

What Becomes of Bodies on Film?

Abstract

What is the nature of the relation between real bodies existing in a real world, and filmed bodies existing in a projected cinematic universe? The article turns to early film theorists – i.e. Béla Balázs, Siegfried Kracauer, Rudolf Arnheim, and André Bazin – to answer this question. These authors have offered numerous insights into the ways in which film technologies mediate between bodies/objects and their on-screen projection; and the ways in which filmed bodies are related to real bodies. The article synthesizes these insights into three “modalities” under which bodies can be seen to become film. “Preservation”, first, points towards the ambivalent nature of filmed bodies, which oscillate between bodily presence and bodily absence. “Revelation”, second, designates an exploration of unknown or unknowable details on real/filmed bodies through film technologies. “Flattening”, lastly, exposes the geometrical gap between real bodies existing in a three-dimensional universe; and filmed bodies projected on a two-dimensional surface. While each modality is visible, to some extent, in all works of fictional film, their relative importance is highlighted in different examples taken from classical and contemporary film repertoire.

Cite as: Chihab El Khachab (2013) What Becomes of Bodies on Film? *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 30 (2), 173-189. URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10509208.2012.718964>

Introduction

The question – What becomes of bodies on film – takes inspiration from a short article published in 1978 by Stanley Cavell. The article, which is titled ‘What Becomes of Objects on Film?’, begins with the following reflection:

And does this title express a genuine question? That is, does one accept the suggestion that there is a particular relation (or a particular system of relations, awaiting systematic study) that holds between things and their filmed projections, which is to say between the originals now absent from us (by screening) and the new originals now present to us (in photogenesis) – a relation to be thought of as something’s becoming something (say as a caterpillar becomes a butterfly, or as a prisoner becomes a count, or as an emotion becomes conscious, or as after the long night it becomes light)?¹

This passage asks two successive questions: first, is there any meaningful relation between physical objects and their filmed projection?; and second, what is the nature of this relation? Cavell’s short article gives little to answer either question, yet his initial reflection defines an interesting problematic for film theory. Substituting ‘objects’ for ‘bodies’, one might ask: what is the nature of the relation, if any, between physical bodies and their filmed projection?

The question is a priori interesting because it delves into an old theme in the history of film theory, that is, the ontological status of the cinematic image. The predicament here lies not in knowing what film projections are, but rather what it is about cinematic images that produces/reproduces the impression of a body’s or an object’s presence, even as it is physically

¹ Stanley Cavell. “What Becomes of Things on Film?,” in *Cavell on Film*, ed. William Rothman, (Albany: State University of New York Press), 1-2.

absent². Noel Carroll distinguishes between three theoretical schools presenting three distinct answers to this problem: 1) “realist” theorists (e.g. André Bazin, Siegfried Kracauer), which hold that cinematic images are exact mechanical reproductions of real bodies and objects in motion; 2) “creationist” theorists (e.g. Béla Balázs, Rudolf Arnheim, Vsevolod Pudovkin), which hold that cinematic images contain, beyond mechanical reproduction, an ineffable spiritual quality which transcends – yet emanates from – their material bearings; and 3) “psychoanalytical Marxists”, or the majority of film theorists in the United States until the mid-1990s, which hold that cinematic images operate as ideological/subconscious apparatuses alienating onlookers from their actual existence³. This typology shows intriguing gaps between “realists” and “creationists”, on one hand, and “psychoanalytical Marxists”, on the other. There is, of course, a historical gap between European writers such as Arnheim, Bazin, Balázs, and Kracauer, writing from the 1920s to the 1950s, and American “psychoanalytical Marxists” (e.g. Laura Mulvey, Peter Wollen) writing from the 1970s until nowⁱ. But there is also another, deeper gap: a fundamental theoretical divergence over the role of film technologies in the relation between bodies and their cinematic projection.

Whether they viewed cinematic images as mere mechanical reproductions or not, early film theorists were attentive to the material mediation required to project existing bodies on screen – a mediation which involves social agents (e.g. cameramen, editors, directors) and sophisticated technological devices (e.g. cameras, celluloid strips) in empirical processes of film production (e.g. shooting, editing, sound mixing). “Psychoanalytical Marxists”, to use Carroll’s term, are inattentive to these empirical processes. Since the core of their analysis revolves around

² See André Bazin. *What is Cinema? Volume 1*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967); See also Bill Nichols. *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991)

³ Noel Carroll. *Mystifying Movies: Fads and Fallacies in Contemporary Film Theory*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 107

the unmasking of ideological or subconscious discourses in filmic representations themselves, their reflection tends to make simplistic assumptions about the nature of film production – and, by extension, about the relationship between bodies and their cinematic projection⁴. Although it is entirely unfair to label contemporary film theorists as “psychoanalytical Marxists”, most scholars working on the body and its representations in film still tend to disregard empirical processes involved in film production, since their interests lie either in 1) the study of film spectatorship in its embodied and affective nature or 2) the study of structural power dynamics and their inscription over cinematic bodies from different genders, races, or classes⁵ (see, among others, Williams, 1991; Marks, 2000; MacDougall, 2006; Auerbach, 2007; Fuery, 2007).

Setting itself in contrast with contemporary film scholarship, this article seeks to examine and define the relationship between physical bodies and their filmed projection. The analysis will rely on early film theorists – most notably Arnheim, Bazin, Balázs, and Kracauer – in order to retrieve theoretical elements with potential relevance to a richer reflection around the relation between body and film. This essay aims to reactivate old theoretical concerns in new conceptual guises, arguing in favor of an empirical approach to cinematic bodies and their filmic transformations. The article will be divided in two main sections. The first section synthesizes early writings with relevance to the body-film relationship. The synthesis will give particular attention to the role of technological devices, social agents and objects in filmmaking. The second section draws upon the first section’s insights to describe three modalities under which

⁴ See Constantine V. Nakassis. “Theorizing Realism Empirically”, *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film*, 7 (2009): 211-235.

⁵ See, among others, Linda Williams. “Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess”. *Film Quarterly*, 44 (1991): 2-13; Jonathan Auerbach. *Body Shots: Early Cinema’s Incarnations*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007); Patrick Fuery. *New Developments in Film Theory*. (New York: St Martin’s Press, 2007); David MacDougall. *The Corporeal Image: Film, Ethnography, and the Senses*. (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006); Laura Marks. *The Skin of Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

one can conceive the body-film relation – namely, preservation, revelation, and flattening. This section will also provide concrete examples from classical and contemporary motion pictures to illustrate how each modality is seen to operate, assuming all modalities to be more or less visible in all films relying on similar (empirical) processes of production. In this light, the examples selected for analysis are not circumscribed in space, in time, or in a particular national culture: they are selected based on the degree to which a particular modality, defined in theoretical terms, is visible and evidenced in a particular film.

The Camera, the Actor and the World

Along with other early film theorists, Bazin and Balázs shared an implicit concern over the status of film as an emergent art form. Their particular concern was not so much about distinguishing the “artistic” from the “scientific” inclinations driving filmic development – both impulses being entwined since the inception of film technologies – but about establishing the historical distinctiveness of “cinema” as opposed to other art forms, such as painting, sculpture, or even photography. Bazin’s classical essay, “The Ontology of the Photographic Image”, begins with an unusual sketch in art history. Tracing the origins of painting and sculpture to mummification in Ancient Egypt and, more broadly, to the desire “to preserve life by a representation of life”, Bazin goes on to explain how this desire becomes the distinctive prerogative of photography – and later, cinema – as an artistic activity⁶. Starting from another perspective, Balázs’ equally classical essay, “Der sichtbare Mensch” (Visible Man), seeks to demonstrate the relevance of film art in the history of Western (capitalist) civilization. With great literary talent albeit with dubious historical accuracy, Balázs describes a historical passage from print culture – which had

⁶ Bazin, What is Cinema?, 9-11

been dominant since the advent of the printing press – to visual culture – which relies on the cinematograph and its capacity to capture gestures and facial expressions in yet unseen ways⁷.

Bazin's and Balázs' narratives are interesting on two counts. On one hand, they serve as useful reminders that their film theories are viscerally bound with their historical context, which elicited specific social, technological, and aesthetic concerns with mitigated relevance to contemporary film theory. On the other hand, both narratives hint towards the importance of film technologies in reproducing/representing reality, albeit in dissimilar ways. In "The Ontology of the Photographic Image", Bazin intimates that the camera, either photographic or cinematographic, mechanically captures any object or body in its quintessential realness. Here, the term "capture" needs to be understood in its literal sense, for Bazin quite literally means that the camera "traps" an authentic image of real objects and bodies,

(...) for photography does not create eternity as art does, it embalms time, rescuing it from its proper corruption. Viewed in this perspective, the cinema is objectivity in time. The film is no longer content to preserve the object, enshrouded as it were in an instant, as the bodies of insects are preserved intact, out of the distant past, in amber. (...) Now for the first time, the image of things is likewise the image of their duration, change mummified as it were.⁸

The photographic camera preserves the physical bodies it captures much in the same way as mummification preserves the corpses it embalms: it operates intricate technical – and chemical – operations to preserve bodies in an inert form. The cinematographic camera, by contrast, "captures" physical bodies in time, thereby preserving an image of aliveness and duration which is impossible to achieve in photography. The objective purpose of the cinematograph is therefore

⁷ Béla Balázs. Theory of the Film: Character and Growth of a New Art. (New York: Arno Press, 1972), 39-41.

⁸ Bazin, What is Cinema?, 14-15 (emphasis added)

to mechanically preserve physical bodies in live – rather than inert – form. Just like mummified bodies, then, filmed bodies oscillate between presence and absence, between life and death, which gives them, in Edgar Morin’s terms⁹, a “ghost-like” character.

Siegfried Kracauer’s Theory of Film argues, in a similar vein, that the central purpose of the camera – in fact, the central purpose of cinema as a whole – is in representing or “establishing” physical reality through mechanical reproduction¹⁰. Contrary to Bazin, who held that the mimetic function of the camera was sufficient to establish an objective concordance between object and representation, Kracauer claims that other “cinematic techniques and devices” are necessary to achieve this concordance. While remaining unclear about which devices have what effects on realistic reproduction, he takes the argument one step further in the following lines,

The hunting ground of the motion picture camera is in principle unlimited; it is the external world expanding in all directions. Yet there are certain subjects within that world which may be termed ‘cinematic’ because they seem to exert a peculiar attraction on the medium. It is as if the medium were predestined (and eager) to exhibit them. (...) Several lie, so to speak, on the surface; they will be dealt with under the title ‘recording functions’. Others would hardly come to our attention or be perceptible were it not for the film camera and/or the intervention of cinematic techniques; they will be discussed in the subsequent section ‘revealing functions’.¹¹

⁹ Morin, Edgar. Les Stars. (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972)

¹⁰ Siegfried Kracauer. Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 41

¹¹ Ibid.

Once more, this passage reveals a theorist's desire to distinguish cinema from other art forms; this time on the basis of specific "cinematic" subjects which should somehow be proper to – or appropriated by – cinema as an art form. The camera here becomes an instrument of knowledge about cinematic subjects. These subjects comprise such "surface" elements as human movement and inanimate objects, and such "hidden" elements as microscopic details on human faces, or overwhelming human experiences (e.g. natural disasters, war, sexual debauchery)¹². Bazin's "camera as embalming machine" becomes a tool to investigate humans and their world: an investigation which, without seeking scientific or documentary objectivity, derives an objective quality from the camera's inherent ability to reproduce reality.

Balázs rejoins Kracauer in regarding the camera as an instrument of knowledge about humans and their world – without, however, sharing his ideas about the camera's mere mechanical purpose. In Balázs view, this knowledge lies not in concrete facts available for empirical consideration, but in ineffable human qualities which are "revealed" through cinematic scrutiny. On a technological level, this scrutiny involves more than the camera's mechanical functioning, as Bazin and to some extent Kracauer contend. It involves various operations – namely camera work (i.e. positioning, focus, movement), close-ups and editing – whose final result is to reveal new aspects of the world, new details in human bodies, or new faces on inanimate objects¹³. Arnheim's analysis of film production shows, in the same vein, how different technical considerations – most notably camera angles, camera frames, lighting, editing, and flat screen projection – shape the way in which filmed bodies and objects become truly artistic products to their viewers¹⁴. Contra Bazin and Kracauer, then, Balázs and Arnheim share a broader outlook on cinema's technological paraphernalia, which includes not only cameras with

¹² Ibid., 42-60

¹³ Balázs, *Theory of the Film*, 46

¹⁴ Rudolf Arnheim, *Film as Art*. (London: Faber & Faber, 1983), 37-114

their mechanical properties, or a mishmash of “cinematic techniques and devices”, but also and most importantly practitioners – directors, cameramen, editors, light technicians, sound technicians – whose labor remains vital in shaping how bodies and objects appear on screen.

From all needed social agents to produce a motion picture, early film theorists tended to single out agents whose creative genius transpires into their actual work – and, by extension, into the film product. These agents, which we could call “artisans”, are not necessarily “auteurs” in the sense of a film director whose movies bear a strong flavor of individual artistry. They can also designate DOPs, or simple cameramen, or editors, or technicians, so long as the artisan transmits his individual agency into his practical activity and, ultimately, into the motion picture. Bazin, for example, holds that “the personality of the photographer enters into the proceedings (...) in his selection of the object to be photographed and by way of the purpose he has in mind”¹⁵. Balázs, on his part, argues that “the set-up of the camera betrays the inner attitude of the man behind the camera”¹⁶. The camera becomes a technological repository for the artisan’s inspiration. This inspiration, in turn, becomes manifest when filmed bodies and objects are projected on screen. The visual anthropologist David MacDougall makes a very similar argument in The Corporeal Image, where he intimates that “the presence of the filmmaker’s body becomes a ‘residue’ in the work of the kind alluded to by Gell”¹⁷. In line with early film theorists, then, MacDougall insists on the physicality of the act of filming, which inevitably trickles into the final film product.

Overall, what emerge from our theoretical survey are three distinct conceptions of the role of film technologies – and, in particular, the camera – in producing/reproducing the physical existence of human bodies and objects: 1) a mechanical conception, championed by Bazin and

¹⁵ Bazin, What is Cinema?, 13

¹⁶ Balázs, Theory of the Film, 89-90

¹⁷ MacDougall, The Corporeal Image, 26

Kracauer, which presents film technologies as elementary instruments devised to replicate physical bodies and objects on screen; 2) an investigative conception, shared by Kracauer and Balázs, which presents film technologies – and more so, the camera – as instruments for empirical or spiritual knowledge about humans and their world; 3) a practical conception, shared by Balázs and Arnheim, which views film technologies as material mediators between different practitioners (e.g. directors, cameramen, technicians, editors) and, in some instances, as material receptacles for an artisanal agency transmitted to/through the film product. All three conceptions are evidently non-exclusive, since different authors have held these conceptions to different degrees; yet their distinction will become useful in the next section.

Having detailed early views on film technologies and their role in filmmaking, it is now important to understand how early theorists viewed the bodies which were effectively captured, explored, framed, or represented through film technologies. Since this article seeks to understand the relation between bodies and screens, the reader will have found it strange that the article has used the terms “bodies” and “objects” in almost synonymous ways. After all, even without adhering to an anthropocentric worldview, bodies and objects are two different classes of “things-in-the-world”. Nonetheless, early film theorists tend to posit an ontological evenness between filmed humans and filmed objects. Balázs best captures the idea in claiming that “man and background are of the same stuff, both are mere pictures and hence there is no difference in the reality of man and object”¹⁸. The stance described here has two important implications. First, it implies that the relationship between real bodies and screens is almost exactly identical to the relationship between real objects and screens. Second, it implies that filmed humans are not “actors” in any theatrical sense, but “material” that is captured, recuperated, and formatted through filmmaking.

¹⁸ Balázs, Theory of the Film, 96

Bazin, in his writings about cinema and theater, distinguishes between “man” (real humans with real bodies existing in a real world) and the “actor” (a self-made subject who exists solely in a theatrical illusion)ⁱⁱ. Man – not the actor – is the “center of the universe” in film. Cinema can capture his objective humanity without evoking the dramatic actor’s paradoxical situation, whereby his character’s existence on stage is always imperfectly warranted in light of his own physical existence. The actor can therefore be absent in cinema, since the very nature of film calls for an objective outlook on man in his full realness. The contrast between “man” and “actor” is, therefore, a contrast between cinema and theater as art forms. While cinema examines reality as a whole, including real humans and real objects, theater fabricates a limited universe – literally, a theater – where a central Subject – the actor – expresses his humanity against a surrounding dramatic universe¹⁹. Kracauer echoes Bazin in seeking to distinguish between screen actors and stage actors, insisting on the former’s ontological parity with objects and things,

The action of the stage play flows through its characters; what they are saying and doing makes up the content of the play – in fact, it is the play itself. (...) Screen actors are raw material; and they are often made to appear within contexts discounting them as personalities, as actors. Whenever they are utilized in this way, utter restraint is their main virtue. Objects among objects, they must not even exhibit their nature but, as Barjavel remarks, ‘remain, as much as possible, below the natural’²⁰.

Kracauer, in this passage, views screen acting as a genuine craft involving more than simply “existing” in front of a camera. Where Bazin would be content to define screen actors as “any human body captured on camera”, just as any object may be captured on camera; Kracauer’s

¹⁹ Bazin, What is Cinema?, 104-106

²⁰ Kracauer, Theory of Film, 96-97 (emphasis added)

rationale establishes an implicit distinction between bodies and objects. While holding that filmed bodies and filmed objects are ontologically equivalent – actors are after all “objects among objects”²¹ – the theorist recognizes that filmed bodies are, before becoming screen material, flesh-and-blood actors with real feelings, thoughts, experiences and expressions.

In this regard, screen actors cannot be said to “naturally” possess the features of inert objects: on the contrary, they tend to craft this “naturalness” in order to reach evenness with their surrounding (filmed) universe. Kracauer makes two complementary arguments here. On one hand, he establishes clear normative grounds upon which to evaluate screen acting – good actors act “naturally”; bad actors are “overly expressive”. On the other hand, and more importantly, the screen actor’s fundamental role is, according to Kracauer, to forego his own physical existence in order to produce a coherent film product. This argument, which is echoed in Pudovkin’s²² and Morin’s²³ writings, grounds itself in a basic observation: flesh-and-blood performance only matters to filmmaking insofar as it can be impressed on celluloid strips, edited, and projected on screen. From this perspective, actors need to be somewhat aware of the overall filmmaking process in order to produce a “good” or “natural” performance – which, in Kracauer’s views, implies an “utter restraint” designed to produce an impression of evenness between filmed bodies, objects, and their surrounding world. Paradoxically, then, screen actors need to forget their own embodied nature in order to become fully embodied on screen.

The distinction between stage actors and screen actors also runs through Arnheim’s²⁴ and Balázs’²⁵ writings. However, where Kracauer sees actors to need “utter restraint”, Arnheim see restraint alone to be insufficient, since screen actors need to express complex mental states

²¹ Ibid., 97

²² Pudovkin, Vsevolod. Film Technique and Film Acting. (New York: Grove Press, 1970)

²³ Morin, Les Stars

²⁴ Arnheim, Film as Art, 116-117

²⁵ Balázs, Theory of the Film, 60-79

through precise gestures and facial expressions which, in everyday life, would seem entirely “unrestrained” or “unnatural”. The author therefore identifies facial expressions and gestures as central corporeal elements in film acting. These corporeal elements are meant, on one hand, to express mental processes – motives, thoughts, impulses... – which are a priori inaccessible when watching (silent) filmed bodies; and, on the other, to sharpen everyday expressions and gestures in order to communicate artistic content in an effective mannerⁱⁱⁱ. Furthering Arnheim’s line of thought, Balázs envisions film acting to be, first and foremost, “facial” acting. In an earlier version of “Der sichtbare Mensch” (Visible Man, 1923), Balázs argues that “modern man” has lost his corporeal expressivity under the impulse of print culture. Corporeal expression becomes instead reduced to facial mimicry and limited hand gestures, which are now revealed through the camera’s technological intervention²⁶.

The theorist’s focus on the human face is clearest in his famous analyses of the close-up. In these analyses again, Balázs establishes an ontological equivalence between bodies and objects, where the “face of objects” and the “face of man” share a particular physiognomy whose essence or “soul” is revealed through the close-up^{iv}. “Physiognomy” here designates specific plays of features, specific sets of gestures, specific facial expressions whose overall configuration indexes innermost thoughts, moods, and intentions – in brief, a human “soul” which expresses an ineffable human (or anthropomorphic) quality (Balázs, 1972: 64). What close-ups show, then, are material details on the surface of bodies and objects – what the theorist calls micro-physiognomic details – which, in their assemblage, reveal immaterial (read spiritual) human qualities otherwise invisible in everyday life. In Balázs words, “this most subjective and

²⁶ Béla Balázs, “Der sichtbare Mensch” in Béla Balázs : Early Film Theory, ed. Erica Carter (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010), 42-43

individual of human manifestations is rendered objective in the close-up”²⁷. Balázs sees film acting to involve facial expressions and gestures which, in line with Arnheim’s reflection, sharpen everyday facial expressions and gestures to show specific emotional states; and second, express the actor’s innermost feelings or “soul”.

Early film theorists, overall, offer several insights into the technological transformation incurred by bodies and objects through film. Implicit, in their discussion, are different views on the nature of filmed bodies themselves. Where Bazin holds that all bodies present a genuine humanness in their filmed form, Kracauer, Balázs, and Arnheim hold screen acting to be an independent craft involving more than mere bodily presence on camera. While Kracauer sees “utter restraint” to be necessary for natural film acting, Balázs and Arnheim insist on screen actors’ facial expressions and gestures in revealing their mental states and feelings^v. In essence, then, early film theorists share an anthropomorphic vision of cinema, whereby all filmed bodies and all filmed objects acquire a quintessential human quality through different cinematic means – either simple mechanical reproduction (Bazin), restrained film acting (Kracauer), or creative expressions and gestures (Balázs and Arnheim).

Preservation, Revelation and Flattening

In a chapter entitled “Representing the Body: Questions of Meaning and Magnitude”, Bill Nichols sets out to answer the following question, “What structure might documentaries have that will conjure or restore for the viewer those orders of magnitude appropriate to the full dimensionality of the world in which we live?”²⁸. The question, which specifically addresses

²⁷ Balázs, *Theory of the Film*, 60

²⁸ Nichols, *Representing Reality*, 230

documentary film, seeks to examine the “tension between the representation and the represented as experienced by the viewer”, where the represented subject/object always experiences a reduction, a degradation, even a corruption, when entering the realm of representation²⁹. The notion of “orders of magnitude”, in this context, designates a scale of presence, a qualitative appraisal of the ineffaceable distance between the filmed world and the real world, or between filmed bodies and real bodies. The distance between film sign, real referent and recipient justifies the very existence of sign mediation, a process which re-presents the magnitude of lived experiences, lived worlds, and lived bodies in perpetually inadequate and incomplete terms to distant spectators. In a sense, then, Nichols’ question engages with the core of our initial interrogation: “what becomes of bodies on screen” may in fact mean “what structures do movies have to summon different orders of magnitude appropriate to the ‘full dimensionality’ of bodies on screen”. Early film theorists allow us to distinguish between three specific modalities – or, in Nichols’ terms, “structures” – which characterize the relationship between filmed bodies and their original corporeal referents.

I. The first modality – preservation – is most clearly expressed in Bazin’s work. Simply put, it designates the literal conservation of bodies on film through mechanical processes of film shooting and screen projection. To some extent, all early film theorists were concerned with the mechanical conservation of bodies and objects, since any “body” or “object” needs to be somehow “preserved” in image form in order to be recognizable as such, beyond its brute projection as black shadow on white screen. However, no early theorist engages with the ambiguities of preservation as carefully as Bazin. In essence, corporeal preservation through film is ambiguous insofar as filmed bodies cannot reproduce the integral experience – or the true

²⁹ Ibid., 232

“magnitude” – of real bodies in the real world^{vi}. This ambiguity poses two complementary questions: first, what is preserved from real bodies on film? And second, what is lost in filmed bodies?

According to Bazin, the camera’s mechanical function dictates what remains preserved from real bodies – namely, chemical traces on celluloid producing an objective image of bodies in motion. Preservation relies on mechanical processes to transform an existing body into an image whose visual likeness to its original referent produces an effect of real presence, even as the referent remains absent. What is lost in mechanical mediation, then, is not an experience of corporeality, which is objectifiable and reproducible through the cinematograph, but merely face-to-face interaction with the film’s original actors and objects. Bazin’s argument relies on two sweeping assumptions. First, he assumes that preservation always occurs through strictly mechanical means (i.e. photographic reproduction), which give an objective quality to conserved bodies. Second, he assumes that spectators always embrace – consciously or unconsciously – the objectively ambiguous character of filmed bodies through a psychological process of identification. While spectators recognize the absence of the actors’ actual bodies in their viewing experience, they are supposed to feel and identify with the actors’ on-screen presence. If, for the sake of argument, one accepts Bazin’s initial assumptions, one can see preservation to operate in different media contexts extending beyond fictional film. After all, any body captured on any camera in any context can produce, according to Bazin, a similar impression of presence/absence to any given viewer. One may therefore talk about preserved bodies in family photographs, in televised advertisements, in music videos, and in motion pictures on even grounds.

However, there are two senses in which preservation operates in ways specific to cinema. In a first sense, preservation contributes to the perpetuation of canonical film bodies. It seems obvious, for instance, that female stars ranging from Marlene Dietrich, to Marilyn Monroe, to Nicole Kidman maintain their glamorous appeal in part because their bodies are forever preserved – literally, mummified – on well-known film reels – e.g. Der Blaue Engel (Joseph von Sternberg, 1930), Gentlemen Prefer Blondes (Howard Hawks, 1953), Eyes Wide Shut (Stanley Kubrick, 1999). Preservation here designates an externality to the specific sign/referent relationship characterizing particular films: it occurs as a byproduct of the fact that a movie's social life extends beyond its initial recording/exposition. It becomes an archivable, objectifiable, commodifiable image, which preserves traces from its original referents even as they are absent. In other words, Marilyn Monroe's body remains present to viewers' minds in part because it remains indefinitely reproducible and re-exposable in her classical movie appearances, even after her untimely death. Similar cases could be made for other female stars, or other male stars (e.g. Douglas Fairbanks, Sean Connery, Leonardo DiCaprio), or even child stars (e.g. Shirley Temple, Judy Garland, Drew Barrymore), whose distinctive corporeal image remains enshrouded on film reels even when their actual bodies have grown, aged, disappeared, or died.

In a second more practical sense, preservation contributes to congeal influences from different practitioners (e.g. cameramen, directors, technicians) on the final film product. As MacDougall argues in The Corporeal Image, these influences are not just intellectual: they are also fundamentally corporeal, since cameras capture movements from the bodies in front – as well as behind – it. Camera movements, changing camera angles, changing lighting and set-ups... all contribute to transmit an artisanal agency whose traces, which are oftentimes imperceptible to the average viewer, are preserved through the camera's mechanical

intervention. Preservation in this sense echoes Balázs' and Arnheim's practical conception of technological mediation in film production, where the camera and other technological devices transmit the agency – and, citing MacDougall, the corporeality – of practitioners into the final film product.

This perspective on corporeal preservation can be illustrated in the famous “Odessa stairs” scene in Sergei Eisenstein's Battleship Potemkin (1925). There are, of course, bodies in front of the camera, whose lively physical action – running, trampling, dying, fighting – remains vivid despite their bodily absence from the viewer. There are bodies behind the camera whose action remains crystallized in the scene. There are, for example, recurring overhead travelling shots which follow protesters in their flight down the stairs. There are also close-ups on individual protesters (e.g. protesters hiding behind stair ramps) without changes in zoom, which create an impression of intimate proximity between camera, cameraman and actors. All these shots indicate most visibly the cameraman's presence, whose physical movement remains recorded on camera, thereby indexing his presence to the spectator. The scene also preserves the editor's material interventions, which not only impresses his artistic vision onto the film, but also literally inscribes his presence (i.e. cutting and patching film reels) onto the film product.

Eisenstein's film therefore illustrates how different corporeal interventions from different practitioners can be preserved on film. One can object that these interventions are only obvious insofar as the film inscribes itself in the lineage of Russian formalism, which seeks to render filmmaking operations – and, in particular, editing – visible to the viewer. It is difficult, in effect, to detect an editor's presence in conventional Hollywood movies, where editing appears to be seamless^{vii}. This does not mean that the practitioners' corporeal traces become entirely erased from conventional films. Simply, they require an additional effort in perception, which is not

afforded – or perhaps not desired – in the average spectator’s viewing experience. We can examine, for instance, the fight scenes in Batman Begins (Christopher Nolan, 2005). On numerous occasions, Bruce Wayne (Christian Bale) is seen fighting with other men – e.g. with criminals in prison; with his former mentor Henri Ducard/Ras Al-Ghul (Liam Neeson); with ninja types in an unidentified Asian country; with mafia thugs in Gotham City... These fight scenes make Wayne’s corporeal strength and athleticism present to the viewer. However, the heightened sense of corporeal preservation comes from the camera’s – and the cameraman’s – visibly close position to the action; and from the editing software’s – and by extension, the editor’s – fast-paced montage of fighting blows and movements. If one pays close attention to the fighting scenes, one will immediately detect indices from other practitioners’ corporeal presence, whose vital contribution to the action tends to be effaced in conventional readings.

II. The second modality – revelation – is directly tied with Kracauer’s and Balázs’ writings on the cinematograph and its investigative function. When the camera sets out to explore human bodies, it reveals hidden qualities which would not have been otherwise visible in everyday life. Through different technological devices (e.g. cameras, film reels, lighting equipment) and cinematic techniques (e.g. camera movement, close-ups, editing), film practitioners produce images whose visual content focuses the viewer’s attention on normally unseen elements in her own existence (e.g. discreet facial movements or hand gestures, “natural” body movements, extreme depictions of corporeal suffering or ecstasy). While Kracauer views these qualities in strictly material terms (i.e. what is revealed is only corporeal substance which is readily accessible through empirical inquiry), Balázs views these qualities to index psychological or spiritual processes (i.e. what is revealed is a human psyche and soul as presented through

normally invisible corporeal features). This divergence constitutes the major distinction between both theorists' views on corporeal revelation. Its operative mechanisms, however, remain essentially identical in their respective works.

From Kracauer's viewpoint, what cinema technologies reveal is purely material information on the limits of embodiment: whenever bodies, objects or experiences are captured on camera, their true objective nature comes to light. Insofar as revelation operates across different media forms, with no exclusive emphasis on fictional film, Kracauer's argument on corporeal revelation parallels Bazin's reflection on preservation. Kracauer talks, for example, about revealing objects which are imperceptible in everyday experiences: a dining table, a radio, an old mirror – objects which, although very much part of daily life, only come to salience when captured in a cinematic décor. He also talks about extreme experiences of disaster, war, or sexuality – experiences which are, according to him, unfathomable unless revealed through the camera's eyes. In the same logic, human bodies are revealed in their most fine-grained detail and their most obscene extravagance through the camera's scrutiny. The idea according to which, for instance, corporeal experiences of war are too traumatic to be revealed other than through film technologies is illustrated in Francis F. Coppola's fiction, Apocalypse Now (1979).

Coppola's movie reveals multiple facets of the embodied experience of war in 1960s-1970s Vietnam. An initial scene shows the protagonist, Captain Benjamin Willard (Martin Sheen), smoking and drinking heavily in a wretched room in Saigon. The sequence exposes the Captain's debauched body, which appears to be dirty, tired and battered by days of intoxication. The images show firsthand the inscription of wartime hardships on the Captain, who attempts to forget these hardships by being violent towards his own body – to the point that, towards the end of the scene, he tries to destroy his own reflection in the mirror and, in so doing, injures himself

on the shattered glass. Another famous sequence shows a helicopter attack on a Viet Cong village near the river Nung. Captain Willard accompanies Lt-Colonel Bill Kilgore (Robert Duval) and his troops in the attack. The sequence begins with a medium shot showing the American soldiers boarding helicopters; the following scene alternates between wide angle shots on the helicopter formation and close-ups on crowded airborne soldiers. A wide shot then shows the village and its inhabitants who, upon hearing the looming helicopters, evacuate the civilians and prepare for resistance. The strike is imminent; the camera alternates between ground views on helicopters and airborne views of soon-to-be-destroyed ground targets. After a successful assault, the helicopters land and American soldiers invade the outpost. A soldier is critically injured and treated to an emergency helicopter; a young Viet Cong resistant kills several Americans with a concealed bomb. Finally, Lt-Colonel Kilgore orders a napalm strike on the neighboring forest, erasing any further resistance in the area. In Kracauer's terms, the sequence reveals "extreme" corporeal experiences of war through cinematic techniques and devices: close shots on soldiers reveal the feeling of crowdedness in helicopters; high-angle shoulder shots showing soldiers shooting slow-running villagers reveal the latter's desperate disadvantage in battle; wide angle shots reveal the widespread casualties caused by the strike; close-ups on wounded and dead soldiers reveal the horrific war damages on soldier bodies, etc.

In contrast with Kracauer, Balázs talks about revealing psychological or spiritual human qualities through the camera's close scrutiny of bodies/objects. His major contribution, in this regard, comes from his analysis of close-ups and "micro-physiognomy" – a realm of micro-gestures, facial expressions, or anthropomorphic animations indexing human minds and souls. Balázs' clearest statement on the role of close-ups comes in the following passage, "The close-up which has made us so sensitive to the naturalness of a facial expression will sooner or later

develop our sensitivity further, so that we shall be able to discern in a facial expression its cause as well as its nature”³⁰. This citation alludes to two facets involved in Balázs’ reflection on close-ups and micro-physiognomy. On one hand, close-ups act as instruments for the knowledge of faces, their expressions, and their meanings. On the other hand, close-ups can reveal such discreet facial expressions in such minute detail as to generate, in potentia, a language of facial expressions: a language which associates facial signifiers (i.e. the facial expression) with a mental or spiritual signified (i.e. its “cause” and “nature”)^{viii}. In this sense, contrary to Kracauer, Balázs did not believe true corporeal revelation to be possible outside of fictional film. In order to reveal mental states or human souls, facial expressions need to be precise and recognizable; and in order to achieve greater precision and recognition, one needs professional actors to craft specific expressions in ways which would regularly reproduce similar expressions – and by extension, similar psychological/spiritual manifestations³¹. In this view, corporeal revelation always works within a certain “artificial” or “crafted” context, which allows for the spectator’s identification with filmed faces and their expressions.

According to Balázs, the prime cinematographic example of micro-physiognomic revelation is Carl T. Dreyer’s The Passion of Joan of Arc (1928). What is “revealed”, here, are psychological or spiritual traits attributed to the main characters in the narrative, namely Joan of Arc (Maria Falconetti) and her persecutors. These traits are indexed in facial or gestural details, which are explored through numerous close-ups on the main characters. These close-ups frame, on one hand, overall expressions on human faces; and on the other, microscopic facial features which would be otherwise invisible. For instance, in the scene preceding the Saint’s execution, the bishop seeks to extort a confession from Joan before she meets her fate. A low-angle close-

³⁰ Balázs, Theory of the Film, 79

³¹ *Ibid.*, 76-77

up shows an angry priest, his mouth barking (silent) haranguing words, his eyes frowning, his hand pointing to the Saint in an accusatory gesture. A corresponding high-angle close-up shows the Saint's face, whose manifest tiredness shows through her slight (unconscious) eyebrow movements and her very inability to move her lips. These observable elements, which are shown in corresponding close-up angles, reveal the psychological states of the characters: the priests' forceful gestures and severe facial features shows his anger and his spite for Joan of Arc; the Saint's relaxed facial muscles and slow lip movements show her tiredness and, ultimately, her surrender to her fate.

III. The third modality – flattening – designates the transformation of a three-dimensional body into a two-dimensional projection through film technologies. The term “flattening” does not designate an ontological “evening” of terms between the sign and its referent: it designates, in fact, the actual operation of “flattening” incurred by human bodies in their projection on screen. When real bodies are captured, explored, and revealed to film spectators through various cinematic techniques and technologies, the resulting image can be seen, in elementary terms, as a projection of shadows on a two-dimensional white surface. When these shadows are identified as bodies on screen, their inherent flatness renders our everyday embodied experience of human bodies into a visual experience of moving surfaces. Bodies therefore become “spatialized” on screen: their movements are constrained within a two-dimensional universe, which reminds of its three-dimensional referent without reproducing it. Thus, while shadows on screen can give an illusion of depth or perspective, the mode of “flattening” requires an attention to the materiality of the screen itself – a materiality which cannot evade its own flatness. In other words,

“flattening” orients our attention to the narrow material relation between filmed bodies and (flat) screens, beyond any further illusion of perspective in film.

This modality has never been fully articulated by early film theorists. Balázs’ analysis of film close-ups, for example, begins with a short reflection on the spatial nature of filmed faces. According to him, micro-physiognomic salience is only possible when faces become perceptible as surfaces – that is, when close-ups allow for close scrutiny of facial surfaces projected on screen³². In other words, the revelation of psychological/spiritual qualities on Maria Falconetti’s face relies on the viewer’s capacity to explore her facial features as he would on a still photograph or a painting – in brief, on a flat surface. Arnheim, on his part, describes different cinematic effects obtained from the artistic use of flatness. He gives an example from Charlie Chaplin’s The Immigrant (1917),

In Chaplin’s film (...) the opening scene shows a boat rolling horribly and all passengers being seasick. They stagger to the side of the ship pressing their hands to their mouths. Then comes the first shot of Charlie Chaplin: he is seen hanging over the side with his back to the audience, his head well down, his legs kicking wildly – everyone thinks the poor devil is paying his toll to the sea. Suddenly Charlie pulls himself up, turns round and shows that he has hooked a large fish with his walking stick. The effect of surprise is achieved by making use of the fact that the spectator will be looking at the situation from a certain definite position³³.

The flatness of the film’s décor creates an occasion to conceal and/or reveal elements from Chaplin’s body which, in the scene described above, produces a comic effect. Arnheim notes that this effect would be hard to achieve in live performance, where Chaplin’s three-dimensional

³² Ibid., 60-61

³³ Arnheim, Film as Art, 39

body and environment would eliminate any possibility to present the two-dimensional gag³⁴. The effect is thus specifically “cinematic” insofar as its realization relies on the camera’s position; the director’s intent; the editor’s skills; the spectator’s fixed viewpoint; and, most importantly, the actor’s flatness.

Kracauer’s views on film acting extend our reflection on the actor’s participation in the “flattening” of his own body. The actor’s “utter restraint” – as Kracauer describes it – requires him to forego his own embodied existence for the sake of a cinematic end product. This foregoing involves the “disappearance” of the actor’s body – to use Jonathan Auerbach’s term³⁵ – in favor of a flat image of his body, which the actor – or the director directing the actor – needs to envision during his performance in order to properly execute his role. The “flattening” of the actor’s body, in this sense, occurs before its production through cinematic means – that is, in the actor’s own performance, or in the director’s own instructions. Now, whether film actors actually anticipate on-screen flatness as part of their acting technique remains to be investigated. One always needs to remember that Kracauer – and his precursor in the matter, Pudovkin – defended “restrained” acting as a normatively good technique against bad, “unrestrained” techniques. This does not mean that “good” actors make an actual conscious effort to imagine, during film shooting, a final product which commands “restraint” over “unrestraint”. Clear examples remain, nonetheless, where actors or directors needed to have made a conscious effort to imagine their on-screen flatness during film shooting, whatever its impacts on acting technique.

Lars von Trier’s Dogville (2003), for example, needed to involve some actorial and/or directorial awareness about the film’s impending flatness, given its particular spatial arrangement. The entire film is set in a village whose buildings and topographical features are

³⁴ Ibid., 39-40

³⁵ Auerbach, Body Shots, 1-15

drawn on a green-floored studio. The village has no visible walls, no visible doors, no topographical particularities, but actors act as if chalk lines drawn on the floor actually delimitate their physical space. The spectator is therefore shown a village space which is entirely visible from any given point in the studio. Yet actors simulate spatial demarcations in their behavior – interacting with invisible doors when entering delimited houses, going around invisible walls when leaving a house, etc. This simulation requires some measure of corporeal restraint, since all actors in the village/studio are visibly aware of other actors' concurrent actions. In other words, the actors would have needed to concentrate on their own private performance in the manifest presence of other (secluded) performers, which, one may reasonably conjecture, had to involve awareness about the ultimate spatial illusion the film seeks to achieve. The final effect is indeed striking: vertical bodies and objects inhabit an abstract horizontal space, whose geometric artificiality seems reinforced in the actors' total compliance with its abstract limits.

The “flattening” of filmed bodies therefore confounds bodies, objects and their surrounding world precisely because it transforms these heterogeneous three-dimensional elements into even two-dimensional surfaces. Film scholar Walid El Khachab expresses this insight in these words,

Therefore, I argue that cinema is per se the technical means to transform, not only the body, but the whole world, into a surface and to surfacialize “deep” transcendence, since it re-produces landscapes, bodies and objects in the guise of a celluloid surface, then re-actualizes these on the surface of a screen. (...)

Surface is understood here in two ways: as the skin, the outer envelop, and as an extended two-dimensional area³⁶.

In other words, the spatialization of filmed bodies explains, in material terms, their ontological parity with objects and, more generally, with their surrounding world. When Balázs discusses the spatialization of the human face through close-ups; or when Arnheim describes artistic effects deriving from the absence of depth in cinematic images; or when Kracauer talks about actors foregoing their own embodied existence for the sake of final film products; “flattening” remains effective insofar as it literally transforms bodies, objects and worlds into flat surfaces, whose two-dimensional interactions on screen occur under even terms.

Dogville (2003) certainly exemplifies the correspondence between the flatness of the world (i.e. the village setting) and the flatness of bodies on screen. This correspondence can be understood in two ways. On one hand, the flatness of the village can be seen to reinforce the appearance of three-dimensionality in filmed bodies, whose corporeality becomes, in a way, more salient against the abstract studio space. On the other hand, the village’s flatness can be seen to reinforce the impression of the actors’ own flatness, whose corporeal existence in this abstract universe appears even more artificial than in “realistic” film settings. The running sequences in Run Lola Run (Tim Tykwer, 1998) also illustrate the point. These sequences, which occur three times due to the film’s looped narrative, begin with a continuous shot tracing Lola’s run through her living room’s television, where Lola’s run is presented in graphic animation. The animation ceases when, having run down the stairs, she exits the building. There ensue long travelling mid-shots showing Lola’s run from different angles. The most common shots are front and back fixed long shots, and sideways travelling shots, showing the protagonist’s rapid

³⁶ Walid El Khachab. “Face of the Human and Surface of the World: Reflections on Cinematic Pantheism,” in Envisager (Intermédialités no. 8), ed. Joanne Villeneuve (Montreal: Centre de recherche sur l’intermédialité, 2006), 126

displacements along geometrical lines (e.g. from right to left, from back to forth). Aside from the animation, which in its very nature flattens Lola's body and her surrounding environment (i.e. the stairwell in her descent), the shooting of her run tends to emphasize its flat spatial/bodily arrangement. The fast sideways travelling shots, for instance, give a strong impression that Lola remains immobile even as the world passes around her. Her body becomes akin to a flat surface whose artificial existence on screen becomes more salient as its surface contrasts with its background – and, interestingly, as its medium-form (i.e. film) contrasts with intermedial elements (e.g. still photographs shown in rapid succession, cartoon animation). “Flattening” here relies on a correspondence between body-surface and world-surface on film; a correspondence which occurs through cinematic means orienting the viewers' perception.

Conclusion: Filmed Bodies and Textual Analysis

There is no need to rehearse our entire argument in this brief conclusion. It suffices to say that early film theorists such as Arnheim, Bazin, Balázs and Kracauer offer interesting insights into the relation between film technologies and filmed bodies; on the nature and purpose of film acting; and on the central question which has preoccupied us through these pages, namely, what becomes of bodies on film? Beyond its theoretical scope, this essay suffers from certain practical shortcomings which need to be addressed. Given the technological mediation involved in making film products, it is difficult to reduce film images to a single film text with coherent meanings. Film images always index technological processes; filmmaking activities; synesthetic combinations between bodies, images, and sounds^{ix}; and particular viewing experiences which cannot always be retrieved from the film text. In fact, any such retrieval assumes a homogenous

identification between spectator and image which, in empirical terms, cannot always obtain³⁷. Therefore, one needs to remain careful about the theoretical claims made in regards to different material ways in which film technologies mediate between bodies, screens and spectators, without empirical material to evidence these claims.

The essay's theoretical concerns remain nonetheless central to contemporary film studies – and more broadly, media studies. As was intimated time and again throughout the analysis, understanding the relationship between physical bodies and their filmed projections involves more than the narrow scope of film studies – in fact, it extends in many social realms where film technologies are employed to different ends. The crucial problem, then, is to examine the relationship between real bodies and filmed bodies; between a relative's presence and his presence on one's souvenir picture; between a sport star's body and his televised performance; between a news anchor's presence and his daily presentation; etc. To recognize these multiple manifestations of body-film interactions requires a preliminary understanding of the ways in which film technologies, film practitioners and screen actors bear on the production of filmed bodies. This article has sought to access this preliminary understanding through the writings of early film theorists, although by no means do these writings exhaust what needs to be said on the matter. It therefore seems wise to conclude on this note from Cavell's article, "What Becomes of Things on Film?",

The moral I draw is this: the question what becomes of objects when they are filmed and screened – like the question what becomes of particular people, and specific locales, and subjects and motifs when they are filmed by individual makers of film – has only one source of data for its answer, namely the appearance and significance of just those objects and people that are in fact to be

³⁷ See Nakassis, "Theorizing Realism Empirically"

found in the succession of films, or passages of films, that matter to us. To express their appearances, and define those significances, and articulate the nature of this mattering, are acts that help to constitute what we might call film criticism. Then to explain how these appearances, significances, and matterings – these specific events of photogenesis – are made possible by the general photogenesis of film altogether, by the fact (...) that objects on film are always already displaced, trouvé (i.e. that we as viewers are always already displaced before them) would be an undertaking of what we might call film theory³⁸.

This article's insights will constitute, it is hoped, a preliminary step into the construction of such a film theory.

³⁸ Cavell, "What Becomes of Things on Film?," 9

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ⁱ There is also an ideological gap between these writers. While Bazin and Arnheim were no way near Marxist, Kracauer and Balázs adhered to what might be termed a "humanist" brand of Marxism, where traditional economic themes were mixed with a deep – indeed, sometimes transcending – anthropological concern with the modern man. In contrast, later "psychoanalytical Marxists" – in Carroll's definition – combine an Althusserian suspicion of ideological mechanisms and a complex psychoanalytical language – more often Lacanian than Freudian – to discuss the spectators' mystification vis-à-vis cinema. Thus, while some early theorists might have been "Marxists" themselves, their ideological positions were markedly different from later film theorists.

ⁱⁱ The distinction is visible in the following passage, "On the screen man is no longer the focus of the drama, but will become eventually the center of the universe. The impact of his action may there set in motion an infinitude of waves. The décor that surrounds him is part of the solidity of the world. For this reason the actor as such can be absent from it, because man in the world enjoys no a priori privilege over animals and things" (Bazin, What is Cinema?, 106).

ⁱⁱⁱ These insights are evidenced in the following passage, "The variety of his [man's] motives, the suppleness and flexibility of thought, the lightning rapidity of the clash of tiny impulses and repressions, all have their natural echo in the play of features and in gestures; and so has the fact that this variety of stirrings often is not integrated in a clear-cut whole. In a good work of art, however, everything must be clear – if anything indistinct is to be shown, it must be distinctly indistinct – and therefore human expression on the screen must be plain and unmistakable. Hence a film actor must be capable of producing 'pure' expression. His face, for example, must be so constituted that the required expression emerges quite clearly down to the smallest details. That an actor does not 'get across', is often because he cannot make each individual muscle fit in with what is required." (Arnheim, Film as Art, 114-115).

^{iv} The ontological equivalence between bodies and objects is evident from these lines, "When the film close-up strips the veil of our imperceptiveness and insensitivity from the little hidden things and shows us the face of objects, it still shows us man, for what makes objects expressive are the human expressions projected unto them. (...) What was more important, however, than the discovery of the physiognomy of things, was the discovery of the human face. Facial expression is the most subjective manifestation of man, more subjective even than speech, for vocabulary and grammar are subject to more or less universally valid rules and conventions (...)" (Balázs, Theory of the Film, 60)

^v It should be signaled, here, that Kracauer's differing views on acting from Balázs' and Arnheim's viewpoints might be a product of historical focus. In effect, most analyses in Balázs and Arnheim address silent films (before 1930s), where facial/corporeal expression was central to any actor given the absence of synchronized speech. Kracauer, on his part, discusses talking films (after 1930s), where the introduction of speech has transformed the actor's expression into delivering dialogue vs. playing with his features/body. The distinction is worth making, since it informs their differing views, although the authors tend to defend their viewpoints even in

examples which they do not extensively address – i.e. talkies, for Balázs and Arnheim; and, to some extent, silent film, for Kracauer.

^{vi} In fact, there exists an interesting current in recent film theory which seeks to theorize the “excess” necessary for bodies to appear in their full reality. Linda Williams, in “Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess”, talks about specific “body genres” – e.g. pornography, horror movies – whose main function is to transmit bodily “excess” – e.g. arousal, shivers – to their audience. Nichols (Representing Reality) and MacDougall (The Corporeal Image) also give an extensive discussion on bodily excess in past and present cinematic production.

^{vii} The difference between Russian formalist editing and Hollywood editing is related, in fact, to two different conceptions of filmmaking. In Russian formalism, filmmakers – and in particular, the editor – need to comment on their film products in order to “make visible” the artifice of film and, answering to Soviet Marxist concerns, liberate the viewer from their ideological alienation. In classical Hollywood movies, on the contrary, seamless editing is employed to maintain the “transparency” of film – that is, the systematic erasing of all traces of artifice behind the camera – in order to favor the viewer’s “evasion” into the film. In one case, the artifice is conscious and visible to the spectator; on the other hand, it is unconscious and hidden from him.

^{viii} This idea was initially suggested in “Der sichtbare Mensch”, where Balázs argued that cinema would restore a universal language of gestures and facial expressions to supplant the universal domination of print. Cinema would therefore reunite Babel’s shattered peoples under the sign of “visible Man” (Balázs, Theory of the Film, 41-42).

^{ix} This question is brilliantly treated in Mary Ann Doane’s article, “The Voice in Cinema”.