 of this work for more on costume drama and interiors/exteriority.

[53] After writing the play, Rama Rau functioned as an agent of sorts – Forster denied an interest in an adaptation, and he didn't even have a telephone when would-be adaptors might call.
Hussein, Waris dir. *Passage to India*. John Maynard producer. Based on the script by Santha Rama Rau. Screenonlinie.org.uk/tv/id/1052917.

[54] Satyajit Ray's adaptation of the novel, never brought to fruition, would have provided a fantastic comparison/critical companion piece to Lean's.

[55] Not unlike the authorship issues of *Lawrence of Arabia*.

intertwined elements of melodrama, mystery, costume drama, and court room drama (238) – while others find the film merely bifurcated, one half Adela Quested's misadventure in India and one half Dr. Aziz's tribulations, both situated within their colonial context and confines. It is also a landscape film, but as with the films above, it is not a vicarious-travel film.

Perhaps it is because of the importance of the "capture of space" to discourses of power that Lean rejects the possibility of presenting the East Indian landscape as "thing-for-us" ("us," the presumed Western viewer, beneficiary of the imperial power dynamic). It is certainly true that, because of colonialism and the urgency of post-colonial scholarship the descriptive and decorative visual elements of the film have frequently been missed, as the film – like the book – is read as a disquisition on empire often to the exclusion of formal concerns.[56]

Like Forster (and as he does in *Lawrence* and in *Ryan's Daughter)* Lean provides a *sense* of space that does not allow for the vicarious pleasure of the travel film (Bruno's pleasure in landscape). The film is too *observational*, too much a survey of the vista and not the vista itself. Lean's film images are not exported mental images (as Bruno might have these spaces in relation to desire and memory) but spectacular images of a specific pro-filmic world captured in a static view on a moving medium.

Forster's novel begins by establishing the terrain – "Except for the Marabar Caves – and they are twenty miles off – the city of Chandrapore presents nothing extraordinary" (3). This might be the literary equivalent of an establishing shot – if, that is, the establishing shot functions conventionally as exposition – with an important distinction. The passage establishes

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[56] "Poor old English – they've had a rough time in the films lately, and it's because, of course, colonialism has gone out of fashion . . ." (D. Lean)

by nullification, articulating what Chandrapore is via what it is *not*, and the novel's narration continues to function in this manner, ever negating and always emptying:

> Edged rather than washed by the river Ganges, it trails for a couple of miles along the bank, scarcely distinguishable from the rubbish it deposits so freely. There are no bathing-steps on the river front, as the Ganges happens not to be holy here; indeed there is no river front, and bazaars shut out the wide and shifting panorama of the stream (Forster 3).

Forster's Chandrapore is static, unchanging; though one would expect the power of the shifting Ganges to wash it away, Chandrapore (merely) endures. Even the sky over the city varies little: "The sky too has its changes, but they are less marked than those of the vegetation and the river. Clouds map it up at times, but it is normally a dome of blending tints, and the main tint blue" (5). That change is barely remarkable is worthy of mention in the novel, a comment on development that is in the same instant an accurate description of the sky above a city in East India outside of the rainy season.[57] Yet narrative, as a function of the experience of time, requires *change*. It is almost fitting then – though it is aesthetically unpleasing – that several moments into Lean's film, Lean films what is clearly a model of Chandrapore as a substitute for a "bird's eye" view of an Indian city on the banks of the Ganges.[58]

The first few moments of the film, however, are not of Chandrapore. Jarre's note-worthily British score is played by the Royal Philharmonic, accompanying iconic Indian painting,

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[57] Recalling, once more, images that are also allegories.
[58] That Lean constructs a more convenient India is as problematic in this instance as it is in the refashioning of cave entrances to better suit his cinematic vision, though in this instance there is no destruction involved.

an aural-visual cultural clash beneath the credits.[59] The film proper begins with Miss Quested's

planning for her passage. Adela (Judy Davis) comes in from the London rain to the P&O office

to arrange her travel. Adela sits opposite a P&O agent, and glances first at a painting of a ship

at sea, then a sketch of the Taj Mahal (which she will never see, venturing instead to her

destination and twenty miles beyond only) and a monochromatic painting of the Marabar

Caves. These images are travel enticements, but they are also examples of the kind of

descriptive painting referenced in the Introduction to this work, evincing artistic and scientific

impulse – they promise the potential to know India, to know the Marabar hills. While an

argument could be made that this desire to know is strictly Orientalist, the glances afforded the

viewer are all-too-brief to satisfy a viewer's Orientalist desire (we also observe Adela's quizzical

gaze), as we are interrupted by the travel agent, who asks if Adela has ever been to India

before. Inexperienced Adela has never been outside of England. For her, for us, the images are

mysterious (Jarre's score briefly emphasizes the mystery here), but they are not stimulating,

and the dull images pale in comparison to the following scenes of Miss Quested's and Mrs.

Moore's (Peggy Ashcroft) arrival in Chandrapore, accompanied by the return of Mr. and Mrs.

Turton, a bright celebration of colonialism.[60]

In the novel, "I want to know the *real* India" is our first introduction to the "queer,

cautious girl" at the center of the crisis (Forster 22). Mr. Fielding's first response to her desire,

tossed dismissively over his shoulder, is that Miss Quested "Try seeing Indians" (Forster 25).

Miss Quested and Forster's Western reader must learn that to *know* India is *not* to know *India's*

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[59] The credit sequence, once again, is ignored – or rather, forgotten – by most who have written on the film.
[60] The repeated verbal play of "Turtons and [Orientalist Sir Richard Francis] Burtons" becomes less apparent in the adaptation from novel to film.

people in a monolithic way, perceiving one category "Indians" despite the distinctions North and South, Hindu and Muslim, Brahmin and non-Brahmin – but to develop a *sense* of India that includes unknowability.   For Forster a comprehension of the limits of the colonizer's understanding is not the same as exoticism: "In [Quested's] ignorance, she regarded [Aziz] as 'India,' and never surmised that his outlook was limited and his method inaccurate, and that no one is India" (76). That there are limits to the outsider's understanding is ultimately tragic.

It is the amiable Dr. Aziz's desire to accommodate Mrs. Moore and his embarrassment over his meager home – along with the equal embarrassment that Mrs. Moore and Miss Quested have ignored his efforts to deflect, identified as a mis-step on Miss Quested's part – the "stupid girl . . .!" (79) – that leads Aziz to attempt, at great effort and expense, to "show" an authentic India to his guests through the ill-fated visit to the Marabar caves, which Aziz himself has never yet visited. For Aziz, this authentic India is the India of the natural world, outside of human history. It is also, tellingly, a place he has never gone and, as a series of caverns – an emptiness, an echo – it is a non-place. Quested's desire to *know* as a physical and intellectual adventure becomes hysterical when, tormented by the echo of the Marabar Caves, she becomes disoriented, and in her disorientation claims to have been assaulted in the caves by Dr. Aziz.

In the novel it is Miss Quested's desire for intellectual intimacy that leads her to reject the picturesque vision she is offered of India: "'I'm tired of seeing picturesque figures pass before me as a frieze,' the girl explained. 'It was wonderful when we landed, but that superficial glamour soon goes'" (26).   Later the same limit to vision is her profound loss: "She would see India always as a frieze, never as a spirit, and she assumed that it was a spirit of which Mrs.

Moore had had a glimpse" (Forster 48). So it is a felt loss for Lean's viewer. In the end Miss

Quested knows "India" less than she had from the travel poster that opens the film. The film's

viewer has seen the landscape – or believes herself to have seen the landscape more – yet this

is not an intimate knowing, but a picturesque one. Despite Aziz's [Victor Banerjee] clear

humanity, we too have only seen India as a frieze.[61]

Lean's film famously sexualizes Quested's crisis in a way rejected by Forster's novel,

which presents a merely "cautious" and contained, very plain young woman. Marcia Landy

cites Forster's effort to "internalize symbolic landscape of India to make it more human," and

suggests that this is in contrast to and conflict with Lean's effort to associate the Marabar caves

with the young sexually repressed woman's hysteria (Landy 238).[62] Lean takes from Forster's

novel the cue that the problem of women and the problems of empire are imbricated (if it takes

two years for a British man to become intolerably racist, it takes a British woman just 6 months,

says Aziz in both novel and film; later in the novel Aziz writes unconvincing poetry urging that to

free India, India's women must be freed)[63] but Lean goes much further. Lean's Miss Quested

bikes alone to the countryside and happens upon the ruins of an ancient temple decorated with

erotic sculptures.[64] Adela's fascination with India, the ancient, and eroticism is punished and

her fear rewarded when she is driven away from the site/sight by a tribe of howling monkeys.

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[61] Forster based the Marabar Caves on the Barabar Caves in the Indian state of Bihar, which produce an astonishing echo. Lean's visit to the Barabar caves was disappointing, as he discovered that the Caves were just 30 feet high and not particularly cinematic. Lean's Marabar Caves were shot in the Ramana Garan Hills, Savandurga, 30 km west of Bangalore. Lean's crew carved the rectangular entrances into the hillside. See Kevin Brownlow's Lean biography and photographer Tim Makins' Mapability: A Passage to India (Makins).

[62] Forster himself has lamented the association of "every opening" with the sex organs (Selig).

[63] Forster's novel explicitly indicts colonial officers' wives: "Why, the kindest thing one can do to a native is to let him die," says Mrs. Callendar (25).

[64] Those sculptures were produced from Indian examples exclusively for the film.

It is then that she agrees to marry Ronny Heaslop, Moore's unremarkable son and the City Magistrate, after all.[65]

In Lean's adaptation, the problem is transformed from Forster's problem of "marriage and family" to the problem of repressed sexuality, eliminating a nuance of the source novel and also the novel's implicit critique of the politics of marriage and the Western-styled nuclear family. When Forster's Mrs. Moore admits to her confusion that through centuries of "carnal embrace" we still haven't learned about one another, it isn't the carnal embrace that is the *problem* (that comes easily enough, she knows). Instead, the problem is the institution of marriage itself. Aziz's arranged marriage, functional before his wife's untimely death, is a counter-example to the British emphasis on romantic *choice*, which apparently leads as easily to discord as it does to satisfaction. Landy remarks that this transformation is consistent with the conservative culture of the 1980s, and makes the imperial past "legible" to its contemporary audience (240). Further, in advancing Adela's hysteria, the film forces the homosociality of Fielding and Aziz into retreat, thereby rejecting the force of much of Forster's work.

There is no doubt that both the book and the film reflect the concerns of both coloniality and gender. It seems, though, that in looking through these lenses (which indeed Forster not only invites but requires), what might be missed is the very surface of the novel, consideration of *language itself*, of *sense* and symbol, of myth and metaphor by which cultural differences and limitations to understanding are expressed and enacted.

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[65] Playwright/theatrical adaptor Santha Rama Rau was distraught by Lean's added scene, the lone "Memsahib" Quested biking through the countryside, discovering erotic carvings (carved for the film on Indian models) and terrifying monkeys. Rau argues that Lean's film is unfaithful to Forster on this matter; for his part, Lean argues that Forster hadn't entirely gotten the British character right, and that the sequence was especially cinematic.

Before his first meeting with Mrs. Moore, Dr. Aziz is perched in the mosque:

Where he sat, he looked into three arcades whose darkness was illuminated by a small hanging lamp and by the moon. The front – in full moonlight – had the appearance of marble, and the ninety-nine names of God on the frieze stood out black, as the frieze stood out white against the sky. The contest between this dualism and the contention of shadows within pleased Aziz, and he tried to symbolize the whole into some truth of religion or love (Forster, 16).

Such a "dualism" and the pleasure found in it could be seen as a part of a project of exoticizing India, were Aziz not such a fully-fleshed character distinguished from his compatriots and his companions by his own sensitivity to symbol, and the novel is so reflexive on this matter. Forster's narration is forthright about the very process of symbolization: "[Aziz] tried to symbolize the whole . . ." but it is clear that his effort is doomed. The whole cannot be subsumed under one symbol: ". . . the mosque – that alone signified, and he returned to it from the complex appeal of the night, and decked it with meanings the builder had never intended" (17). As with the passage above, in which Aziz "tried to symbolize . . ." the effort itself reveals a wry attitude toward metaphysics, the process of symbolization revealed as over-reaching.   It is with this heightened awareness that the reader processes all of the novel's subsequent similes and metaphors. Forster seems genuinely and explicitly engaged in how it is we make meaning, in which registers (ideological, theological, matrimonial) we make it, why, and to what effect and detriment, and he requires his readers to develop the same sensitivity.[66]

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[66] Far less so than that he is drawing on those myths we make. Many attempts to re-symbolize Forster's work, or to apply external myth systems to the work, have been made. Robert Selig offers examples from his 1950's master's thesis including a possible relationship between the sound of the caves (bu-oum) and the holy syllable

When Ronny and Adela cannot really say why they will not get married, nor why they are so civil about the decision (apart from that the very obvious fact that they are British), they turn their attention to an unidentified bird, the identification of which "would somehow have solaced their hearts. But nothing is identifiable, the mere asking of a question causes it to disappear or to merge into something else" (Forster 91). The problem of specification functions differently in the novel and in the movie, but both clearly trouble it (as in *Lawrence of Arabia* and *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*). Forster's simultaneous presentation of detail and the troubling of the possibility of detail are as remarkable as his undercutting of symbol, providing a complicated project for the film adaptor.

Rethinking "knowledge" and "knowability" with respect to symbol are keys to reconsidering the Imperial past (the recent past of an as-yet occupied India, for Forster writing in 1924; a roughly forty-years' independent India for Lean). A choice cannot be made between the two projects – thinking thought and thinking Empire – and perhaps this is the brilliance of Forster's text. Is Lean's approach to cinematic knowledge and empire's symbol similarly distant or ironic? Certainly not: the *kind* of ironic position toward myth and symbol that are possible in the novel are not quite possible in the photographic film image, just as an "agnosticism" about the world itself is difficult to convey in a realistic photographic image. Yet Lean makes explicit the process of symbolization through his source text choices (here, Lawrence, Forster and Flaubert, and elsewhere, popular works) and through the composition of his images.

Om/Aum and the "discovery" of sexual symbols throughout. Forster's reply suggested that such a critical practice was wholly at odds with the play with sense and nonsense in the novel. Selig writes, with more than twenty years' distance from his project (and after having read a host of similarly-minded projects), "Yet even if we assume that Forster, as a critic of his own fiction, has no more inherent authority than any other critic, we should, in all honesty add that his approach to *A Passage* in his letter has one great advantage over our mythological approaches: it uses a sense of ironic fun that corresponds very closely to the basic qualities of the novel itself" (Selig, 474).

The film *Passage to India* moves the thematic crisis of knowledge and knowability nearly entirely onto the aging Mrs. Moore, who – after her claustrophobic attack in the first Marabar cave – sees the moon by day in the Indian sky, which appears as an insert shot of a rather close image of the moon. Though Mrs. Moore had pronounced "God is here" (here the mosque, here India, here the world) when first meeting Aziz in the mosque, she is no longer certain that this is so. By the time of the Marabar trip, Mrs. Moore has discovered that the Great Mystery is a great "muddle" instead. The "muddle" is no longer intercultural but is now existential, captured in a confusion of perceptions and a lack of clarity regarding their origins. In the midst of this muddle, Mrs. Moore loses the will to act – even in her new friend's defense, even given (especially given) her certainty of his innocence – and plans to depart India before Aziz's trial. We are later informed that she dies during her passage home and we are not reassured of her transcendent being – neither by her now-empty Christian faith, nor Aziz's Islam, nor Professor Godbole's [Sir Alec Guinness's] caricature of Brahman Hindu practice.[67]

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[67] The novel resolves the crisis through comedy and absurdity, in the celebration of a Hindu festival in which God, only just reborn, can play practical jokes on himself. What is more, in the celebration of the rebirth, "No definite image survived; at the Birth it was questionable whether a silver doll or a mud village, or a silk napkin, or an intangible spirit, or a pious resolution had been born. Perhaps all these things! Perhaps none! Perhaps all birth is an allegory! Still, it was the main event of the religious year" (326).   The God of this passage amuses himself – sometimes darkly – and so, it seems, does Forster: Not "God is Love" but "God si Love. Is this the first message of India?" (320). As Selig indicates, "God si Love" is reflexive – therefore, the sense of the errant phrase is that "God loves himself" (478).

Raymond Bellour argues that the inclusion of a photograph in a narrative film allows for the possibility of a pensive spectator, a spectator who has become aware of the "uncoupling" of the cinematic imaginary and the cinematic image. A fact *suspended* is capable of undoing its own truth-claims, and a moment of cinematic suspension, as with the filmed photograph Bellour describes, "permit[s] me to reflect on cinema. Permits me, that is, to reflect that I am at the cinema" (Bellour 120).   Yet while Bellour allows for this uncoupling to happen through other means in the narrative cinema (through the mise-en-scene, he later suggests) he rejects the possibility that we could arrive at such pensiveness through "those shots where inanimate objects await the arrival of a human being. Rather, [pensive spectatorship] works against the movement of the film, which depends on figures moving" (Bellour 120). I see neither why this distinction is necessary nor that it is valid: Static moments in an art of movement and time do not present to us as natural lulls, as Jean-Louis Comolli has suggested in his writing on movement and depth of field. In Lean's films, there are moments so long in time and in distance that they are non-anticipatory. Their effect is not determined by the proposition that something of import is to follow, that someone is to emerge, or that there is an end to waiting: anticipation has dissipated with duration, replaced by an awareness of the apprehension of spatial relations themselves.

Lean's work in these three films is best understood through their spatial relations via the descriptive image. In such work, representation is not just re-presentation of the object but of the process of representation itself – not in the same way as in the self-referentiality of the high

modernist and the post-modernist, but non-representative representativity nonetheless. Here we might recall again Derrida's discussion of Heidegger's exchange with Meyer Schapiro regarding Van Gogh's *painting* of a peasant's shoe. The painting demonstrates detachment from an *actual shoe*, yet it is neither an "illustration" of a particular shoe (belonging to a particular person) nor an example of the category Shoe ("Restitutions," *Truth in Painting*). Perhaps, as in Derrida's example, it is that the image occupies a strange middle territory, an "inter-posture" between "thing" and "work" (297). The following chapters attempt to illuminate this inter-posture.

3. ART AS HISTORY: FIGURATION IN STANLEY KUBRICK'S *BARRY LYNDON*

Being governed by emotions is a great asset of mankind in a way; however, our downfall will be
caused by the illusion and belief that we are governed by rational thinking
— Stanley Kubrick

In this chapter, I will argue that "descriptive understanding" accounts for the ways Stanley

Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon* (1975) manages the conflict between positivism and negativity that

drives the William Makepeace Thackeray novel (1844) from which it is adapted.   More

significantly, I will account for the ways Kubrick's film contributes to historical understanding by

undermining a linear, progressive notion of "History" without collapsing history into the

present.   Descriptive cinema has to do both with language and with stillness, though *Barry*

Lyndon offers a different kind of descriptive image from Lean's: moving closer to the Deleuzian

Time Image but nevertheless remaining in the interposture between Movement and Time.

Where the landscape image in temporal suspension was a primary characteristic of the films

described in Chapter Two, this chapter concerns the order of things: the presentation of the

objective world of things and historiated bodies in an historical and historiating mise-en-scene

(defined below).   This is an inverse problem to the spatialization of the Art of Time identified in

the panorama.   Description is a temporal issue that has to do with duration; it is neither

Proustian *temps perdu* nor *temps morts*, in that description's interest is in objects and the one

who sees history unfold more than history's unfolding itself.   It is neither a critique of the

Society of the Spectacle nor a spectacle as Debord describes (Debord 2002), not the simulacrum

but the diorama.   As in the first chapter, we are not entirely in the realm of the Baroque: *Barry*

Lyndon does not believe that there can never be an objective representation of reality, but it

critiques the economism of such a representation by expressing the duality of the representation itself, as we will see.[1] Unlike the Baroque, *Barry Lyndon*'s descriptive image is profoundly material, not fantastic, a world with many frames, but without mirrors. *Barry Lyndon*, then, might be considered a study of the Still Life of Moving Images.

Unlike David Lean, whose ambivalent position with respect to "history" films was the subject of the last chapter, Stanley Kubrick is widely considered to be a filmmaker highly invested in images of history. Yet it remains undecided what *kind* of historical vision he presents, particularly in the enigmatic and often misunderstood *Barry Lyndon*. Set in the eighteenth century, the film is reasonably counted not only among "period pieces" but also, with its lavish fashions and cinematography designed to emphasize textures, among "costume dramas." While appreciation for the film has increased in the 35 intervening years, the film has nonetheless largely been overlooked as a history film, perceived even as a- or anti-historical in refusing to narrate history. But the film is a film of philosophy of history, history rethought not in terms of "causes" but in terms of concretions, in terms of the coalescence of things, spaces and social forces into historical-material blocks.

In Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon*, the Seven Years' War is represented first by close-ups and then by long shots of the ship that will carry the soldiers across the sea, followed by a regimental march toward their first skirmish, both accompanied by dense voice-over narration:

It would require a great philosopher and historian to explain the causes of the

famous Seven Years' War in which Europe was engaged and in which Barry's

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[1] Emmanuel Plasseraud describes the aesthetic of the cinematic Baroque as "procède d'une position philosophique: la vérité sur le reel ne peut être atteinte objectivement, par la capitation d'extraits du réel, in rationnellement par sa representation" (Plasseraud 2007, 49). This is not quite the issue of the descriptive image, which knowingly approximates realism but critiques it all the same by the compounding of individual details.

regiment was now on its way to taking part. Let it suffice to say that England and

Prussia were allies and at war against the French, the Swedes, the Russians and

the Austrians.

No mention is made of the North American theater or the control of trade routes or the

battles of the East India campaign in this sequence or otherwise, though the tea trade is

mentioned in passing in the source novel (Thackeray 1999, 308). It is not that the film tries and

fails to represent the "causes" of the War (or other occurrences within the film's purview) for

an audience for whom that war might no longer be quite "famous"; it is instead that in both

voice-over narration and images, the film refuses to do so. Ostensibly because of the film's

attachment to Barry, the skirmish is described by the narrator as "not recorded in any history

books" yet "memorable enough for those who took part," an alternative to a grand battle that

will never be presented. Even then, only the first half of the film is explicitly invested in affairs

outside of the Lyndon estate, control over which has been achieved by Barry at the start of the

second half and lost by the end.

Alan Spiegel observes that in *Barry Lyndon*,

[t]he particularities of history seem to take place in a blink of the camera's eye –

the Seven Years War reduced to brief snaps of two elegant skirmishes (the

outcomes of which we never see); the signal date '1789' glimpsed at the close

and consigned to an ironic grace note on an annuity statement, the end of an

epoch placed literally beside the point that the film itself is coming to an end

(1996, 206).

Spiegel concludes from the film's apparently limited view of seemingly relevant national and international events that *Barry Lyndon* favors a more developed view of "personal" history than of world history. Thus, he suggests that *Barry Lyndon*'s most useful comparisons are *Magnificent Ambersons* (Orson Welles, 1942) and *Lola Montés* (Max Ophüls, 1955), "those 'period' films that project history into a Proustian *temps perdu*, that visualize the historical past not as an aspect of the perdurable, human conflict, but as a textured cluster of private emotion, the sensible expression of memory and nostalgia" (206). Spiegel's appraisal is at odds with the common assertion that *Barry Lyndon*'s narrator ignores, or lacks access to, gestures of intimacy throughout the film. We witness Barry's tenderness for his wife and his son, for example, though it is rarely subjected to the narrator's attention. Private feelings are conveyed in image while public events are conveyed in voice over (Miller 1976). Accepting a judgment that the film favors the private over the historical (Spiegel) or the reverse, the public over the private (Miller), reinforces a distinction between "period" and history films, one related once again to a description/narration divide indicated in the introductory chapter.[2]

To accept Spiegel's appraisal of the film's treatment of its local history – a formulation wherein happenings belong to history and "particularities" belong to the personal[3] – one must hold the position that history must not be thought through the domestic *things* of history, but rather through causal connections between historical events .This is a strange thought for fields otherwise invested in material culture. Yet the film resists the assumption that space (co-existence) is opposed to time (succession). In *Barry Lyndon*, Kubrick instead presents an

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[2] And, in fact, those 'period' pieces *and* Proust's own *In Search of Lost Time* (and Raoul Ruiz's *Time Regained*, 1999) are endlessly entangled with history. Once again, we needn't accept that we must choose between continuity and fragmentation as the "proper" form for history. The "descriptive" offers a third term.
[3] See chapter four for another brief discussion of the problem of "personal history."

alternative philosophy of history: a geological history, a critique of both disciplined history and rationalism. On the surface, the film is far from the visceral *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) and *The Shining* (1980)[4] situated on either side of the film in Kubrick's oeuvre, though all are fairly described as atmospheric. But *Barry Lyndon*'s pride, and its purpose, is in its untimeliness. *Barry Lyndon* returns to a premodern philosophy itself, instead of merely reflecting it, and it does so as a critical practice.

 Barry Lyndon ends with a title that reads "It was in the reign of George III that the above-named personages lived and quarreled; good or bad, handsome or ugly, rich or poor, they are all equal now," a displaced quotation from the film's source novel. The finality of Lady Lyndon's signature on the final annuity issued to Barry, as described above, is compounded by the film's epigraph. Concluding with the epigraph, *Barry Lyndon* quite literally returns us to language and to the sense of finitude embodied in it.[5] At the same time, the contrast of the finality and materiality of the annuity and the date inscribed on it and the existential matters of the epigraph call into question the rationalism of the modern world. The film's narrative concludes in 1789, (a few years later than the novel) the year when the French Revolution fractured the *ancien regime*, but nevertheless opens onto a present occupied by the film's viewers.[6]

 While others have mentioned the nearness of the publication of Kant's "What is Enlightenment?" to the date on which Kubrick has chosen to end the narrative, it is also useful

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[4] Which, I might argue, is more neo-Baroque than is *Barry Lyndon*, though I save this argument for future work.
[5] There is no sense here of the acceleration of time in *The Shining* (in which we move from months to, suddenly, "Tuesday") though *Barry Lyndon* shares that film's sly "conclusion," a seeming final note that pretends to, but will not, explain the preceding events.
[6] England had already modernized economically, but Kubrick is identifying a broader West European spirit. England's task, at the time of the film's diegesis, was to fortify national interests after the blow dealt by the American Revolution.

to recall the popularization of Adam Smith's 1776 *Wealth of Nations* and the birth of Utilitarianism in Britain in the "Mid-Modern" period. It was also, and for our purposes most significantly, the instantiation of disciplined history's alignment with narrative. Claudio Fogu describes the last decades of the eighteenth century compactly as the moment "when a three-part process of 'transcendentalization,' 'temporalization,' and 'singularization' led to the notion of capital-H 'History' (the ensemble of all human actions in time), the semantic collapse of 'history' with 'the past,' and the opening of Western consciousness to a 'linear' and 'progressive' view of historical time" (Fogu 2009, 109). It is the awareness of the peculiarity of the dual process of transcendentalization and singularization – and the relationship between whole to part and totality to particularity within – that effects *Barry Lyndon*'s peculiar form of temporalization.

The concluding epigraph recalls less the democratizing virtue of death than Walter Benjamin's sense that in the Trauerspiel, "[a]ny person, any object, any relationship can mean absolutely anything else," that "just verdict" on material being (Benjamin 2003, 175). The equality of "above named personages" after a proper-named film results in exchangeability, a rationalization of human worth despite a protracted experience of the life of the unworthy titular character. For some this is akin to misanthropy, for others it is an illumination of the human condition, and for still others it is evidence of an extraordinary pragmatism. It might be seen, instead, as a radical reconsideration of historicism.

In *Barry Lyndon*, associations are made formally between the leveling of all "distinctions" in the cinematographic framing of *things* in the mise-en-scene and the leveling of all "distinctions" made theoretically possible for Europe with the class leveling that was to

follow the French Revolution. But we also know this was not practically achieved – it was a revolution recognized only too quickly as a realization of political liberty absent economic change. Thus while I focus first on the film's *words*, we will see that the problem of the relation of generality to specificity within the image functions, within an aesthetic of description, as a way of challenging an investment in the development of a rationalized economic system. Yet the film is far from valorizing the "shock" of fragmentation, maintaining a conceptual unity that amounts to an aesthetic of sedimentation at odds with the epistemological skepticism of the 18th century it purports to represent.

Barry Lyndon's literal time period does *signify* (with specificity) in a way that in a conventional historical film a year does not – it rings so loudly that it can't be missed. The specific temporal location stands out too much for the period piece generally (the "period piece" genre is, after all, identified by the typifying "period" and not the specifying "1789" piece). The "period piece" in general is characterized by internal movement and rupture within a homogeneous material. By contrast, *Barry Lyndon* is sedimentary, marked by dense, non-hierarchical organization, fossilized in a moment of phase-transition. The film is simultaneously heterogeneous and concretized, sterile and non-proliferative. Put less metaphorically, *Barry Lyndon* exists less as a narrative than as a container of space-time.

Barry Lyndon, an adaptation of William Makepeace Thackeray's 1844 *The Luck of Barry Lyndon: A Romance of the Last Century*, engages in the meta-critical historical work begun in the source novel, work akin to that performed by other films in Kubrick's oeuvre. In its parodic modes, Thackeray's work returns his often-bleak narrative's missing humor to the surface and formally insists on the reflection on difference; in its descriptive mode of historicizing, Kubrick's

Barry Lyndon reveals its sympathy with that work. Kubrick has suggested that Western culture's relation to history is one of very successful denial of a lack of progress: "this illusion that you get that you're much more sophisticated and that it can never happen that way again may be true but the thing that you don't realize is that it'll happen a different way, you know" (Kubrick 1966).

A. ART AS HISTORY

Barry Lyndon is among many Kubrick films with literary antecedents, from the absurdist and pacifist *Paths of Glory* (the 1957 adaptation of Humphrey Cobb's 1935 novel of the same title) through the theatrical *Eyes Wide Shut* (a 1999 adaptation of Arthur Schnitzler's *Traumnovelle*). *Lolita* (1962), *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) and *Barry Lyndon* have the specific challenge of adapting literary source texts featuring unreliable narrators.[7] These films do not have to be viewed alongside a reading of their antecedents to be understood as contemplating a gap between what can be represented and what can be known and challenging the automaticity of the movement from the former to the latter. However, a consideration of the novel is useful here to the extent that it informs our understanding of what it is Kubrick's film is able to do similarly or differently with respect to representing a "Romance of Past Centuries."

Barry Lyndon does not attempt to adapt the unreliable narrator of Thackeray's picaresque directly, though the voice of Barry is the key feature of the novel. The novel, and more so its initial serialized form, presents a dynamic between text purportedly produced by Irishman Redmond Barry-cum-Barry Lyndon and the equally fictional editor (and one of Thackeray's many writing personae) George Savage Fitz-Boodle. In the novel, the interplay between the two voices presents a constant comment on Thackeray's opinion regarding the "Irish Character" in general, revealed a year earlier in Thackeray's wood-cut illustrated

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[7] *Eyes Wide Shut* has an altogether different problem with the narration of Schnitzler's *Traumnouvelle*: whether to maintain the tragic disjunction between an assertion that "these things cannot be expressed in words" (Albertina's contention) and the necessity of forming the words to express that abject state, at the same time as the atmosphere is lushly described. This is a contradiction that could have been lost (or jettisoned) in adaptation.

travelogue *The Irish Sketchbook*,[8] even as Barry becomes (or perhaps revealed because Barry becomes) a comically polynational figure throughout.

The dynamic between "Barry's" memoir and Fitz-Boodle's remarks is also a formal intervention into nineteenth century narration and perception. If narration mitigates contingency (an assumption of literary realism, as discussed in the first chapter of this work), Thackeray's novel of "Luck" clearly favors the accident even as the plot moves toward what feels like an inevitable tragic conclusion. The multivocity of the text magnifies this effect, demonstrating not only a character's but also a text's desire to subvert a unified "truth" and complete knowledge. At the same time as Fitz-Boodle functions as a normative voice, insisting that his reader never trust Barry, his presence reminds the reader that she is indeed reading, and thus performing a very local, historically situated act on a material object, itself already historically situated. This is a function passed not onto the narrator but onto the material objects in the film.

The voice of the film's extra-diegetic narrator (that of stage, screen and radio performer Sir Michael Hordern) is as earnest as the voice-over for any popular historical documentary, though it is clear that his "reading" of events is neither entirely accurate nor complete. For example, the initial description of Barry's father, who was "raised to the profession of the law" but died, possibly, as a criminal, is read over a long shot of a duel. Likewise, his flat description of the "naturalness" of Barry's first stirrings of love for his evidently very plain cousin Nora narrates an affection which is anything but a "magnificent secret" held in Barry's heart. The

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[8] For example, shortly after remarking that one with an allegorical bent might imagine all of Ireland through just one window (propped open with a broom handle), Thackeray introduces us to three young men, by the names of their counties: "Mr.Galway, Mr. Rosscommon, and Mr.Clare."(1882, 22).

disjunctions between the voice and the images of the film persist, but they are automatically of another order than that of the disjunctions between Fitz-Boodle and Barry. Yet I disagree with Thomas Allen Nelson's argument that the "detached" and "ironic" voice of the film's narrator is limited in its capacity to address broader social concerns extending beyond the story's era (Nelson 1979, 42).

The voice-over, only one element of an audio track which is often augmented by rich orchestration (most famously, "Sarabande" from Handel's D Minor, 1733), performs an alternative form of historical critique not fully accounted for by reflexivity. In an interview, Kubrick attempts to explain the function of the gap in time between the present of the diegesis and the present of the voice-over thus: "the commentary creates the same dramatic effect as . . . the knowledge that the Titanic is doomed while you watch the carefree scenes of preparation and departure . . . Being told in advance of the impending disaster gives away surprise but creates suspense" (Ciment 1982, 171), pointing to a dramatic affective difference between narrated and pre-narrated events (like the affect of the minor keyed morose "Sarabande" itself). That we are told that Barry will die alone, penniless and childless before his son Bryan's accident and death is only the most pronounced instance of the sense of an hermetic seal having been placed around the contents of the film, as if everything that is to happen is both unnecessary and entirely inevitable: from the point of view of the narration, everything has already happened and has only to unfold once more.

Would that *The Luck of Barry Lyndon* had been an illustrated novel like Thackeray's own *Vanity Fair* (1848); we might then have a more viable comparison between literary text and film. In *Vanity Fair*, author-drawn images (pictorial sketches, emblematic capitals) function in

disparate ways,[9] including "revising" the text they purport to elaborate[10] and inviting the reader to do for herself some of the work Fitz-Boodle does in language in *The Luck of Barry Lyndon*.[11] It is worth noting that Kubrick first hoped to film a version of *Vanity Fair*, but found the narrative hostile to condensation.[12] Perhaps it is the form – already word and image combined – that proved hostile to adaptation.[13] To the film's advantage, *Barry Lyndon* also had the benefit of being a lesser-known work than *Vanity Fair*, and so was less likely to bring with it the baggage of "adaptation" and the infamous fidelity discourse: when films are identified with the literary, emphasis is often placed on a well-known story, and too little on form, even though adaptation provides useful occasions for formal interrogation.

As a novel and as a serial publication, *The Luck of Barry Lyndon* also immediately invited engagement between a diegetic present and known European history, given its status as a nineteenth century novel of the eighteenth century. Despite Lukács's complaint that Thackeray's historical novels failed to present a proper history, much of Thackeray's completed work evinced a serious interest in both historical subjects and the problems of historical representation. And, as Hayden White shows, the eighteenth century distinguished between three kinds of historiography – true, fabulous, and satirical –but all three forms of thinking counted, for the eighteenth century, as history nonetheless (White 1973, 49). Thackeray's interests in the constructions of history were diverse: he hoped, even, to complete a "History of

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[9] These illustrations are regrettably omitted from modern paperback editions.

[10] For more, see Patricia Sweeney's essay "Thackeray's Best Illustrator" (1974).

[11] See Elliot's discussion of *Vanity Fair* in *Rethinking the Film/Novel Debate* (2003) or the prologue to Prawer's *W.M.Thackeray's European Sketchbooks* (2000). Both indicate a complicating or even "destabilizing" function of a number of Thackeray's illustrations.

[12] See Ciment in Castle (Castle 2005).

[13] It is also worth considering whether or not the illustrations perform a kind of auto-interpretation. See my discussion of *Lawrence* in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

the Times of Queen Anne," though he was not able to do so before his death (Prawer 2000, 1).

Thackeray's interests overlap, then, with our own. His investment was not merely in history but in the presentation of it, both in his own parodic works and in his milieu, which more than occasionally offered unwitting self-parody; this shared investment – rather than thinking of the *Barry Lyndon* book and film pairing in terms of "adaptation" or even "influence" – provides a way to understand Kubrick's relation to the problem of history.

Thackeray's observations regarding the reign of Louis-Philippe of France (1830-1848), in word and image, are germane to his conception of the relationship of past to present. On the occasion of the return of Napoleon's remains to Paris, Thackeray wrote:

> One would think that these sham splendours betokened sham respect, if one
> had not known that the name of Napoleon is held in real reverence, and
> observed somewhat of the character of the nation. Real feelings they have, but
> they distort them by exaggeration; real courage, which they render ludicrous by
> intolerable braggadocio (Prawer 2000, 43).

Thackeray dubs the ceremony of this occasion "The Second Funeral of Napoleon" (Prawer 2000, 44), because he perceived a present (the time of Louis-Philippe's reign) having dressed itself as a thing of the past, humorlessly attempting to deny the difference or the temporal or ideological space between. This critique of Louis-Phillipe's France resonates with Marx's critique of his replacement Louis-Napoleon (in 1848):

> And just when they seem to engage in revolutionizing themselves and things, in
> creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of
> revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their

service and borrow from them names, battle cries and costumes in order to

present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and

borrowed language (15).

Marx lamented that, in his specific example and in general, the present is "dressed up" as

history as a means of legitimating contemporary political action or inaction. That history is

instrumentalized in this way or represented as naïve (apolitical) historical "costumery" led to a

belief continued in criticism from the left that such cultural forms of engagement present the

problems of their "today" merely "dressed up" as a thing of the past or function as an escape

from the material conditions of the present to a pleasurable and distant time,[14] beyond the

reach of ethical consideration. "Costumery" is a "blocked representation," the construction of

an ideal that prevents the experience of an actual, and as such, it is a block to action (Deleuze

1994, 15).

We might recall here Lukács's concern in the context of the historical novel: "Again and

again . . . history is unmasked as mere costumery" (Lukacs 1983, 226). Lukács's distaste for

"costumery" is a Marxian one, observing the distance "costumery" introduces between a visible

surface and the historical forces at work beneath or behind. For Marx, "costumer" is a marker

of failure, not a failure at achieving novelty but an incomplete replication, "grotesque" not

merely in trying to recall the grandeur of a prior moment but in failing to embody a concept

(Deleuze 1994, 90).[15] It is for this reason that costumery is a form of the surface. What is

more, those same forms of the surface that Lukács reviled, historical novels and so-called

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[14] See Sue Harper's *Picturing the Past: The Rise and Fall of the British Costume Film* (1994).
[15] Deleuze writes, "Repetition thus appears as a difference, but a difference absolutely without concept; in this sense, an indifferent difference" (1994, 15).

period pieces, tended toward psychological interiorization and individual emotion. Yet the move from spatial qualities of surface and depth to interior psychology in both Lukács's critique and its inheritors strangely elides questions of *perception*: period pieces employing an aesthetic of description foreground spatial qualities rather than cause-effect relationships that are the hallmark of narrative *and* the analogical thinking that governs such, as above. For, these forms argue, a quest for evidence of narrative understanding of history will not be adequate. They are forms that utilize sensuousness as a bridge to intellection, rather than replacing intellection with misplaced affection.

Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon* derives much of its sensuousness from the art history it so explicitly engages, with references to landscape and portrait painter Thomas Gainsborough, painter, print-maker and satirist William Hogarth, and portraitist Joshua Reynolds—not to individual paintings but rather their manner and mise-en-scene. Thus while art historians and film scholars have attempted to identify specific paintings included in the film and to understand their inclusion in terms of the development of a cinematic "subtext," it is useful instead to consider surface resonances. Kubrick's desire to film in Ireland and England (with second-unit photography in Germany)[16] and only in natural light (with the Ariflex camera) and candlelight led him to use a lens originally developed for NASA satellite photography, the very fast Zeiss 50mm lens.[17] Filming with the aperture wide open, necessitated by the low lighting,

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[16] This is in striking and useful contrast with his stagy *Eyes Wide Shut*.
[17] The use of this lens required the modification of a Mitchell BNC (Blimped Newsreel Camera), a model of rear-projection camera discontinued before Kubrick acquired it from the studio in anticipation of *Barry Lyndon*. The modification to the camera alone took three months to complete (Howard 1999, 141). That such a contemporary technical development was necessary for this feat seems an extraordinary extravagance.

results in very shallow focus, and in this case, gorgeous painterly images evocative of eighteenth century paintings themselves, and not only of the subjects of those paintings.[18]

In addition, while there is discord between spoken word and image, I am less keen to diagnose competition between word and image, or to determine a text/subtext scheme, a scheme I believe Kubrick resists. Thus while art historian Bille Wickre argues that "the visuals vie with the voice-over in providing ironic commentary on the story and creating friction between the multiple levels of meaning" such that "[i]n *Barry Lyndon* meaning resides in the interaction and the slippages between the verbal and the visual" (166),[19] the enigma of *Barry Lyndon* cannot be solved by specifically locating its generation of a stable "meaning." These strategies might work to support or amplify the dominant narrative or they may resist the dominant narrative. Understanding *Barry Lyndon*'s form of historicization depends, once more, on the transcendentalism/specificity problem.

Much of the inspiration for such an orchestration of contradictory significations is inspired not by Thackeray but Hogarth (and Hogarth had, in fact, been Thackeray's own model, even though Thackeray's images and Hogarth's are vastly different in their levels of graphic specificity and their quality).[20] It is fair to say that Hogarth's mode resonates across the film: shared elements range from doubled articulation, images accompanied by commentary, and

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[18] Kubrick had considered filming in lighting conditions suggested by the Dutch Masters, which the director evocatively associated with "the way we see things," but he determined that the effect was too flat, and so side-lighting was employed (Howard 1999, 140).

[19] Wickre argues that "[i]n *Barry Lyndon* a visual subtext is created through the juxtaposition of images, references to works of art outside the film, and the inclusion of works of art within scenes. Functioning as subtext, these strategies may work to support or amplify the dominant narrative, they may resist or contradict one or more of the other forms of narration, or they may provide ironic commentary on the dominant texts. The development of a visual subtext throughout the film is crucial because *Barry Lyndon*'s meaning depends on intricately linked levels of narration . . ." (2006, 166).

[20] Commonly noted for political satire, it is helpful, too, to think of Hogarth's satires of the stage and incorporation of older art in his parodies (Zehnder 2010).

the specifics of fashion, which Hogarth studiously and satirically reproduced. Yet the language that Wickre, for example, uses to describe that process – the language of subtext, of layers, of "levels" and depths – is telling.   I would counter that instead we ought to attend to the operation of intermediality across the surface of the film, to both ways of seeing suggested by intermedial reference and to the particular material objects seen.

B. "MINUTE AND ACCURATE, THOUGH NOT VERY IMPORTANT . . ."

In an interview with Kubrick, film critic Michel Ciment points to the extent of historical detail it would be possible to include in a period piece as a potential area of concern rather than as an opportunity, and Kubrick responds in partial assent to the concern:

Ciment: The danger in an historical film is that you lose yourself in details, and

become decorative.

Kubrick: The danger connected with any multi-faceted problem is that you might

pay too much attention to some of the problems to the detriment of others, but

I am very conscious of this and I make sure that I don't do that.[21]

Kubrick studied period details for a year before beginning production, with the intention of reproducing pieces from period illustrations, using production processes akin to those of the 18th Century.   Production Designer Ken Adam reportedly "researched such minute details as 'the toothbrushes of the period, a mass of things which finally didn't appear on the screen'"

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[21] We might recall here the similar denial on the part of David Lean, in chapter 2.

(Howard 1999, 140). Much of that mass of collected things *did* make it onto the screen, though the import of those objects is not immediately obvious. Despite the ordering systems to which they nominally belong ("Eighteenth Century" or "Baroque"), details qua discrete details emphasize not historical authenticity but heterogeneity, even recalling absent members of a set.[22] Thus while art historian Heinrich Wölfflin might have argued that "objective completeness" apparently leaves nothing to be elaborated by the spectator, an exhaustive catalog of details upsets this sense of completion, and the very possibility of completion.

Why worry, then, about losing oneself in detail? As we have seen, this is a more general art-critical and art-historical problem than a film-specific, or Kubrick-specific,[23] or *Barry Lyndon*-specific, one. The seemingly worrisome anti-synthetic function of the detail has been partially accounted for by theories of post-modernism, which argue that the multiplicity has come to take the place of the unified in an indication of the loss of a necessary and desirable totalizing vision. For Fredric Jameson, then, *Barry Lyndon* would demonstrate the impossibility of historical representation, even if its details are internally consistent (and "accurate" or "authentic"). If authenticity requires that details function to confirm the historical setting, both for the synthesis that is characteristic of realism and for the broader task of 'reality maintenance,' then over-coding can be anti-synthetic. A mass of details has more than one

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[22] This recalls Horkheimer's and Adorno's position that the detail's persistence outside a unity (a unity advocated by Lukács) poses a challenge to Fascism, refusing as the detail does to submit to an oppressive organizing principle. Again, we need not choose between unity and fragmentation as the necessary ethical responses to modernity, but may choose the third path instead.

[23] To some extent, efforts at attention to detail have been pathologized as "obsessive." Sifting through Kubrick's archives before their move to their current institutional home, Jon Ronson describes boxes containing "The usual stuff – the stuff that elucidates the ever-lengthening gaps between productions." When Ronson asked Kubrick's producing partner Jan Harlan if Kubrick might have produced more work if he'd researched (and saved) less material, Harlan responded thus: "That's a completely theoretical and obsolete observation! . . . That's like saying had Vermeer painted in a different manner, he'd have done 100 more paintings" (Ronson 2004).

possible internal relation: part to whole relations are causal, but particular to general are not.

We might think, once again, of the Leibnizian example of a "heap of stones" in the introduction to this dissertation: The difference, argues Leibniz, is that difference between a "heap of stones," having no dominant monad – a "*unum per accidens*,"– and a compound structure. Like a catalogue of objects or a library, a mass of details presents to us as exhaustive and finite despite infinite possibilities.[24]

This potential "problem" identified by Michel Ciment and confirmed by Kubrick, then, is not a post-modern problem or a modernist one, but it is a modern one: From Goethe to Lukács, we find the insistence that "everything isolated is reprehensible" (Goethe quoted in Lukács 1971).   Even without passing the moral judgment in the epithet "reprehensible," narrative historical understanding rejects the isolated detail and the non-hierarchical agglomeration of detail; in both cases the question becomes whether or not the "historical detail" works for or against a rationalizing system. Details do not function as mere distraction, but signify in their own senses, calling our attention both to the process of signification *and* to the ontological desire underlying the pleasure in photography.[25] Among the dicta of an aesthetic of description is this: Order is not the same as totality. Perceiving non-causal external relations between objects means, among other things, that we need not choose between positivism and structuralist explanations of the function of an individual detail.[26]

If "realistic" perception is based on what can be taken in by the human eye, if everything is measured in human scale, the detail, including the infinitesimal detail, relates to a

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[24] See Chapter 1, p. 31 and the concepts of data sets and the database in Chapter 4.
[25] See the discussion of Manovich's very suggestive category "database film" in chapter 4.
[26] For elaboration of the distinction between flat and hierarchical ontologies, see Manuel DeLanda's work (DeLanda 2009).

distinct aesthetic and epistemological position from the strictly realistic. We might think of an

imagistic analogue to the "creative positivism" of Balzac or Proust, recalling that in *The Fold*

Deleuze sees positivism as having two distinct consequences. Tom Conley refers Deleuze's

reader to Henri Focillon (as do I in the first chapter of this dissertation) to emphasize that

> On the one hand, a remarkably firm tradition of inquiry, observation and
>
> historicization came with positivism. Yet, on the other, the really creative
>
> positivists of the nineteenth century – Balzac, Hugo, and Proust – built works
>
> whose mass, fragmentary totality, and changing effects impugned the tabled
>
> symmetries that their scientific counterparts had invented (Conley 1993, x).

The "creative positivists" have allowed us to sense that a *lot* of *things* is, semantically, anti-

economical. But is it, more importantly, anti-economical in the material sense?[27] To return to

the sense of (en)closure in Lady Lyndon's banknote: a final annuity check, in a pronounced year,

is a sly full-stop (which is nevertheless followed by an epilogue) that belies the semantic surplus

of *all those objects* – objects that exceed realism. In surplus – a surplus of paintings, of

references, of bodies – *Barry Lyndon* is less interested in the syntagmatic than in the

paradigmatic. A planar rather than chronological order of things and happenings, this is the

Leibnizian description of the plane of the present.

There is resonance here with Kant's insistence on the necessity for conceptual synthesis:

"Unity of synthesis according to empirical concepts would be altogether accidental, if these

latter were not based on a transcendental ground of unity. Otherwise it would be possible for

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[27] Larry Crawford offers a suggestive adaptation of semiotician Gregory Bateson's phrase: "differences which do not make a difference" (Crawford 1983, 113). Crawford is interested in economy with respect to the film segment, which is a far grander semantic unit than my own interest: the object itself.

appearances to crowd in upon the soul" (Crary 14). For Kant and neo-Kantians, the "crowding"

of detail does not lead to concept-formation, and identifying the sensuous world via description

is surely not the same as either comprehending *or* understanding it. But it is possible that, as

with a Caravaggio, we are presented in the excessively detailed period piece with the *problem*

of where – and how – to look. This is an indication that the period piece has a complex

relationship to bourgeois realism, in which verisimilitude and virtuosity collide. Of this

particular problem of the detail, costume itself is exemplary.

C. COSTUME REDRESSED

Like the sea-god Proteus struggling in the arms of Telemachus on the Pharie Coast [18th Century fashion] passed from shape to shape with the velocity of thought.
-- William Connor Sydney (1891)

"Costumery" has long been an epithet signaling decadence and ahistoricism. Costume as an art

in itself – as both a fetishized and fetishizing popular art – has often been the "bad" object of

performance studies, while studies of history on film have consistently preferred the biopic to

the costume drama.[28] More commonly perceived as engaging a contemporary notion of the

tastes of the past rather than reproducing historic ways of clothing the body, costumers adopt

"period details" and conventions for use within and alongside contemporary fashion, preferring

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[28] Though Costume Studies has been part of institutionalized Art History in the United States since at least the 1940s, when the Museum of Costume Art merged with The Metropolitan Museum of Art to produce the Costume Institute.

"plausibility" over "authenticity."[29] Fashion on film has functioned, then, as a doubling of artifice.

Yet this does not fully account for film costumes' and costume films' rejection as an area of inquiry or site for critique in film studies. Pam Cook writes that "[t]he marginalization of costume design by film theorists is marked enough to be diagnosed as a symptom" (1996, 44). In the introduction to her recent work, Sarah Street cites arguments that costume drama has been rejected as an area worthy of cinema scholars' investment because both costume design and fabrication are considered feminine elements of film production, and because of the relation of fashion to female objectification under the male gaze. Until recently, Street shows, the study of costume has been dominated by anti-heteronormative notions of gender and social role informed in large part by Judith Butler's argument that incomplete gender expression is completed through dress (3).[30] In fact, the historical novel and costume drama alike have received comparatively less attention from literary and film scholars because both are so very "middle brow," and as such, presumed to be both unartistic and reactionary; consequently, both high art and popular forms have received wider attention.

Chris Robé details the rejection of costume drama by critics on the American left at the end of the 1920s into the 1930s:

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[29] See Pam Cook on Sofia Coppola's *Marie Antoinette* (Cook, "Portrait of a Lady: Sofia Coppola" 2006).
[30] For foundational text regarding fashion, gender, consumption and the management and legitimation of class distinction, see Thorstein Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), which, incidentally, Kubrick had assigned to screenwriter Michael Herr (*Full Metal Jacket*) who he hoped would work with him on *Eyes Wide Shut* along with Machiavelli and *The Art of War* (Herr 1999). Stella Bruzzi's *Undressing Cinema* is a valuable contemporary contribution to the field, given her consideration of dress, spectacle and fetish in and out of film, but Bruzzi is still more invested in how gender specifically is enacted and desire developed in dress than I am in this present work (Bruzzi 1997).

[The left's] clear demarcation between the historical costume drama and 'legitimate' historical film began as early as 1928 with the release of Carl Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928). Writing for the *National Board of Review Magazine* in January 1929, Harry Alan Potamkin observed, '*The Passion of Jeanne d'Arc* is an historical film, but not a costume film' (2009, 72).

Potamkin reaches this conclusion because the film avoids "specious prettiness" and seeks a unified Idea. Robé argues that here Potamkin "establishes a central dichotomy that will structure all of later U.S. Left film criticism's demarcation between the costume drama and legitimate historical films: spectacle versus theme" (ibid). Late 1930s interest in the history film shows a desire for a firm distinction between history and "invention" (Harper 1994). Yet even earlier, the *National Board of Review* published a number of editorials arguing against "artifice" in Hollywood film from diverse corners. Russian filmmaker Alexander Arkatov contributed to the American magazine a "Plea for Honest Motion Pictures": In Europe, "[a]udiences are interested primarily in the dramatic interplay of human emotions and came to picture houses expecting it – not expecting an exhibition of costly furniture and rugs. These dead elements are totally unnecessary to good motion picture technique" (Arkatov 1926, 3).

As I have argued, this is also a historied demarcation between description and narration, while the Lukacsian foundation of this position is but a footnote for Robé. Nevertheless, left film critics inherited the position that, as Robé characterizes it, "spectacular attention to *mise-en-scène* foreclosed the ability to adequately represent sociohistorical contexts" (73).

Many of the costume dramas once rejected for lavish style and the valorization of inessential elements (the specific visual pleasure of the costume drama) – including *Queen*

Christina (1933) and *The Scarlet Empress* (1934) – have been redeemed since by feminist and queer studies in the intervening years.[31] But it was Jean Renoir, Robé argues, who posed an immediate challenge to the left critics' assumptions regarding costume film and history, presenting a film that resisted classification – *La Marseillaise* (1938). This challenge was temporarily averted when critics demonstrated their desire for a "pure" history picture apart from the costume drama, forgetting or downplaying the costume-dramatic elements of a spectacular film allied with the Popular Front.

Whether gendered, classed, or class-conscious, this desire for and insistence on such a dichotomy persists. Leger Grindon is among contemporary history film scholars who have little use for the costume drama as a genre. Grindon distinguishes between "romance" and "spectacle," and though he allows for some overlap between the modes of the two, he rejects genres dominated by the former, including costume drama, out of hand. Yet many of the concerns I believe to belong to the study of costume and the costume drama Grindon subsumes under "spectacle," and he denies the existence of those spectacular elements within the romance (1994).[32] For Grindon, the costume drama imposes an aesthetic form divorced from the politics and social milieu that determines the very costumes represented. In contrast with his progressive vision of spectacle, Grindon sees costume as unable to function as a vehicle for historical explanation (15). So it is that costumery participates, for Grindon, in an unfortunate aestheticization of the real.   While he argues that costume drama aestheticizes the Real in denial of real material conditions (the proper subject of history, for Grindon) the

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[31] See for example Marcia Landy and Amy Villarejo's *Queen Christina* (1995) and the Cecilia Barriga video project *Meeting of Two Queens* (Barriga 1991).
[32] In his introduction, Grindon offers *Lawrence of Arabia* as one example of "spectacle," but he misses the elements of that film that resonate strongly with the costume drama – suggesting, perhaps, the inadequacy of each of these terms.

costume drama form is far more complicated than he seems to allow. Even if romances tend toward psychological interiorization of individuals, costume dramas foreground spatial qualities. It would seem, then, that the costume drama could accommodate ambivalence in interesting and useful ways.

Marcia Landy finds the costume drama a vexed site for history on film, problematically expressing as it does the tendencies of what Gilles Deleuze describes as the "gestural" on the one hand and Antonio Gramsci's "operatic" on the other. In Gramsci's "Operatic Conception of Life," he laments a people who have succumbed in their taste to inauthentic forms of life, to "bombastic solemnity, oratory and operatic sentimentalism, a theatrical rendering coupled with a baroque vocabulary" (375), and this is not unrelated to the lamentation of "dead elements" in the 1930s criticism above.

But the "gestural" returns us to possibilities for allegorization that Landy wishes to retain. It is this sense that Marnie Hughes-Warrington misses when she writes:

> . . . the 'melodramatic' films that Landy describes also lack political dimensions but she goes further than Grindon in arguing that they use emotional appeals, the valorization of individuals, and the familiar to help viewers manage and even avoid the complexities and crises of the present-day world. Melodramatic history, she is clear, is socially pathological because it preserves ideal past worlds instead of creating new ones: that is, it renders viewers socially and politically inactive (27).

Hughes-Warrington's emphasis on this point – that many (though not all!) politically engaged cinema scholars perceive social pathology in the costume drama, and consequently reject the

genre out of hand, is important, though the issue is not so clear in Landy's work. That in

Landy's work all "melodramatic" forms are "socially pathological" is an overstatement that

conveys to me a misreading on Hughes-Warrington's part.[33] Landy's reading of the genre is

inflected by Gramsci's concern that operatic forms themselves create thought matrices rather

than pathways to thinking, hence blocking political action (Gramsci 373); of these forms,

Gramsci particularly takes to task middle-brow cultural forms even more so than popular works.

Yet Hughes-Warrington misses the Deleuzian inflection in Landy's work, which posits that the

cinema both attempts to reclaim and reveal the loss of the gesture in the everyday, a point to

which we will return. Though the descriptive mode of the period piece presents a "history

without events" (Marx 2004, 43) it does not present a history without historical thought.

In one of the most accomplished full-length book studies of the rise of the period film in

Britain, Andrew Higson acknowledges that the term "costume drama" requires interrogation,

and so employs a variety of terms such as "heritage films, costume dramas [and] period films":

> We might add others, some facetious (white flannel films, frock flicks, Brit-Lit
>
> movies)[34], some focused on particular cycles (post-heritage films, the Edwardian
>
> genre), some ideologically grounded (nostalgic screen fictions) as well as "the
>
> woman's picture, the art-house film, and the quality film (Higson 2003, 9).

The field of such films, he indicates, is burdened by too many names with too little distinction.

He narrows his own field of inquiry to "serious social dramas with a naturalistic quality and a

period setting" (22). Thus, he writes, "Indeed, almost all of the films listed [in the 2003 text]

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[33] One might think, here of Landy's discussion of the *The Leopard* (Visconti 1963) in *Italian Cinema* (2000, 158).
[34] And even more facetious: Higson reproduces a 'recipe' for the period film, with ingredients such as "1 classic text, 1 large tub whimsy, 1 gross britches, 2 gross frocks, various sentimental anachronisms and Helena Bonham Carter . . . or brand equivalent" (33).

make strenuous efforts to reproduce a period *in all its fullness and authenticity*" (22, my emphasis). The historical details of a period film exceed the function of "reality maintenance," yet for Higson, the "overarching quality of the heritage film is 'naturalism'" (ibid). Higson briefly distinguishes these films from radical films that introduce explicit elements of visual play, including the films of Sally Potter, Peter Greenaway and Derek Jarman. I am not so quick to set these films apart but wonder instead about their interaction with more popular forms, so as not to miss the possibilities in the fact that costume itself suggests a play with authenticity.[35] Pam Cook believes that Higson's prior work "manifests" a

> distrust of decoration and display, which is perceived [by Higson] as obfuscating
>
> a more genuinely authentic approach to history; a fear of being 'swallowed up'
>
> by nostalgia and a concomitant desire for critical distance and irony; a view of
>
> history as necessarily offering lessons for the present; and a sense that history
>
> should somehow remain uncontaminated by commodification (1996, 69).

Cook argues that despite the fact that Higson notes the possibility for difference – "it would be wrong to assume that pastoral and nostalgic discourses are always conservative"– such possibility is relegated to Higson's footnotes. This is so, and Higson is in good company, as the above arguments regarding "costumery," and even more generally, regarding decoration and ornamentation, show.

If "costumery" functions as a form of visual and temporal play, it is possible that the costume drama or period piece jams its own purported pre-formation of thought-matrices. How, in fact, to manage the relations of people to history except through their dress? *Barry*

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[35] See chapter 4 of this work.

Lyndon's narrator tells us that ". . . within a month he was transformed into a tall and proper young soldier"; the accompanying track backwards reveals that Barry's transition to a "proper young soldier" involves, explicitly, taking on the pose and the dress of the Red Coat. That two officers are bathing together and lamenting a future separation enables Barry to appropriate the uniform, horse, papers and identity of one. Here, the relationship between the officers-lovers is an apparent device to make Barry's escape plausible, but it is also an uneasy joke about the officers' sexuality; Kubrick does not make room for fluidity of sexuality in the space of costumery.[36]

For Thackeray, nationality is essential, and he indicates a fundamental relationship between Irishness and (dis)honesty, even if Barry is free to choose a Prussian identity later in the novel, fooling almost no one and for not very long.   For Kubrick, to call attention to costume is to call into question the validity of political identity: Barry, as an Irishman first fighting for Britain, contributes immediately to a sense of exchangeability among national identities, a sense magnified in subsequent occurrences in the film. Later, being pressed into Prussian service will mean exchanging the red coat for Prussian blue, and national identity will be revealed again to be a function of dress, a reasonable assessment of the historical moment given that the Prussian army was by that point a multinational conscripted force (and a not unreasonable but more contestable assessment of the film's own moment).[37] Thus Barry becomes a Prussian by another exchange, and a spy by yet another; becoming a spy is remarked diegetically as a "disguise," while the other exchanges are comically naturalized.

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[36] Gender-play is often otherwise, for the critic, a form of redemption of the costume film, from the 1930s to the present.

[37] 1975 saw the election of the conservative party in Britain, and significant IRA activity.

Later, Barry is transported across Prussian territory, without papers, in the disguise of the

Chevalier – and it is clear all along that this is Ryan O'Neal in the guise of Redmond Barry in the

disguise of the Chevalier Balibari. The parity between a long shot of a red regiment of British

soldiers and a long shot of Prussian soldiers confirms this. The costume, the regiment, the shot

can be exchanged – mobile units *within* mobile units – counteracting the biographical claims of

a "memoir" and the single-subject orientation presumed to be bourgeois.[38]

Though Kubrick does not allow for sexual transmutability or even gender complication in

costumery, the work, set in the last moments of the eighteenth century, promotes awareness

of class distinction by detail and design. Lady Lyndon's (Marisa Berenson) *robe à la française*

allows for a wide horizontal presentation. The horizontal presentation of this style of dress

provides a broad canvas for decorative fabrics, but also allows a woman to command a large

social and physical space. Thus while eighteenth century woman might appear decorative in

the domestic milieu, and this is Lady Lyndon's experience in her own home in much of the film,

in a dress wider than the wearer's arm span, a woman in a *robe à la française* is physically

imposing in a way rejected in the immediate post-democratic moment of the 1800s. In a

nineteenth century survey of the fashion of the eighteenth century, William Connor Sydney

cites a 1745 pamphlet, "The Enormous Abomination of the Hoop Petticoat," wherein the

author expresses his outrage over the width of the *robe àla française*: "The pamphleteer's

wrath appears to have been particularly excited at beholding a young girl of seventeen taking

up the whole side of a street with her hollow standing petticoat . . ." (1891, 94). The ability to

dominate such space shows a tension between class and gender. Her class provides the

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[38] It is not, then, a conventional costume film so much as a critique of both the theatrics and the operatics of history in the costume genre. In this respect it is not unlike Visconti's *The Leopard*. See fn 34.

privilege to take up space that her gender (and in the case of the pamphleteer, her relative youth) make obscene.   The costume is about the extension of the body into natural, social and historical space.   If fashion is a manifestation of social relations in physical form, then ornamentation is its peak: it is the body parodic.

In thinking through the status of costume, Deleuze suggests an alternative to the historical/costume drama divide, indicating that the latter is "no less historical" than the former:

> Let us first of all return to the great SAS [situation-action-situation, or the "Large form"] historical film, the film of monumental and antiquarian history. To this is opposed a type of film which is no less historical – an ASA film [Action-Situation-Action, or the "Small" form] – which has aptly been called the 'costume film.' In this case the costume, the dress and even the fabrics function as modes of behaviour or 'habitus' and are indices of a situation which they disclose. This is quite different from the historical film where – as we have seen – the fabrics and costumes have great importance, but only in so far as they are integrated into a monumental and antiquarian conception (2003, 163).

While I find the distinction between historical and costume drama to some degree gratuitous, it provokes a useful thought: The costume that operates as anti-integrative becomes the model for a subject who himself becomes ornamental, and ornamentation functions as a useful challenge to monumentality.

D. I APPEAR AS AN ORNAMENT OF ENGLISH SOCIETY – BARRY LYNDON, W. M. THACKERAY

To perceive the problems of the costume drama embodied by *Barry Lyndon*, we must consider Ryan O'Neal's own body and his performance. Even in softened focus, he is clearly not the youth described by the narrator, though his character will age significantly over the course of the film and, by the conclusion, Barry Lyndon will catch up and bypass O'Neal's own age at the time of filming. What is more, through O'Neal's impassivity, our attention is called to the contemporary figure dressed as an historical character. James Howard characterizes the 1975 reviews of the film as blaming O'Neal's performance for the film's failures (140). Yet if the woodenness of O'Neal's performance[39] is considered a weakness, this is to misunderstand the way the film functions. Howard writes that "Kubrick maintained that he was the best actor for the part. 'He looked right,' said the director . . ." and indicates that Kubrick had had a faith in O'Neal's yet-unrealized acting potential. If Howard's reading were accurate, Kubrick's expectation for O'Neal's performance would fall into the same camp as that of the critics themselves – an expectation of a psychologically rounded and realistic performance which *Barry Lyndon* doesn't seem to need or call for.

Precisely because he "looked right," O'Neal *stands in for* the eighteenth century "gentlemen" he purports instead to represent. This recalls Jean-Louis Comolli's assertion that the problem of an historical film is an "embarrassment" over a "body too much" (1978). I read Kubrick's "confidence" not in O'Neal's acting but in his inactivity, in his ability to refer to the figure of Barry Lyndon without identifying with the character. As a result of this, the character

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[39] O'Neal had already established himself as "likeable if somewhat lightweight" (Howard 1999, 136).

Barry Lyndon is conversely incapable of cancelling out the actor's body. But it is not necessary to the perception of the film or its view of the work of historical representation that he do so. Barry/O'Neal becomes, instead of an "actor"/character, an observer. The film frequently feels like an exercise in making the actor's body *too* present, a persistent presence, and the persistence of that body-too-much becomes far more interesting than the problem of subjectivity posed by the narrative. We are so habituated to seeing Barry/O'Neal that a point of view shot, otherwise common in the narrative cinema, feels anomalous: a near point-of-view shot of a battlefield is so at odds with O'Neal's/Barry's constant inclusion that it disrupts the flow of the film and heightens awareness of the frame, where agency is overtaken by perception itself. Perception becomes possible instead, not for Barry, but for the film's viewer, as the "merely objective" look exceeds the narrative.

This moment is exceptional because in the main, in order to see *Barry Lyndon*, we need the presence of Barry. If the Baroque performer is an actor in a theater of a world he cannot comprehend, he is also a cipher. O'Neal's Barry is not nullified: he lacks the complexity of psychological inscrutability, but bears the duality of the historically double. It is not important to the film, then, that O'Neal offer a fully developed, psychologically complete Barry: after all, the only sense of character development is in Barry's response to the tragic death of his young son Bryan and his decision not to shoot stepson Lord Bullingdon in the film's final duel.

Is Ryan O'Neal's body a body "too much"? We might look instead to a different history of bodies too-much, narrative and extra-narrative, historical and superficial beings in one image: the history of the historiated portraiture. Doing so acknowledges an alternate genealogy from the historiated portrait and photographic images of tableaux vivants to the

costume drama and gets us out of the binds of temporal continuity *and* the "ethical" problems

of costumery. Thus, while authors cited in the first section of this chapter are most interested

in Hogarthian images and while others have looked for specific art-historical intertexts in the

film, I would propose that one of the most important theoretical resonances for understanding

how *Barry Lyndon works* as a critical costume drama is its attention to the resonance between

the costume drama and the historiated portrait genre of painting.

In the historiated portrait genre, the subject sits for a painting of herself costumed and

posed as an historical, mythical, or biblical figure. The historiated portrait's peculiarity is that in

the completed work, the subject is also always obviously (that is, "obvious" to the work's

anticipated contemporary viewership) identifiable as herself, posing *as* the referenced figure.

There is no expectation of the portrait sitter's historical identity being subsumed by the

character to which her costumed body refers, nor is the connection between the sitter and the

nominal subject of the painting necessarily allegorical. Rather the historiating process results in

a layering, not a substitution, of identities; the primary identity remains that of the

contemporary person (portrait-sitter) and not that belonging to the historical "disguise." Thus,

while identity is central to the historiated portrait, together with the class concerns and powers

of ownership that "identity" entails, any romantic view of *subjectivity* is confounded by the

doubling built into the portrait.

Svetlana Alpers describes the doubling at the heart of the historiated portrait as a

"collusion" between the painter and his subject: "It is as if the insistent identities of the Dutch

sitters, present in the look of their faces and their telling domestic bearing, combines with the

insistently descriptive mode of the artist representing them to make them unable to appear

other than themselves" (14).[40] It is this collusion and duality of the image (and not dialectic) that suggests to me that the costume drama, and our particular example, *Barry Lyndon*, is something other than allegory. The impulse beneath the historiated portrait, and, I venture, the costume drama more generally, is the formation of incomplete and open analogies between the present and an imagined and imaginative past. In this, Marisa Berenson is a particularly striking example. Named *Elle*'s "most beautiful girl in the world" (Howard 1999, 137), Berenson could hardly *be* the Lady Lyndon described (even if not wholly convincingly) by the Barry of the novel as far less a beauty: ". . . truth compels me to say, that there was nothing divine about her. She was very well, but no more" (Thackeray 1999, 188).

We witness a similar impulse toward doubling identity in the tableaux vivants of the nineteenth century. If tableaux are closed referential systems, photographs of tableaux vivants add a third layer of complexity to the historiated portrait: in a photograph of a staged tableau (for example, the photographic works of the late 1800s of Hill and Adamson), the subject is not mistaken for the painting or for the subject of the painting, but is always to be perceived as a contemporary presentation of a representation of a prior or fictional moment.[41] This is continued in the pageant movement of the nineteen-teens and twenties and the photographic documentation of that movement. If the photograph of a tableau vivant – which adds yet another layer of mediation to the first act – fixes its subject, such fixture would not carry for its contemporary audience the finitude that the photograph's stillness now does, for these prior

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[40] Only occasionally does the Historiated Portrait overlap with the conditions of the historical portrait-sitter. Caravaggio's self-historiated portraits, now housed in the Galleria Borghese, are examples of such work; *David With the Head of Goliath* (1609-1610) is a clear response to his critics. So, too, is the *Penitent Magdalen* held in the Doria. Yet the more common form of Historiated Portrait is less clearly rhetorically positioned. See Varriano (*Carravaggio: The Art of Realism* 2006) and Crawford-Parker *(Refashioning Female Identity: Women's Roles in Seventeenth Century Dutch Historiated Portraits* 2006).
[41] Hill and Adamson also photographed their friends posing in scenes from Sir Walter Scott's historical novels.

moments echo.[42] I disagree, then, with Brigitte Peucker's argument that "Tableau vivant, as a staging of painting . . . successfully brings the living body into painting, collapsing as far as possible the distance between signifier and signified" (, 112). Where Peucker sees "success" I see "embarrassment," a representation of the limits of representation itself, representation dependent on a literal embodiment.

Certainly technological specificity intervenes between the historiated portrait genre of painting and the photographic tableau and again between the photographic tableau and the cinema. This is not merely because of the lack of instantaneity in the production of each image type, though the difference in the time it takes to record a photographic image (an instant), to register a daguerreotype image (between 10 and 20 minutes) and to render a painting (indefinite) is not insignificant by any means. Even more so than technological specificity, there is a metaphysical difference between the painting and the photograph, pertaining not to the technology but the pose.

For Deleuze, it is anachronistic to return to the pose:

The modern scientific revolution has consisted in relating movement not to privileged instants, but to any-instant-whatever. Although movement was still recomposed, *it was no longer recomposed from formal transcendental elements (poses), but from immanent material elements (sections).*

Deleuze insists ". . . in fact, the determining conditions of the cinema are the following: not merely the photo, but the snapshot (the long-exposure photo [*photo de pose*] belongs to the

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[42] A Freudian reading would suggest that a portrait – whether portrait painting or photography – would recall to us, via the very endurance of the representation beyond the body of the represented – the loss of the love(d) object. Here I am speaking specifically of a consciousness of historical contingency, but it is not an exaggeration to call the effect of these photographs "uncanny."

other lineage) . . ." (2003, 5)[43] before emphasizing the equidistance of instances of movement/change in the capture and replay that are the technical conditions of the live action cinema. To over-emphasize either the authenticity of the photographic image or the indexicality of the same, to over-estimate the psychological difference between painting and photograph, and to emphasize instantaneity as a way of insisting on immanence is to lose sight of the historiating impulse beneath all of the forms. We have in the costume drama contemporary figures in historic costumery, not dressed up as a comment on their contemporary moment but as a comment on historical understanding itself. In adopting the pose, the aesthetic of Kubrick's films is a return to pre-modern or transitional privileged moments.

This would be the "pathetic" for Sergei Eisenstein, jettisoning the old dialectic for a new one. Costume drama plays with the old dialectic; it is the inverse of the "action painting." Deleuze would suggest that this "misses" the movement, but I disagree. The problem of perceiving stillness in movement becomes a problem of where to look, and of how to manage the same philosophical sense of the detail on a grander scale, from the toothbrush, to the body, to the landscape. Occasionally within a scene Kubrick employs horizontal movement, such as the lateral track and zoom when we first spy Lady Lyndon, her present husband and son ambling in the garden; in these instances we have insistence on where to look that suggests an out of frame that belongs both to the diegesis and to the world beyond. Some of the problem of knowing where to look, then, is managed for us in the repetitive tracks backward that Kubrick uses as transitional device.

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[43] This passage is discussed once again in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

Kubrick cuts from medium long shots (for example, the framing of the infamous insult to Captain John Quin that will soon require Barry's departure) to long shots of individuals or couples. The camera tracks backwards to extreme long shots before settling on a framing, as if the goal of the scene is not narrative but purely formal: to finalize the composition. These tracks backwards could suggest an even broader world out-of-frame, but that is not the sense achieved with the hold on the final frame, painterly and posed. In the finalized frame, the initial figures become details in a landscape, non-hierarchized images.

I read Kubrick in a way that Deleuze reads Stroheim: "We might say of Stroheim what Thibaudet said of Flaubert: for him, duration is less that which forms itself [*se fait*] than that which undoes itself [*se défait*], and accelerates in undoing itself. It is therefore inseparable from an entropy, a degradation." (2003, 127). Flaubert is indeed a fine connection: If only naturalism had not required that time remain "subordinate," but had become the actual coordinates, it would have become the time image. Instead, *Barry Lyndon*, like Flaubert, remains in a space between, where forms remain the coordinates in a Leibnizian space, and there remains the descriptive image.

4. ASPECT, ARCHIVE AND APERTURE: PETER GREENAWAY'S VIEWS OF HISTORY

Because for the moment we haven't found anything better, and because we are lazy, the narrative is the glue we use to hold the whole apparatus of cinema together.

—Peter Greenaway

In chapter 3, I argued that Stanley Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon* remained in the space between the Deleuzian Movement Image and the Time Image, emphasizing finitude and functioning as a discursive (and specifically, "descriptive") image. If a painterly style contributed to the form of *Barry Lyndon*, as a necessary intervention into the literary/narrative form, it is the principle aesthetic and technological problematic in Peter Greenaway's *The Draughtsman's Contract* (1982). Greenaway's work further extends our notions of discursive and descriptive beyond structuralist limitations in which those terms (and Greenaway's projects) might have found themselves embedded in the past. My exemplary texts here are Greenaway's multiplatform *Tulse Luper Project* (ongoing), and *The Draughtsman's Contract* (1982), wherein the double meaning of aspect is visualized. Both the project and the film trouble the time of events, time-in-relation to events, and time suspended. These texts demonstrate the interaction between images, strategies and technologies for new forms of historicizing. Yet it is the seemingly more traditionally narrative *Draughtsman's Contract* that uses its technologies against themselves to challenge historical thought formation, returning to an identified historical moment to undercut a film's claim to representing history. In this chapter I consider the interaction between aspect, archive and aperture to produce alternative approaches to the relationship between narration and description, and hence to thought, in cinematic images.

"Aspect" should be understood in both its semantic and visual senses. Grammatical aspect, as a category of verb, designates the relation of the indicated action to the passage of time, particularly with respect to: completability of that action (perfective), duration (durative), and repetition (iterative). The visual sense of aspect seems simpler at first: "visual aspect" indicates a specific vantage point, expressed such that the spatial coordinates from which one observes the view are most obvious.

"Archive" cannot help but evoke Michel Foucault, though I mean specifically to evoke Deleuze's interpretation and adaptation of Foucault's project into a philosophical one (1988, 1). Our concern with the archive has to do with the positivity of expressed statements, however tenuous and multiple the potential connections between statements, and with the non-subjectivity of those connections. It also has to do with the atomism or monadism of the world, not only an aesthetic produced in a "redistribution" of the weight of narrative and description but also the consequences of such. At first "database" would seem to update "archive," to contemporize the objective of the archivist, providing a technology for its cognitive schema (Manovich 1999). Yet while a database is still interested in words, objects and subjects, an archive (or an archivist) is interested in "statements." Statements are not synthetic, are peculiarly affirmative (Deleuze 1988, 12), and are both historical and "absolute" (Deleuze 1988, 58). Thus the database is ontological, the archive epistemological. From Jacques Derrida comes the sense that the archive is enclosing ("institutive" and "conservative") (1996). The archive is distinguished from the aesthetic and the ethic of the database *by* its enclosure. This results in a sense of finitude even if the law governing its circumscription cannot be

determined, a difference which requires us to distinguish between *archiving* as an act in the present and the archive as if it pre-existed the experience of it.

To consider the access into the archive from Greenaway's projects, I opt for "aperture" as a knowing refusal of "interface," particularly for the digital texts. An interface is the mode by which the underlying data can be accessed or perceived, a mode for "activating" information encoded below. The aperture instead is interested in the *form* of the opening onto the not-coded of the world before it. Anne Friedberg examines the history of our views of the world through "windows," both literal and metaphoric (2006) but the difference between a frame and a window, and a window and a screen, cannot be ignored. This difference is both rhetorical and perceptual: the "actual" window is oriented toward the not-coded; the screen, to the coded; and the aperture, to the *seemingly* not-coded but explicitly positioned view.

Greenaway's *Draughtsman's Contract* was produced by the British Film Institute alongside more conservative films Andrew Higson locates within the Heritage Film cycle.[1] The film was called the "first entertaining structuralist film," (Jaehne 2000, 23), identifying the film's systematization as its determining feature and evoking structuralism's anti-historicism. But "structuralist" does not express its relationship to history, in part because of structuralism's less apparent ambivalence toward history, history which must be distinguished from historicism. Without denying the bodiliness and sensuality of Greenaway's works, I wish to think through the material of the images and their counter-views – not on history, as Greenaway claims, but on the process of historicizing.

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[1] See Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

Though the database only emerges as the primary form in *Tulse Luper*, in Greenaway's works there has been the issue of the eternal present of the database, eliminating before and after as well as breaking down causality. Causality belongs to history, but before-and-after relations are fundamental to the experience of time and determine the arrow of time, the phenomenon of which must be separated from history – disciplined or otherwise. Even though succession is not a *primary* relation (Ricouer 1988, 16) linear succession remains, nevertheless, the dominant form for representing history. To understand the database's alternative to prior intellectual models, Lev Manovich asks: "What is the relationship between database and another form, which has traditionally dominated human culture — narrative?" (80). Manovich understands database and narrative as competing forms over time, and insists that the database carries greater "weight" in the contemporary moment: the logic of the database is promiscuous and proliferative, allowing for intuitive rather than automatic connections between discrete units of thought (ideas and objects). This chapter will consider the difference between the database and the archive and how the perception of data effects historical understanding. My return from the 2010 incarnation of the *Tulse Luper Project* to the earlier *Draughtsman's Contract* (1982) allows for a new appraisal of Structuralism and also, incidentally, qualification of the "new" in "new media,"[2] and should be seen as synecdochal for the process of return undergone in this dissertation.

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[2] We might think, for the example, of the replacement of narrating methodologies of history in Foucault and the Post-structuralists, the intervention of De Man etc. Greenaway's project spans the years of the production of their texts and the years after, and all of the disciplinary changes that entailed. I am sympathetic to Jameson's concerns that "alternative" structures are nonetheless replacement structures: I structuralism "the various elements of social life are programmed in some increasingly constructed way" and here, "programmed" is especially fitting (Jameson quoted in Bové, xxii).

A.   THE BAROQUE CATEGORICAL FRAME

The Pillow Book was a film made in 1996 to throw another stone in the pond of my anxiety that we have not seen any cinema yet. We have only seen 105 years of illustrated text . . . Illustrating the words first, making the pictures after, and, alas, so often not making pictures at all, but holding up the camera to do its mimetic worst!
                                    — Peter Greenaway

Greenaway's process is visibly recursive: images from a career spanning more than forty years in film, painting, installation and digital art fold back on one another endlessly, as does his own commentary on those images. Greenaway, a painter before a filmmaker, has spoken at length about film history and art theory; this includes his famous insistence (and repetition of that insistence) that the cinema is dead, killed by the television remote control in the early 1980s.[3] Yet what Greenaway has said about history – in both word and image, and in "phototext" (to return to Laszlo Moholy-Nagy's term) and figure (in Sergei Eisenstein's usage) – is incomplete. The work he has done to deny a totalizing "History"[4] and to produce counter-histories requires unpacking, elaboration, qualification and perhaps refutation. Greenaway's position that media think –or rather model thought – means that his films and other projects are thinking history, though out of very peculiar archives and through very particular apertures.

Angela Dalle Vacche offers this reason for not including Greenaway's films in her 1997 *Cinema and Painting*:

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[3]Writing for *The Independent*, Cliff Coonan quotes Greenaway's pronouncement: "Cinema's death date was 31 September 1983, when the remote-control zapper was introduced to the living room, because now cinema has to be interactive, multi-media art," and Coonan adds, "It should be noted that September has 30 days" (Coonan 2007).

[4] Geoffrey Bennington and Robert J.C. Young critique the Structuralist capitalization of "History" and the implications thereof: "Such attacks invoke history, or History (the capital letter transforming a problem into a magic word)" (1987, 8).

I have chosen to deal with other directors in order to spread my inquiry across many different personalities, instead of collapsing everything into one case study. To those who want to know what place Greenaway might have had in this book, I will say that he would have served as a summary of my first seven chapters, for *The Belly of an Architect* relies on a type of intertextuality in which film is more preoccupied with defining itself than with redefining art history (1997, 7).

Dalle Vacche's remarks describe not only a compositional decision but also a common block: It is not just that Greenaway "explores all the issues" in which Dalle Vacche is invested, but rather that he has already done so much of his own theorizing within the image itself that his inclusion in her study, and in studies of history on film, could seem at first redundant.

Greenaway ascribes his work to the category of the Baroque, and his critics follow. Greenaway's assertion that the cinema is always automatically Baroque warrants more careful consideration than it has been paid, as does his desire to turn the Baroque against the "baroque" in cinematic and multimedia interventions:

I believe that here in the end of the 20th century we're now again in an enormous Baroque period, this time with a small b instead of a capital B. In our lives, we have seen the Baroque used as propaganda for the two great C's, capitalism and communism. The Baroque is an attempt to bring together all the different art forms in order to create propaganda for something that is really not there at all. Certainly this applies to cinema, which is only a few shadows on the wall but a powerful artifice for the suspension of disbelief (Shulman 1994).

Greenaway describes his career as a baroque attempt to turn the modes of a Baroque period against "propaganda for something that is really not there at all" with cinematic "virtuosity" in still frames and slow lateral camera movements, compositional complexity and compositing. In doing so, his principle target is narrative, and his weapons are verbal and visual ornamentation.[5]

Yet Greenaway's images, rather than attempting to "escape" the frame as Baroque images, demonstrate the futility of reducing complex spatial orders into perspectival images. For Henri Focillon, as in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, the Baroque is propelled beyond the frame by a "maniacal 'similism'" (Focillon 1992, 58). This is closer to Greenaway's Baroque, a maniacal similism rather than an emotive or perceptual extension beyond the frame.

That Greenaway's works considered here are not emotive,[6] or extensive or even allegorical in the Benjaminian sense suggests to me that Baroque is not adequate to his forms, but that its predominant characteristics are discursive and dysnarrative. The Baroque is "a language that refers to other languages" (Plasseraud 2007, 117), but the images we have previously examined belong in the interposture between language and the real, as do Greenaway's images. If the Baroque presents the world in a hall of mirrors, description is the world through varying apertures in which the aspect is always identifiable. The Baroque, in its specific and more broadly applied conception, rejects the regularity of the frame – the Baroque façade "thrust[ing] itself forward" (Deleuze 1993, 29) but Greenaway continually employs frames within the frame of the image, emphasizing fixed views from among members of the set

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[5] Plasseraud concurs: "A travers ces chiffres, Greenaway utilize l'ornement comme une stratégie pour combattre la predominance de la narration, à la manière de l'art oriental" (Plasseraud 2007, 190).

[6] For theorist of the Baroque Erwin Panofsky, the Baroque is a "*souverain tumult*" (Plasseraud 2007, 11). Panofsky is less interested in the features of the Baroque than in the psychology that subtends those features (Plasseraud 2007, 12): "unbridled movement" as a psychological response to the eruption of the Modern (Panofsky 1997, 20).

that includes all possible views. The viewer is not overtaken by a "seduction of [her] senses," in Deleuze's terms, in the works at hand. The world of these texts does not penetrate our world, and we do not penetrate that world with our vision.

I would turn, then, to a longer view on the history of "dysnarrative" formations of history, to borrow Deleuze's term. The problem of narrative paucity and significatory excess, as we have seen, is not (merely) post-Modern. In both disciplined historiography *and* in the cinema, when we use narrative to create a unity, we do so at the expense of other ways of creating wholes. Chronicles and paradigmatic sets are earlier examples, the database a late example and we have, as ever, the archive. In Greenaway, the archive manifests: less an architecture of vision than a theater of the legible, with a wry emphasis on the frame and its contents as belonging within a frame.

Greenaway's provocative explanation for the narrative turn in the dominant cinema is characteristically contrarian: "Because for the moment we have not found anything better, and because we are lazy, the narrative is the glue we use to hold the whole apparatus of cinema together" (Greenaway 2001, 48). If it is, as Greenaway claims, that "we are lazy," this is a "laziness" that extends beyond the bounds of cinema.   In the return to a concern for a "pure" cinema[7], Greenaway presents arguments aligned with both anti-adaptation anxieties and anti-description insistences of narratologists: "Read 'he entered the room' and imagine a thousand scenarios. See 'he entered the room' in cinema-as-we-know-it, and you are going to be limited to one scenario only" (Greenaway 2001, 48). Like Bazin, Greenaway argues that D.W. Griffith's cinema of storytelling has taken us "the wrong direction" and for too many years.   But

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[7] We should recall Bazin's praise for an impure one in this context.

Greenaway objects to Griffith for his alternation between literary and imagistic styling. This mischaracterizes Griffith's duality with respect to a representation of history on film: as early even as Griffith's *Intolerance* (1916), we see medium-specific "dysnarrative" possibilities, suggesting that we develop a more complex understanding of the Movement Image. This would suggest that Greenaway's work is not a deviation from "cinema" but a different weighting of competing cinematic tendencies toward narration and description. Greenaway assumes that such a problematic choice of narrative over description is medium specific – that is, that words are for telling stories, that films are for showing images, and that images themselves are for unalloyed thinking. Thus Greenaway misses or dismisses the opportunity to argue in words that there have always been other ways of forming wholes, conceived even before the formalists – though he does argue so in images.

B.   DESCRIPTION AND THE DATASET: ACTIVATING THE ARCHIVE

Greenaway's *Tulse Luper Project* presents a limit case that allows us to identify and address the misrecognition of a technological question for a semantic one. Manovich's dual sense of the database as a structured collection of material on which a variety of actions can be performed and also as the new *form* for the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, is useful. Manovich argues that the database provides "a new way to structure our experience of ourselves and of the world" (81):

Indeed, if after the death of God (Nietzsche), the end of grand Narratives of Enlightenment (Lyotard) and the arrival of the Web (Tim Berners-Lee) the world appears to us as an endless and unstructured collection of images, texts, and other data records, it is only appropriate that we will be moved to model it as a database. But it is also appropriate that we would want to develop poetics, aesthetics, and ethics of this database (81).

Manovich speaks both of the definable database and the lived database that is the world we are modeling on it, which is the concern of the database ethic. The multiplatform *Tulse Luper Project* – thus far the films *The Moab Story* (2003), *Vaux to the Sea* (2004) and *From Sark to the Finish* (2003) and footage from those films re-edited into *A Life in Suitcases* (2005), DVDs, books, installations, live performances as above, websites, on-line games and contests deploy a database aesthetic, but less so a database ethic.

Tulse Luper seems at first designed in accordance with G.K. Chesterton's famous maxim: "There is no history. There are only historians," as Karine Bouchy suggests (2005). In an interview during the early phases of the project, Greenaway described his objective quite similarly to that maxim: "Ultimately it'll be one big global encyclopedia about this phenomenon of there's no such thing as history" (Hawthorne 1997) but only *histoire*, the same conclusion that indeed might be drawn from end-user interaction with 92 suitcases and their virtual contents in the online game world, along with the project's proliferating stories. But *Tulse Luper* only *seems* limitless and nonlinear.

To watch a video of one of Peter Greenaway's 33 live *Tulse Luper Project* performances, presented in 14 countries over 4 years, is at once captivating and confounding. "Every time we

do it, it's different," Greenaway announces to his audience in Guanajuato, Mexico, insisting on the powers and possibilities of "liveness," – with its emphasis on presence and synchronicity – as the project performances' medium specificity. The easiest analogy, of course, is that it is like watching the recording of a musical composer conducting an orchestra. The analogy preferred by the producer of Greenaway's live performances, NoTV: Visual Music, is that of "VJ.,"who emphasize improvisation, repurposing and recontextualizing.   But this too is a troubled comparison. Neither analogy gets at the work that Greenaway and his composition alike are performing: he's not performing a composition, or even a jazz piece, nor is he spinning video clips.   Instead, Greenaway is "playing" a knowingly restricted database – or perhaps more accurately, tracing a line through an archive.

In 2010 the project enters a new phase, described in promotional materials as a list, with reference to the form of encyclopedia:

> *THE LUPERCYCLOPEDIA* Live Cinema VJ performance presents a live encyclopedia
>
> for the Information Age: 92 Characters, 92 Places around the World, 92 Global
>
> Events, 92 Stories, 92 Elements, 92 Objects to Represent the World, and a
>
> blistering end sequence of 92 Atomic Bombs (NoTV: Visual Music 2010).

Greenaway has suggested that his encyclopedic films, including *The Falls* (1980) and *A Zed & Two Noughts* (1985), indicate the impossibility of the very process of systematization and cataloguing that appear to be amongst our deepest desires as (neurotic) thinking beings. Yet they also produce different relations and suggest that multiple relations among objects. Tulse Luper, the imaginary figure at the center of the project, respects most those who "try to put all the things of the world into one place, under one system," (*Moab Story*); this is a structuralist's

futile compulsion to order in a post-structuralist context. Slippage between the particular and the general here suggests that the world cannot be represented at all: The "92 objects to represent the world" include "a baby," who just a moment ago was a specific baby, Tulse's brother. Yet this is not negativity but a different kind of affirmation. Greenaway finds a structure – a neurotic response to the anxiety provoked by the impossibility of a totalizing system – and a meta-structure. The figure of "Tulse Luper" pervades other projects. *The Moab Story* asserts that Luper was, among other things, the original author of *Belly of an Architect*. *The Falls* catalogues 92 victims of the "Violent Unknown Event."

Greenaway's filmic and digital objects are significant only in so far as they are relational and differential, their significance determined by their orientation to the system and not in relation to a subject. But they do not suggest that "there's no such thing as history." They reflect, instead, post-structuralism's efforts to reclaim history from both its elimination by structuralism and its unification according to a dominant ideology; thus, while perhaps it is *anti-*historicizing, it is not as ahistorical as structuralism. If, as Perry Anderson charges, post-structuralism amounts to "*the randomization of history,*" it does not amount to its elimination (Bennington and Young 1987, 4 original emphasis).

The proper name of the new format for the *Tulse Luper* performances, *Lupercyclopedia 2010*, purports to spatialize history and subjectivity, with reference to how an encyclopedia is used, traversing a dataset at will and according to a strategy that is, in new media terms, end-user determined. This is nonetheless an impossibility given that Greenaway is foremost the developer of each element and the navigator. Put another way, Greenaway composes nightly a piece out of fragments, but they are all fragments selected or composed by Greenaway himself,

as are the pathways forged between them.[8] Where a neo-Baroque digital project would be

composed from "meanders and detours," it would also be expressed in *dilation* – an expression

not only of *linkages* between objects laterally and in depth but also of the completeness of each

object unto itself (Deleuze 1993, 37) and the object's indivisibility.

If the digital is, as Lev Manovich claims instead, principally founded in possibility and

compossibility – or an expression of the complete set of equally compatible alternatives –

Greenaway's database performance still promotes a singular experience, even if that

experience differs nightly. A live "performance" of *Tulse Luper* may resist any radical capacity in

"liveness," but such a claim to a radical capacity of liveness itself should be scrutinized. Philip

Auslander complicates the valorization of live performance in general and insists on the

absence of the spirit of liveness in mediated (and consequently mediatized) performances

(Auslander 1999).   Auslander finds performance studies's valorization of "liveness"–

"representation without reproduction," representation that doesn't leave a trace –

problematic, and I believe that we, too, ought to approach the concept with some suspicion

(41).[9]

Tulse Luper seems to operate along the paradigmatic axis, emphasizing the array of

available alternative semantic units within the set of available units, a sense enhanced by the

inclusion of archival and found footage and photography. *The Moab Story*, for example, begins

with the "audition" process, offering many possible bodies for each character/figure including

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[8] Angela Ndalianis observes the technological complexity of truly open and interactive texts. She cites Keith
Ferrell's description of the problem: "On a purely pragmatic level, the creation of open-ended, wholly interactive,
fully explorable worlds that still possess some sort of structured story and character content may be too much to
ask . . . Add the creative, technological, and budgeting challenges and you're looking at an undertaking that dwarfs
even the biggest of motion pictures" (2005, 121).
[9] Though this is outside the scope of the present work, thoughts on Greenaway's claims to "liveness" of the
Lupercyclopedia performances could also push on the boundaries of Auslander's scholarship.

the young Tulse Luper. However, the "performances" of the database do not completely shrug off the hold of the syntagmatic, as the project suggests it will.

As a filmmaker and theoretician of discursive practices and the ordering of things – the artificial systematization of chaotic death brought about by an unnamed calamity in *The Falls*, the recitation of the alphabet and counting games in *Drowning by Numbers* (1988) – Greenaway first seems the archivist par excellence,[10] and linear history's harshest critic. In digital media, it would have seemed that an encyclopedic filmmaker who insists on the death of the cinema would have met his medium. The *Tulse Luper Project*'s subtitle is "a Personal History of Uranium," and "Personal" should be read, in the context of Greenaway's work, as "atomic," in the sense of the atom belonging to set theory: as discrete, fully enclosed and irreducible units. Greenaway's conception of the world does not accord with the quantum mode to which the digital belongs.

The online game, *Tulse Luper Journey*, was designed cooperatively among game producer and developer Submarine and students of various universities and art schools in Europe. The project was designed so that new content (puzzles) would be released over a period of eighteen months – an unusually time-dependent format for a massive multiplayer game – during which time players, identified as "researchers," would also design challenges for one another and offer trades for movie clip layers and virtual items representing Luper's life. These items which would become scarce over time and the planned scarcity itself are symptomatic of an attitude that runs counter to the multiplicity and re-productivity that drives

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[10] Luper, as an alter-ego, is also an "archaeologist" and a "collector."

the digital. It is more consistent, perhaps, with the logic of the physical collection on which it is based.

This is the difference between the archive, subject to constraints of inclusion, and the subject-less database. Despite the invitation to create additional puzzles and the diversity of creators of digital "suitcases," the interactive digital elements of the project cannot be classified as contributory or collaborative: even if the project is participatory and proliferative, it is still pyramidal, with Peter Greenaway himself and the three films at the top (though he had imagined movement *down* a pyramid toward a base of interactivity and immersion). While the online game depends on player interaction with digital objects, the functionality of interaction is inhibited, and the game itself – not the players – "discovers" the game's embedded suitcases and "researchers" are notified by email; this temporally predetermined "discovery" is a metaphor, perhaps, for spectatorial engagement with Greenaway's films, and while it results in a critical appraisal, it is not one Greenaway would likely refute.[11]   The *Tulse Luper Project* seems to conform to the aesthetics and the poetics, but not the ethics, of the database, when, if we follow Greenaway, we would hope to find in it examples of all.

Each element of *Tulse Luper* is so highly aware of the project in total that the pleasure of intertextual knowledge is diminished – if the viewer discovers the resonances across texts, the repetitions are evidently overcoded. This begins to suggest that the subject of the project is not the troubling of subjectivity itself (the Structuralist project) but Greenaway's own fully preserved subjectivity. One gets the sense that while there is an ur-code, the ur-code is

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[11] As a forum administrator for the *Tulse Luper Journey* Game Community, "Peter" expressed a mixture of dismay and pride that would-be gamers couldn't figure out how to use it, asking procedural questions about what would seem to be the simplest of tasks (Kasander Films et al. 2006).

"Greenaway,"[12] and thus, especially given the problems of the live production I indicate above, it is easy to attribute his work to his peculiar subjectivity rather than to an anti-subjective ethical and rhetorical position.

Lev Manovich, writing before the *Tulse Luper Project*, identifies Greenaway, together with Dziga Vertov, as a "database filmmaker," and he argues that throughout his career Greenaway "has been working on a problem of how to reconcile database and narrative forms" (1999, 94),[13] suggesting that we see Greenaway's filmic numbered sets as "a spatialized database – but also with a narrative" (95). Perhaps this is a useful perspective to bring to *Tulse Luper*, both in terms of the architecture of the project and architectures of images internal to the project. Yet there is not only an aesthetic but also an ethical difference between linear and nonlinear forms. Database poetics involve a sense of vastness, multiplicity of access points and the capacity for alternative pathways,[14] while database ethics also involves the capacity for "end-user" *desire* to affect the database itself and a database's openness to new connections if not new (and unauthorized) inputs.[15] The database world is a world of objects and ideas, the bonds between which are not necessarily narrative – they are associative and ephemeral.

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[12] Greenaway himself has agreed that the scope of the *Tulse Luper Project* particularly could be described as "megalomaniacal" (Mirapaul 2003).

[13] "For cinema already exists right in the intersection between database and narrative. We can think of all of the material accumulated during shooting forming a database" (94) resulting, effectively, in one film from among all possible films. It does seem quite useful to see the task of editing as one of "cutting" a (linear or narrative) path through the film material, but this forgets the possibilities of Eisensteinian montage-in-depth for a moment, possibilities that description seeks to reclaim.

[14] Thinking of the database user, one might recall the Benjaminian flâneur or Certeaudian transversals as well as the Foucauldian archive.

[15] Ndalianis invokes Deleuze's description of the "infinite work in process" as a way of understanding poetics of the internet as opposed to structural order (2005, 72). Still, hierarchical relationships might maintain in an individual project *on* the net. Even if a project eliminates the "problem" of a unified romantic subject, it may not be reflective of database ethics.

Such possibilities preceded the database in the form of description, as well as in the history-specific form of the chronicle (White 1973).   Manovich includes among "database forms" the ancient Greek encyclopedia, contrasted with the epic.   The relationship of the Encyclopedia to history recalls once more the Leibnizian "heap of stones": these forms, like the database, reject an explanatory system in favor of the co-presence of detail in the formation of a data set.   They also share a hyperawareness of the "complement," or every item that is excluded from the set.   Yet one would be hard-pressed to suggest that these forms are proto-database.

In his recent essay "Digitalizing Historical Consciousness," Claudio Fogu shows that there is an increasing sense among digital media scholars that, despite its promise to enable alternative modes of thought, "interactive media will not entirely supplant traditional institutional forms of historical consciousness" (Fogu 2009, 105).   Fogu draws the historically broader notion of "remediation" from Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin (*Remediation: Understanding New Media* 1999). Bolter and Grusin argue that "[r]emediation did not begin with the introduction of digital media," with which I concur.

For Bolter and Grusin, the key terms are "immediacy" and "hypermediacy."   Immediacy attempts to place the viewing subject in the "same space as the object viewed" in denial of the "act of mediation itself" (11). Hypermediacy foregrounds the co-presence, interdependence and integration of various signifying practices in the same text; for Bolter and Grusin, hypermediacy can be observed in a "medieval illuminated manuscript, a seventeenth-century painting by David Bailly, and a buttoned and windowed multimedia application . . ." (12).   They equate "immediacy" with "transparency," and "hypermediacy" with "opacity," which recalls

once more rhetorical and perceptual difference between the window and the screen.[16]   Bolter and Grusin's work is enabling, but I am suspicious of the notions of "immediacy" and "transparency" in "old" and "new" media alike.   The commonality, instead, between "old" and "new" media is the co-presence of discrete units of data and the appearance of multiple apertures, or openings onto, that data.   I would argue, then, that the move to the digital conception of history is not so much a "remediation" as it is a return, a development *back* toward weighing "descriptive" more heavily than narrative.   That I privilege description over narrative has been, to be sure, influenced by digital developments, but it is not a reaction to the digital, even if I am a member of the last generation not reared fully on interactivity, a privileged position from which Fogu writes as well (Fogu 2009, 106).

To perceive a true break between the descriptive and the digital we would have to perceive a predominance of interactivity and immersion (and not merely limited interactivity). Yet even the notion of immersion is related to a user's re-narrativization of available audio-visual materials in addition to sensory engagement.   Instead we see an exaggeration of previously present possibilities.   A look at Greenaway's own films, even, as against the *Tulse Luper Project*, remind us that there have always been non-narrative forms for representation of the historical world – maps of spaces; collections of things; archives of documents; household ledgers recording material histories of individual objects acquired, lost, eaten, used up and replaced; and the earliest digital databases. The important question for digital presentations of history is instead whether a digital archive just allows "history" to do what it does – or ought to do – best: to privilege *experience* over *action* (Fogu 2009, 108).

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[16] This recalls Anne Friedberg's insistence that the computer screen is simultaneously "a 'page' and a 'window,' at once opaque and transparent" (2006, 19).

Taking a broader historical view, one could argue that the "virtualization" and "spatialization" of history has already happened, both in experience and representation, and that the narration (that is, "emplotment") is the deviation. From this perspective, it is not a medium-specific question so much as a semantic one, through which we see that syntagm and paradigm issues belong not exclusively to multimedia, but to the tension between narration and description as well.[17] We might recall here Seymour Chatman and others cited in the introduction of this dissertation, narratologists who asserted that as an imagistic rather than verbal form, film could not help but specify, the task, narratologists have argued, reserved for verbal description (Chatman 1980, 127).[18] Like the database, description sees the world as atomic: interactions among highly specific and discrete objects and units of information. From this perspective, narrative is revealed not as the original cause of a film but instead as an algorithm applied to causal materials (to adopt a Manovichean formulation), by the filmmaker rather than by the viewer. This atomized view is not negativity itself but a different kind of affirmation.

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[17] We find similarities, even, to what Kenneth Burke was trying to work out in "Order" (Burke 1969), as he attempted to distinguish "positive," "dialectical," and "ultimate vocabularies."

[18] See page 13 of the introductory chapter to this dissertation.

C. FROM LINKAGES TO THE GRID

Tulse Luper's first idea: "recording vertical lines in the landscape in a way that showed the grid systems they suggested and demonstrated the intervention of man on the natural environment."

– The Moab Story[19]

In an interview with Stuart Morgan in 2000, Greenaway offered that he was then working on a novel to be titled *Three Artificial Histories*, which was to be "a reconstruction of three centuries – one in the past, one in the present, and one in the future – very loosely based on the 14th, 20th and 26th centuries."[20] "Reconstruction" is a provocative term for the representation not of the past but of the present and the future. For Greenaway, such a scheme "provides an excuse to examine the whole problem of lists, indices, and catalogues, and thereby consider what the making of history and fiction is all about." "What is the problem?" Morgan asked, to which Greenaway replied:

> The novel form is comparatively recent; it has only existed from (shall we say) about 1600. But authors have been making lists for very much longer . . . As one way of reconsidering narrative – to make a savage paraphrase of the idea that everything exists in order to be put into a book – I suggest that everything exists to be put into a list, that if you wait long enough everything will find itself in a list somewhere or other and that if you are genius enough everything will appear in every list. Examining lists means playing with the re-creation of history. History doesn't exist, it's only made by historians (Morgan 2000, 16).

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[19] This refers, as well, to his 1978 *Vertical Features Remake*.
[20] The tripartite structure recalls *Intolerance* once more.

Again, we find the Chesterton paraphrase. Yet the "problem," even in Greenaway's formulation, is not history, but the *novel* and the standardization of that form, in Greenaway's estimation in the 17th century, or in the 18th Century, when the category of the fictional novel appeared as discrete from history. The difference between a list and a database is the false notion of order generated by visual linearity. In Manovich's view, to narrativize is to impose an algorithm on a set of subjects and objects, whether that narrativizing act is performed by the historian, the fiction writer, the filmmaker, the spectator, or the end-user.[21] We should see novelizing and narrativizing, then, as aesthetic and ethical practices distinct from the product "the novel."

What happens in an aesthetic of avoidance of the construction of that algorithm? What of an ethic of the same? Manovich has pointed to the misconception that datasets are passive, calling this notion "another example of passive-active binary categories so loved by human cultures" (1999, 84). He proposes another history for the dataset itself, as I have indicated above: "Just as a traditional cultural object can now be seen as a particular case of a new media object (i.e., a new media object which only has one interface), traditional linear narrative can be seen as a particular case of a hyper-narrative" (Manovich 1999, 87).[22] There is a (teleo)logical problem hidden in the seeming paradigmatic set that includes the narrative as a special case of hyper-narrative: because the terms are not concurrent, they are perceived as both developmental and hierarchical. The temptation to perceive a shift in relative weight between narrative and description as "post-modern" is understandable, but a relative greater

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[21] Though Manovich writes that "most narratives do not require algorithm-like behavior from their readers" (8).
[22] As he has claimed that live-action film be perceived as only a particular case of animation. This is a rhetorical move we needn't make. Reversing genus and species still leaves an hierarchical relationship we might well do without.

weighting of description over narration is also pre-modern, and it has already been a problem for particular strains of the "modern."

In systematization, difference is both the creative spark and the terrible threat. Karine Bouchy evokes Deleuze's *Cinema 2: The Time Image* in the context of Greenaway's films, and particularly in the context of the *Tulse Luper* films: She recalls that for Deleuze, "[t]he cinema is always narrative, and more and more narrative, but it is dysnarrative in so far as narration is affected by repetitions, permutations and transformations which are explicable in detail by new structure" (Deleuze qtd. in Bouchy 2005). In Deleuze's conception, "dysnarrative" forms provoke *thought* (Deleuze 1989, 137)*.

That cinema for Deleuze "*is always* narrative" (my emphasis) is not a comment on the medium as much as on the process of making film conform, and one could argue more strenuously than I have that narrative is (or may be) the persistent excess of cinema.

D.   ALTERNATIVE GRIDS, OR WHY THE DRAUGHTSMAN HAS TO DIE

The Draughtsman's Contract begins with tight interior shots of costumed, powdered and wigged figures stark white against the black background, a set-up not to be repeated in the film. We are introduced to the Herbert household and local society as well as to the draughtsman, Mr. Neville (Anthony Higgins), in a sequence of initial interactions that may or may not be presented chronologically. Diegetic time is not a factor here. The shots, cut like

punctuation, highlight scatological humor[23] which is seemingly at odds with the décor and the manners of the costume drama form.   In the same way, and with no greater emphasis or differential treatment, we learn of Mrs. Herbert's (Janet Suzman) attempts to engage Mr. Neville, in a scene composed of atomistic, mobile parts.

At the heart of the narrative of *The Draughtsman's Contract* is the bloodlessness of a contract between a seventeenth century landowner's wife, Mrs. Herbert, and the titular draughtsman, Mr. Neville. Neville agrees to complete twelve drawings of the estate in twelve days to please Mrs. Herbert's husband (though in fact there will be only eleven drawings) (Morgan 2000, 14). In exchange for work that seems beneath him and for which he cannot be satisfactorily paid, Neville is to have sex with Mrs. Herbert when and how he pleases throughout his tenure. However, in the course of drafting the estate, Neville will also inadvertently and vaguely (and even then, only from a particular point of view) implicate himself in the murder of the missing Mr. Herbert by drawing objects placed in the scene, which he does not take to refer to Herbert, or to anything other than themselves – a shirt, boots, and so forth. The Herbert's married daughter, Mrs. Talmann (Anne-Louise Lambert), suggests that one might throw "an interpretive plot" over the images that would incriminate Neville, and she devises another arrangement in exchange for her silence (though this agreement, it would seem, has also already been ordained by the women).

Mrs. Talmann insists on the evidentiary status of Neville's iconic images, supporting her assertion that the works are riddled with clues to Herbert's disappearance with the argument that the drawings have not at all involved the intervention of the draughtsman's imagination:

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[23] The scatological humor is no doubt related to the critique of class and of capital throughout the film.

"You could be regarded as a witness to misadventure," she tells him, and even worse, "an accessory to misadventure." Blackmail and a new contract between Neville and Mrs. Talmann ensues, with the unexpressed expectation on the part of the women that Mrs. Talmann will conceive an heir. The illegitimacy of Mrs. Talmann's future child, sired by Neville, will preserve the estate for the women and come to reflect the illegitimacy of the West European social order.

For Greenaway, the signatories to the contract are not only bound by the contract but also constructed by the document itself. We might think along with Deleuze's *Coldness and Cruelty* to understand the film's sexual exchanges and power relations, considering the excess outside the original contractual exchange as the reason for which the Draughtsman had to die (1971). A contract is executed with two signatures; Neville reminds Mrs. Herbert that it can also only be dissolved in two signatures, and that terms cannot be renegotiated during its execution. As a genre, the contract is both aesthetic and juridical and reveals the overlap between the two. Thus the contract is fundamental to the state of masochism and "[f]undamentally, masochism is neither material nor moral, but essentially formal" (Deleuze 1971, 65).

As such, Deleuze argues that the masochistic contract functions as symbolic violence not against the other bound by the contract but against the very idea of the social self.[24] The contract form refuses the dominant mystification of the foundations of law, recalling that the foundation of law is the social *contract*, neither natural law nor inalienable human rights. *Draughtsman's Contract* is not then a morality play in form or in function: the contract (both

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[24] This is in contrast to the Freudian model of Masochism as Sadism turned against the self, for Sadism belongs to the material world while Masochism belongs to the ethical.

diegetically and generically) immediately belongs to the realm of the ethical instead of the moral.[25]

Yet the film's most intriguing questions have less to do with Mrs. Herbert's framing of Neville and more to do with Neville's framing of the Herbert grounds (though the latter is a seemingly necessary condition of the former). Specifically, I want to ask: What is the draughtsman's ostensible contract, as a draughtsman, with the *world*? As a draughtsman, Neville's responsibility is not to an interpretation of what can be seen, including suppositions made in order to achieve a conceptual rather than spatial whole; instead, the draughtsman's charge is to document precisely what can be seen from each particular vantage point so as to affirm a world that precedes the viewer while indicating the viewer's – and the view's – own contingency.[26]

In *The Draughtsman's Contract*, Greenaway has not yet employed compositing and collage techniques, or the complex mat and layering of a film like *Prospero's Books* (1991) or *The Pillow Book* (1996), the first of his films to make extensive use of digital compositing. Here there is a continual de-compositing effect as we watch the Draughtsman draft rather than compose, in scenes that are in fact very much composed by the filmmaker, both laterally and in depth. Whether formal, narrative or social, realism includes inferences and invites inferences as well, an accounting for what cannot be seen but must exist. In contrast, a draughtsman must not infer – perfect draughtsmanship would include absurdities and incongruities the draughtsman would observe and for which he would not attempt to account. In seeing a

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[25] Perhaps the real chimeric nature of Greenaway's monstrous *The Baby of Mâcon* (1993) is that it mixes ethical and moral orders, punishing cinematic audiences for their voyeurism, asserting moral guilt by association with the diegetic theatrical audience.

[26] *Tulse Luper* is explicit about this problem as a problem: "The dinner guests were subjected to a quandary: were they to paint what they saw? Or did they paint what they expected to see?" (*From Vaux to the Sea*).

misplaced shirt, the draughtsman intervenes only (but aberrantly) in draping it more beautifully.

After the premises (or conditions) of the narrative are established, the grounds are established, and *The Draughtsman's Contract* has a very particular method for doing so. "Establishing" entails Neville's voice-over instructions for the Herbert household to clear a particular view combined with the view as he describes it, as well as the construction lines implemented over the view (followed thereafter by the makings of its representation in pencil). The grid before the image emphasizes not a "particular intersection" of a visual "pyramid" (Alberti quoted in Friedberg 2006, 29) but the very grid itself.[27] The grounds are established not only by the image, then, but also by Neville's description of the view he has ordered. Greenaway refers visually and in voice-over to the background/foreground troping of history and events – that background refers to historicizing and foreground refers to events that happen to or are caused by actors. Quite literally here, the background is foregrounded.

This is followed by film frames of long duration famous for their stillness, and the beauty of the images is coordinated with Michael Nyman's score. What Greenaway calls the "facetious reason" for such duration – that "paintings don't move" – is also, he claims, both a response to the needs of rapid-fire dialogue and a critique of excessive camera movements that had come to predominate the film's contemporary moment (Jaehne 2000, 23).   It is more importantly, I would argue, a response to the apparatus theory assertions of the powers of the mobile camera to penetrate the world, advanced in the decade before the film's production.

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[27] Anne Friedberg argues that the common misconception that Alberti was speaking of perspectivism as the proper form for painting – when he was speaking of painting *historia* (narrative painting) – has troubled visual studies for too long (2006, 32). Perspectivism is doubly anthropocentric made to the measure of both the included human figure and the human eye that views the painting.

Stillness is justified narratively by the presence of the draughtsman, who has ordered that nothing move as he draws, drawing our attention, of course, to small acts of dissent in distant quarters of the frame. In two striking scenes, we become aware of deviation from this structure. In one, a still wide frame opens onto sheep running in the field. If prior picturesque views had been attributed to Neville – and, while not exclusively in point-of-view or shot-counter shot maneuvers, the production of the images is focalized around Neville – in this scene, the draughtsman is absent. The view is for-its-sake alone.[28]

In another, the camera position is reversed so that we see Neville through the same grid through which he has seen the estate. This reversal, when we see Neville in the grid of his own framing device (figure 4), forces our awareness of dual picture planes, both the screen and Neville's frame, emphasizing flatness – what we are perceiving conforms to the flattened grid, not to the piercing of perspectivism.[29]

Despite the draughtsman's anti-synthetic work of detailing the incongruent, the absurd, and the remainder, David Pascoe sees Greenaway's draughtsman's work as an act of synthesis: "To frame is to exclude, to select, to synthesize; and in representing Neville, the camera synthesizes the visions seen by the director with the images that he sets down in black and white" (Pascoe 1997, 74). Yet if this is so, the draughtsman's death troubles a positive view of such synthesis. The physical grid the draughtsman places before his view belongs not to the camera's exalted ability to represent the "real" but to the camera's "mimetic worst," in

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[28] In another scene of similarly deviant focalization, the young child resident of the manor (Talmann's "orphan" nephew – orphaned only by his mother's conversion to Catholicism) appraises the view and sketches on his chalkboard, playing at the role of draughtsman.

[29] The lateral movement along a dinner table set in the garden glides across conversations so that sometimes the speakers can be seen and sometimes they cannot. Indeed, when the camera does move throughout the film, the movement is lateral. Such lateral movement predominates his other films as well, *Belly of an Architect* and *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* (1989) most dramatically.

Greenaway's own terms; the grid provides neither an indictment nor "redemption of physical reality."[30]

Description, in the way I have been using the term, conceives of spatial and temporal wholes without an automatic movement to causal relations. If Neville is a talented draughtsman (as contrasted with an inventive painter), Neville will not perceive Mrs. Herbert's or Mrs. Talmann's stratagem – and even less so would he perceive an indictment. It does not matter to the film that neither the evidence of the crime of Mr. Herbert's murder nor Neville's murder itself is compelling. Pascoe is correct, instead, when he describes the images the draughtsman has drawn *not* as contributing to a "complicated allegory" (the assertion of one of the film's characters) but as "isolated plans," ambiguous in their individual and collective signification (Pascoe 1997, 75).

The draughtsman sees the world without an interpretive grid (narrative or allegorical), drawing all of the things he misses. This question of whether or not the lack of an interpretive grid is the draughtsman's tragic flaw bears comparison to the interpretive strategies of the central figure of the *Belly of the Architect*, wherein the American architect Stourley Kracklite (Brian Dennehey), brought to Rome to produce an anniversary exhibition celebrating the fascist architect Étienne-Louis Boullée, overcodes his own experience; while not instinctual but formal, Kracklite's assumptions were correct, both about his advancing abdominal cancer and about his cuckolding.[31]

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[30] For a discussion of description vis-à-vis Kracauer's film theory, see the first chapter of this dissertation.

[31] Kracklite's diagnosis, stomach cancer, is in itself excessive and overburdened: Cancer, endless cellular replication and self-consumption, is identified with historicism. In "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life," Nietzsche claims that it is not *history* but an excess of historicism that ails his German contemporaries. He describes this as a malady of digestion (for Nietzsche, indigestion and constipation)   In his historicism, Kracklite is eating himself.

On the level of the plot, Neville fathers the Herbert heir, takes the blame for the death of the father (though this is unspoken, and it only remains a suggestion), and dies without comprehension of his non-agency in the drama. The tragedy is not his murder but his incomprehension, even to the end. The women ostensibly triumph (with the patriarch and the illegitimate father both eliminated), the men of the estate (including the lawyer, Mrs. Herbert's former lover) celebrate Neville's death and the social order is maintained at Neville's expense. Yet not a single person within the narrative is valorized and Neville is not exactly "framed" for Mr. Herbert's murder; such framing would require an algorithm and not merely a data set. Mrs. Talmann has thrown such an "interpretive grid" over the images Neville has produced, highlighting Neville's own failure to do so and the viewer's inability as well.

The value of such an interpretive grid is complicated in that Neville's death occurs merely *because* Neville resists, on the level of the diegesis, the very thing Greenaway would have us resist (that is, the narrativizing impulse) on the level of spectatorship. At the same time Neville does his "mimetic worst" – or the 17th Century equivalent.[32] If, in some of Greenaway's films and projects, the filmmaker attempts to work out a misfit between representational schemes and the world,[33] representation without scheming (scheming about representation, that is) seems, in Neville's death, all the more pathetic. Yet, at a certain point, if Neville fails to see the problem (which, by its only vaguely reconcilable dataset is not obvious) he becomes aware of the reversal of the power dynamics at play and is pleased to be part of the intrigue – a consequence of "innocence and arrogance in equal parts."

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[32]Only in the 18th Century would the visual field open up to include microscopy as well, an alternative kind of detail to the descriptive (at the level of natural human vision).
[33] One description of *Z.O.O.* (1985) for example.

Imagistic realism is not mere perspectivism but is the implementation of an interpretive grid, both causally and visually. It is here that "aspect" intervenes once more: We must conceive of "aspect," once again, not as an overlay of an interpretive grid or as an encompassing synthesis but as an opening onto a world that can be perceived from multiple points of view that pre-exist the beholder. The draughtsman's images do not insist on a "particular interaction" of a visual "pyramid" (Alberti quoted in Friedberg 2006, 29) but on the grid itself.

In one moment, Greenaway brings narrativizing to a crisis, reversing the film's visual strategies by turning from moments of long duration modeled on landscape painting to an unexpectedly moving image of a polyscenic narrative painting: Mr. Herbert's late-Baroque Januarius Zick painting, to which Neville calls Mrs. Herbert's attention. The camera's fragmentation of the painting is accompanied by Neville's aggressive attempts to understand why Mr. Herbert wanted the painting. He urges Mrs. Neville, who is quite literally in no position to do so, to "perus[e] it together" with him to see if there is "narrative," "drama," or "intrigue." The conversation between Neville and Mrs. Herbert is about a desire to perceive what it is that is happening in the painting, just as it should have been for the draughtsman to have curiosity or insight to perceive the "intrigue" before being embroiled in it.

He invites her to narrate the painting, but the invitation is a provocation: "There is drama, is there not, in this overpopulated garden? What intrigue is here?" These are narrative questions with which Neville is only beginning to engage in his own work, and never will he do so satisfactorily, as we know. Close ups of sections of the painting are edited together with a full

shot of the painting.[34]   This is in contrast to the way that we look at the landscapes of

Draughtsman's Contract, as still frames emphasizing deep space and painterly quality of a

"natural" space are set against a fragmentary view of a still painting, segmented and

recombined in montage. This recombination turns an allegorical polyscenic painting not into a

whole but into data, discrete and polysemous.

Greenaway's citation of the Zick painting is an anachronism: while Newton's depicted

discovery is contemporaneous with the 1694 date of the diegesis, Zick's reflection on Newton

comes nearly a hundred years later. Additionally, Zick's baroque painting itself is promiscuous

in meaning more so than it is narrative. The painting is populated with both allegorical figures

and representations of "actual" figures; it is a database image, then, that Greenaway

momentarily reduces to data. As with the film taken as a whole, neither the montage nor

Neville's monologue will narrate the painting or explain away its intrigue.

Greenaway himself offers this: "These may be heretical opinions, but I don't think that

cinema is a very good narrative medium" (Hawthorne 1997). "Dysnarrative" addresses not only

conventional modes of narrativity, but also what seems to be a more pervasive narrativizing

impulse or *desire*, insisting on the multiplicity of possible relations between elements. The

desire to narrativize is born out in a viewer's relation, even, to what would seem the most

uncooperative art forms: still life paintings, paintings that seem in every way to refuse temporal

progression and cause/effect relations that are the hallmark of narrative. We might recall that

Diderot delighted in the tactility of Chardin's still lifes, amplifying the paintings' own claims on

life: "You have only to put out your hand and you can pick up those biscuits and eat them, that

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[34] See both Eisenstein (Eisenstein 1975) and Bazin on cinema and painting (Bazin 1967).

orange and cut it and squeeze it, that glass of wine and drink it, those fruits and peel them"

(quoted in Peucker 1995, 109).

Diderot demonstrates a common desire to narrativize even the still life via the fiction of

the spectator physically entering the work rather than merely virtually engaging the work from

an exterior space. Taking his cue, Brigitte Peucker imagines the viewer-in-general imaginatively

entering the paintings' diegetic spaces. In another reading of the relation between the

paintings and their viewers, however, paintings are uncooperative with this effort, oriented as

they are toward both an invitation and a refusal (you *cannot* touch these biscuits, you may not

consume these details). Still lifes are thus melancholy works, and unlike landscape gardens,

they are works that refuse the temporality and the agent of narration: there is no one there

who *can* enter the space.[35] If the still life's space is narrative, it is the narrative of the

perceiver's *desire* and not a narrative engendered by the painting. Peucker's argument, and the

Draughtsman's own, is this: We still have to want, anticipate, or expect something from realistic

art works, whether narratives or still lifes. My own position and the film's, it would seem, is

that dysnarrative forms intervene, undercut, and enable thought by blocking that desire.

In this respect the *Draughtsman's Contract* is a more interesting example of the virtual

than the *Tulse Luper Project* or the earlier *The Falls*: *Draughtsman's Contract* opens up a

plurality of views in a way that *Tulse Luper* has not. In *Draughtsman's Contract*, paradigm is

privileged over syntagm within a narrative framework and a (relatively) realist grid. We

become aware by the very selection of the draughtsman's (and the cinematographer's) views

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[35] Even Giuliana Bruno's notion of the *haptic* sense of visual media, which would seem at first to be completely sensorial, relies on added (and excessive) personal narration See the discussion of Bruno's reading of Alpers's *Art of Description* in chapter 1 of this dissertation.

that the selected views are one set among sets of possible views executed neither by the draughtsman nor the film. If, as Manovich argues, "Paradigm is real, syntagm is virtual" (Manovich 1999, 89), *Draughtsman's Contract* provides a knowing virtual that precedes the purer conception of data input. Though Manovich attributes the intensification of such effects to new media, *Draughtsman's Contract* offers a visual organization of data within a grid, not through a window –foregrounding the continual pressure of data on narrative.

5. ILLUSTRATED HISTORIES: WINSOR MCCAY'S *SINKING OF THE LUSITANIA* (1918) AND THE ANTI-BALLISTIC IMAGE

In 1915 Karl Kraus asked, "How is the world ruled and led to war? Diplomats lie to journalists,
then believe what they've said when they see it in print."
The thing described takes over from the real thing.
–Paul Virilio

This chapter considers a different sense of the virtual than is present in the preceding chapter.

That is, while prior chapters have been concerned with alternative historiography (or

historiophoty) in the live action cinema, this chapter considers how Winsor McCay's 1918

animated *The Sinking of the Lusitania* presents history, both in terms of how it conceives of the

specific event and in terms of the kinds of historical thinking the film makes possible. It is also

an attempt to address the misrecognition of the animated form as a form of movement but not

as a form for thought. Recent considerations of animated "realisms" and animation as a

challenge to realism are aligned with but not identical to my interest in the ways animation is

employed to re-animate the past. *Sinking of the Lusitania* has been considered a masterpiece

of "realist" animation, but this designation is inadequate; it misses the film's critical properties.

Likewise, it is far too simplistic to suggest that a now-dissipated "propagandistic shock effect"

expresses the film's affect (Telotte 2007, 466).   Borders between realist and experimental

modes have always been permeable, and this is especially true for the early cinema – live action

and animated – before filmic spatial conventions were settled. What concerns me particularly

is the way *Sinking of the Lusitania* manifests historical perception in figure and ground tensions

in what I consider "anti-ballistic" relations, as another perspective on the descriptive image. It

isn't a question of McCay's adherence to 19th century aesthetics, or to animation's pertinence

to the 20th century – or even the sinking itself as a uniquely 20th century kind of disaster, though

all these things matter. The affect of the film has to do with the seeming application of a "small form" to a monumental conception of history, resulting in a discursive image.[1]

In *Cinema 1: The Movement Image*, Deleuze distinguishes the "small form" from the "large form" of the action-image. The "small form" is associated with explicit actions which lead to new situations (circumstances) that prepare the way for new actions (ASA') (Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement Image* 2003, 160). By contrast, the "large form" begins and ends with qualitative world-conditions: we begin with a situation, to which a conflict between two forces (a "duel") is introduced, and conditions/relations are subsequently re-formed (SAS'). The "large form" is a movement from general to particular to general conditions again. "This is Realism," Deleuze proposes (141). For the small form (ASA'), an initial indeterminate action is clarified, revealing the possibility for new action. Both of these forms nevertheless posit trajectories of effect – and Deleuze refers specifically to the sign of the Small Form as the "vector," the geometric term for a quantity with both direction and magnitude[2] – while my emphasis has been and in this chapter will continue to be on visual planes. In *Sinking of the Lusitania*, we are once more closer – if we are to maintain a Deleuzian scheme for the moment – to the underdeveloped "discursive" image, one step closer to the presentation of the spatial material world than the metaphysics of time in *Cinema 2: The Time Image* (1989).

Sinking of the Lusitania seems to first be concerned with narrative, with effective behaviors in determined milieus. Yet neither the small form nor the large form of the action image can accommodate *Sinking of the Lusitania* because of the intervention of the *virtual,*

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[1] Perhaps this is what Donald Crafton observes when he writes without elaborating that "The impulse was remarkably similar to Griffith's historicism in *Intolerance*" (Crafton 1993, 116) even though the more automatic connection, with respect to subject matter, narrative scale, and incorporation of documentary claims would be the contemporaneous *Hearts of the World* (1918), not the monumental, episodic and allegorical *Intolerance* (1916).

[2] The vector has a defined tail and an arrow.

both literally, as we will see, and in Deleuzian terms of the figure. As the representation of an

event already passed, the film would seem to be a place (as with any "documentation" of a real

event) where the commonplace notion of the virtual could not be expressed. Yet the

inevitability of the sinking with respect to the film is a Deleuzian virtuality, an inevitable event

haunting the initial image in advance of its own diegetic appearance, mitigating rather than

compounding the shock of the event. While employing the sinking itself for war propaganda

would rely on seeing the sinking as a result of German national will, the sinking is (accidentally,

it would seem) neutralized in the film, or rather, revealed as indifferent. In this chapter, I will

discuss how the aesthetic of *Sinking of the Lusitania* mitigates the sense of causality, concluding

with a non-causal but compensatory auto-enclosure, giving the lie to the notion of a closed

whole of history that historical narratives (and historical grand narratives) seem to desire.

Through its framing, an ostensible war propaganda film becomes a film of mourning instead.

A.   DRAWING FOR THE MOVIES

> *It was too bad Michael J. Angelo [sic] didn't draw for the movies . . .The coming artist*
> *will make his reputation, not by pictures in still life, but by pictures that are*
> *animated.*
> *-- Winsor McCay*

The study of animation has until recently been subjected to a sub-disciplinary divide, a division

of theoretical and critical labor between "film" scholars and "animation" scholars,[3] but a recent

rapprochement between the two enables development in cinema studies broadly conceived,

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[3] Much valuable work has been conducted by animation scholars for at least the past twenty years; *Animation Journal* was founded in 1991, and the Society for Animation Studies' bibliography is ever-expanding.

and in this case, historical film more narrowly.[4] To move animation scholarship into the center

of film studies is to reveal where realist film theory has struggled to account for the cinematic

image beyond the index.[5]

McCay's *Sinking of the Lusitania* is a hand-drawn 12 minute depiction of the May 7,

1915 tragedy when nearly 2,000 people, many of whom were prominent Americans, perished

when German torpedoes sank the British ocean liner in just 17 minutes. Begun in 1916, the film

was first intended as a call to an isolationist America to join what had been popularly known as

"Europe's War."[6] *Sinking of the Lusitania* differs from other films discussed in this dissertation

not only because of its animated form but also because of the closeness of the event to the

representation: *Sinking of the Lusitania* participated near-simultaneously in the construction of

a political narrative around the specific event (as an unprovoked attack on Americans) and the

grander narrative regarding the necessity for American intervention into what had formerly

been seen as European affairs.

Comprised of 25,000 drawn images and live-action footage of the animator in process,

the film was completed after the United States entered the war in April 1917, and was

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[4] This rapprochement is related to expanding considerations of the impact of new media on the cinema and on cinema scholarship. See, for example, Lev Manovich's *Language of New Media* (2002) and his perhaps more nuanced articulation of the problem of the relation of animation and live action as a need to conceive "animation in an extended field" (Manovich 2006, 43).

[5] See the brief discussion of Tom Gunning's essay "Moving Away from the Index" on page 8 of this dissertation, as well as the essay itself (Gunning 2007). Paul Wells suggests instead a shift in cinema studies toward seeing animation as an "interrogation" of realism, though this discounts radical possibilities in "realist" forms of animation (Wells 2002). This question, though not the central question of this essay, is particularly important given that, as Manovich observes, so much research – even into contemporary digital animation – is focused on animation's purported or possible realism (Manovich 1997). Andrew Darley, too, identifies the significance of realism to the study of computer animation (Darley 2000). On the one hand, animation is described as realism's opposite and on the other hand, realism is its gold standard.

[6] In that sense, the sinking of the Lusitania itself was a convenient motivator. While the concept of the war as "Europe's War" had been promulgated by the press, and particularly William Randolph Hearst's media machine, President Wilson had, after all, been re-elected with the slogan "He kept us out of the war."

copyrighted July 1918. Released too late to influence the decision to enter the war, *Sinking of*

the Lusitania was among several used to bolster support as the war drew to a close.[7] It was

featured on the July 27, 1918 cover of *Moving Picture Weekly*; the magazine declared it "the

Picture that will never have a Competitor" and "Winsor McCay's Blood-stirring Pen Picture of

the Crime that Shocked Humanity" (Callahan 1988, 227).

McCay, who began his career as an illustrator for periodicals in 1898,[8] had been

employed by William Randolph Hearst since 1911 to produce newspaper comics, illustrations,

and cartoonist "reports." Popularized in weekly publications by the mid-1800s, and a regular

feature of dailies by the 1880s,[9] pictorial illustrations supplemented text and contributed a

sense of immediacy to the news. McCay's relationship with Hearst was an unhappy one, their

personalities and politics at odds with one another from the start.[10] Hearst's papers had taken

a distinctly anti-British and anti-interventionist position, and as of February 1917, Hearst's

papers still urged a national referendum on the war issue.[11]

If McCay's principle motivation for producing *Sinking of the Lusitania* was patriotic, it

was also likely influenced by a desire to resolve a disagreement between McCay and Hearst

over animation's possibilities as both a profitable form of entertainment and as a news

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[7] Other films include D.W. Griffith's *Hearts of the World* and Edison's "W.S.S. Thriftettes" war stamps promotion, viewable via the Library of Congress Origins of American Animation (Library of Congress).
[8] After such varied work as producing and printing promotional posters for the circus and for a dime store museum.
[9] The Taylor press made it possible to run word and image at the same time, allowing for unprecedented integration of the two forms.
[10] While McCay's 1899 cartoons for *Life* included anti-imperialist images opposing the Spanish-American War, Hearst's papers had vigorously promoted the war. See for example *New York Evening Journal* February 17, 1898 (confirm citation).
[11] Even more significant than any ideological position was Hearst's animosity toward Woodrow Wilson; this played out in editorial text and images throughout McCay's tenure.

medium.[12]   If indeed McCay sought to change Hearst's mind on this matter, he was

unsuccessful in doing so: in 1917, when Hearst demanded that McCay curtail his moonlighting

in animation and live lightening sketch entertainment in favor of increased output for the

newspaper, work that significantly contributed to an increase in circulation, McCay was

compelled to comply. McCay could have benefitted from the substantial resources of Hearst's

International Film Service had he been successful in this attempt.[13]

    While it is necessary to observe the extent to which animation and the graphic arts

differ in both theory and practice, it is also necessary to think about the ways the film's images

relate to McCay's career as an illustrator. The film's images appear at first as adjuvant to

language, both to its own written argument in decorative intertitles and to rhetoric already

familiar to public debate about America's obligation to engage in the war. Yet *Sinking of the

Lusitania* also claims explicitly to be a "document," with obvious ties – aesthetically,

rhetorically, and thematically – to the newsreel, as well as to the impulses of modern

illustration.

    Like McCay's comics, *Sinking of the Lusitania* is tensely positioned in relation to its

industrial context. The first of the film's titles remarks that McCay "decides to draw a historical

record of the crime that shocked Humanity." A subsequent intertitle reads thus: "from here on

you are looking at the first record of the sinking of the Lusitania." "[L]ooking at the first record"

is a strange claim for iconic rather than indexical images necessarily produced after the event.

As a noun, "record" indicates attestation or proof; the verb "record," after the instantiation of

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[12] John Canemaker suggests that McCay "may also have wished to impress Hearst with a serious-minded film closely resembling the thought-provoking editorial cartoons he produced daily for the *American*" (Canemaker 2005, 187).

[13] Hearst's International Film Service pioneered comics-to-cartoons adaptations including George Herriman's *Krazy Kat* (1916).

photographic and phonographic reproduction, suggests mechanical capture and replay instead of subjective recreation.[14] What does it signify, then, that the film is a "record" that does not objectively (nominally) and cannot (technologically) affirm the actuality of the event? This documentary cartoon in a "realist" style, presents us with a contrast between matter and form, producing immediate ambivalence. If Roland Barthes is right that the photograph is essentially invisible while its *object* is visible, the implication is that for the non-photographic representation, it is the representation itself that we see.

McCay's newspaper illustrations belong to a transitional moment overlapping with the halftone printing revolution: by the first Paris Exposition, 1880, halftone printing was certainly possible. By the second, popular papers were capable of photographic reproduction and could rely less on reporter-illustrators that had dominated dailies. Yet newspaper illustration, whether pictorial or photographic, participated less in the representation of reality than in a discourse of authenticity. The first photographic newspaper illustrations still conformed to the values of pictorial illustration, claiming the status neither of unmediated view of a real world nor of an analog to the real world. To demonstrate the pictorial newspaper illustration's claims of "authenticity," Joshua Brown cites *Leslie*'s 1873 coverage of a shipwreck in the Atlantic, which insisted that most of the images "are real: others are pictorial reprints of authentic statements and descriptions, whereby our artists have caught and transfixed the reports of the

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[14] Marnie Hughes-Warrington calls her reader's attention to *Hadashi No Gen* (1983) as an example of the illustration of Hiroshima, an event that could not be justly treated by photographic film. The more recent *Waltz with Bashir* (Ari Folman 2008) employs animation to emphasize the inaccessibility and instability of memory in the face of personal and national trauma.

telegraph" (Brown 2002, 34).[15] "Caught" and "transfixed" suggests that the artist's hand was

not a deforming force but an instrument for authenticity.[16]

There are formal similarities, too, between *Sinking of the Lusitania* and McCay's

newspaper illustrations. In both cases, it is clear that political exigency has not precluded the

exploration of the limits of the form. It is the standard position that in *Sinking of the Lusitania*

McCay "finds no room for the kind of morphism and elasticity prevalent in so much early

animation" (Kornhaber 2007, 136).[17] For many, a rejection of such graphic morphism signifies a

surrender of animation's subversive qualities.[18] However "realistic," "factual," or "photo-

realistic" (Wells 2002, 34) the images of *Sinking of the Lusitania*, these are not the key terms for

understanding the film's conception of history.

McCay's other animated films deal differently with the notion of "realistic," and the

difference is illuminating.   For example, *How a Mosquito Operates* (1912) and the three

Dreams of the Rarebit Fiend (1921) are certainly more consistent with Sergei Eisenstein's

observation that animation's core trait is its "plasmaticness," the capacity for a perpetual

becoming-other. Eisensteinian "plasmaticness" is too open to apply to *Sinking of the Lusitania*,

in that endless possibility ignores historical specificity – it isn't a becoming-something but a

virtual-something. Yet each of the films deals differently with this potentiality, not *Sinking of*

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[15] Brown argues that "the significance of the specialists's work was, in fact, not predicated on direct observation" (Brown 2002, 33).

[16] However much this argument has been propagated from *The Laocöon* forward.

[17] See also Paul Wells's insistence that "*Sinking of the Lusitania* relocated the animated form back in the codes and conventions of 'realism' and demoted the artist beneath the necessary priority of advancing a persuasive propaganda message" (Wells 2002, 33). However, Stephen Rowley suggests that we need to reconceive "realist" animation in terms of "relative realisms," the identification of axes along which an animated film would vary in degrees of realism visual, aural, narrative and character, and social realism as well as "realism of motion" (Rowley 2005).

[18] As with Wells, above. In the case of editorial cartoons, we would think of the same political conditions as "enabling restrictions": McCay's editorial images are praised for combining stylistic experimentation with political vision pressed by editor Arthur Brisbane and Hearst himself.

the Lusitania alone. In the animated *Little Nemo* (1911), continuity conquers the disjunction so evident in the layout of *Little Nemo* comics (1905-1914); in the film, thin penned lines are brought together bit by bit to form Flip's head, then his full body, which is fleshed out by partial hand-coloring, and the form is given a sense of weight before he insists the audience "Watch me Move."[19] Only afterwards three bodies – Nemo, Impy and Flip – squash and stretch in a fun-house mirror. This is not an abdication but an adaptation of normal physics and spatial perception. John Canemaker praises McCay's early animation for "naturalistic timing, fluid movements, and a feeling of weight," (1987,30) – hardly the rejection of realistic representation often pitted against a pro-realistic *Sinking of the Lusitania*. The implication of the conventional identification of *Sinking of the Lusitania* as "realist" is that it understands both historical *reality* and perception in an uncomplicated way. This critique posits a limited notion of realism, one that denies realism an expressive capacity, thus eliding debates internal to cinematic realism *and* ignoring the openness of the aesthetic of even the live-action silent cinema of 1917 and 1918.

McCay's own films suggest a more open understanding of realism. In *How a Mosquito Operates* (1912) McCay rejects literal scale while maintaining realistic visual relationships by favoring causal proportions, objects scaled according to their agency. We might think here of Eisenstein's description of a child's drawing of the act of "lighting a stove":

Everything is represented in possibly accurate relationship and with great care.

Firewood, stove. Chimney. But what are those zigzags in that huge central

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[19] "Watch[ing] me Move" is the import of the animated *Little Nemo*, a matter of intertextuality for an audience already familiar with Nemo from the comics: movement is the superadded element in its translation to film. The effect of producing *Little Nemo* as an adaptation, though worth considering, is outside of the scope of the present chapter.

rectangle? They turn out to be – matches. Taking into account the crucial

importance of these matches for the depicted process, the child provides a

proper scale for them (Eisenstein 1949, 34).

If initially a comment on the close-up and scale, Eisenstein's example nevertheless ought to

encourage us to think differently – or think of different possibilities – for realistic scalar

schemes. In Eisenstein's example the match dominates, for the match is the bearer of action.

Not a realist but a literalist would draw matches, those objects that burn, smaller than objects

burnt. In *How a Mosquito Operates*, the unwelcome guest, the Mosquito, dominates the

frame; the film offers a realism of effects as much as anthropomorphism and exaggeration.

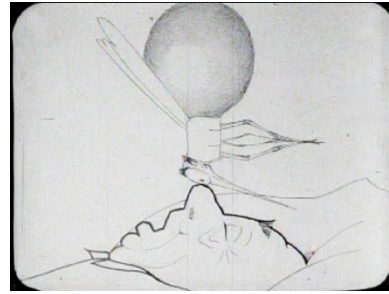Figure 1 The Mosquito molests his victim.

Figure 2 The Mosquito filled to near-exploding.

Less a difference in degree of "realism" or even placement on a continuum of "realistic"

tendencies, the difference between *How a Mosquito Operates* and *Sinking of the Lusitania*

might be rethought in terms of differences in orders of magnitude; this way of re-seeing

McCay's works outside a realist/plasmatic binary, seeing *Sinking of the Lusitania* beyond an

"imitative mode of documentary"[20] moves us toward recognizing the film's dialectical

perception.

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[20] Paul Wells's critique of the film (2002, 33).

Sinking of the Lusitania's introductory live-action sequence situates the film not within a "realism" debate but within a discourse of authenticity, like early newspaper illustrations. The film begins with the animator's labor, including a consultation with journalist August Beach. In this sequence, the process of animation is indeed the spectacle (analogous to "Watch me Move"), in keeping with animation's Vaudevillian roots and McCay's own "lightening sketch" performances. This sequence, confirming both the material production of the film and McCay's showmanship, which is more fully expressed in the earlier *Gertie the Dinosaur* (1914), shows the animator strategically reducing the intensive effort to reproduce an event of extraordinary magnitude to its constituent parts, instants. Yet *Gertie*, despite emphasizing the animator's skill, also derives its comedy from a mystification of the process, the bringing to life of an otherwise would-be fossil.[21] Paul Wells describes early animation in general as "embrac[ing]" animation's "rationalization" even while it pushes on the limits of an aesthetic of rationalism and resists a disembodiment of the modern industrial world (Wells 2002, 22) or a desubjectivization to which an increasingly industrialized and technological world inclined. The live-action sequence of the film attests to McCay's ability to generate images rapidly and to utilize repetition effectively, even as McCay makes explicit claims to an artisanal mode now in tension with industrialization.[22] We witness here a transition from individual perceptions to

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[21] Within that film's diegesis, the character Gertie is drawn to life, but she moves at the animator's command rather than at the movement of his pen on the surface. William Schaffer describes this as early animators "mak[ing] a performance of their own uncanny control over the image and, through it, over the audience and its perception" (Schaffer 2007, 465). Such uncanniness is far from *Sinking of the Lusitania*'s affect.

[22] In fact, John Randolph Bray used McCay's supposed inefficiency to support Bray's own claim to have developed the animation cel. Canemaker cites Bray's argument that this process "with its possibilities of producing better pictures at an extremely small fraction of the cost of the production of the 'Little Nemo' pictures [sic] . . . tends to conclusively show that applicant's process was not obvious to the skilled and clever artist who produced the 'Little Nemo' pictures at such an enormous expense of time, labor and capital, as to absolutely preclude their commercial use in moving picture theaters having the usual low price of admission," (Canemaker, *Winsor McCay: His Life and Art* 2005, 172). Bray's account of McCay's films as expensive and elitist is inaccurate; nevertheless the argument

industrialized, scientifically managed sensations, but our interest here is in the way the layering of cels and the geometry of the images contributes to the film's affect.

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B. MATTERS OF PERSPECTIVE

Once you grasp the points of perspective, the rest is clear sailing.

—Winsor McCay

The production of the *Sinking of the Lusitania*, we are told in intitles, starts with the illustration of "the moving sea," and the film showcases the continuous, rhythmic movement made feasible by McCay's transition from redrawing or retracing each background on rice paper to the emerging technology of

Figure 3 Rendering "the moving sea."

cel animation.[23] McCay had already employed looping to varied effects in previous films. Here McCay seems to have layered several "sea" cels, independently timed to create rhythm without exact repetition (Cohen 2010). The striking effect of this is that in the image of a moving sea, multiple backgrounds are evident, with no object in view in the foreground, only the ocean cutting across the bottom third of the frame.

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shows that the contention of the development of cel technology hinged on the presumed or real labor-intensiveness of McCay's work.

[23] McCay does not call his material "cel." The cel process, as above, was patented by Earl Hurd in 1914 and by 1917 the Bray-Hurd Company monopolized animation technology, holding many of the most important patents, This may explain why McCay refers to the use of "transparent paper" in place of "cel" in his brief illustrated "Animation Lesson Number One," produced for the Federal School of Applied Cartooning's correspondence course of 1919, and also why the impact of the materials on the film's aesthetic is minimized in McCay's discussions of *Sinking of the Lusitania* (Cohen, "Winsor McCay's 'Animation Lesson Number One, 1919'" 2002). Yet "cel" was still described as a "professional pet name of these tracings" for a general readership as late as 1926 (Hamilton 1926, 14), which suggests that McCay may also have been avoiding technical jargon for an audience that would not, after all, master animation through a correspondence course.

The development of transparent animation cel material enabled rationalization of the animation process, allowing animators to separate backgrounds from foregrounds in order to reduce and redistribute elements of labor. The sky, it is clear, is divisible and divided from the sea, remaining stable while the sea changes. This is the result of process improvement: When an animator or animation team employs crossmarks to align layered images, a stable background is the result. Put another way, the cel process prevents the mobility of the lines of the background. This suppresses the transformative power of the animated image that could otherwise be brought to bear not only on the foreground but also on the drawn environment. We might also think here of Eisenstein's assessment of the missed potential in the backgrounds of Disney's cartoons – backgrounds unresponsive to their foregrounds. Donald Crafton laments the loss of "energy" between the retraced and cel-animated McCay films (page): the animated world is fixed by the cel. The form of "internal editing" permitted by the layering of cels, to the extent that it physically separates background from foreground, encourages an "indifferent" nature (in Eisenstein's terms). Yet here, a freedom of the play of waves persists, in part because of the notable absence of construction lines in McCay's animation. *Sinking of the Lusitania*'s waves, in movement that is entropic rather than lively, produce a vacillation between habituation and attention to our own perception. Time passes, but not in the slivers of time suggested by the process of animation.

The focus in animation scholarship on the "virtuality" of movement suggests that real differences are quantitative, but not qualitative, but this is not so. The quantification that occurs in production of the image – the decomposition of time into independent images – is the illusion, and not the other way around. Here we might recall Henri Bergson's association of

durée with melody as contrasted with the transcription of that melody.   Ronald Bogue describes the difference thus: "Although we tend to spatialize and hence distort melody through the graphic representations of musical scores or the visualization of keys on a piano, melody is actually an 'indivisible multiplicity changing qualitatively in an ongoing movement' (Bogue 2003, 14).

After the next set of intertitles, the Lusitania steams laterally out of New York Harbor. Drawn curtains at the margin of frame right not only divide the film into theatrical acts – a strategy for managing the passage of time from the ship's departure on May 1 to the sinking on May 7 – but also determine the viewer's perception of space, containing the ship and the dangers that await it. Briefly a German submarine approaches toward the plane of the screen, but the threat is mediated by the frame projected onto the screen. The image that follows is double-framed, dominated by a flat silhouette, grey waves, and once more, lateral movement.
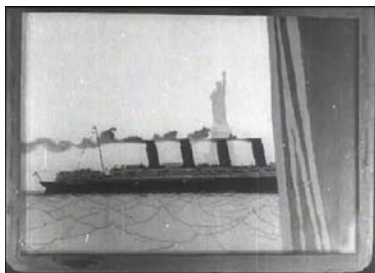
Thus far, flat images and horizontality of movement have prevented the perception of movement into depth.

Figure 4 Dividing the space between the viewer and the Lusitania

Discussing McCay's navigation of spatial depth, Crafton describes the position of objects on the screen via an imagined mobile "camera" (as does Canemaker), retroactively applying the spatial standards of the mobile motion picture camera (Crafton

1993, 117).[24] Such a description neglects both the image's actual geometric arrangement and the effect of the on-screen frames. The frames contain the images, marking out the distance in time and heteromateriality between the world presented and the world perceived.

In a more recent reconsideration of McCay's oeuvre, J.P. Telotte appeals to Anthony Vidler's conception of the "warped space" of modernity to diagnose *Sinking of the Lusitania* as a "drama" of the inconstancy of the physical world.[25] Telotte moves to the psychic, seeing the submarines as both representations of German submarines and as metaphors for other subconscious threats, the sea as both the sea-in-itself and a modern abyss as well (Telotte 2007, 467).   He concludes dramatically: "We might even think of it as the specter of modernism, stalking through the animated world, reminding us of how pliable cinematic space is and how similarly malleable the real world might also prove to be" (473). As evocative as this is, it is not an entirely satisfying assessment of McCay's work in *Sinking of the Lusitania*. An alternative reading might be that the images represent an anxious transitional moment, evincing a distinctly modern sense of space (or disruption of the sense of space) while preserving a Victorian sensibility with respect to information and objects as constant. For Telotte, *Sinking of the Lusitania*'s affect hinges on the anxiety in the film frame's negative spaces, but such a view is incomplete: we also ought to think about the film's movements and the film's frames, and the extent to which they stabilize or destabilize the film's epistemology.[26]

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[24] Tracking shots are visible since at least *Cabiria* (1914) and movement was of course a common feature of train films, but the mobile camera was not the decisive standard for narrative cinema as of 1917.

[25] "The drama to which *The Sinking of the Lusitania* attests and to which it purports to record . . . is not just that of the real historical event, but also that implicit in the pregnant space of every frame and every image" (Telotte 2007, 467).

[26] This also helps us avoid, once more, the limited and limiting Realist/Modernist debate, allowing us to ask "In what way realistic?" instead.

In McCay's contribution to a home study correspondence course "Animation Lesson Number One," the animator advocates what he calls a "split system" for determining movement.[27] McCay describes the process thus: He would first determine a trajectory for the object as a guide for all frames. Then, as with the highly rationalized process of pose-to-pose animation, McCay would draw predetermined ("extreme") frames, here the first and last positions. From there would interpolate the position of the images in between, beginning with the image equidistant from first and last, or the "split image" (McCay 1919).[28] The next task would be to determine the image between the first and the split image, creating a new split image, and so forth to completion, engaging dialectical movement by negating it. McCay's description of his process evokes Zeno's paradox. The process could be likened to a mathematical intensive process, endlessly divisible into discrete rational units, privileging the instant over movement. Yet McCay's principle determinant is *not* the pose but the splintering of time; this is the opposite of what would be, for other animators, the Deleuzian privileged instants of gestures, which is more closely aligned with pose-to-pose animation, wherein significant expressions and postures are determined in advance and frames are produced to cover the gaps between. Pose to pose animation is a different practice that suggests a different vision.[29] These conceptions of animation – "split system," "pose-to-pose," and "key framing" –

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[27] Thanks is owed to Karl Cohen for sharing excerpts of a facsimile of the booklet, as well as his own published appraisal of the work (Cohen 2002) and for discussing it further in correspondence with this author (Cohen 2010).
[28] This is in contrast with straight-ahead animation, in which the animator begins with the first frame and works sequentially to the end.
[29] Lev Manovich combines all forms of "in-betweening" (the use of key frames and in-betweens along with time-based divisions) together in his analysis, and while it is economical to do so on the way to conceiving animation in a broader field of "motion graphics," doing so risks missing conceptual differences between the use and refusal of pose-to-pose animation. See "Image Future" (Manovich 2006, 35).

are, however, mechanist in the industrial, mechanical and mathematical senses;[30] they all

ascribe primary importance to planned trajectories via perceived linear movement, and the

movement of the linear film strip through the projector.

Quantifying movement is, for Deleuze, a form of Cartesianism; thus Deleuze suggests

that animation in *general* is essentially Cartesian. In *Cinema 1: The Movement Image*, Deleuze

attempts to articulate the problem of relating privileged instants (poses) in the cinema, as

against what he conceives of as the more cinematic passage of time caught in the

instantaneousness of photography and the linear, metered passage of film through the film

projector:

> It is in this sense that the cinema is a system which reproduces movement as a
>
> function of any-instant-whatever that is, as a function of equidistant instants,
>
> selected so as to give an impression of continuity. Any other system which
>
> reproduces movement through an order of exposures [*poses*] projected in such a
>
> way that they pass into one another, or are 'transformed,' is foreign to the
>
> cinema. This is clear when one attempts to define the cartoon film; if it belongs
>
> fully to the cinema, this is because the drawing no longer constitutes a pose of a
>
> completed figure, but the description of a figure which is always in the process of
>
> being formed or dissolving through the movement of lines and points taken at
>
> any-instant-whatevers of their course. The cartoon film is related not to a
>
> Euclidean, but to a Cartesian geometry. It should not give us a figure described

---

[30] Here I mean to indicate particularly the definition of mechanism as concerned with three traits: "size, shape and motion" (Garber 2009, 4).

in a unique moment, but the continuity of the movement which describes the

figure (Deleuze 2003, 5).

While animation relies on the snapshot for recording and on the equidistance of frames passing

through the projector for its visibility, its metric relations are not determined by equidistant

snapshots of pre-existing movements.

In animation, equidistance is naturalized rather than natural or essential.[31] Individual

images assembled into the movement of animation are produced in uneven intervals and

independently from one another, which is not only a matter of the extension in time of the

process of production, both as each frame is photographed (a difference introduced in the

animation process of compositing, examined below) and between each frame that is

photographed (the invisibility and virtuality of movement), but also of a different kind of

perceptual unity. McCay's practice (for example, the "split image" system as corresponding

with discrete units of time and motion, a continual and complete re-creation of each form) and

his films seem to conform to two-dimensional, planar geometry rather than vectorial geometry

(plane plus rotation in space). While animation scholars have lamented Deleuze's all-too-brief

direct writing on animation,[32] and have suggested that Deleuze nearly excludes animation from

the cinema,[33] it is inaccurate to suggest that he has little to say that is relevant to animation.

The problem, posed not as a question of the "cartoon film," is a broader question regarding the

Cartesianism of the Movement Image. In *Sinking of the Lusitania*'s perceptible geometric

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[31] A point which William Schaffer reiterates in his recent essay on animation and Deleuze (2007).
[32] Schaffer writes: "Beyond this, Deleuze has nothing to say on the matter – as if animation were merely a peripheral example, belonging passively to the motion picture machine without contributing anything of its own . . ." (Schaffer 2007, 456).
[33] Emphasizing the "if" in his "*if* [the cartoon film] belongs fully to the cinema" (Deleuze 2003, 5, my emphasis).

relations, we have a reduced Cartesianism for which we have not yet accounted by way of McCay's process.

C. TRAJECTORIES

Since the First World War, surface, depth, trajectory and penetration become the working metaphors for understanding images.[34]   In addition to contemporaneous developments in states of warfare and in the understanding of physics, interest in the "depth" psychology paradigm emerged. While the latter might reinforce Telotte's argument regarding *Sinking of the Lusitania*, as above, for me it also suggests the significance of the prominence of the image of the vector, as contrasted with the scalar. The vector is defined by a tail and an arrow, hence determined by an origin, magnitude and direction, or speed. Scalar is defined as a quantity determined entirely by magnitude with no direction indicated. Thus the vector is determined by coordinates, the scalar by a single value.[35]

If we are to look for a label for this visual and metaphoric trope in the popular physics of 1917, "ballistics" is appropriate, where we might today speak of the ubiquity of the quantum image.[36] The First World War inaugurated new ballistic techniques of war – among its most important developments the machine gun and the tripod – but it also resulted in the breakdown of a belief in scientific progress and the rationalism driving it. Thus while ballistic

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[34] This was, of course, reinvigorated by 1970s apparatus theory.
[35] This, as with other conceptions of the relations between time and history, is something new to the early modern period.
[36] See Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

images were possible, so were counter-images likely, found in the non-vectorial images of geometry, concerned not with speed but with duration.[37] Just as *Sinking of the Lusitania* does not fully yield to narration, it does not yield to cinematic ballistics. The anti-ballistic image evinces ambivalence about the destructive capacities of a war that was both mechanical and personal, and necessarily absurd.[38]

Walter Benjamin proposed that the camera be understood as a surgeon; the camera has since been weaponized: For Jean-Louis Baudry and Paul Virilio, the camera becomes associated with "projectile" vision.[39]   In the cinematic apparatus, the visual becomes a virtual physical extension. Baudry and Virilio argue that a dynamic approach to a target of vision results both from camera movement through space and the monocularity of the lens itself. While the effects of such monocularity now seem exaggerated and to some extent dated, it is because the effect was misattributed, not because it was absent.

The "ballistic image," drawn from Virilio, considers the function of the camera in live-action film to be identified with, and not merely analogous to, the function of a weapon. The relationship between the development of war technologies and camera optics is well-documented, from the Crimean War forward, but it is Virilio who insists most stringently on the conjunction between photography and war.[40]   Thomas Lamarre summarizes Virilio's position

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[37] I am thinking here of more commonplace forms of early modernism than, for example, Vorticism (and certainly than Futurism, which tended toward Fascism).

[38] Stories of cakes delivered to the front line illustrate this (Fussell 2000).

[39] See for example Manovich (1996) and Armitage (2001).

[40] "'We ought to acknowledge the significance for mankind of the simultaneous invention of gunpowder and printer's ink,' says Karl Kraus, further. We might add that a similar connection exists between, say, the machine gun and the camera, nitro-cellulose and film, radar and video – but also between the *trick effects* of the depiction of actual events in graphic illustration, photography, film, and television and good old military *camouflage*, designed to conceal armaments, convoys and troop movements from the observer's prying eyes and to leave the enemy in the lurch, no longer able to tell *where reality begins or leaves off* (Virilio 1998, 54).

thus: "The eye becomes one with the bomb, and everywhere in the world becomes a target" (Lamarre 2009, 5).

Much of the action in *Sinking of the Lusitania* occurs parallel to the plane of vision, while moments of inaction are composed on the diagonal, refusing the viewer the sensation of movement into depth. Despite the representation of the dramatic action of a torpedo (or two) that would sink the ship, *Sinking of the Lusitania*'s movement is essentially parallel to the screen.

Non-vectorial distribution of points in space operates differently across the forms of deep focus, planar vision, and multiplanar vision. Stabilized multi-planar vision, the result of compositing in animation, reduces the difference in movement between background, middle ground and foreground while preserving spatial difference. For Thomas Lamarre, play between cel layers – which he terms the "animetic" possibility of compositing – resists the penetrating effect of the ballistic image. In the play between cel layers – *difference* for me – Lamarre perceives both an ontological and aesthetic openness (9, 16-17). That openness, he argues, is suppressed most completely via the animation stand, aptly called a "control device for animation" in the Garrity patent application.

When Lamarre describes compositing of multiple cels via the animation stand, he recalls for his reader Eisenstein's earlier attempt to identify a non-linear "montage": In an uncut length of live-action film, "all we have to do is look for montage elsewhere, in fact, *in the performance of the actor*" (*The Film Sense* 1975, 23). Eisenstein had multiplied his conception of montage to encompass all forms of representation of a whole which depended on "contributory details" (24), a revised position from seeing montage as collision. The animation stand, then, allows for

a literally vertical montage. For Eisenstein, (inter)penetrating vision like Virilio's ballistic vision

was only one version of screen "ecstasy," a version he described as "based on the telescope," a

far more positive association than the rifle or missile sight.[41]

Seeing compositing in cel animation as both a resistance to ballistic vision *and* as

internal editing is apt here. It unites with the concerns for the status of "contributory details"

distributed in space found throughout this dissertation, suggesting that vertical montage

deserves another look. We see the effects of internal editing far more broadly than presently

identified in Lamarre's work, which is principally invested in anime; we see it even in the

foregrounding of the cycling of the waves of the Atlantic before the appearance of the

Lusitania, before the advent of the rostrum. McCay's highly rendered cels, warping as a result

of the addition of a wash and crayon to pen and ink, are stabilized for filming with the aid of

binder pegs, a technological-material concession that contributes to the film's aesthetic, only

partially suppressing the difference (and distance) between the images' planes. Yet here the

"contributory details," – aspects of the scene distributed over background, middleground and

foreground cels – are graphically contained. If Eisenstein's vertical montage suggests that the

movement of the eye within the piece is the very process of editing, he nevertheless does not

attribute this process to a particular eye (or to a viewing subject) but attributes it rather to

qualities of the work itself (Eisenstein 1987, 130).[42]

The film, and McCay's style generally, evince their inheritance from nineteenth century

realism, and perhaps there is an uneven development between the technology and the vision:
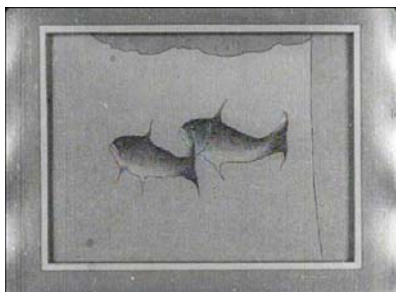
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[41] Ballistic penetration can only be, for Eisenstein, *inter*penetration, and interpenetration rises to the highest form of ecstasy, a view derived from Eisenstein's commitment to the dialectic. See *Nonindifferent Nature* (1987, 152).
[42] See also Pierre Montani's discussion of Eisenstein on painting ("The Uncrossable Threshold: the Relation of Painting and Cinema in Eisenstein" 2002).

the rational grid is never fully eliminated. This unevenness culminates in an anti-ballistic torpedo, as we will see below. Animation itself is a Cartesian distortion, but McCay's intervention is a Leibnizian one.

Among the film's peculiarities is the alternation between those images around which a frame has been imposed and images that extend to the edges of the screen. As an attempt at a hierarchical ontology, the projected frame projects difference. The image of the German U-39, without consideration for the on-screen frame, leads to readings such as Telotte's, that the silhouetted figures going down below are also nightmares of other kinds, unnamed anxieties of the modern age. Yet a plain frame around the silhouetted submarine, containing all of its action within it, comes to our attention as something different from a positive/negative or above/below of the physical or psychical world.

The style of the framed images differs remarkably from the unmasked images: the line drawings of the framed images contrast with more fleshed out, textured, and mid-toned unframed images.[43] In McCay's use of frames, inside/outside relations become at least as significant as positive/negative and above/below. The perspective of the framed image is not associated with a subject. The frame indicates instead a pre-subjective viewing position rather than a particular point of view, suggesting imperfect and incomplete yet also impersonal

Figure 5 Inside/Outside replaces Above/Below

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[43] Telotte attributes the "propagandistic shock effect" of the film to its "interweaving two very different spatial conceptions: a literal concern with actual space and a stylized treatment of space" (Telotte 2007, 466). Nevertheless, he neglects the frame even as he conceives of McCay as a "spatial negotiator" (473).

knowledge of the world. McCay's frames preserve perspectivism, but reveal perspectivism itself to be dependent on a plurality of possible orientations with respect to depicted space. The frame asserts that the image could have been rendered in another way, locating the image in the space of rhetoric.

In animation, unlike the live-action cinema, there is no spectatorial assumption of a pre-existing "outside" world beyond the frame.[44] The image that belongs to the live-action cinema is produced by subtraction, excision from a profilmic world accomplished by the camera. This is an essentially negative relationship, carving an image out of the presumptive space of reality.[45] For Bazin and subsequent Bazinians, the psychology of the projected film depends on the viability of the extensibility of images into off-screen space, while a painting ought properly to be divided from the world of the wall on which it hangs – not a doorway to a broader space but rather a window.[46]

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[44] CGI challenges this but does not invalidate it: It suggests, instead that a desire for whole and continuous worlds is not dependent on the actuality of such worlds.

[45] In "Painting and Cinema," Bazin suggests that the cinema both opens up and opens onto the world while the painting, framed, orients itself to an alternative space, "a space the orientation of which is inwards, a contemplative area opening solely onto the interior of the painting" (Bazin 1967, 166). With regard to the painting, "[t]he essential role of the frame is, if not to create at least to emphasize the difference between the microcosm of the picture and the macrocosm of the natural world in which the painting has come to take its place" (165).

[46] For Bazin, "A frame is centripetal, the screen centrifugal" (166).

Animation's relation to the real is the reverse of that of live-action film: image and movement are born in positive intervention. There is no claim to an objective out-of-field in *Sinking of the Lusitania*, though there is a discursive out-of-field and the pretense of off-screen

Figure 6 An unexploding frame
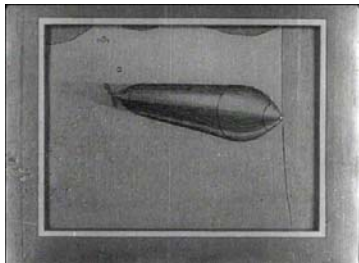
space. This results not in a different conception of actuality, but in a different virtuality. The problem of the difference between the frame and the screen edge is literalized when McCay applies masks in the form of frames to his drawn images. The simple double frame repeats as fish pass before our view, just as a torpedo charges downscreen right, toward the plane of the screen and, by implication, toward the Lusitania. The "German" images – that is, those directly representing German agency, whether the silhouetted U-boat above-water or the torpedo underwater – are framed. The threat is, once again, mediated by the frame and by time, shock not magnified but mitigated by our awareness that the torpedo will not explode the frame. Instead, the torpedo explodes against the edge of the frame, fully contained within it, leaving an unexploded frame of reference (Figure 8). This is a marked distinction from the nightmare quality of the over-full exploding mosquito in *How a Mosquito Operates* (Figure 9).
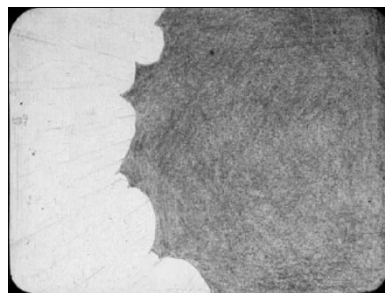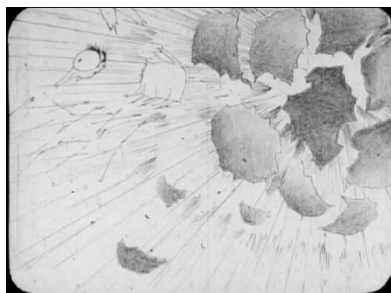

Figure 7 How a mosquito explodes . . . at the edges of the screen.

In images such as the torpedo image above (Figure 8), the frame is redundant, marking out a diegetic space that is already marked as discontinuous from the "real" world by its

projection into darkness, the passage of time from event to representation, and the iconic

rather than indexical form. However, inside the frame, duration becomes more perceptible, a

replacement for the speed and direction of events, even if it doesn't yet move to the level of

Bergsonian durée. It is not an abstract time that *Sinking of the Lusitania* presents, though we

come to be aware of closed sets and a closed-off past.

We can contrast the movement of the torpedo, too, with McCay's diagram illustration

of the approach of the Lusitania itself to the plane

of the screen.   The torpedo, on its projected

trajectory, would never reach the screen.   The

Lusitania is in the process of making a screen-ward
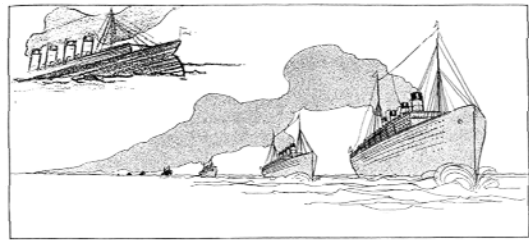
turn (Figure 8).

Figure 8 McCay's Illustration of "The Lusitania Coming into View on the Horizon and Advancing to the Position Where it was Struck by the Torpedo" (McCay 1919)

The frame returns in another form, as the

frame around images of famous passengers who died in the tragedy, a portion of the film also

unaddressed in work on McCay's animation. Haunting reproductions of photographic still

images appear: "men of world wide prominence" Elbert Hubbard, Alfred Vanderbilt, and

theatrical manager Charles Frohman, whose apocryphal last words are reported as "Death is

but a beautiful adventure of life." The static images cast the film as a site of mourning, the

now-dead suspended in animation. These images are obviously functionally tied to the

newspaper obituary, which is congruous with the position McCay attempted to stake for the

film in the discourse of authenticity, and to the Victorian fixation with photographic memento

mori as well. Nevertheless, the effect is to cause the viewer to experience the moving images

surrounding them as well, a contemplation of life and death as, in essence, movement and
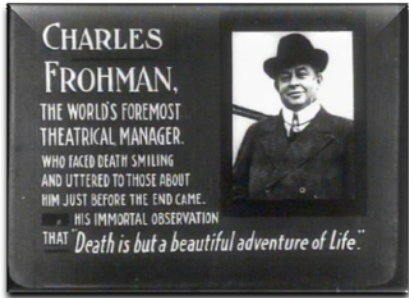
Figure 9 Charles Frohman suspended in animation

stillness.[47] We might recall here Peter Wollen's argument, cited in chapter two of this dissertation, that "[i]n a film . . . it is the still image (Warhol, Straub-Huillet) which seems paradoxical in the opposite sense: the moving picture of the motionless subject" (Wollen 2007, 110). In attending to the still images, we are reminded once more that freeze frames lay bare the mechanism of all film animation. What is more, the photographic images of Vanderbilt and all immediately contrast the indexical and the iconic; they are in starkest contrast with the later, more poignant representation of the mass of passengers, falling to the sea below inside a redundant double frame. Stillness contributes to the film's melancholy and forms part of the film's spatial negotiation, but more importantly, these images reveal the ambivalence at the heart of the film's phenomenological negotiation.

Suspension, anti-vectorial (or anti-ballistic) movement and the movement of the waves contribute to a sense of the breakdown of possibilities for action even if the film concludes with a call to arms. In the descriptive image, possibility is suspended. The result is continuity that is independent of causality, a totality that is not comprised of unified historical movement in the same direction, but formed by the addition of numerous particularities – addition that occurs not in intellection but first in perception, and second, in the perception *of* perception, which is for Leibniz and Delueze, thought.

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[47] One might think once again of Laura Mulvey's *Death 24x a Second* as well (Mulvey 2006).

A specifically Deleuzian Leibniz helps us think through more complicated relationships between background and foreground uncoupled from one another and, to some extent, from a narrative of the film. Both the early multiplanar vision of *Sinking of the Lusitania* and the rejection of projection (in the sense of "projectile") relate the film to the anti-hierarchical nature of the descriptive image indicated throughout this dissertation, returning us to the concerns of the "geometrics of history" in the first chapter of this dissertation.

The Leibnizian position would observe the substantial forms of the frames as well as that created through the layering of cels, forms which a hyper-mechanist position, in its zeal for trajectories, would forget. Leibnizian perception involves the globalizing of "petites perceptions": How else to construct the melancholy sea but as a layering of minute movements? It is an exemplary memory-image, of a memory that does not belong, properly, to the viewer:

> The point is one of knowing how we move from minute perceptions to conscious perceptions, or from molecular perceptions to molar perceptions. Is it through a process of totalization, when for instance I grasp a whole whose parts are imperceptible to me? Thus I apprehend the sound of the sea, or of an assembly of people, but not the murmur of each wave or person who nonetheless is part of each whole. But, although Leibniz states the point in terms of totality, the question involves something other than a sum of homogeneous parts. In truth,

Leibniz never fails to specify that the relation of the inconspicuous perceptions

to conscious perceptions does not go from part to whole, but from the *ordinary*

to what is *notable* or *remarkable* (Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*

1993, 88).[48]

Animation's process is a metric process, over metered time (and is thus an extensive process)

but as I argue above, this does not account for our perception of it, and consequently of time,

of history, and of pastness. Animated movements are a virtual continuum, and this virtuality

seems a metaphor for a more important (for the philosophy of history) sense of virtuality, that

is, a virtual past, emphasizing affective rather than effective capabilities.

The conclusions from this examination are relevant to the propositions of the analyses

in prior chapters: to understand them, we must consider, once more, the *visibility* of co-

presence and non-causality. For conceptions of history and historical events, there is especially

a lot at stake in the difference between a whole and a totality, and between both (conceptual)

and what is "notable" (affective and perceptual). Not spectacular, but profound – this is the

past as a history of the present, and the visual suggestion of non-linear relations, which seems

to be at the heart of the intellection of the last century.

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[48] Sergei Eisenstein's idea of sensations as pertaining to film is very similar to Leibniz's, and it's possible that we could have arrived there another way than Leibniz via Deleuze. This would suggest that the Descriptive Image is a kind of montage, a question outside the scope of this chapter but worthy of later attention.

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