

Methods of Disseminating Images in Film

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An actor in a film or the film within a frame often are viewed as a surrogate self who does the looking for a subject. Such a surrogate self often is assumed to have transcended the space of the subject by the presupposition of an absolute fixity within the gaze by the closure of the frame. The closing of a frame refers to an ambivalence and indifference to the interruptions between frames of the image's disappearance by the presupposition of the possibility of viewing an uninterrupted string of images in a film. It seems that a belief in the closed frame fears the undoing of a chronological sequence of images by their consequence, or, in other words, the disappearance of the chronological sequence.

Fear of the absence of a chronological sequence in what can be presumed to be a fear of unknowing or the unknown, opposes the notion of an "open-whole" proposed by Giles Deleuze¹ in his theoretical writings on film.² Sergei Eisenstein and Alfred Hitchcock a classical technique that presumes a logical string of images that assume to depict an entire image. Deleuze writes that the film making techniques that had happened predominantly in Italy implement the cuts between frames to open the movement to chance. The cut appears arbitrary and interrupts the sequence of images. Techniques used by Stan Brakhage³ and filmmakers such as the so-called Italian neorealists⁴ located the origin of their films both in the dissemination of images and the interruption of these images. I propose that the dissemination of images in film determines the nature of its sequence by its consequence and the consequence determines the nature of the sequence.

A sequence of images disappears following their consequence. The viewing of a film by the opening and closure of its frames in a sequence consequently makes visible and invisible images and, as such, necessarily interrupts a sequence by its consequence. This consequence cannot be measured quantitatively. It must be seen as a desire to see the end of an image.

Images in film disseminate by their potential to dislocate another image. Locating neither fully within nor outside the film becomes a liminal process of

¹ 1925 – 1995

² "Deleuze distinguishes between closed sets and the open whole" (Bogue, Ronald, Deleuze on Cinema, pp. 41)

³ 1933 – 2003

⁴ Included among these directors: Michelangelo Antonioni, Luchino Visconti, Gianni Puccini, Cesare Zavattini, Giuseppe De Santis and Pietro Ingrao.

viewing a sequence also by its consequence. The consequence of the film is the image in a sequence being interrupted by the present.

The sequencing of images in film takes into account notions of *economy* and *method* in a process of *dissemination*. It is a process of deciding which images offer the most potential for interesting a subject to recollect or imagine becoming something. Derrida offers this postulate for the definition for economy:

economy is perhaps indicated in the following: the operation that substitutes writing for speech also replaces presence by value: to the *I am* or to the *I am present* thus sacrificed, a *what I am* or a *what I am worth is preferred*, "If I were present, one would never know what I was worth."... The battle, by which I wish to raise myself above my life even while I retain it, in order to enjoy recognition, is in this case within myself, and writing is indeed the phenomenon of this battle.⁵

The image in the each frame sacrifices what it replaces due to the determination of an image's supposed recognition upon dissemination. Viewers sacrifice their presence in order to locate themselves within a film and interrupt its sequence by the consequence of their presence in the interruption of the image. This interruption of the sequence correlates to the valorization of the self over *what* the self might become. However, the image of the self never absolutely becomes present because the same process of dissemination opens it to dislocation by the possibility that its partial meaning may find no structural end.

By its nature dissemination scatters images in no logical method of distribution. That the self-referential image is neither outside nor inside the frame means that any sacrifice of an image or part of an image can only present another image or part of an image according to the process of seeing. The imminent question regarding the projection of the image is: what image may be sacrificed for another image of the self? Contrary to dissemination, the projection of a sequence of images follows a method which preserves an economy of the self. The following passage from Derrida on critical reading applies to the situation of the methods meant to preserve an economy of images over the self:

And the reading must always aim at a certain relationship, unperceived by the writer, between what he commands and what he does not command of the patterns of language that he uses. This relationship is not a certain quantitative distribution of shadow and light, of weakness or of force, but a signifying structure that critical reading should *produce*.⁶

The signifying structure in film is the sequence of images. Yet, the consequence of such a signifying structure becomes subject to the critical engagement of the

⁵ Derrida, Jacques, *Of Grammatology*, pp. 142

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 158

viewer in their ability to discern the present from the past, which appears disseminated via a sequence.

Dissemination becomes *overdetermined*, unconscious to the author that produces it. The spectator or reader determines the critical reading while accepting an initial stability to the author's supposed "command" over the subject in the formulation of a methodical signifying structure. Derrida writes:

This moment of doubling commentary should no doubt have its place in critical reading. To recognize and respect all its classical exigencies is not easy and requires all the instruments of traditional criticism. Without this recognition and this respect all its classical exigencies is not easy and requires all the instruments of traditional criticism. Without this recognition and this respect, critical production would risk developing in any direction at all and authorize itself to say almost anything. But this indispensable guardrail has always *protected*, it has never *opened*, a reading.⁷

Derrida seems complacent with tradition; yet, not in the way of respecting an Author with a capital "A." There is a security in tradition, in knowing that the method used in the instrument of past ideology simultaneously fulfilled at one point an economy of the self by what it became. However, the dissemination of images present by the projection of the self becomes visible by sacrificing exactly what the self had previously become.

The self must accept the danger of losing part of the image of itself in order to see part of itself in the present. If economy determines the value that determines what gets preserved in order for the self to become itself only again, particular notions of economy cause the acceptance of the opening of the self to the danger of its confusion upon recognizing itself only partially in each image it sees disseminating within each frame.

Images in a film have a consequence and sequence that is determined by an interruption of projected images. Yet, any projection of film obeys a methodical signifying structure of a sequence of images for fear of imagining just anything. Since not just any image can lead to any image because any subsequent image becomes a matter of consequence, whatever opening of the image done so in order to locate the present at once must take into account its consequence to its sequence. Locating the self in a process of imagining both the sequence of images in film as well as their consequence opens the possibility for critical engagement as a counter to traditional film viewing. What makes the critical viewing necessary must be answered by the tension between autonomy of the self to represent its imaginary self and the dependence on the self on images always already visible, yet, contrary to its own image.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 158

Works Cited

Bogue, Ronald, Deleuze on Cinema, Routledge: New York, NY, 2003

Derrida, Jacques, Of Grammatology, translated and introduced by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, The Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore and London, 1997