Adorno, as noted, had objected not to moviegoing, but to what he saw as the inevitably mimetic nature of the film image.[22]

Like Adorno, Barthes was a celebrant of the ritual of film-going, and, at the same time, a deeply resistant spectator—resistant to the fullness of the image, its plethora of information imposed upon the spectator.[23] It was, in effect, the tact and economy, the discretion, the reserve of the linguistic signifier that Frampton offered in *Poetic Justice*, so that there would now exist a cinema invented as if to order for them both. Frampton's sublimation of filmic mimesis and information through textual reduction would complete and intensify the iconoclastic ascesis introduced by the emptying of the screen, postulating, as the ultimate object of cinephilia, one that was wholly eidetic.[24]

22. See Theodor W. Adorno, "Transparencies on Film," trans. Thomas Y. Levin, *New German Critique* (Fall/Winter 1981), pp. 199–205.
23. Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1975), p. 59.
24. This text, written in recognition of Anthology Film Archive's signal contribution to the development of a truly independent cinema, was composed by a member of its advisory board.

JEAN-LOUIS COMOLLI

Translated by Annette Michelson

1. The cinema, in documentary and other forms, has rarely filmed work. The reasons are many, the same, no doubt, as those that account for its very frequent filming of love or seduction. The first film provides us with the first reason; it is on leaving the Lumière factory that the workers present themselves to cinema, acquiring the double status of actresses and of future spectators. Leaving work, they enter the spellbound world of entertainment. For the world of work is only minimally spellbound or spellbinding and hardly subject to reciprocal action by the cinema, unless in the form of the nightmare (*Metropolis, Modern Times*).

Two attempts at "filming work"—*Birth of a Hospital* (1991) and *Real life (in the Office)* (1993)—have led me to formulate the following two-part question: Why does cinema (mine, to begin with) show so little interest in the representation of work? And what is it that cinema finds of greater interest?

2. Putting aside all those central, essential, powerful factors that might explain how the field of cinema, sustained by the entertainment industry, is barely enlisted in the representation of work, considered too tedious, insufficiently flattering and simulating, and, in the long run, threatening, I shall, rather, restrict myself to some of the question's minor aspects, for example, that of the machinic kinship of cinema and the world of labor, mechanized or otherwise.

This complicity is maximized when the machine for the fabrication of the visible intersects with the organized visibility of machines.[1] "Movement of movements" (Deleuze), the cinema is, to begin with, a machine that is heir to other machines, haunted and as if fascinated by them. The dialogue of machines. The attraction and seduction that involves the emphasis of plastic and choreographic dimensions in the representations of work. The cult of surface and of movement as quintessence of spectacle. Witness the industrial films, the commercials, reportage, the televised news; the length of shots, the careful framing, the flow of

1. It should be noted that electronic machines establish a threshold of cinematographic visibility. They can hardly be filmed otherwise than as boxes. To represent their functioning, recourse is had to the animated or computerized image: the threshold of cinema.

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tracking shots convey something like a cameraman's delight in filming mechanical tools, cranes, car bodies, presses—all that moves in the sheen of metal, everything that slides, strikes, rises and falls in the immutable cadence of the metronomic beat. The eroticism of machines is captured to perfection by the cinerotic machine.

"Filming work" frequently begins and ends by emphasizing the leap of a camera, the perfect regulation of a mechanical ballet. Tireless, relentless, the beat of the machines condenses and accelerates—cutting off from sight anything in work (in all work) having to do with slow process, with destruction/construction, with decomposition/recomposition, with organic metamorphosis. The machine-tool is already an idealization of the work that perfects and improves it, rendering it more regular, prompter, cleaner, straighter. And since cinematography tends to redouble this idealization, the aspect of work most frequently filmed is unfailingly that which is most unreal.

The visible now functions as mask and cosmetic. That which is shown conceals something else. The visible aspect of things and of relations conceals the other dimension, the other scene, obscured, dissimulated by the very movement of representation. The "window open upon the world" (Bazin) works as a mask, a screen, a curtain that closes down the scene, a veil of modesty that strives to hide from our gaze the reality of social sacrifice, constrained or consensual.

3. The cinema's eroticization of machines functions like the other, accessory side of work's mechanization of bodies. The link between manual work and the tool, as it appears to the filmmaker, is probably to be noted. The gestures of work become mechanized when filmed because they pass through the turnstile of the cinemachine, and because the dream of the body's mechanization (the marionette, the skeleton) is linked to the desire for projecting images at a distance.

The proximity of body to machine is embodied, so to speak, in the figure of the automaton.[2] Whether as mechanism with a human face such as the chess players once displayed in fairs, or as something closer to the artificial man such as the humanoid creature of *Metropolis* or *Frankenstein*, this automaton enacts, in relation to the human body, the role of the camera as it functions for our gaze. Like and Other are fused, above all, and the desire for artificial life, for the illusion of life animated by the hidden work of a machine, is achieved . . .

In *The Man with the Movie Camera* (1929), Dziga Vertov boldly reveals the status of this machinic desire.[3] Might we not specify "the desire for cinema" as the acceptance or recognition of the fact that one must first pass through the machine (the cinema), through the inanimate trace of the film frame, so that

2. Is it because one of their first tasks was to strike a bell that they often represent workers? In addition, the automatons themselves could be faked (the chess player). The man hiding within the animated statue imitated the machine. This is what happens in the Neapolitan theatre with Toto, for example, when the actor reverses a situation already reversed, imitating the marionette that imitates man.

3. See Comolli, "L'avenir de l'homme," *Trafic* 15, pp. 31–49.

later, through the exorcistic inscription of this mechanical death, we can bewitch it, rendering it immortal (as we imagine machines to be)?

4. The body, primary machine, alterity within identity. Doesn't the gesture of labor, while mechanized, rationalized, and purified, serve thereby as model for the definition and regulation of machines to come? Don't film's celluloid frames bear, through the forms of labor, the unperceived trace of these exchanges between bodies and machines? I recall Dario Fo's representation of the singing laborers plaiting rope or setting out stakes in the lagoons (*Mistero Buffo*). In its rhythm and choreography, the body's movement approached and identified with that of the machine.

The memory of this bodily twist—performed by Dario Fo alone on a stage—is fused, in my recollections, with what is perhaps the strongest representation of factory work, the leitmotif of Dziga Vertov's *Kino-Pravda* in the 1920s: the shot of a worker dancing in place while seizing a thread of molten steel and sliding it from one channel into another. The drive, tension, twist of choreography. For one of the first times, surely, in the cinema the gestures of labor blended with those of play or of the dance. (Today it would be done through shots of sport in slow motion.) Repetition of repetition.[4] There is a change of length and of tempo; it's no longer the chronic beat of gesture exerted on matter, but another beat, another time, that of the gesture as productive of a trace. The material trace (the printed film stock) is no longer the material being worked (the thread of steel).

The idealization of matter and of the body, the exaltation of forms. To embellish the world: that is the Cinema's desire and achievement. That is its answer to the productivist dogma; the worker becomes an athlete, a dancer, an acrobat. The undeniable arduousness of work in the steel mill is thus informed, through cinema's magic, with lightness and grace. Representing work means de-realizing it, through the estheticization of gesture and of posture, through the body's ludic mechanization and virtualization. The Vertovian dream of enchanting work may be that of all filmmakers. The cinemachine replaces work with play, and a playful tremor infuses the gestures of work with a scenic light.

5. The filming of bodies at work does indeed attract me more than the filming of machines. There is a whole bodily work before the camera-machine that metaphorizes, displaces the body's engagement in labor and its eventual link with another machine-tool. Let's say that I prefer filming bodies to filming machines, even if it means filming the body's mechanical part at work.

4. The choreographic grace and power of the workers in the steel mills of the Don Basin had been remarked upon by Isadora Duncan during her travels there in the postrevolutionary period. And Dziga Vertov did, in *The Man with the Movie Camera*, employ slow motion to great effect in the film's sequences of sport and athletics. Trans.

The body at work is both actor (as always), agent (of this particular work), and subject to social and technical violence that subdues and governs it. It's in this first sense that work is filmable: in the drilling of bodies and resistance to this drilling. It happens that the relation of filmed bodies to the cinematic machine is also a kind of drilling. That which we call "self-direction" means, in short, that the filmed body constructs, together with camera and crew, the delicate system that allows it both to adapt to and to resist the pressure of cinematography.

Therein lies the trap for the filmmaker: in filming the relation of submission to another direction (that of the enterprise, the profession, the specialization, the social body . . .) *as if it were the cinematographic relation itself.* And thus to make the first relation, generally imposed and constraining, appear as the second, usually chosen and constructive. Unlike situations in the workplace and irrespective of the violence exerted on the filmed subject, the cinematic relation is always somewhat playful—in its play with fact, its play of change—and thereby imbued with autonomy, resistance, freedom, subjective choice. I can always refuse to perform in a documentary film; I can't always refuse to take on the appointed task. Unlike the labor contract, the cinematic pact is always reversible. Making a film may mean snatching the worker from his work, extracting or abstracting him from the direction imposed by the business enterprise or the institution, holding out the possibility of his own direction, one which will articulate anew, in his own way, the body at work and the body's work for the camera.

Imagine a somewhat lazy documentary filmmaker finding himself rather at ease in filming those bodies that (at last!) don't have to wait for his commands or instructions in order to act and move about. He'll find delight in the ordered mobility of the working bodies because it is cinematically facile and felicitous. The danger really lies in presenting the constrained direction of work for the planned direction of play, thereby producing a representation, a somewhat softened representation of this work.

I see cinema as tending toward an attenuation of the rigidity and violence of forced labor. The director will have an uphill battle in forcing the cinematic machine to confront that violence with its own. That means not accelerating duration, not condensing development, not embellishing what is unbeautiful, not counting on little mechanical miracles to confer grace on heavy machines. It means, finally, doing the contrary of that which the cinema loves and knows how to do: filming against the cinema—certainly this rarely happens. And this, again, may explain the small number of films on work.

6. On the whole, I prefer the reverse trap: *a cinematic relation that, once developed and accomplished, finally compels recognition as that which is centrally at stake, replacing those very relations that form the object of representation.* Taking on more solidity and power than the reality of reference, the scene becomes a transfer of power, and the bond formed in play replaces social ties. If the cinema's dream be indeed the replacement of the world, if only within the time limit of the screening,

another turn of the spectacle's spiral is made when the cinematic relation is intensified to the point of passing for the world itself. The cinema breathes new life into the exhausted world. This is approximately what happens in Claire Simon's (fine) film, *Coûte que coûte.* The set task is the filming of the life, or rather the survival of a business enterprise, the changing relation—one of conflict, confusion, despair, but also of play and ease—that the members (agents) of this outfit maintain with their work. The shop fails, but the film is completed.

The film's work is determined by two preconditions. The first, of a narrative order, adjusts the periods of shooting to the company's paydays. Bills and unpaid orders, salaries more or less deferred: Claire Simon chose to focus her film (beginning with the scheduled sequence of shooting) on these phases of the settling of accounts when the work relations form or dissolve in the name of this supposed real of money. The second precondition is one of mise-en-scène; as her own camerawoman, Claire Simon selected, on the one hand, lenses of medium length (most of the situations are shot close-up) and, on the other, a correlative play of rather rapid panning shots that constantly forge links between persons always already isolated by the lens. The coherence of these two systems soon becomes clear; they refer to a single stylistic figure, that of prosopopeia, through which those present (those who are filmed) evoke an absence or a nonpresence, a former or external element. Those being filmed tell (to whom? to the filmmaker? to the machine?) of situations that are not filmed—the mishaps, on the whole, of the business' survival taking place away from the filmmaker—without the cinemachine, without the cinematic scene.[5] These absent circumstances return doubly, as in the classic theatre, through the narratives of those being filmed; they return as filmed presence of the narrative, and as absence indicated by the narrative.

Prior to adoption as the particular system of the cinematographic scene (limited by a frame and therefore incapable of simultaneously showing everything), this *double inscription* is involved in the very genesis of the notion of the scene. A scene by definition cannot include the world's entirety. That which it does include must therefore bear within it the trace or narrative of the rest. The link between the scene and the rest is thus doubly assured: by the exclusion realized through the prosopopeia—that compensates for that exclusion only by calling attention to it. It is soon apparent that in cinema this double inscription is reinforced in the cinema by the frame's pregnance, by the articulation of screen and off-screen. In cinema, off-stage and off-screen are linked by a relation of ambiguity. Off-stage can tip over into off-screen, threatening the cancellation of the alterity of that which is not of the scene. It is this cancellation that's at play in Claire Simon's sweeping pans of the scene.

5. Let us recall that the cinematic scene is composed of the confrontation—the relation—between the machine (broadly construed as the camera, accessory equipment, the technical crew) and the body or bodies being filmed. This relation has a claim as "a true inscription" because inscribed on the film stock or the strip is the truth, the precise and unique circumstances of this relation: its duration and intensities, its particular, singular, irreproducible form.

For what is not present to be shown is, of course, that which is produced away from the filmic scene and must be re-installed by narrative, evoked by a trace. But it is also that which is not framed, not yet framed, not filmed, although it participates in the filmic scene. Thus the filmed bodies and the nonfilmed events pass, each in turn, through the same tourniquet of presence/absence, fusing in the same cinematic link further reinforced by the panning movements' spatiotemporal threading and weaving. The pan that sweeps over the field from one character to another does so in order to link the filmed body, present in the field, framed, with that which is not yet filmed, or which is no longer so, waiting beyond the field, so to speak, for the camera's arrival or return to frame it. Prosopopeia links the present of the shoot (the true inscription is in the present) and the past of the nonfilmic action (the life of the enterprise). The panning shot links the presence and absence of the filmed bodies, this time turning the off-screen back on to the field, a field that the pan's system writes as a space-time that is metonymically extended and continuous, available and complicitous, fashioned of likeness and repetition. The off-stage is thus gradually reduced to the dimension of this mere, familiar off-screen.

What is it that the off-screen brings into play at this point? Simply the reality of the workplace, of work, of the relations and conflicts taking place there. A reality presumed to continue beyond the shooting period. Well, there comes a moment within the film when one loses the assurance of a beyond-the-field, an independent and autonomous reality not subject to the film's shooting. The characters come, insidiously, to exist more as the film's actors than as actors in the business enterprise of reference. The work becomes that which is done in the film, for the film, with the film. Or to put it differently, as the business declines and the bonds of work loosen or change, the film takes shape and the cinematic links form and are reinforced. The fate of the workers appears progressively clearer and fulfilled within the film. They lose work and gain a job. Their role in spectacle appears more real than any other. This does not necessarily appear to be the worst or least worthy result.

7. The scene of work is certainly and always one of dark, deep drama, whether that of the inexpugnable scenario of "Man's exploitation of Man" or that equally drastic script, of "creative processes" or Man's digestion of the world. And this dark human tragedy is expressed, finally, in a strong resistance of all forms of work, mental and social, to their rendering as spectacle. When we observe the difficulty, the reticence, the precautions or subterfuges of cinema with respect to its filming, it may very well be that work is irretrievably linked to opacity, to invisibility. *Coûte que coûte,* going back to the theme of *The Man with the Movie Camera,* instructs us, nonetheless, that through machines, there is play within work, and that it is in the play with this machine par excellence, the cinema, that the boldest venture of Man's share still lies. The work of spectacle can replace the impossible spectacle of work.

Jean Epstein's Cinema of Immanence: The Rehabilitation of the Corporeal Eye*

MALCOLM TURVEY

> *Shall we say, then, that we look out from the inside, that there is a third eye which sees the paintings and even the mental images, as we used to speak of a third ear which grasped messages from the outside through the noises they caused inside us? But how would this help us when the real problem is to understand how it happens that our fleshy eyes are already much more than receptors for light rays, colors, and lines?*
>
> —Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind" (1961)

I

Consider the following fragment from Epstein's oft-repeated paean to the cinema, written in 1921:

> Although sight is already recognized by everyone as the most developed sense, and even though the viewpoint of our intellect and our mores is visual, there has nevertheless never been an emotive process so homogeneously, so exclusively optical as the cinema. Truly, the cinema creates *a particular system of consciousness limited to a single sense.*[1]

This definition, and indeed celebration, of cinema as a "process" that instantiates a purely *visual* mode of perception and consciousness is not peculiar to the film theory of Jean Epstein. Germaine Dulac, for example, writing in 1925 on the essence of cinema, also argues: "Should not cinema, which is an art of vision, as music is an art of hearing . . . lead us toward the visual idea composed of movement and life, toward

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1. Jean Epstein, "Magnification," in *French Film Theory and Criticism, A History/Anthology, Volume I: 1907–1929,* ed. Richard Abel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 240 (emphasis in the original).

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