Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

TCLC 92

Volume 92

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

Criticism of the Works of Novelists, Poets, Playwrights, Short Story Writers, and Other Creative Writers Who Lived between 1900 and 1960, from the First Published Critical Appraisals to Current Evaluations

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Preface

Since its inception more than fifteen years ago, *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* has been purchased and used by nearly 10,000 school, public, and college or university libraries. *TCLC* has covered more than 500 authors, representing 58 nationalities, and over 25,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical response to twentieth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as *TCLC*. In the words of one reviewer, "there is nothing comparable available." *TCLC* "is a gold mine of information—dates, pseudonyms, biographical information, and criticism from books and periodicals—which many libraries would have difficulty assembling on their own."

Scope of the Series

TCLC is designed to serve as an introduction to authors who died between 1900 and 1960 and to the most significant interpretations of these author's works. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of this period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. In organizing and reprinting the vast amount of critical material written on these authors, *TCLC* helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in *TCLC* presents a comprehensive survey of an author's career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Every fourth volume of *TCLC* is devoted to literary topics. These topic entries widen the focus of the series from individual authors to such broader subjects as literary movements, prominent themes in twentieth-century literature, literary reaction to political and historical events, significant eras in literary history, prominent literary anniversaries, and the literatures of cultures that are often overlooked by English-speaking readers.

TCLC is designed as a companion series to Gale's *Contemporary Literary Criticism,* which reprints commentary on authors now living or who have died since 1960. Because of the different periods under consideration, there is no duplication of material between *CLC* and *TCLC*. For additional information about *CLC* and Gale's other criticism titles, users should consult the Guide to Gale Literary Criticism Series preceding the title page in this volume.

Coverage

Each volume of *TCLC* is carefully compiled to present:

- criticism of authors, or literary topics, representing a variety of genres and nationalities
- both major and lesser-known writers and literary works of the period
- 6-12 authors or 3-6 topics per volume
- individual entries that survey critical response to each author's work or each topic in literary history, including early criticism to reflect initial reactions; later criticism to represent any rise or decline in reputation; and current retrospective analyses.

Organization of This Book

An author entry consists of the following elements: author heading, biographical and critical introduction, list of principal works, reprints of criticism (each preceded by an annotation and a bibliographic citation), and a bibliography of further reading.

- The **Author Heading** consists of the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. If an author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym will be listed in the author heading and the real name given in parentheses on the first line of the biographical and critical introduction. Also located at the beginning of

the introduction to the author entry are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose languages use nonroman alphabets.

- The **Biographical and Critical Introduction** outlines the author's life and career, as well as the critical issues surrounding his or her work. References to past volumes of *TCLC* are provided at the beginning of the introduction. Additional sources of information in other biographical and critical reference series published by Gale, including *Short Story Criticism, Children's Literature Review, Contemporary Authors, Dictionary of Literary Biography,* and *Something about the Author,* are listed in a box at the end of the entry.

- Some *TCLC* entries include **Portraits** of the author. Entries also may contain reproductions of materials pertinent to an author's career, including manuscript pages, title pages, dust jackets, letters, and drawings, as well as photographs of important people, places, and events in an author's life.

- The **List of Principal Works** is chronological by date of first book publication and identifies the genre of each work. In the case of foreign authors with both foreign-language publications and English translations, the title and date of the first English-language edition are given in brackets. Unless otherwise indicated, dramas are dated by first performance, not first publication.

- Critical essays are prefaced by **Annotations** providing the reader with information about both the critic and the criticism that follows. Included are the critic's reputation, individual approach to literary criticism, and particular expertise in an author's works. Also noted are the relative importance of a work of criticism, the scope of the essay, and the growth of critical controversy or changes in critical trends regarding an author. In some cases, these annotations cross-reference essays by critics who discuss each other's commentary.

- A complete **Bibliographic Citation** designed to facilitate location of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism.

- Criticism is arranged chronologically in each author entry to provide a perspective on changes in critical evaluation over the years. All titles of works by the author featured in the entry are printed in boldface type to enable the user to easily locate discussion of particular works. Also for purposes of easier identification, the critic's name and the publication date of the essay are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the journal in which it appeared. Some of the essays in *TCLC* also contain translated material. Unless otherwise noted, translations in brackets are by the editors; translations in parentheses or continuous with the text are by the critic. Publication information (such as footnotes or page and line references to specific editions of works) have been deleted at the editor's discretion to provide smoother reading of the text.

- An annotated list of **Further Reading** appearing at the end of each author entry suggests secondary sources on the author. In some cases it includes essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights.

Cumulative Indexes

- Each volume of *TCLC* contains a cumulative **Author Index** listing all authors who have appeared in Gale's Literary Criticism Series, along with cross references to such biographical series as *Contemporary Authors* and *Dictionary of Literary Biography.* For readers' convenience, a complete list of Gale titles included appears on the first page of the author index. Useful for locating authors within the various series, this index is particularly valuable for those authors who are identified by a certain period but who, because of their death dates, are placed in another, or for those authors whose careers span two periods. For example, F. Scott Fitzgerald is found in *TCLC,* yet a writer often associated with him, Ernest Hemingway, is found in *CLC.*

- Each *TCLC* volume includes a cumulative **Nationality Index** which lists all authors who have appeared in *TCLC* volumes, arranged alphabetically under their respective nationalities, as well as Topics volume entries devoted to particular national literatures.

- Each new volume in Gale's Literary Criticism Series includes a cumulative **Topic Index,** which lists all literary topics treated in *NCLC, TCLC, LC 1400-1800,* and the *CLC* yearbook.

- Each new volume of *TCLC,* with the exception of the Topics volumes, includes a **Title Index** listing the titles of all literary works discussed in the volume. In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Gale has also produced a **Special Paperbound Edition** of the *TCLC* title index. This annual cumulation lists all titles discussed in the series since its inception and is issued with the first volume of *TCLC* published each year. Additional copies of the index are available on request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the following year's cumulation. Titles discussed in the Topics volume entries are not included *TCLC* cumulative index.

Citing Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume in Gale's literary Criticism Series may use the following general forms to footnote reprinted criticism. The first example pertains to materials drawn from periodicals, the second to material reprinted from books.

[1]William H. Slavick, "Going to School to DuBose Heyward," *The Harlem Renaissance Re-examined,* (AMS Press, 1987); reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism,* Vol. 59, ed. Jennifer Gariepy (Detroit: Gale Research, 1995), pp. 94-105.

[2]George Orwell, "Reflections on Gandhi," *Partisan Review,* 6 (Winter 1949), pp. 85-92; reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism,* Vol. 59, ed. Jennifer Gariepy (Detroit: Gale Research, 1995), pp. 40-3.

Suggestions Are Welcome

In response to suggestions, several features have been added to *TCLC* since the series began, including annotations to critical essays, a cumulative index to authors in all Gale literary criticism series, entries devoted to criticism on a single work by a major author, more extensive illustrations, and a title index listing all literary works discussed in the series since its inception.

Readers who wish to suggest authors or topics to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to write the editors.

Acknowledgments

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Kandinsky, Vasili, photograph. The Bettmann Archive. Reproduced by permission.

Contents

Jean Epstein

1897–1953

French director, poet, and critic.

INTRODUCTION

One of the foremost directors of the French silent cinema, Epstein is also remembered as a cinematic theorist whose writings such as *Ecrits sur le cinema* examined the philosophical impact of film. Epstein's works, considered precursors of the avant-garde movement in film, are admired for their visual modernity and innovative techniques. His use of cinematic devices such as close ups, overlapping images, and non-sequential narrative foreshadowed techniques that would not be employed by other filmmakers for several decades. The creative nature of Epstein's best-known works, such as *La chute de la maison Usher* (*The Fall of the House of Usher*) and *Coeur fidèle,* offers a significant artistic transition between the experimental nature of silent films and the French *Nouvelle Vague* (New Wave) movement of the 1960s.

Biographical Information

Epstein was born in Warsaw into a Jewish family. When his father died in 1908, the family relocated to Switzerland, where he attended secondary school. He attended university in Lyon, France, and received a medical degree. At Lyon, he met the pioneer filmmaker Auguste Lumière. Influenced by the works of American directors Charlie Chaplin and D. W. Griffith, Epstein and Lumière founded a film journal, *Le promenoir,* in 1920. The next year, Epstein published *Bonjour cinema,* a treatise on poetry, photography and the nature of the relatively new artistic medium of film. The positive response to his early films such as *Pasteur,* the biography of scientist Louis Pasteur, allowed Epstein to set up his own production company, *Les Films Jean Epstein.* In a short time, he produced a number of diverse films, including *The Fall of the House of Usher* and *La glace à trois faces.* However, with the advent of sound technology, Epstein's experimental works fell out of favor, and he relocated to Brittany, where he made short films and documentaries. At the beginning of World War II, Epstein and his sister were captured by the Gestapo, but they were not deported. Unable to make films because of the German occupation in France, Epstein worked for the Red Cross and honed his writing skills. In 1947, he returned to Brittany, where he finished his career with several critically acclaimed films, most notably *Le tempestaire,* the tale of a French fisherman. Although Epstein continued to write, he ceased filmmaking shortly thereafter. In 1953, he died of a cerebral hemorrhage.

Major Works

Epstein's first film, *Pasteur,* was a biography that did not display the cinematic innovations of later films. *Coeur fidèle,* the story of a romantic triangle, however, utilized such innovative devices as non-sequential timelines and flashback sequences. Epstein strapped the camera to a merry-go-round at one point to provide images of increasing twirling and dizziness. The startlingly inventive and fantastic elements of Epstein's early works such as *Mauprat,* are considered a precursor of works of the Spanish filmmaker Luis Buñuel, who worked with Epstein on his early films. However, the frequently surreal and experimental content of these works hindered both their critical and popular success. One of Epstein's most highly regarded films, *La glace à trois faces* tells the story of a young man with three mistresses. When he suddenly dies, the women describe him in such diverse ways it appears that they know three different men. This film's visual inventiveness is displayed in overlapping images and use of the close-up, Epstein's favorite cinematic device. *The Fall of the House Of Usher,* based on Edgar Allan Poe's short story, is the tale of an artist who paints his wife's portrait. However, he finds that as he works, her health fails. Here, Epstein's cinematic devices that anticipate works of filmmakers several decades later include innovative lighting, flashbacks, and slow-motion photography. Epstein's first Breton film, *Finis terrae* is shot as a documentary but utilizes innovative camera styles. *Le tempestaire* is considered by many critics to be the culmination of his most experimental techniques, such as slowed sound and overlapping visual elements. In this film, Epstein rejected the romanticism and extravagance that typified Hollywood productions in favor of simplicity and realism, a philosophy mirrored in his life as well as his art.

Critical Reception

Although Epstein is not well known today, modern filmmakers' aesthetic and stylistic debt to him is apparent with the advent of the cinematic avant-garde movement. His films are rarely shown, but limited recent viewings have served to emphasize his modernity. Many of his techniques, in fact, were so advanced that they have only been recently been identified as foreshadowing contemporary cinematic devices. Today, Epstein is remembered as a filmmaker and theorist who sought to continuously examine the connection between the viewer and the screen.

PRINCIPAL WORKS

Bonjour cinema (essays and poetry) 1921
La poésie d'aujourd'hui (poetry) 1921
Pasteur (film) 1922
L'auberge rouge (film) 1923
La belle nivernaise (film) 1923
Coeur fidèle (film) 1923
La montagne infidèle (film) 1923
L'affiche (film) 1924
Le lion des mogols (film) 1924
Les aventures de Robert Macaire (film) 1925
Le double amour (film) 1925
Mauprat (film) 1926
La glace à trois faces (film) 1927
Six et demi onze (un kodak) (film) 1927
La chute de la maison Usher (film) 1928
Finis terrae (film) 1929
Sa tête (film) 1929
Le pas de la mule (film) 1930
Mor-Vran (film) 1931
L'homme à l'Hispano (film) 1932
L'or des mers (film) 1932
La chatelaine du Liban (film) 1933
Le cinema du diable (essays) 1947
L'intelligence d'une machine (essays) 1947
Le tempestaire (film) 1947
Les feux de la mer (film) 1948
Esprit du cinema (essays) 1955
Ecrits sur le cinema (essays) 1974

CRITICISM

Catherine Wunscher (essay date 1953)

SOURCE: "Jean Epstein," in *Sight and Sound,* Vol. 23, No. 2, October-December, 1953, p. 106.

[*In the following essay, Wunscher praises the magical elements of Epstein's work, noting that their lack of dialogue provides a more pure cinematic experience.*]

Being about the same age as the sound film myself, I am one of the generation that was astonished when the characters in *Modern Times* didn't talk. Of course, since that time, I have seen *Potemkin, Caligari, La Charrette Fantome, The Kid, Greed, Metropolis, Chapeau de Paille d'Italie,* etc., but I have never been as fascinated by silent images as I was by Jean Epstein's, whose shadows have outlived him. Again, I had never before realised how much the screen lost when it was allowed to talk. Living in a white frame, Epstein's phantoms take on an independent existence, a true gift of mystery and enchantment.

After having seen for the first time, at the rate of three a day, most of Jean Epstein's films, my judgment is somewhat paralysed. What can one say, except that they are beautiful, with the incontestable beauty of masterworks? Epstein gave me something I had been vainly searching for in contemporary production (and had failed to find except in Renoir and Ford): a purely cinematic emotion, a beauty based uniquely on rhythm and the plastic perfection of moving images.

While these memories are still fresh, I must try to analyse something of what I found.

Up to ***La Chute de la Maison Usher*** (1928), Epstein's films seem curiously *demodé.* Certainly, there are some remarkable moments—the night sequence and the execution in ***L'Auberge Rouge*** (1923), the two lovers meeting by the water's edge and the country fair in ***Coeur Fidèle*** (1923), the automobile death race in ***La Glace à Trois Faces*** (1927); but the "modernistic" and historical styles of decor appear restrictive now. When one remembers that he made these films between the ages of 25 and 29 (he was born in Warsaw, of a French father, in 1897), one is inclined to reconsider this verdict; yet the general impression persists.

La Chute de la Maison Usher stands a little apart from the rest of his work. (It is little known, incidentally, that Bunuel was the assistant director.) The film contains some unforgettable imagery: the vistas of corridors with a wind sweeping down them, the bizarre hangings, guttering candles, the supernatural features of Madame Gance, and the splendid, marvellous, strange and too brief sequence of the burial, in which four men, walking through a landscape stripped bare by autumn, carry a white coffin behind which floats a long white veil. Edgar Allan Poe was not betrayed.

But the real revelation comes with ***Finis Terrae*** (1929), and continues up to ***Le Tempestaire*** (1947), films with a love and understanding of the sea, of Brittany, and of simple, noble, hard-pressed people. Before writing of Rossellini and the birth of neo-realism, critics should look at these films by Epstein. All the beauty of the austere images in the final scene of *Paisa* is already there in 1929, in Epstein's figures stretched out on a white sandy beach, scarcely distinguishable from the surrounding rocks.

The actors in these films are not only Bretons and thick-set Breton women, always in mourning for a loved one; they are, too, the unceasing wind, blowing salt water spray along with itself, flattening the drenched manes of horses, swallowing up candle flames, eddying peasant women's skirts already soaked by the rain and the sea, fluttering black veils against a grey sky—the wind that twists round trees, bends flimsy grasses, sharpens the sound of horses galloping on the little island of Bannec; and, above all, the sea, that Epstein never tires of photographing—calm, crowned with circlets of foam, swelling, breaking ceaselessly on the rocks, sending up its immaculate foam to fall again, slowly, on succeeding waves; the sea of great storms, sometimes throwing up an

oar, sometimes a body, sometimes a necklace, sometimes a mysterious casket, containing, perhaps, ***L'Or des Mers:*** the sea by which these people are obliged to live, and by which they are punished. Unlike the Flaherty of *Man of Aran,* Epstein does not describe exceptional circumstances, but a people whom he watched living day by day, his eyes opened wide by love. Sometimes, unconsciously, one licks one's lips, astonished not to find the taste of salt on them.

Epstein's films are slow; when their narrative finally reaches its end, it seems to be because life has brought it there. He is never chary of lingering over a detail—on the contrary, his stories are often composed only of details, integrated into a complete fresco. He will dwell on the limbs, the walk of a character if the motion fascinates him, on shrivelled hands, a handkerchief being dropped, a single face. He will contemplate a pool of water with the rain driving into it (***L'Auberge Rouge***), a face reflected in a tarnished mirror (***Coeur Fidèle***), a bleeding hand (***Finis Terrae***), faces that exchange long and slow glances, an Ile de France landscape: or, simply, the sea whose last secret he seems determined to prise out.

His characters are never in a hurry. They live their daily lives under our eyes, performing the innumerable everyday acts and gestures that make up their "plot"; but one doesn't for a moment long for the feverish rhythm of most of today's films, in which nothing is allowed unless it advances the action; the montage of Epstein's films gives them a rhythm which is like the rhythm of breathing.

The term "magician of the screen" has been used and abused. Jean Epstein is one of the few who perhaps deserve it. The little girl in love in ***Coeur Fidèle,*** and her crippled friend, Lady Usher, the Breton fishermen and their families, the passionate poetic images of men and nature, these will live with the breath of love that Jean Epstein gave them.

Jean Epstein (essay date 1974)

SOURCE: "Magnification, and other Writings," in *October,* No. 3, Spring, 1977, pp. 9-25.

[*In the following excerpt, which was originally published in French in 1974 as part of* Ecrits sur le cinema, *Epstein expounds on the cinematic concepts of the close-up and the different means by which he conveys the passing of time in his films.*]

I will never find the way to say how I love American close-ups. Point blank. A head suddenly appears on screen and drama, now face to face, seems to address me personally and swells with an extraordinary intensity. I am hypnotized. Now the tragedy is anatomical. The decor of the fifth act is this corner of a cheek torn by a smile. Waiting for the moment when 1,000 meters of intrigue converge in a muscular *dénoument* satisfies me more than the rest of the film. 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 carries 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.

The close-up is the soul of the cinema. It can be brief because the value of the photogenic is measured in seconds. If it is too long, I don't find continuous pleasure in it. Intermittent paroxysms affect me the way needles do. Until now, I have never seen an entire minute of pure photogeny. Therefore, one must admit that the photogenic is like a spark that appears in fits and starts. It imposes a *découpage* a thousand times more detailed than that of most films, even American ones. Mincemeat. Even more beautiful than a laugh is the face preparing for it. I must interrupt. I love the mouth which is about to speak and holds back, the gesture which hesitates between right and left, the recoil before the leap, and the moment before landing, the becoming, the hesitation, the taut spring, the prelude, and even more than all these, the piano being tuned before the overture. The photogenic is conjugated in the future and in the imperative. It does not allow for stasis.

I have never understood motionless close-ups. They sacrifice their essence, which is movement. Like the hands of a watch, one of which is on the hour and the other on the half hour, the legs of St. John the Baptist create a temporal dissonance. Rodin or someone else explained it: in order to create the impression of movement. A divine illusion? No, the gimmick for a toy presented at the *"concours Lépine,"*[1] and patented so that it can't be used to make lead soldiers. It seemed to Rodin that Watteau's *Cythera* could be animated by the movement of the eye from left to right over it. The motor-bikes posters race uphill by means of symbols: hatching, hyphens, blank spaces. Right or wrong, they thereby endeavor to conceal their ankylosis. The painter and the sculptor maul life, but this bitch has beautiful, real legs and escapes from under the nose of the artist crippled by inertia. Sculpture and painting, paralyzed in marble or tied to canvas, are reduced to pretence in order to capture movement, the indispensable. The ruses of reading. You must not maintain that art is created out of obstacles and limits. You, who are lame have made a cult of your crutch. The cinema demonstrates your error. Cinema is all movement without any need for stability or equilibrium. Of all the sensory logarithms of reality, the photogenic is based on movement. An exhibition of inventions held annually in Paris. Derived from time, it is acceleration. It opposes the event to stasis, relationship to dimension. Gearing up and gearing down. This new beauty is as sinuous as the curve of the stock market index. It is no longer the function of a variable but a variable itself.

The close-up, the keystone of the cinema, is the maximum expression of this photogeny of movement. When static, it verges on contradiction. The face alone doesn't unravel its expressions but the head and lens moving together or apart, to the left and right of each other. Sharp focus is avoided.

The landscape may represent a state of mind. It is above all a state. A state of rest. Even in those landscapes most often shown in documentaries of picturesque Brittany or of a trip to Japan are in serious error. But 'the landscape's dance' is photogenic. Through the window of a train or a ship's porthole, the world acquires a new, specifically cinematic vivacity. A road is a road but the ground which flees under the four beating hearts of an automobile's belly transports me. The Oberland and Semmering tunnels swallow me up, and my head, bursting through the roof, hits against their vaults. Seasickness is decidedly pleasant. I'm on board the falling airplane. My knees bend. This area remains to be exploited. I yearn for a drama aboard a merry-go-round, or more modern still, in airplanes. The fair below and its surroundings would be progressively confounded. Centrifuged in this way, and adding vertigo and rotation to it, the tragedy would increase its photogenic quality ten-fold. I would like to see a dance shot successively from the four cardinal directions. Then, with strokes of a pan shot or of a turning foot, the room as it is seen by the dancing couple. An intelligent *découpage* will reconstitute the double life of the dance by linking together the viewpoints of the spectator and the dancer, objective and subjective, if I may say so. When a character is going to meet another, I want to go along with him not behind or in front of him or by his side, but in him. I would like to look through his eyes and see his hand reach out from under me as if it were my own; interruptions of opaque film would imitate the blinking of our eyelids.

One need not exclude the landscape but adapt it. Such is the case with a film I've seen, *Souvenir d'été à Stockholm.* Stockholm didn't appear at all. Rather, male and female swimmers who had doubtlessly not even been asked for their permission to be filmed. People diving. There were kids and old people, men and women. No one gave a damn about the camera and had a great time. And so did I! A boat loaded with strollers and animation. Elsewhere people fished. A crowd watched. I don't remember what show the crowd was waiting for; it was difficult to move through these groups. There were Café terraces. Swings. Races on the grass and through the reeds. Everywhere, men, life, swarms, truth.

That's what must replace the Pathé color newsreel where I always search for the words "Bonnie Fête" written in golden letters at the corner of the screen.[2]

But the close-up must be introduced, or else one deliberately handicaps the style. Just as a stroller leans down to get a better look at a plant, an insect, or a pebble, the lens must include in a sequence describing a field, close-ups of a flower, a fruit, or an animal: living nature. I never travel as solemnly as these cameramen. I look, I sniff at things, I touch. Close-up, close-up, close-up. Not the recommended points of view, the horizons of the Touring Club, but natural, indigenous, and photogenic details. Shop windows, cafés, quite wretched urchins, a cashier, ordinary gestures made with their full capacity for realization, a fair, the dust of automobiles, an atmosphere.

The landscape film is, for the moment, a big zero. People look for the picturesque in them. The picturesque in cinema is zero, nothing, negation. About the same as speaking of colors to a blind man. The film is susceptible only to photogeny. Picturesque and photogenic coincide only by chance. All the worthless films shot near the Promenade des Anglais proceed from this confusion; and their sunsets are further proof of this.

Possibilities are already appearing for the drama of the microscope, a hystophysiology of the passions, a classification of the amorous sentiments into those which do and those which do not need Gram's solution.[3] Young girls will consult them instead of the fortune teller. While we are waiting, we have an initial sketch in the close-up. It is nearly overlooked, not because it errs, but because it presents a ready-made style, a minute dramaturgy, flayed and vulnerable. The amplifying close-up demands underplaying. It's opposed to the theater where everything is loudly declaimed. A hurricane of murmurs. An interior conviction lifts the mask. It's not about interpreting a role; what's important is the actor's belief in his character, right up to the point where a character's absent-mindedness becomes that of the actor himself. The director suggests, then persuades, then hypnotizes. The film is nothing but a relay between this source of nervous energy and the auditorium which breathes its radiance. That is why the gestures which work best on screen are nervous gestures.

It is paradoxical, or rather extraordinary, that the nervousness which often exaggerates reactions should be photogenic when the screen deals mercilessly with the least forced gestures. Chaplin has created the overwrought hero. His entire performance consists of reflexes of a nervous, tired person. A bell or an automobile horn makes him jump, forces him to stand anxiously, his hand on his chest, because of the nervous palpitations of his heart. This isn't so much an example, but rather a synopsis of his photogenic neurasthenia. The first time that I saw Nazimova agitated and exothermic, living through an intense childhood, I guessed that she was Russian, that she came from one of the most nervous peoples on earth. And the little, short, rapid, spare, one might say involuntary, gestures of Lillian Gish who runs like the hand of a chronometer! The hands of Louise Glaum unceasingly drum a tune of anxiety. Mae Murray, Buster Keaton. *Etc.*

The close-up is drama in high gear. A man says, "I love the far-away princess." Here the verbal gearing down is suppressed. I can see love. It half lowers its eyelids, raises the arc of the eyebrows laterally, inscribes itself on the taut forehead, swells the massiters, hardens the tuft

of the chin, flickers on the mouth and at the edge of the nostrils. Good lighting; how distant the far-away princess is. We're not so delicate that we must be presented with the sacrifice of Iphigenia recounted in alexandrins. We are different. We have replaced the fan by the ventilator and everything else accordingly. We demand to see because of our experimental mentality, because of our desire for a more exact poetry, because of our analytic propensity, because we need to make new mistakes.

The close-up is an intensifying agent because of its size alone. If the tenderness expressed by a face ten times as large is doubtlessly not ten times more moving, it is because in this case, ten, a thousand, or a hundred thousand would—erroneously—have a similar meaning. Merely being able to establish twice as much emotion would still have enormous consequences. But whatever its numerical value, this magnification acts on one's feelings more to transform than to confirm them, and personally, it makes me uneasy. Increasing or decreasing successions of events in the right proportions would obtain effects of an exceptional and fortunate elegance. The close-up modifies the drama by the impact of proximity. Pain is within reach. If I stretch out my arm I touch you, and that is intimacy. I can count the eyelashes of this suffering. I would be able to taste the tears. Never before has a face turned to mine in that way. Ever closer it presses against me, and I follow it face to face. It's not even true that there is air between us; I consume it. It is in me like a sacrament. Maximum visual acuity.

The close-up limits and directs the attention. As an emotional indicator, it overwhelms me. I have neither the right nor the ability to be distracted. It speaks the present imperative of the verb to understand. Just as petroleum potentially exists in the landscape that the engineer gropingly probes, the photogenic and a whole new rhetoric are similarly concealed in the close-up. I haven't the right to think of anything but this telephone. It is a monster, a tower and a character. The power and scope of its whispering. Destinies wheel about, enter, and leave from this pylon as if from an acoustical pigeon house. Through this nexus flows the illusion of my will, a laugh that I like or a number, an expectation or a silence. It is a sensory limit, a solid nucleus, a relay, a mysterious transformer from which everything good or bad may issue. It looks like an idea.

One can't evade an iris. Round about, blackness; nothing to attract one's attention.

This is a cyclopean art, a unisensual art, an iconoscopic retina. All life and attention are in the eye. The eye sees nothing but a face like a great sun. Hayakawa aims his incandescent mask like a revolver. Wrapped in darkness, ranged in the cell-like seats, directed toward the source of emotion by their softer side, the sensibilities of the entire auditorium converge, as if in a funnel, toward the film. Everything else is barred, excluded, no longer valid. Even the music to which one is accustomed is nothing but additional anesthesia for what is not visual. It takes away our cars the way a Valda lozenge takes away our sense of taste. A cinema orchestra need not simulate sound effects. Let it supply a rhythm, preferably a monotonous one. One cannot listen and look at the same time. If there is a dispute, sight, as the most developed, the most specialized, and the most generally popular sense, always wins. Music which attracts attention or the imitation of noises is simply disturbing.

Although sight is already recognized by everyone as the most developed sense, and even though the viewpoint of our intellect and our mores are visual, nevertheless, there has 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.* And after one has grown used to using this new and extremely pleasant intellectual state, it becomes a sort of need, like tobacco or coffee. I have my dose or I don't. Hunger for a hypnosis far more violent than reading offers because reading modifies the functioning of the nervous system much less.

The cinematic feeling is therefore particularly intense. More than anything else, the close-up releases it. Although not dandies, all of us are or are becoming blasé. Art takes to the warpath. To attract customers, the circus showman must improve his acts and speed up his carousel from fair to fair. Being an artist means to astonish and excite. The habit of strong sensations which the cinema is essentially capable of producing, blunts theatrical sensations which are, moreover, of a lesser order. Theater, watch out!

If the cinema magnifies feeling, it magnifies it in every way. Pleasure in it is more pleasurable, but its defects are more defective.

Timeless Time

LEARNING PERSPECTIVE

Every spectacle which is the imitation of a series of events creates, by the very fact of the succession contained within it, a time which is its own, a distortion of historical time. In primitive theatrical manifestations, this illusory time dared depart only a very little from the time in which the described action actually occurred. Similarly, the first designers and painters explored the illusion of relief timidly, hardly knowing how to represent the illusion of spatial depth; they remained attached to the reality of the flat surface on which they worked. Only gradually did man, developing as the imitative animal *par excellence,* become accustomed to providing himself with fictive spaces and times which, proceeding from imitations of nature to secondary and tertiary versions of these first imitations, progressively distanced themselves from their original models.

Thus, the length of mystery plays performed in the Middle Ages reflects the difficulty which minds of this epoch still experience in shifting temporal perspective. At

that time, a drama which did not last almost as long on stage as the actual unfolding of the events would not have seemed believable and sustained the illusion. And the rule of the three unities which established 24 hours as the maximum of solar time which it was permitted to compress into three or four hours of performance time marks another stage of the advance toward the comprehension of chronological abridgement, that is, of temporal relativity. Today, this reduction of duration by one eighth which classical tragedy offered at best seems a very small endeavor compared to the compressions of 1/50,000 which the cinema achieves, though not without inducing slight dizziness.

THE MACHINE WHICH THINKS TEMPORALLY

Another astonishing quality of the cinematograph is its ability to multiply and make immensely more supple the play of temporal perspective, to train the intellect in an exercise which is always difficult: to move from established absolutes to unstable conditionals. Here again, this machine which extends or condenses duration, which demonstrates the variable nature of time, which preaches the relativity of all standards, seems endowed with a kind of psyche. Without it we would not see and therefore would understand nothing at all of a time which may physically be 50,000 times more rapid or four times slower than the one in which we live. It is a physical implement, certainly, whose functioning, however, provides an illusion so fully elaborated and ready for the mind's use that it can be considered as already half-thought, conceived according to the rules of an analysis and synthesis which man, without the cinematic instrument, had been unable to use.

DIMENSIONS OF SPACE

The respect with which the precious standard measures of irradiated platinum are conserved in armored and padlocked tabernacles at constant temperatures recalls the worship accorded to miraculous objects, materializations of revealed truths descended from the absolute in the heavens onto this world of errors. No one, however, considers the meter—a one ten-millionth part of a quarter of the terrestrial meridian line—as a sacred and essential truth. Many countries still use other measuring units. We have seen four millimeters become three and a half centimeters under a magnifying glass long ago. Travellers know that each kilometer has a different meaning depending upon whether it is traversed on foot, on horseback, on a bicycle, in a car, in a train or in a plane, according to the terrain, the climate and the season. Like the lunar, Martian and Venusian meters—one ten-millionth part of a quarter of the meridian lines of this satellite and these planets—the terrestrial meter possesses only a relative significance. And if these celestial bodies, as is believed, gradually contract into themselves, we must ask ourselves where our true meter can be found—whether in the less variable standards of the Bureau of Longitudes or in the subdivision of a meridian line in perpetual regression?

DIMENSIONS OF TIME

More mysteriously, the truth-value of the hour has proved less subject to caution. The hour is not merely the secret product of standard clocks that are also buried in deep crypts and venerated as religious objects. It is nothing but the result of a simple measurement of the globe's surface; it originates on sundials from the trace inscribed by the incomprehensible, divine movement which animates the whole celestial mechanism. While the meridian line can for better or worse be divided by the decimal system, the orbit's elliptical shape refuses to submit to the arbitrariness of this human convention; it imposes its own number of days and nights so tyrannically that even if the total were unsatisfactory, nothing could be done to change it and calendars would have to be readjusted constantly. Occasionally, no doubt, a boring hour seems to pass more slowly than a pleasant one, but these impressions, always confused and often inconsistent, are not sufficient to shake the faith in the inalterable stability of a universal rhythm. A belief also confirmed by the irreversibility of duration, invariably positive, an image of the constancy of astronomical movements, since in its length, breadth and depth, space may be crossed and measured in one way one time and in an opposite way at another. Thus, until the invention of accelerated and slow cinematic motion, it seemed impossible to see—and it was not even dreamed of—a year in the life of a plant condensed in ten minutes, or thirty seconds of an athlete's activity inflated and extended to ten minutes.

TIME IS A RELATION IN SPACE

Thus, an hour and the time it defines, produced and regulated by cosmic dynamism, appears to be of a very different reality than that of the meter and space: more mysterious and more exalted, intangible and immutable. But the cinematograph, by "laminating" time to demonstrate its extreme malleability, has caused it to fall from these heights and reduced it to a dimension analogous to those of space.

The fourth dimension has been discussed for a long time, misconstrued, all the while, as to its nature, its existence even subject to doubt. For certain mathematicians, it was an essentially geometric dimension similar to the three others, a fiction or reality of calculation, yet practically ungraspable because our senses provide us with no data about it. For numerous scholars and novelists, philosophers and poets, it was ether or the means to go to the stars, the habitat of pure spirits or the way to the square the circle. . . . Nevertheless, just as all things which preoccupy man sooner or later come true, the fourth dimension—like the unicorn that will eventually be captured in Nepal—appeared, endowed with probability in the relativists' space-time.

Time, understood as a scale of variables, as the fourth of a system of coordinates in which our representation of the universe is inscribed, would have merely remained for

a long time to come a construct of the mind, satisfying only a restricted audience of scholars, if the cinematograph had not visualized and reinforced this concept by experimentally producing very ample variations, hitherto unknown, in temporal perspective. That our time is the frame of a variable dimension, just as our space is the locus of three kinds of relative distances, can now be understood by everyone because all can see the extension or abridgement of time on screen just as they see the elongation or shortening of a distance through one end or another of a pair of binoculars. If today, every modestly cultivated man can represent the universe as a four dimensional continuum in which all material accidents are situated by the interplay of four spatio-temporal variables; if this richer, more variable, perhaps truer figure is gradually supplanting the three dimensional image of the world just as it had substituted itself for primitive flat schematizations of the earth and heavens; if the indivisible unity of the four factors of space-time is slowly acquiring evidence which modifies the inseparability of the three dimensions of pure space, the cinema is responsible for the wide fame and popularity of the theory with which Einstein and Minkowski have principally associated their names.

FOURTH OR FIRST DIMENSION?

Nevertheless, while the three spatial dimensions merely offer by no means essential differences of position among themselves, the temporal dimension retains a particular character which is at first attributed to the irreversibility of the march of time. Movements within any spatial dimension are supposed, on the contrary, to be capable of being effected in a positive direction sometimes, in a negative direction at others. But since the four dimensions form inseparable covariants, it seems strange that one of them can be irreversible without requiring the three others to also become so. In fact, nothing that moves, whether living or inanimate, can ever erase the route it has travelled. The kilometer traversed while returning does not annul the kilometer traversed while going, but is added to it because it is a new kilometer, different from the first. The evening's route, even if it doesn't differ a millimeter, is always another route than that of the morning, bathed in another light, in another atmosphere, traversed in another frame of mind and with different feelings. The irrevocable march of time effectively imposes a unique, irrecuperable and indestructible, perpetually positive meaning on all the movements of the universe. The *sui-generis* quality of the temporal dimension has a power to orient geometric space in such a way that the successions in it can only be produced according to the direction of this polarization. It is only through the polarized movement which it brings to images that the cinema—when given stereoscopic capacities—will be able to create the perfect illusion of a four dimensional continuum, an alternative reality.

In order to take into consideration the chronological order in which man familiarizes himself with the measures of length, surface and duration, wouldn't it be better to call time the first and not the fourth dimension in recognition of the general orienting function that it exerts over space?

LOCAL AND INCOMMENSURABLE TIMES

Not only does the cinematograph show that time is a controlled dimension correlated with those of space, but that furthermore, all the valuations of this dimension merely have a local value. It is conceded that the astronomical conditions in which the earth is situated impose an aspect and a division of time very different from what they must be in the Andromeda nebula, whose heaven and movements are not the same; for those who have never seen cinematic fast or slow motion, however, it is difficult to imagine, viewing from outside, the appearance that a temporality other than ours could have. That is why a short documentary film which describes in a few minutes twelve months in the life of a plant from its germination through its maturity and withering to the formation of the seed of a new generation (in a few minutes) suffices to make the most extraordinary voyage, the most difficult flight that man has yet attempted, come true for us.

This film seems to free us from terrestrial—that is, solar—time, from whose rhythm, it seemed, nothing would ever dislodge us. We feel introduced to a new universe, to another continuum in which change in time occurs fifty thousand times more rapidly. In this little domain, a special time reigns, a local time which constitutes an enclave within earth time, which is itself merely a local time, though extending over a vaster zone, in its turn enclosed within other times, or juxtaposed and mingled with them. The temporality of the whole of our universe itself is but a specific time, valid for this aggregate but neither beyond it nor in all its interior sections.

By analogy, innumerable ultra-specific temporalities, organizers of atomic ultra-microcosms, are foreseen as probably incommensurable in terms of wave or quantum mechanics, guesses are they share no common measure with solar time.

TIME IS NOT MADE OF TIME

Sustained by the senses, the intellect separates itself with difficulty from its primary conception of a sensory continuum. Just as it had filled space with ether, it had endowed time with a sort of extremely thin consistency corresponding to the uncertain fluidity of ordinary perceptions of duration offered by synesthesia. This exquisite weft, this fine thread of fate, this veil of sorrow, this indefinite substance subtler than ether which even refused to accept the precision of a proper name nevertheless remained a physical reality.

The cinematograph destroyed this illusion; it demonstrates that time is only a perspective generated by the succession of phenomena just as space is only a perspective on the coexistence of objects. Time contains nothing

that can be called time-in-itself any more than space is comprised of space-in-itself. They are only composed, one as much as the other, of relationships, variable in their essence, between appearances which are produced successively or simultaneously. That is why there can be thirty-six different times and twenty kinds of space just as there can be innumerable specific perspectives depending upon the infinitely diverse positions of objects and their observer.

Thus, the cinema, having shown the unreality of continuity and discontinuity alike, confronts us rather brutally with the unreality of space-time.

The Universe Head over Heels

Experience since time immemorial has created the dogma of life's irreversibility. The course of evolution in both the atom and the galaxy, in inorganic matter as in both animal and human forms, derives its irrevocably unique meaning from the loss of energy. The constant increase in entropy is the catch which stops the gears of the terrestrial and celestial machine from ever moving in reverse. Time cannot return to its origin; no effect can precede its cause. And a world which would claim to break with or modify this vectorial order seems both physically impossible and logically unimaginable.

Focus attention, however, on a scene in an old avant garde film or a slapstick comedy that has been filmed in reverse motion. Suddenly, with an undeniable precision, the cinema describes a world which moves from its end to its beginning, an anti-universe which until now man had hardly managed to picture for himself. Dead leaves take off from the ground to hang once again upon tree branches; rain drops spurt upwards from the earth to the clouds; a locomotive swallows its smoke and cinders, inhales its own steam; a machine uses the cold to produce heat and work. Bursting from a husk, a flower withers into a bud which retreats into the stem. As the stem ages, it withdraws into a seed. Life appears only through resurrection, crossing old age's decrepitude into the bloom of maturity, rolling through the course of youth, then of infancy, and finally dissolving in a prenatal limbo. Universal repulsion, the energy loss of entropy, the continual increase of energy constitute truth values contrary to Newton's law and the principles of Carnot and Calusius. Effect has become cause; cause, effect.

Could the structure of the universe be ambivalent? Might it permit both forward and backward movements? Does it admit of a double logic, two determinisms, two antithetical ends?

The Cinema as the Instrument of a Philosophy as Well as of an Art

For several hundred years, the microscope and the telescope have helped to intensify the acuteness of our dominant sense: vision, and reflection on the world's new aspect thereby obtained has prodigiously transformed and developed every philosophical and scientific system. In turn, the cinematograph, although hardly fifty years old, has to its credit some admittedly important revelations, notably in the analysis of movement. But for the general public, the machine which generated the "seventh art" chiefly represents a way of reviving and popularizing the theater, a machine for the fabrication of a type of spectacle accessible to the minds and purses of the largest possible international common denominator. A beneficent and prestigious function, certainly, whose only drawback lies in the stifling effect of its popularity upon those other possibilities of the same instrument which then pass almost unnoticed.

Thus, little or no attention has been paid until now to the many unique qualities film can give to the representation of things. Hardly anyone has realized that the cinematic image carries a warning of something monstrous, that it bears a subtle venom which could corrupt the entire rational order so painstakingly imagined in the destiny of the universe.

Discovery always means learning that objects are not as we had believed them to be; to know more, one must first abandon the most evident certainties of established knowledge. Although not certain, it is not inconceivable that what appears to us as a strange perversity, a surprising nonconformity, as a transgression and a defect of the screen's animated images might serve to advance another step into that "terrible underside of things" which terrified even Pasteur's pragmatism.

The Interchangeability of the Continuous and the Discontinuous: A Kind of Miracle

We know that a film is composed of a large number of images, discrete and slightly dissimilar according to the more or less modified position of the filmed subject, juxtaposed on the film strip. The projection at a certain speed of this series of figures, separated by short intervals of space and time, produces the appearance of uninterrupted movement. And this is the most striking and prodigious quality of the Lumière brothers' machine; it transforms discontinuity into continuity; it permits the synthesis of discontinuous and static elements into a continuous, mobile whole; it effects the transition between the two primordial aspects of nature which have always, ever since the constitution of a metaphysics of science, been opposed as mutually exclusive.

First Manifestation: The Perceptible Continuum

At the level where it is directly or indirectly perceived by the senses, the world at first appears as a rigorously coherent assemblage of material parts between which the existence of a cavity of nothingness, a veritable discontinuity seems so impossible that whenever one is not sure what is there, a substance, baptised ether, has been imagined to fill it up. Indeed, Pascal showed that nature's supposed abhorrence of the void was purely imaginary, but he did not efface that abhorrence of the human intellect