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Dissociative identity disorder (DID) is distinguished by distinct personality states and amnesia while*depersonalization/de-realization disorder*is characterized by a feeling of unreality and estrangement from the self, body, and surroundings. Early symptoms of *autism* include the inability to distinguish the animate from the inanimate and excessive focus on non-relevant parts of objects. Distractedness and the inability to focus are symptoms of *attention-deficit disorder*.*Melancholy*’s clinical features include *disturbances in affect* (blunted emotional response), *psychomotor disturbance*expressed as retardation (slowed thought, movement, and speech), and *cognitive impairment* (reduced concentration and working conscious memory). The ‘negative symptoms’ of *schizophrenia*include flat affect, avolition and alogia, while delusions, hallucinations, and suspiciousness/paranoia are considered ‘positive symptoms’. Apathy can be an early symptom of *depression* or *schizophrenia*.

What does this have to do with film theory? Hugo Münsterberg, author of the first work of film theory, *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study,* considered the following features—reminiscent of the symptomatic language of dissociative identity disorder—essential to cinema: decentralization (the ability to assume alternate points of view), mobility (the ability to invert the past and the present, the real and the virtual), and de-realization and disembodiment (characteristic of film reception). Both Jean Epstein’s revelationist aesthetic and Bela Balázs’s anthropomorphic film theory are informed by animistic beliefs, translating into the realm of the aesthetic the symptoms of various types of disorders (e.g. autism) characterized by the inability to distinguish the living from the non-living. In *Theory of Film*Kracauer posited affective states commonly perceived as symptomatic of mental disturbance—detachment from reality, ennui, melancholy, distraction, and disinterestedness/apathy—as necessary to film’s redemption of physical reality. Indeed, many of the privileged concepts in classical film theory could be seen as aestheticized symptoms of a range of mental illnesses, e.g. *affective flattening* (cf. de-dramatization and dead time in neo-realist theory), *avolition* (cf. the weakening of character and narrative motivation in realist film and theory), *fragmentation* (cf. the privileging of episodic over dramatic narratives), *dissociative fugue* (cf. Kracauer’s notion of distraction; the privileging of defamiliarization as a way of reestablishing a more intimate connection to reality; or the temporal deregulation of the ‘time-image’)and *spatial dislocation* (cf. Kracauer’s notion of the solidarity of spaces foregrounding the interconnectedness of things).What this short survey makes evident is that one of the distinguishing characteristics of classical film theory is its promotion of non-cognitive forms of expression—often couched in the rhetoric of madness and mental illness—as a resistance to the rationalizing forces of modernity.[1]

The *mental*—rather than *mimetic*—realismof early film theory—which construes *cinema as obeying the laws of the mind, rather than those of the physical world*—can be traced back to Münsterberg’s *The Photoplay*, an examination of ‘the means by which the moving pictures impress us and appeal to us. Not the physical means and the technical devices…but *the mental means*’ (1970:17). Anticipating Epstein’s and Balazs’s idea of cinematic time and space as belonging to a *mental/spiritual* dimension, rather than

representing *properties of the material world*,Münsterberg argues that the impression of depth and movement in cinema is 'produced by the spectator's mind and not excited from without. […] Depth and movement…are present and yet they are not in the things. We invest the impressions with them' (27, 30). Cinema's specificity lies in successfully mimicking the mind's independence from the temporal and spatial limitations of the material world by reproducing the basic mental functions through which we make sense of it:*attention*(the close-up) and *memory* (the flashback). Film reproduces our *mental* functions in the absence of the essential *material* conditions for perception and projects them back to us as if they existed outside us, disembodied:in the photoplay, '[t]he massive outer world has lost its weight, it has been freed from space, time, and causality and it has been clothed in the forms of our own consciousness. The mind has triumphed over matter' (41, 95).[2]

Similarly, Epstein and Balazs locate film's specificity in its de-realization ofmaterial reality through the manipulation of time and space. While some have read the notion of photogénie as evidence of Epstein's sensorial film theory,photogénieis actually indicative of Epstein's belief infilm as a technology for *deranging* reason and the senses. Already in *La Lyrosophie* (1922) his description of filmic illusion, indebted to medieval Jewish mysticism, emphasizes film's collapse of the distinction between personal subjective experience and the reality of the external world, an experience one could describe as *psychotic*:

> The word, the exterior sign of representation and the interior sign of the things, is identical with the representation and the thing. Thus there are no longer representations of things, but things-representations. [T]he Kabbalist…does not differentiate between two categories of phenomena: objective and subjective. All are located for him on a unified plane of consideration, a subjective plane—that is to say, that of feeling. (*La Lyrosophie*2012:284)

Epstein consistently privileges film techniques—the close-up, slow motion, superimposition, and experimental sound—that derange the "seemingly fundamental and solid classifications of the extra-cinematographic universe" (*L'intelligence d'une machine*2012:312) by detaching objects from their spatiotemporalcontext, producing effects similar to a delusion or hallucination.[3]Cinema mimics the architectural principle of the dream through its indeterminacy and illogical continuity, which binds shots together affectively rather than logically, just as in a dream representations are joined together because of their figurative rather than literal value[4]: 'It is out of our faithfulness to *mental realism* – perhaps the more real of the two – that film so widely dares to transpose the signification of forms, to substitute people for things and vice versa, to use the part for the whole' (356).[5]Ironically, cinema's derangement of the senses brings it in line with modern scientific discoveries about the instability or porousness of matter and with the theory of relativity.[6]Contrastingcinema's visual thought with language's rational thought,Epstein praises cinema forreinvigorating

> the *delirium of interpretation*, freeing it from the syllogistic yoke, so as to reach or remind people to use their poetic faculty. Since no philosophy, no science, no discourse, no judgment, no understanding, no narrative, no memory, no sensation

> exists that is not essentially paranoid; since interpretation is the universal mode of knowledge; since *paranoia typifies the function of the mind and the senses*, the true genius that cinema makes manifest is its own authentic capacity for surrealization.(*Esprit de cinéma*2012:372)

Cinema's inherent paranoiarefers to the inexhaustibility of cinematic interpretation, which, in turn, reflects the infinite nature of the unconscious.

Throughout his writings Epstein associates the unconscious with the inarticulate and thus with the inanimate, and it is this association that underliesphotogénie,[7] as becomes clear in his discussion of the close-up. The close-up allegedly reveals the mobility constitutive of the material world; however, this finer mobility is interesting to Epstein only insofar as it 'translates in minute detail the mobility of a soul (*Esprit de cinéma* 2012:339). Not surprisingly, he criticizes avant-garde cinema for misusing the close-up in a merely mechanical way, failing to tap into cinema's true nature as 'the photography of delusions of the heart' (*Le Cinématographe vu de l'Etna*2012:304). Objects to which we attach a *sentimental value* provide the clearest example of photogénie: 'We are incapable of seeing them as objects. What we see in them, through them, are the memories and emotions, the plans and regrets that we have attached to those things' (304). Photogénie, then,refers to our *blindness to things in their sheer materiality*: 'Close-up of the telephone…you no longer see a mere telephone. You read: ruin, failure, misery, prison, suicide' (305). This way of looking at objects incorporates them into a narrative/signifying structure wherein they function as mere projections of our subjective desires or fears rather than as autonomous entities. The 'soul' of inanimate objects is not their own; their inarticulate language is an euphemism for the indeterminate emotional value they might assume for the spectator once they are 'processed' byher memory and imagination. Objects become photogenic by virtue of being a part of an *affective [i.e. human] complex*. Epstein's close-up fulfills a function similar to that in Münsterberg's theory: it does not 'reveal' the material world but only its significance for us,making visible to us the mental functions (perception, memory and imagination) through which we attribute meaning to things.

Ironically, while photography and film were instrumental in the transition from physiognomic to psychological theories of madness at the fin de siècle,[8]Epstein and Balazs revive the obsolete concept of physiognomy to describe cinema's 'redemption' of material reality. Epstein's numerous descriptions of the face in close-up are poetic yet striking in their scientific attention to the subtle movements of facial muscles. While critics have explored the links between Balazs's physiognomy and 18th century aesthetics,[9]no one has yet noted the continuities between Epstein's photogénie and 18th and 19th century physiognomy, specifically the shift from early physiognomy's conception of the mobility and ephemerality of facial expressions as indicative of insanity, to late physiognomy's challengeof the association of the mobile face with insanity. In the earliest treatise on the subject,*Physiognomy, or the Corresponding Analogy between the Conformation of the Features and the Ruling Passions of the Soul*, Lavater describes physiognomy as 'reading the handwriting of nature upon the human countenance (1775:3). In the section 'Medicinal Semeiotics' he argues that the repetitious, well-regulated contraction of facial muscles produces normal facial expressions, which become deformed when an element of disproportionate change and

randomness is introduced into the muscles' habitual work. Here*the normal* is associated with *the habitual/recognizable* and *the abnormal* with *the accidental/unpredictable*;the immobile facesignals normality, themobile face abnormality.Similarly, in *The Physiognomy of Mental Diseases* (1843) Sir Alexander Morrison endorses physiognomy as the most reliable method for classifying the insane, positing the *habitual* contractions of facial muscles, resulting in a *recognizable* expression, as 'proof' of sanity.

The desire to understand how mental states become manifest in a person's visual appearance was, likewise, the motivating force behind the work of G. B. Duchenne de Boulogne; however, contrary to Lavater and Morrison, Duchenne 'sought to understand the face in motion, describing facial expressions as a mobile muscular phenomenon' (Gunning 2004:149).[10]It is Duchenne's legacy that informs Epstein's reflections on the close-up. In *The Mechanism of Human Facial Expression*(1862) Duchennerejected the crude association of particular mental states with corresponding facial expressions, proposing instead to decompose general facial expressions into the set of facial muscles that produce them. He discovered that a single contraction of a facial muscle does not cause all other muscles to contract; accordingly, he classified the isolated or combined contractions of the face as expressive on their own, expressive only in a complementary way, or partly expressive. Challenging early physiognomy's assumption of a correspondence between the visible (body) and the invisible (mind), Duchenne described*mentaldeformity as a kind of illegibility*: the deformed mind could not be 'read' through the body. Even as he held on to the idea that physical deformity (the contraction of the facial muscles in non-habituated ways) points to mental deformity, Duchenne emphasized much more the illegibility (the non-habituated being 'illegible') of the visible (physical deformity), which translated into an illegibility of the invisible (mental deformity). He underscored the fragmentary/illegible nature of the body (hence his interest in the contraction of *isolated* facial muscles) and, by implication, the fragmentary/illegible nature of the mind. By distancing himself from earlier physiognomic theories and using photography to capture the ephemeral and the instantaneous, Duchenne was already beginning to understand the face *cinematically*.[11]

Epstein's descriptions of the close-up echo Duchenne's accounts of his experiments through the method of localized electrization:

> Muscular preambles ripple beneath the skin. Shadows shift, tremble, hesitate. Something is being decided. A breeze of emotion underlines the mouth with clouds. The orography of the face vacillates. Seismic shocks begin. Capillary wrinkles try to split the fault. A wave carried them away. Crescendo. A muscle bridles. The lip is laced with tics like a theater curtain. Everything is movement, imbalance, crisis. Crack. The mouth gives way, like a ripe fruit splitting open. As if slit by a scalpel, a keyboard-like smile cuts laterally into the corner of the lips.("Magnification"1993: 235-236)

Epstein's photogénie conforms to Duchenne's notion of the face as a mobile phenomenon and, more generally, to a modern view of human expression as *syntactic rather than semiotic*. It cannot really be otherwise given that, as I already suggested, the physiognomy or soul of things refers to their place in our subconscious, which, as Wall-Romana points out, consists mostly of 'sensorial impressions and affective

comportments' (2013:20) and should thus be distinguished from the too narratively based Freudian unconscious.

Katie Kirtland traces Epstein's 'lyrosophical mode'—in which objects are invested 'with an intensified sense of life via their position in an atemporal nexus of the viewer's subconscious emotional associations (2012:281)—back to his appropriation of experimental psychologist Edouard Abramowski's *Le Subconscient normal* (1914), wherein Abramowski posits a connection between chronic intellectual fatigue and a hyperactive subconscious, concluding that the subconscious is the seat of the aesthetic and, even more specifically, that 'the aesthetic element is found in the generic sentiment of the forgotten' (qtd. in Kirtland 108). Art, then, is an instance of *paramnesia*, 'the appearance in consciousness of either the forgotten, or perceptions that had never been elaborated in the first place' (108). The link between paramnesia and photogénie is only one instance of Epstein's implicit association of photogénie with various types of psychological and physiological disturbances. The cinematic techniques he champions as most 'photogenic' can be seen as aestheticized versions of two opposite types of mental disorders: *depersonalization* and *psychosis*.

Epstein praises the camera's inhuman analytic properties: it is 'an eye without prejudices, without morals, exempt from influences' (*Le Cinématographe vu de l'Etna*292). He compares cinema to the experience of descending a spiral staircase lined with mirrors:

> Each of these mirrors presented me with a perverse view of myself, an inaccurate image of the hopes I had. These spectating mirrors forced me to see myself with their indifference, their truth. I seemed to be in a huge retina lacking a conscience, with no moral sense, and seven stories high. (291)

Cinema's view of the world transposes into the realm of the aesthetic the symptomsof depersonalization disorders: flat affect and alienation from the self. Cinema's depersonalizing power is reflected in its equivalent treatment of the animate and the inanimate i.e. in Epstein's well-known animism, part of *the aesthetic of isolation* characterized by the perceptual decomposition of objects, an extreme focus on minute details, and an inability (refusal) to perceive an object in its totality:

> One of the greatest powers of cinema is its animism. On screen nature is never inanimate. Objects take on airs. Trees gesticulate. […] A hand is separated from a man, lives on its own, suffers and rejoices alone. And the finger is separated from the hand.(290)[12]

Epstein's animism is complemented by a fascination with various disturbances of our sensory-motor apparatus, as evidenced by his obsession with deformed, truncated, or stilled movements.[13]

The aesthetization of various symptoms of depersonalization and sensorimotor disorders, disclosing cinema's*non-humanity*, is only side of Epstein's discourse; the other side—represented by *the aesthetic of proximity*—foregrounds precisely those powers of cinema that make it *human*: its *affective*, rather than *depersonalizing*, powers. Insofar as the aesthetic of proximity construes the boundaries separating the self from the external

world as porous, it translates into the aesthetic realm the symptoms of *psychosis*, a conditionrecognized by the failure to distinguish subjective mental states from objective reality. Within the psychotic structure of Epstein's aesthetic of proximity the ontological distinctions between screen and realitythat circumscribe the realm of 'normal experience' collapse: 'Between the spectacle and the spectator, no barrier. One doesn't look at life, one penetrates it' (*La Poésie d'aujourd'hui* 272). Similarly, Epstein's 'natural movies', in which he works on the "exchange of substances and properties" (water, clouds, wind),[14] celebrate the (psychotic) dissolution ofego boundaries and of the boundaries between physical objects.

Balazs's theory, like Epstein's, is undergirded by what appear to be aestheticized symptoms of various mental disturbances. Like Epstein, Balazs attributes to cinema the structure of paranoia, for 'while words can be meaningless, there is no such thing as a meaningless image' (Balazs2010:57). Paradoxically, the imageis defined by its dearth of meaning (determinate, logical meaning) *and*by its excess of meaning (indeterminate, surface meaning): 'Words cannot be understood when they are incomprehensible. […] But a sight may be clear and comprehensible even though unfathomable' (59). The paranoid structure of cinema's visual thought is evident in the microphysiognomy of the close-up, which derives its power from a mistrust of everything conscious and intentional. Cinema promotes a paranoid delusional stance toward reality insofar as it feeds our mistrust of thesurface appearances and consciously expressed ideasthat cover up 'true' meaning, which is to be found in the nuances of the close-up rather than in the long shot, in the micro-drama of the moment rather than in large scale narrative shifts. Objectivity in cinema exists 'as no more than an impression that certain shots may consciously create,'for 'whatever is not really deformed is imperceptible' (115). On the level of sound, too, cinema does not aim to reproduce the sounds of the external world but to de-realize the world, to transform—through sound montage—'outward perceptions [into] internal mental associations…[a]coustic impressions, acoustic emotions, acoustic thoughts' (199). Thanks to the camera's mobility cinema dismantles the distinction between the self and the external world, so that the spectator no longer feels a boundary between *real space*and the *virtual space* of the screen, an experience not that dissimilar from a hallucination.

Like Epstein, Balazs identifies the facial close-up as the essence of cinema. Since he gives the close-up as an example of cinema's new language of gestures, claiming that 'whatever is expressed in his face and his movements arises from a stratum of the soul that can never be brought to the light of day by words' (9), what matters to him is not the scale of the close-up but its *silent* expressiveness, which it shares with the wordless language of gestures. *Physiognomy refers to the silent, visual expressiveness of things rather than to the scale of the shot in which they appear*. Balazs's belief that all objects in cinema assume a 'physiognomy' i.e. that they are inherently symbolic and, on the other hand, that their meaning dwells on the surface, immediately perceived rather than demanding interpretation, appears contradictory until we acknowledge that this symbolism is not produced by the filmmaker but by the spectator. The *intended* symbolism of a shot is irrelevant to Balazs: what matters is the spectator's *apperception* of the represented object, which is automatically perceived as already colored by the spectator's subconscious. In cinema, as in dreams, we never see objects for what they are—we immediately see them colored by our memory, wishes, and fantasies. To say that

all objects are necessarily symbolic is simply to acknowledge that *physiognomy describes the structure of human perception*. Echoing Münsterberg's description of cinema as 'clothing the material world in the forms of our own consciousness,'Balazs views the material world as 'merely an extension of my inner world rather than an autonomous, self-sufficient realm…[it] does not conform to the laws of motion in the physical world, but to the internal rhythms of the mental world' (49).[15]Cinema does not bring us closer to the material world: on the contrary, it appeals to those of our mental faculties—imagination and memory—that sustain our sense of independence from reality. The physiognomy of inanimate things refers *not* to their material existence but to the inarticulate feelings and thoughts they provoke in us.

Whereas inarticulate thoughts and feelings are generally recognized as possible signs of a mental disturbance, in Balazs's theory the close-up's inarticulateness makes it especially suitable to 'photograph the unconscious': 'microphysiognomy is the direct making visible of micropsychology' (103, 104). While a verbal description takes time and fails to capture the ephemerality of feelings, the close-up nullifies all sense of time, displaying the most varied emotions simultaneously. The close-up's expressiveness is independent of any spatial and temporal context, positioning the viewer as similarly *disembodied*, unable to position himself in time or space:the close-up'locates the filmic image not within the linear time of narrative and epic but in the temporality of affect and the dream' (Carter 2010:xxix). Like Duchenne, Balazs detaches *expression* (which transcends time and space) from its *medium* (the face as a series of muscles existing in space and time):

> Physiognomy has a relation to space comparable to that existing between melody and time. The facial muscles that make expression possible may be close to each other in space. *But it is their relation to one another that creates expression.* These relations have no extension and no direction in space. No more than do feelings and thoughts, ideas and associations. All these are image-like and yet non-spatial.(2010:101)

Like Balazs and Epstein, Kracauer's mistrust of a rationalized culture of wordsfinds expression inan aesthetic of fragmentation or atomizationthat aestheticizes various forms of mental disturbances.Recently critics have began to challenge the accepted division between Kracauer's pre- and post-exile writings, a presumed epistemological shift from the early Kracauer, the phenomenological[16] observer of the ephemeral and the everyday, and the 'poorer' late Kracauer, 'the sociological reductionist' and 'unredeemed humanist' (Petro qtd. in Aitken 2006:2). In their Introduction to *Siegfried Kracauer's American Writings: Essays on Film and Popular Culture* Johannes von Moltke and Kristy Rawson maintainthat, 'the émigré Kracauer remained true to Kracauer the Weimar critic in his enduring attention to detail, to the forms and materials of culture,' pointing specifically to Kracauer's emphasis on inanimate objects as revealing the continuity between Kracauer's American writings and his feuilletons on material culture for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* (2012:23). Although Kracauer never articulated a physiognomic theory of film like Balazs and Epstein, many of his observations on inanimate objects, particularly in his articles on Hollywood's 'terror films', Jean Vigo, and silent film comedy, reveal significant continuities with

Epstein and Balazs, although Kracauer puts a 'malicious' spin on physiognomic theory by suggesting that cinema redeems the inanimate world mainly by acknowledging its maliciousness towards us.

"Hollywood's Terror Films: Do They Reflect an American State of Mind?" (1946) begins as a critique of 'terror films', which, rather than dealing with social abuses, as the gangster films of the Depression era had done, explore psychological aberrations, taking for granted the 'sickness of the American psyche' (Kracauer 2012:44), without ever attempting to motivate or rationalize the introduction of sadistic violence and terror, and intentionally blurring the distinction between normal and abnormal mental states. What redeems these films, however, is their explicit attention to the physical environment. Their heightened attention to the material world is not accidental because

> people emotionally out of joint inhabit a realm ruled by bodily sensations and material stimulants, a realm in which dumb objects loom monstrously high and become signal posts or stumbling blocks, enemies or allies. This obtrusiveness of inanimate objects is infallible evidence of an inherent concern with mental disintegration. (45)

Kracauer thus links mental instability or abnormality with a heightened interest in bodily sensations and in the inanimate world: distorted mental states heighten our corporeal self-awareness (Epstein's 'coneaesthesis') as well as the 'physiognomy of things' (Balazs) i.e. our perception of things as extensions of our mental states.

In "Jean Vigo" (1947) Kracauer praises Vigo's camera for not discriminating 'between human beings and objects, animate and inanimate nature. As if led by the meandering camera, he exhibits the material components of mental processes' (48). Vigo's originality consists in treating objects not only as "silent accomplices of our thoughts and feelings" (49) but exploring situations in which objects influence dramatically our thoughts and feelings rather than merely accompanying them. While in the article on 'terror films' Kracauer associated *abnormal mental* states with a *heightened attention to the inanimate world*, here he draws a similar connection between *the unconscious* and *the material world*: 'And since increasing intellectual awareness tends to reduce the power of objects over the mind, [Vigo] logically chooses people who are deeply rooted in the material world as leading characters' (49). The unconscious acts as a bridge connecting the animate and the inanimate realm: for Kracauer, inanimate objects embody our unconscious in a way reminiscent of Epstein's photogénie and Balazs's physiognomy.

It is in "Silent Film Comedy" (1951) that Kracauer's view of the inanimate world on film comes fully into focus. Silent film comedy is essential to his theory of film inasmuch as its exposure of the powerlessness of human beings, reduced to automata, and its heightened attention to inanimate objects, especially to their 'malice towards anything human' (214), prefigures 'the aesthetics of alienation' Kracauer would develop more fully in *Theory of Film* (1960). Kracauer describes the relationship between humans and inanimate objects as a power struggle in which humans are repeatedly defeated: 'Instead of making us independent of the whims of matter [the progressive gadgets of modernity] were the shock troops of unconquered nature and inflicted upon us defeat after defeat' (214), from which the only rescue was 'a matter of sheer chance rather than personal

accomplishment' (215). We can perhaps trace the origin of Kracauer's idea of film's affinity for 'the fortuitous' and 'the random', in *Theory of Film*, back to his acknowledgement of the material world's maliciousness toward us in the silent film comedy essay. Echoing Balazs's association of 'visible man' with silent cinema, Kracauer points to the introduction of sound as the end of the 'genuine cinema' of silent film comedy. Sound, and speech, shifted cinema from the 'the depths of material life which words do not penetrate' to 'the dimension of discursive reasoning in which everything was, somehow, labeled and digested verbally' (216-217): 'the depths of material life' refers not only to the inanimate realm but also to the subconscious inasmuch as it shares the inarticulateness and irrationality of the material world.

The material world as "the pranks of objects and the sallies of nature" (216) represents only one side of Kracauer's idea of material reality on screen. Throughout his writings he alternates between describing the relationship between cinema and reality in terms of 'malicious physiognomy' and describing cinema as a meaningless, affectless, 'barren' inventory of the material world. Thus, departing from Balazs's notion of the inherently symbolic nature of objects, Kracauer underscores the inherent meaninglessness of the photograph by contrasting it with memory: 'Photography grasps what is given as a spatial (or temporal) continuum; memory images retain what is given only insofar as it has significance [which is not reducible to spatial and temporal terms]' (Kracauer 1995:50). Photography as a technology is predicated on the 'evacuation of meaning from the objects' (53) because its likeness'does not immediately divulge how it reveals itself to cognition' (52). The shudder photographs—especially old photographs—provoke in us results precisely from this quality: photographs eternalize 'not the knowledge [truth content, semiotic value] of the original but [only] the spatial configuration of a moment' (56).

However, it is precisely in photography's—and film's—*evacuation of meaning* from objects—whose psychological equivalent is a condition known as 'flat affect', one of the 'negative symptoms' of schizophrenia—that Kracauer locates its redemptive potential. Film's 'barren' inventory of nature, its 'warehousing of nature,'

> promotes the confrontation of consciousness with nature. […] But if the remnants of nature are not oriented toward the memory image, then the order they assume through the image is necessarily provisional. […] The capacity to stir up the elements of nature is one of the possibilities of film. (62)

The evacuation of meaning from material reality is linked to another especially cinematic feature that translates 'flat affect' into aesthetic terms—the episodic narrative, an embodiment of cinema's 'affinity for endlessness,' which it shares with the modern novel. In the novel and film, both products of modernity's groundlessness,the eternity of epic time has been replaced by a 'chronological [fallen] time without beginning and end' (Kracauer 1997:233), which arranges events in a never-ending, a-pathetic (devoid of pathos), 'affectively flat' series of 'one after another' with no hope for transcendence/meaning/value.

*Theory of Film*locates cinema's redemptive potential in its derangement of perception, memory, time, space and causality. The theory of redemption depends on Kracauer's own *redemptionof certain negative aspects of modernity and psychological*

abnormalities into positive aesthetic qualities, which he posits as 'the basic affinities of film' essential to its realism: film's affinities for the indeterminate, the unstaged, the infinite, the fortuitous, and the transient disguise negative effects of mass culture—fragmentation, distraction, groundlessness, relativism, and solitude—and mental disturbances (affective flattening, avolition, dissociative fugues). Echoing Balazs's celebration of microphysiognomy's challenge to totalizing/rationalizing interpretation, Kracauer insists that we can reconnect with reality not by trying to revive an impossible sense of wholeness but by fragmenting reality even more, breaking it down into unfamiliar configurations (e.g. through composition and editing). He redeems *distraction* and *fragmentation*—usually symptomatic of various mental disorders—as a desirable aesthetic quality signifying *autonomy* and *indeterminacy*. He posits the failure to construct a coherent view of the world—i.e. to narrativize, instead of merely do an inventory of, the world—not as a worrisome regression of our perceptual and cognitive stance towards reality but as a way to reconnect with reality. Conversely, he condemns the inability to atomize the world, to break down all connections between things, to see every thing as dis-embedded from its habitual network of relations to other things, for reducing the world to a symbol or a metaphor, a mere mental representation. Rather than viewing the derangement of our habitual experience of time in terms of past, present and future, as a sign of mental or cognitive aberration—the inability to position oneself temporally, to distinguish the past from the present and the future, which also determines our ability to distinguish causes from effects, and to attribute motivation to certain acts—he points to it as a way of overcoming our alienation from reality. Kracauer reinterprets positively the degradation of values, beliefs and norms, suggesting that it is precisely the insignificance of events and their relative value that makes them cinematic. Thus, in a truly cinematic film major plot events are replaced by multiple, indeterminate incidents with no clear causal relation between them. Rather than seeing randomness and arbitrariness as revealing the absurdity of existence under the conditions of modernity (as Beckett would) Kracauer emphasizes their *democratizing* potential. He redeems *distraction* as *episodicity* (praisingit for challenging the totalitarianism of plot), *moral and existential relativism* or *groundlessness* as *ambiguity* and *indeterminacy*, *solitude* and *alienation*—fragmentation on a social level—as states of (Kantian) *aesthetic disinterestedness*, and *melancholy*as a more *ethical* way of relating to reality.

Although Epstein, Balazs, and Kracauer are considered representative of an intuitionist (Aitken)[17] or revelationist (Turvey)[18] tradition of realism, their belief in cinema's potential to *reveal the material world* is, in fact, rooted in a theory of cinema as *transcending the limitations of the material world,* affirming the mind's triumph over matter: their theories, which combine *an aesthetic of isolation* with *an aesthetic of alienation*, articulate a *mental*, rather than *corporeal*, realism. The aesthetic of isolation refers to cinema's ability to focus our attention on things we overlook in everyday life by separating objects from its spatial and temporal context, transposing them into another, spiritual dimension. The aesthetic of alienation concerns cinema's 'tendency to the unorganized and diffuse' (Kracauer, "The Photographic Approach" 2012:211), which proceeds from its *automatic* (intentionality-free) transcription of the *visual excess* of the material world without any special attention to the human i.e. without privileging the animate over the inanimate. Epstein, Balazs and Kracauer locate cinema's redemptive potential both in its aesthetic of alienation, predicated on *diffused attention* or *inattention*,

and in its aesthetic of isolation, which functions through the *excessive focusing ofattention* (via the framing and scaling of shots). They celebrate cinema for its *de-realizing* and *depersonalizing* power, for denying the material world an autonomous existence—inasmuch as cinema's images are free of the temporal and spatial limitations of the material world—and, at the same time, for denying the human subject autonomy—inasmuch as the human on screen is just another material phenomenon among many, rather than an independent entity organizing the world by attributing value to it.

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Notes

[1] See Temenuga Trifonova, “Introduction: That Perpetually Obscure Object of Theory” in *European Film Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2008), xiii-xxxiv.

[2] Langdale hints at the disturbing implications of Münsterberg’s theory of film as perfectly mimicking the operations of the mind: ‘Münsterberg’s viewer may…be justifiably described as an automaton responding thoughtlessly to the powerful stimulus of the motion picture’ (22).

[3] Liebman reads Epstein’s photogénie as a theory of cinematic representation ‘very far removed from any notion of realism’ (86).

[4]For Epstein, thought in images is 'the foundation of verbal thought' (*Esprit de cinéma* (359). It is at the level of the *inarticulateness* of visual language that the human and the nonhuman co-exist.

[5] Cinema's 'complete relativity of every aspect of nature has only one point of departure, only one point of reference, only one judge: man. […] But this measurement is itself measured by what it purports to measure: it is the relative of relativity, an absolute variable' (*L'intelligence d'une machine* 313, 314).

[6]The cinematograph shows us the material world through the prism of quantum physics: 'Fluidity–the reality of the cinematographic experience–is also the reality of a scientific outlook, which sees in every substance a gaseous structure' (*Le Cinéma du diable* 322).

[7] On the history of 'photogénie', including a comparison between 'photogénie' and Benjamin's 'aura', see chapter 1 in Christophe Wall-Romana's*Jean Epstein: Corporeal Cinema and Philosophy.*

[8] See Temenuga Trifonova, *Warped Minds: Cinema and Psychopathology* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 2014).

[9] Erica Carter traces the origin of Balazs's physiognomic understanding of aesthetic perception to the debate between Lavater and Goethe in the course of their collaboration on Lavater's *Physiognomical Fragments*. While Lavater saw the relationship between body and soul *semiotically*, the body functioning as a sign of the spiritual content, Goethe developed a *syntactic* notion of physiognomy '"in which every bodily element stands in a dialectical and mutually determining relationship with a hypothetical conception of the whole"' (Richard Gray qtd. in Carter xxvii).

[10] Tom Gunning 149

[11]Ibid149

[12] On Epstein's early evocation of animism and primitive religions see Rachel Moore's "A Different Nature."

[13] On this aspect of Epstein's theory seeLudovic Cortade's "The 'Microscope of Time'" and Trond Lundemo's "A Temporal Perspective."

[14] See Nicole Brenez's "Ultra-Modern."

[15] When discussing the 'aura' of the middle-ground shot, in which the character imbues the more tightly framed frame with 'the emanation of his soul' Balazs admits that, 'in the final analysis, it is only human beings that matter. And the "expressions" of objects become significant only in so far as they relate to human expression' (2010:51).

[16] On the relationship between realism and phenomenology, see Allan Casebier's*Film and Phenomenology.*

[17]Aitken explores two traditions of realist film theory, the intuitionist realist tradition and the 19th century Lukacsian tradition.

[18]Turvey's revelationist tradition includes Epstein, Vertov, Balazs and Kracauer, who emphasize film's ability 'to uncover features of reality invisible to human vision' because of its limitations (2). While Turvey criticizes Epstein's skepticism, claiming that it's based on a category mistake, Christophe Wall-Romana charges Turvey with 'bracketing the psycho-sensorial and ethical aspects of photogenie' (2012:62) in order to criticize the truth-value of Epstein's statements.