

THE PECULIARITIES OF INTERMEDIA APPROACH TO EXPERIMENTAL FILM IN THE  
CONTEXT OF CINEMA'S STRIVE FOR ARTISTIC AUTONOMY

by

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**ABSTRACT**

Intermedia approach to film seems to stand in the way of cinema's persistent fight for its medium specificity and artistic integrity. Thus, making the very definition of experimental filmmaking ambiguous for artists, theorists, and audiences alike. However, close analysis of the history of experimental film and its theory, reveals new possibilities of how cinema can benefit from its merging with the materials, logic, and aesthetics of its fellow art forms. This paper will thus analyze the problematics of intermedia approach to cinema as well as how it can be manipulated for achieving genuine cinematic communication. A special emphasis will be put on the role of language and poetics (both verbal and visual) as well as the metaphysical, conceptual side of filmmaking as opposed to its technicality.

## INTRODUCTION

Cinema - the newest and the most complex of the arts, yet also the one trying to establish its artistic autonomy. Such battle for media specificity comes as no surprise, as it is a reaction against the artform's blatant commercialization.

*Cinema is storytelling* is a statement that has been overused by Hollywood film schools and directors. And sadly, that is how the general audience relates to the world of the moving image today. This dominant perception continues to close the doors of exploration of cinematic language, which thanks to its synesthetic nature is more complex to analyze in comparison with other arts. Painting has a history that stretches for centuries, photography is way younger than painting however it also has established a solid theoretical standing. And then there is experimental cinema, outside the realm of storytelling, passionately devoted to uncovering the uniqueness of its form and purpose, lacking theory and sometimes even audience.

However, such condition seems to have been an inevitable fate for cinema as an interesting parallel can be observed between cinema's peculiarities as a medium and its path of development. A medium full of dynamism and movement, so bound to its machine, was born and is maturing in a reality, which changes as rapidly as one frame of film strip follows the other. Godard famously said, "Photography is truth, but cinema is truth twenty-four times a second," and indirectly pointed at the obstacles that cinema faces today. A truth that divides itself into twenty-four frames is harder to catch.

As Gene Youngblood argued in his book *Expanded Cinema* (1970), the age of expanded cinema should also be the age of expanded consciousness and to comprehend the first one should have attained the second. It is fair to assume that we - filmmakers, theorists and audiences, did not

catch up with cinema's pace, as its machine modeled closely to resemble the human eye, is the most complex tool that the artist has ever had in his hand. Who knows, maybe truth twenty-four per second is still overwhelming for our consciousness and patience is what lacks.

Such circumstances, however, should not be an excuse for me and other filmmaker/scholars to stop paving a way for cinema's unique place among the arts. On the contrary, efforts should be doubled, as the process of mass commercialization of cinema continues, and the priority is given to its technical side, prematurely depriving the medium of its conceptual heights. It is time to liberate cinema from entertainment, and experimental filmmaking is a viable place to start. It is time to return poetry to the screen.

One trait that makes cinematic language unique is that relies on synesthesia-like effect, combining hearing and seeing bound by movement in time and space. If synesthesia is the cross-merging of the senses and the basis of cinematic communication, then an intermedia approach to cinema comes as a logical consequence. Thus, while fighting for its integrity, cinema was also crushed by its fellow artistic disciplines.

When cinema apparatus was becoming more accessible to the masses, the curiosity of many artists from other fields heightened (most notably Andy Warhol and Man Ray.) At that time, cinema was too young to draw boundaries between the arts. If one could afford a low-budget camera then the possibilities of the moving picture became endless. Let us not forget the abstract films from the 1920s by Hans Richter and Viking Eggeling, notably their films *Rhythmus 21* and *Symphonie Diagonale* (1924) respectively, which aimed to make musical rhythms visible. Dance was another art form that has obtained a new dimension through the of Maya Deren and Shirley Clarke. They were not just filming dance performances but adding another cinematic dimension to them by manipulating movement and space. Dancefilm, from experimental practice, soon was

ready to become an independent aesthetic. Such was the beginning of experimental cinema - promising in its variety but not having enough theory to assist the medium in its quest for autonomy.

What we have here is a paradox. On one hand, cinema cross-breeding with other arts and on the other its wish for purity. The two seem to contradict each other more than they assist. However, one nuance can help cinema strive on its paradoxicality. The practice of cross merging can be attributed to the desire with the means of cinema to create something holistic, complete. What one art lacked on its own, in cinematic language could suddenly attain a novel form.

Secondly, only after experimenting with various approaches and materials, by means of exception can one arrive at the definition of cinematic language that would do justice to the possibilities of the medium. With cinema combinations seem infinite – that is what makes the medium so attractive for our contemporary consciousness. Sound and image, image and silence, silence and word, music and dialogue, and many more can be added and subtracted for the sake of a cinematic idea.

Cross-media approach to experimental cinema is a way to find one's own language of film. It is a way to choose to be inconsistent and to participate in a search. To choose the language over dance and then image over the word. Sometimes to speak and sometimes to remain silent.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In 1940-60s the American avant-garde cinema was going turbulent phase, seeking to establish its independence in the contemporary art scene on one hand, and attempting to define its relationship with respective artistic disciplines on the other. The debate concerning the linguistic qualities of cinema and its relationship with poetry was widely discussed at the time.

Considering the newness of the art form and its rapid transformations from purely visual form to the introduction of sound and dialogue, resulted in a significant theoretic debate. Was language a part of cinema? Can a film be considered poetic based solely on imagery or based on its fusion with language? Of course, the questions are rather open-ended and might provoke numerous interpretations up to this day.

The symposium of Poetry and Film which took place in Cinema 16 in New-York in 1953 marked an important event which addressed the rare problem of poetry in film. Because of its novelty and urgency, the debate that took place during the symposium was quite heated. The possibility of cinema to be a poetic medium and even its verbal elements were put under scrutiny. Experimental filmmaker Maya Deren, much of whose theoretic writings is not highly popular, was the pioneer of poetic cinema during the 1940s and a filmmaker who had a very specific view of the medium's metaphysical capacities, and how those should be separated from the conventional language of film.

The symposium starts broadly by addressing what poetry is in and of itself. One of Deren's key ideas, on which I will base my own arguments is that poetry as such does not apply only to language but is rather "a way of structuring in any one of a number of mediums, and (I think) that it is possible to make the dramatic structure in any one, and that it is possible to combine them."

(Kappenberg, 2017, p.105) Thereby, Deren encourages the cooperation between the mediums and her film *A Study of Choreography for Camera* (1945) shows us poetry by means of cinematic and dance languages. Thus, Deren assumes, that if the artist takes poetry as means of relating to the world and creating art, therefore any combination within filmic structure should serve that purpose. In such case, the combination of dance or verbal elements would not harm the cinematic integrity but boost it instead.

Deren divides her approach to cinema as vertical and horizontal. The horizontal refers to linear development characteristic of drama, while the vertical defies conventional logic communicating messages that are more ambivalent and abstract and present of an investigation of a moment instead of action. Other members of the symposium found Deren's distinction of the vertical and the horizontal inapplicable to film. For instance, Arthur Miller argued that emotion is wedded into action, therefore there should not be a distinction at all. Deren, however, did not deny the coexistence of the elements, as she believed those can work together so that a story with a clear narrative can suddenly be interrupted by a vertical investigation that would transcend the moment. Another aspect, that Deren spoke about and that I would like to emphasize in my project is the search for specific "film integrity and logic." (Koppenberg, 2017, p. 103) Each artistic medium deserves a unique technical and conceptual approach. Cinema mostly has been analyzed in terms of time and space, however in a rather limited manner. Time and space are assigned to cinematic language but are rarely investigated to their full conceptual potential. Therefore, I will attempt to analyze what follows from the two proposing a theory of experimental film based on the logic of movement and ephemerality.

Deren was inspired by Ezra Pound's definition of image published in 1913 in the journal *Poetry*. Pound referred to images as something "which presents an intellectual and emotional

complex whose logic is the whole form.” While T.S. Eliot’s referred to poetry as a synthesis of emotions with form, yet another notion that had an influence on Deren’s films and theory. Another of Pound’s claims about in the context of film and language provides ground for the debate about cinema as a verbal or nonverbal art form, as he argues for an image to be the speech itself “the word beyond formulated language.” Deren believed that language in cinema can exist not as a separate entity but as another dimension or extension of cinematography. My experience with the fusion of the two mediums was similar. The poetry I wrote for the film *Θνηπιρνιύ* (Crookedness) is of little literary merit when considered without the imagery it was written for. Thus, the text was not created in and of itself but out of the cinematography, thereby resulting in the creation of a totally different relation.

The relationship between speech and cinema remains active even in the case of films where the audible word is not present. During the filmmaking process, the artist engages with her/his inner speech all the time and so does the viewer when watching the film. Boris Eikhenbaum in his *Problems of Film Stylistic* identifies the peculiarities of film-speech as one of the most important problems in cinematic history. (Eikhenbaum, 1974, p.7) While Eisenstein refers to the laws of inner speech as “precisely those laws which lie at the foundation of the whole variety of laws governing the construction of the form and composition of art-work.” (Oeler, 2006, p. 4) However, to analyze the specifics of one or another language, one must know the language first. Which poses an important problem for experimental film. As a result of lacking theory and overt freedom of language of experimental film, its ties with the audience and with theory have weakened and are waiting to be restored.

Lev Vygotsky, a Soviet psychologist, was also interested in the concept of inner speech and especially its transformation. According to Vygotsky, thought and speech are not connected

primarily instead the connection occurs as the thinking process transforms and evolves. Given my interest in ephemerality and metamorphosis as a unique characteristic of film language, the studies of Eisenstein and Vygotsky will underpin my project. As a filmmaker, the evolution of the creative process is crucial to the understanding of the medium.

The relationship of language and film acquires a different dimension when it comes to the deconstruction of both verbal and cinematic language. Dziga Vertov in his poetic documentaries achieved poetry not verbally but through montage. His montage mimicked Futurist poems, achieving a rhythm that is purely visual, with its most prominent example in his film *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929). “Vertov in his films plays with the semantic structure of thoughts by using unusual camera angles and montage strategies, with the result of “a palpable texture of visual analogies and rhythmic segments” (Lawton, 1978, p. 44)

Vertov himself referred to his work in the following way “I work in the field of the poetic documentary film. That is why I feel so close to both the folk songs and the poetry of Majakovskij.” Vertov was driven by a vision of Kino Pravda (film-truth), which he regarded as the process of capturing elements of actuality, which when organized together and manipulated through cinematic language (mostly montage) reveal a deeper truth one cannot capture with the naked eye. Such statement again hints at experimental cinema’s connection to poetry, as what is poetry if not revealing the hidden aspects of realities/experiences and making the unfamiliar seem familiar? Thus, Vertov’s poetic film is constructed based on elements characteristic of poetry however without the audible word, establishing a cinematic language independent of words. The early battle of cinema’s authenticity initiated by Lev Kuleshov and Sergei Eisenstein was a battle for montage. They believed it was through montage that cinema could free itself from the influence of other art forms.

Preoccupied with montage, Soviet film pioneers like Vertov, Eisenstein and Kuleshov were interested both in the structural and conceptual aspects of the medium. However, the history of experimental film has witnessed a period with a heightened attention towards the material properties of film. To demonstrate the degree of such cooperation it is enough to know that a work of art was considered to be a film even when it “employed no camera, film strip, projector, or screen, taking instead space, light, and duration as its parameters.” (Walley, 2003, p.20)

Walley in his essay *The Material of Film and the Idea of Cinema: Contrasting Practices in the Sixties and Seventies Avant-Garde Film* identifies two branches of the American avant-garde - one group concerned with film’s materiality and technicality, while the other group, including Deren, was concerned with the dematerialized and ephemeral aspect of the medium. However, like cinema’s synesthetic nature calls for cooperation of the senses, in the same way, the two contrasting practices cooperated without realizing it. While all physical materials of film - the film strip, projector, camera, and screen were utilized to their full potential (for instance flicker films) another group of artists was rebelling against it by building a cinematic logic that would utilize its material properties without being dependent upon them.

In another of his essays, Walley argues that if anything could protect experimental film from its excessive materialization that is conceptual art. As conceptual art rejected the notion that many modernist critics held in common - that an art form is defined by its materials. However, to disregard cinema’s material nature completely is impossible. The two approaches without a doubt should be viewed as interdependent.

Another crucial reading that draws upon contemporary consciousness, silence and language is Susan Sontag’s *Aesthetics of Silence*. Even though it has little to say about cinema, most of her arguments can be easily transferred to the plane of the moving image. Sontag views art as a method

of reinventing the spirituality of one's own time. Intimidated by endless interpretations, information, and art outgrowing itself, the art of our age has never been so close to asceticism, with silence becoming a tool of ascetic participation. The artist then goes as far as to prioritize silence over finding his artistic voice. The silence of the artist, of course, does not go unnoticed by the audience and creates an ever-growing gap of misunderstanding and irony. The artist does not literally become silent but "continues speaking in a manner that his audiences can't hear. (Sontag, 1967, p. 3) Such relationship becomes a contradictory realization of the ideal of silence.

The second problem that Sontag identifies is the problem of language in art, which has become "the most contaminated, the most exhausted of all the materials out of which art is made." (Sontag, 1967, p. 4) Her views of language fit well into the context of experimental film. As she thinks that language has been so overused that it can no more present the contemporary consciousness as it deserves. Thus, even though Sontag does not make direct reference to cinema for its ability to do what language cannot in the modern age, she discusses Bergman's film *Persona* (1966), in the context of silence of its protagonist. Such a seeming impulsive choice establishes parallels between cinema's closeness to silent and sensual experiences, where language is conceived not through words but through montage.

The interconnectedness of the cinematic elements is something that as well occupied Eisenstein. Influenced by the Kabuki theater, he believed for cinema to be the first among the arts the synesthesia effect. (Odin, 1989, p. 70) Eisenstein argued that such multisensory experience should be aimed at achieving a psychological continuum. Overall, Eisenstein encouraged all filmmakers to draw inspiration from the art of Japan. Indeed, the laconic art of haiku poetry, which is also based on merging of the senses, is very close to cinema in its effect.

Eisenstein advocated for a cooperation of all cinematic elements, turning the viewing experience into an emotional and psychological whole. Alike other directors and theorists mentioned above, it seemed that Eisenstein was making a claim about cinema's dynamism, which unsurprisingly made Deren label the medium as "the twentieth-century art-form" owing to its "time, movement, energy and dynamism." (Butler, 2007, p. 1) Moreover, cinema's intermedia nature affects the artistic messages conceptually. For instance, according to Deren, the boundaries between past, present, and future become blurred. (Butler, 2007, p. 2) Thus, cinema becomes an art-form apt to communicate the rapid pace in the era of modernity.

Cinema's cross-merging with dance was yet another curious practice, which according to Erin Brannigan went largely undeveloped. During the early period of dancefilm, filmed performances were accused of their lack of kinetic energy of a live performance, which is imminent and, in the moment. That is true for filmed performances of Isadora Duncan or Loie Fuller. Where the camera is static, and no intimacy is established between the cinematography and choreography. "All kinetic drama is lost." (Brannigan, 2011, p.9) However later, cinema added a new dimension to the experience of dance.

As soon as the camera started moving around the dancers, choreographing its own movement in space and with the performer, the result was totally different. Thanks to unexpected camera angles and close-ups, film allowed to experience the movement from an uncanny perspective. The viewer, therefore, gets to experience the micro-choreography of the movement as the camera slides from one body part to another. Other manipulations regarding movement can be added in post-production, the most prominent among which is of course slow motion.

With so many artistic variations within the medium, the manipulation of film also affects the definition of the artist. Walley builds up on that idea in his second article on the identity crisis

of cinema trying to find its unique place among other arts. Starting from the 1960s the artist has worked with a but found a way to synthesize different artforms in inventive and conceptual ways. Therefore, as a director, utilizing all aspects of cinema I should learn to think in terms of image, sound as well as rhythm both visual and semantic. Thus, I will try to come up with a theory based on my own artistic practice, with a special focus on cinema's unique role as a contemporary medium as well as its connection to visual and verbal poetry allowing it to communicate ideas that are fleeting and abstract, with a special focus on the state of silence.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

Having so far introduced the problematics of intermedia approach to cinema, my foremost goal is to identify how it can benefit from cross merging with other art forms and turn to its own variety of synesthetic elements. However, for cinema to cooperate with fellow artistic disciplines, it should first firmly establish itself as an autonomous medium with its logic. Thus, my goal is to uncover the specifics of cinematic language, considering both its material and conceptual sides, still giving priority to the latter.

Of course, as I am to draw upon other art forms, I shall also know their language. Naturally, my research was not limited to experimental cinema but included research and aesthetic comprehension of photography, dance and music.

Besides extensive reading on the subject, I have watched many experimental films. Constructing a chronological timeline has helped me identify several artistic and technical trademarks of the medium. Not classified as experimental films, still many crucial films that utilized a poetic approach to a narrative structure, have made it to my watchlist.

My viewing of films was not driven by a holistic perception but rather was aimed at understanding the films based on the synesthetic elements present in them – from films created during the silent era to those with voiceovers and dialogues. Thanks to a careful viewing of films separately and in comparison, helped me identify common trends in experimental film as well as practices and theories that went largely unnoticed.

I do believe that the theory of experimental film should be interpreted along with its practice. The medium of film allows endless possibilities, however, at risk of using those

carelessly, filmmakers should take on the responsibility to analyze their own artistic practice adding to the urgent debates about cinema language today.

And of course, the best way to understand the nature of experimental film as an artist is to experiment. Thus, aware of the theory of experimental film and intermedia approach to it, amid creating, I have let myself to be free of prejudices and convention, that could weaken my genuine artistic impulses. Still, the strive for discovering a cinematic logic and the wish to revive the understanding between experimental film and its audience guided my practice.

The films for this project were mostly shot on Google Pixel phone camera and edited through Adobe Premiere Pro. Most of my footage is observational in nature, with very little scripted material. I left my experiments to chance so that the components of poetry, dance and image can flexibly interact within themselves without my absolute intervention. Thus, the findings of this paper will rely on my experience with the medium.

To conclude, the methodology will also rely on my personal experience and relation to the medium through a close reading of my films and the creative practice behind them. By putting my films within a larger scope of experimental cinema practice, I will try to envision a possible conceptual, poetic future for the medium. A special part of the paper will focus on the idea of silence in its different manifestations and how it can be best conveyed through cinema.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

### **Silence: A Dream for Transcendence or a Conflict with the Audience?**

*O, may my lips someday attain*

*The primal muteness that I've sought -*

*That's like a flawless crystal note,*

*Its purity - from birth sustained.*

1910

By Osip Mandelstam, Translation by Andrey Kneller

The yearning for silence has matured in me for a long but I clearly remember the day it was born. On a snowy winter morning, I was looking from the window of a bus that was driving me away from the city. Overwhelmed by the whiteness of the roads, the crooked trees, the weeping window glass and the sound of the bus engine, I was thinking nothing. I was silent, yet my silence was not self-reflective then.

My perception was overcome by totality, oneness with my consciousness and with the subjects. The trees were not separate, those were one with snow, movement and sounds, reminiscent of an impression one gets from reading a haiku. When the totality was conceived, only then I thought. It was for the first time I contemplated silence. Back then, I perceived the state as cinematic. Now it is clear why.

The choice to represent silence through cinema is not a coincidence, as cinema was indeed a silent medium until 1927. It was a cinematic language that has already asserted itself and which violently collapsed as sound and dialogues started accompanying images on the screen. What early film theorists called pure cinema was lost. Talkies increased in popularity, allowing to tell stories which were not possible before and brought cinema closer to its synesthetic quality as we know it

today while also gave rise to the artforms commercialization. Silence had lost its relevancy and did not reassert itself up until the sixties and seventies during the American avant-garde.

If one's goal is to return cinema its artistic autonomy, one must refer to all its stages of development and not neglect the primal condition of the artform. Cinema's primal condition was silence, which undoubtedly can and should return to cinema with a futuristic force. Considering that cinematic language has changed extremely rapidly, we should put its turning points under close theoretical examination, not to let concepts as powerful as silence get neglected.

Falling silent makes one protected, vulnerable and in a position of power at the same time. While discussing silence in the context of cinema, it worth one more time to mention Ingmar Bergman's film *Persona* (1966). The protagonist, an actress Elizabeth Vogler decides to go mute to mentally escape from her life that had sunk into dissonance. "A person who becomes silent becomes opaque for the other; somebody's silence opens up an array of possibilities for interpreting that silence." (Sontag, 1967, p.5) Sontag also characterizes Vogler's silence as "a means of power, a species of sadism, a virtually inviolable position of strength from which she manipulates and confounds her nurse companion, who is in charge with the burden of talking." (Sontag, 1967, p.5) Thus *Persona*, like no other presents the deceptive side of silence - one that looks dignified on the outside but happens to conceal the messy inner world of the protagonist.

The film is also reflective of how silence (as an inner state) can be communicated through the screen, without the protagonist having to utter a single word, a task which would hardly be accomplished by literature. Cinema offers presence, corporeal and emotional, emphasizing the state of being above another characteristic of characters and storyline. Therefore, it is apt to reveal the psychological realities which exist beyond the realm of words, activating and merging our senses to create a state of being as opaque and multilayered as silence.

Since my intention is to investigate the concept of silence from various standpoints, the cross-media cinematic approach became the best mean to do it. First cinema spoke one universal language of silence, but then with the addition of each novelty, it became more diverse in its forms and purposes. The myth of Tower of Babel comes to mind as an analogy. First, there was a sole language which communicated eternal concepts but when the languages became many and communication lapsed into chaos. However, art, on a general note, has taken on the responsibility to strive for a universal language – a promise which early silent films wished to fulfill. Thereby, only after realizing the threat that cinema's multilingualism (in this case intermedia) poses to its autonomy, the medium can finally invent a way to benefit from it.

Silence itself is multilingual. As John Cage insisted, "There is no such thing as silence. Something is always happening that makes a sound." Saying that he referred to his 4'33 performance when in a soundless chamber he still heard the sound of his heartbeat and the coursing of blood to his head. Thus, silence is ambivalent while in art often an illusion. In cinema, things are no different. When we think we are perceiving silence, there are some manipulations we do not consider as often in films silence is orchestrated through sounds and music. While voiceover poetry can stand for inner monologue and, therefore, exterior silence.

"The art of our time is noisy with appeals to silence." (Sontag, 1967, p. 4) Cinema with its multilingualism sometimes can get tiring, as its components when used carelessly indeed can turn it into a noisy medium. Then the filmmaker always has an ever-present choice – to crave for silence, to return to the almighty prehistoric language. Then all components of sound, image, words would work towards a single end. Then, the seemingly static state of silence will easily find refuge in a medium which is so full of dynamism and energy thanks to its constant process of becoming.

However, silence is also a way of compliance with the artistic process, a process that so often speaks for itself and when uninterrupted acquires its autonomous logic becoming a mixture of intellect, sensuality, and intuition. It is also a servitude to the themes of art, which are sometimes too complex for our consciousness to grasp. Thus, silence poses questions, while offering little answers always with a belief in the possibility that “there are always ways of thinking that we don’t know about.” (Sontag, 1967, p. 5) This hypothesis is vital to understanding the place of experimental filmmaking today. Due to its recent birth, many of its potentialities remain undiscovered, making it arguably the only art for which the idea of the avant-garde has not exhausted itself.

The silence I chose, is both passive and active, a surrender and a quest. It’s a quest for artistic identity and perhaps a surrender of revealing it, keeping it away from the public eye in fear to reveal its immaturity and rawness. Such silence then, becomes a manner of communication with the audience, with its peculiar problems and benefits.

“Modern art’s chronic habit of displeasing, provoking, or frustrating its audience can be regarded as a limited, vicarious participation in the ideal of silence.” (Sontag, 1967, p. 3) Modern art, therefore, allowed the artist to abandon his responsible sense of vocation. Silence on behalf of the artist becomes the reluctance to communicate further engendering the gap with her/his audience. “Silence is the artist’s ultimate otherworldly gesture: by silence, he frees himself from the servile bondage to the world, which appears as patron, client, consumer, antagonist, arbiter, and distorter of his own work. (Sontag, 1967, p. 2) However, my silence does not turn away from the audience, it is inviting to participate in observation and contemplation. This kind of silence is tense, as it tries to expose the audience to the unknown, which I do not claim to know well. Traditional art, Sontag argues, invites a look while silent art engenders a stare. (Sontag, 1967, p.5)

Silence then, becomes a mean of retaining attention, an ability that is now endangered globally. The artist falls silent to be responsibly attentive to her/his work and is ready to share the experience.

As for the audience, when viewing experimental film, the audience ideally should perceive it with what Deren calls innocent receptivity, which would permit them to experience a different filmic dimension of the world instead of a reality replica. This innocent receptivity becomes the missing component of a work of art and its audience. “The audience for art is limited not by ignorance nor by an inability to analyze, but by a lack of innocent receptivity.” (Deren, & McPherson, 2005, p. 23) To achieve a heightened state of concentration is my foremost goal while experimenting with film and manipulating its medium. I believe that such concentration is born out of viewers’ concentration with something unfamiliar, unknown. In my case, the unknowingness is born out of the most sincere, inner happenings, conceived in silence. Such communication will be possible if the audience also gains its right to innocent reception and therefore, will create its own silence.

### **The Attainment of Silent Language and Verbal Silence in Experimental Film**

*Certain thoughts without words grew in the poet's soul and can be clarified neither into an image nor a concept.*

*Oh if only one could express One's soul without words.*

- Afanasy Fet, 1844

As already mentioned, the concept of silence is not absolute as it may seem. There is a meditative silence, which aims at the termination of thought and ego-dissolution. However, there are also monologues and inner speech which become the components of silence. Lev Vygotsky

argued that the real identity lies in not just language but in inner speech, which Eisenstein believed is the very foundation of all art. My silence is not absolute at all, language has a share of it.

In fact, my transition to cinema was from poetry. Before my film shooting experience begun, I was translating my impressions of the world through writing. Then at some point, words left me unsatisfied. Leaving the static power of words behind, my fascination with the moving picture increased. However, nor did I sacrifice words completely neither my poetic sensibility. Language still makes up a significant part of my films and so does poetry both verbal and visual. This how I referred to the transition described above in my journal. "First was the word. Then was the image. The image craved for silence. Silence is not muteness, it rebels against muteness."

In inner speech, words no more resemble the ones in external speech - it is thinking in pure meanings. "It is a dynamic, shifting, unstable thing, fluttering between word and thought, the two more or less stable, more or less firmly delineated components of verbal thought." (Vygotsky, 1986. p. 37) Vygotsky argued that thought and speech are not connected by a primary bond but rather the connection originates as both evolve respectively. Moreover, inner speech generally is considered as a process of discovery. If the artist manages to expand her/his inner speech, then s/he becomes aware of new elements of his own perception. Thus, creating more than one realizes.

Let us examine the film *Θνητότητα* (Crookedness) (2018) in this context. Observational in nature, the film did not have much appeal when it was solely visual. Only when it started to be accompanied by the poem, the whole concept of "crookedness" was born. While editing, images suddenly transcended into words, and thus the process of discovery revealed a new dimension and logic of the images. In other words, I was not aware what my film was about until through the process of writing the poem, I discovered the inner logic of crookedness on which the whole film is based.

My film with its montage strategy resembles Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*, where montage phrases rhythm with each other thanks to similar (in both cases irregular/bent) camera angles. Thus, the rhythmic poetic quality was at the heart of the film, making the incorporation of the verbal poem a natural extension of cinematographic logic. Moreover, despite having more experience in writing poetry in English, for this film, I wrote it in Armenian. This is yet another nuance which reinforces the connection between the images and the word. This seeming coincidence is very close to Vertov's argument about poetic documentaries, in which a new truth about reality stands out after filmic manipulations. Since my film was completely shot in Gyumri, Armenia, the images, and the poem cooperate to reveal both poetic and social insights of my actuality.

I would argue that the evolution of inner speech with its fluttering and unstable quality finds its refuge easily in experimental cinema. As it gradually either transforms into a sequence of images or into writing which goes into the film. Inner speech or stream of consciousness can be too overwhelming for one medium, that is why it needs to employ a medium that is based on synesthesia. The films of experimental filmmaker Jonas Mekas are also prominent in their use of inner speech and stream of consciousness. Using mostly diary-like footage, his films such as *Lost, Lost* (1976) or *As I Was Moving Ahead Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty* (2000) would have lost their charm if it was not for the existential voiceover that accompanies them. In *Whistle Move* (2018), the process of discovery through inner speech is also evident. The inner speech accompanying the film, gradually evolves conceptually defining its relationship to space. It evolves intuitively, resembling more the logic of an improvised dance rather than verbalized thought.

However, what happens if neither language nor silence suffice the needs of the artist? Then come in the sounds - trying to balance the two. Sounds can evolve into language and vice versa. Such was the mission of Zaum, the transrational language proposed by Viktor Shklovsky, which intended to go beyond logical means as an echo of the primeval human self-expression.

Perhaps Juliusz Slowacki was right when in his notebook he wrote that “There will come a time in verse when poets will be interested only in sounds.” Film allows the advantage of prioritizing sounds over words and vice versa. Such was the case for my film *Soundportrait*. As the title suggests the protagonist is defined by sounds. The inner state of silence is visible through the image but is conveyed through the sounds of the surrounding space. All diegetic in nature, the sounds bond together the different spaces in the film. Thus, despite separate locations, the inner state of the protagonist and her relationship to her reality remains the same. In *Whistle Move*, the agency of sounds is similar – sounds merge easily with the movement of the body, but rarely so well with words.

### **Experimental Cinema: A Subconscious Movement**

Kineticism should be the goal of the moving picture.

-Maholy Nagy

Sometimes sounds can seem overwhelming too and the artist might turn to cinema's almighty feature – movement. To silence the internal speech or to rebel against language, the artist can turn to the movement of the body and still convey it through film.

One thing is certain – to reveal the movement is to reveal ephemerality and therefore make a statement about the very nature of cinema. Time and space are considered cinema's unique

parameters. However, due to their transitory and abstract nature, it is hard to find explicit examples of their application. Thus, a curious phenomenon occurs when movement of a body becomes the moving force in the filmic space. Owing to its immediate metamorphosis, it acts as a metaphor for time itself. Moreover, it utilizes space, which becomes the ultimate habitat of such amorphous but visible existence. Time and space finally assert themselves as the main components of cinematic language.

“We move not to populate space, not to extend it or to embody it, but to create it.” (Manning, 2009 p. 13) Such effect could hardly be achieved by sound, as its relation to space and time is harder to detect. As sounds can just be a part of space but not participate in the process of its creation as vividly as the moving body. Thus, the practice of dancefilm or cinedance reveals new possibilities for medium specificity with its ability to draw viewer’s attention to the filmic dimensions of time and space in the most vivid manner.

In fact, dance becomes a way of silencing the mind, ending the daunting and static inner monologue and giving immediacy to an impulse. The transition from thoughts and speech towards dance is like a transfer of an impulse from one organ of perception to another. In the film *Whistle Move*, there is an antagonism between movement and language. When the movement of the body fills the screen, the mind of the protagonist is silenced – dance emancipates the body from words. While when the body is static, words take on the leading role, the protagonist no more connects to space through movement and touch but through metaphysical concepts. The shots of the static body are followed by shots of static objects. However, the nuance that makes those shots seem less stale is that they nevertheless strive for movement. The cellophane is slightly pushed by the wind, the withering flower still shivers, and the cat turns its head. Thus, even the static shots, do not lose their filmic logic as they find themselves affected by spatial and temporal relations.

In fact, it could be argued that the movement of the body lay at the foundation of the first ever cinematic experiments. From Eadweard Muybridge's photographic study of motion to Etienne Jules Marey's chronophotography - we can observe a dissection of movement. Cinema as storytelling was not even a possibility back then. To go back to my argument about the theoretical analysis of cinema's history with a special focus on its turning points, it would be fair to insist that movement, and especially dance, deserve a closer theoretical look in frameworks of experimental film, as they open novel and fundamental ways to the medium's comprehension.

The main component of choreographic films is dancing through space. By the means of creative geography and cutting on action, the dancer is transported from indoors to outdoors, but the movement of his body remains intact, embracing continuity. Cinematography allows the dancer to expand the space around him/her. It may be linked to the desire of the dancer to break through space, to create a movement that transcends the space and the body. The fleetingness of dance is complemented with the fleetingness of the cinematic image. As one of the pioneers of screendance, Shirley Clarke, remarked about one her dance films *Dance in the Sun* (1953) featuring Daniel Nagrin, where latter's leap from a stage to a beach becomes possible through montage. Herself perplexed by this spatial and conceptual possibility that cinema has allowed dance, Clarke referred to it as "a way of encompassing the universe." (Rabinovitz, 1983, p. 8) Here again, we deal with an artist who tried to endow one art form new possibilities through the cinematic lens, while also tried to achieve a holistic result in the process. Deren and Clarke were the two women who, however, did not prioritize one practice over the other, instead, they tried to achieve a monistic ensemble of movement-body-space-time.

Due to cinema's moving and changing nature, dance is integrated naturally into the medium. If one views poetry outside of literary tradition, regarding it as a general manner of

translating reality impressions that could be integrated into the medium of film, then the same applies to choreography. Erin Brannigan argued that “corporeal performance is one filmic movement amongst many... spreading out across people and things, thereby releasing figures from the demands of storytelling, allowing them to become part of a transference of movement across bodies and to resonate in moments that are freed in space and time.” (2011, p. 113) Thus, it is important to view filmic movement not only in terms of the body but also other objects present in space and their relationship to movement.

The very nature of cinematography is choreographing movement, objects, and actors in space, which later can be manipulated through montage again staying true to choreographic principles. The early history of experimental cinema proves this hypothesis. What we see in those films is an obsession with movement. Be it Vertov’s *Man with a Movie Camera* or Man Ray’s *Emak Bakia* (1926), what makes their cinematic experience enchanting is their kineticism. Both films examine and choreograph the dynamics of urbanizing cities, machines, shapes and human bodies.

Rene Clair was another avant-gardist hoping to create a work of pure cinema with his film *Entr’Acte* (1924). Initially, the film was planned to be screened between two acts of Francis Picabia’s 1924 opera *Relâche*. The film is a brilliant example of how Clair utilized one aspect of musical language – rhythm, for a uniquely cinematic purpose. Clair’s attempt to create pure cinema is visible through the variety of techniques that he used: fast motion, slow motion, superimposition, etc. The slow-motion shots of the leaping ballerina and the funeral procession are especially curious, as these act as a microscope of movement of the bodies. Thus, with slow motion and the body, one can put the very idea of cinematic time under scrutiny. “Thanks to ... rhythm, the cinema can become a new force which, abandoning the logic of facts and the reality of objects, will

engender a series of visions hitherto unknown and inconceivable.” (Clair, 1978, p. 61) Indeed, *Entr’Acte* put a beginning to a cinematic language that did not live up to its full potential. The film proposed a choreographic logic of movement, without being a dancefilm, thus making a purely cinematic statement.

The early cityfilms also had a close relation to dance and choreography. For instance, Walter Ruttmann’s classic film *Symphony of a Great City* (1927). The presence of the word “symphony” in the title already makes a reference to the film’s close relation to dance and music. Other city films like *In the Street* (1948) by Helen Levitt, Janice Loeb, and James Agee or *A Bronx Morning* (1931) by Jay Leyda also strived to reveal the dance-like quality of the everyday. Since the films’ main goal was to reveal the multidimensional space of the city with its inhabitants, machines, and buildings, the movement became a necessary characteristic for making that happen. The same could be said about Shirley Clarke’s *Bridges-Go-Round* (1958), where the movement between the bridges of the city and the camera becomes as intimate as a contact improvisation between two dancers. Only through corporeal presence and relation to objects is movement truly made visible, pushing the bodies and objects to assume a role of active or passive agents within the filmic space.

Henri Bergson argued that the comprehension of time is limited by our language, as our relation to space is more concrete. Our relationship to space is defined by the objects and therefore possible actions towards that objects. Meanwhile, the relationship to time is more ambivalent, as only upon realizing those actions time can be experienced. (Deleuze, 2009) Through the logic of dance, time and space become interlinked, therefore giving dancefilm a priority over written theory to define the cinematic bond of the two concepts.

## **Cinema as the Best Medium for the Ephemeral**

The depiction of action and inaction has the potential to become a central question in experimental as well as narrative films with a poetic slant. As already discussed the state of silence can both be active and passive, however since it lacks a narrative verbal component, the possibilities to communicate it through literature and dramaturgy are quite limited. Meanwhile, cinema, as in the film *Persona*, offers an emotional and sensual presence. Therefore, if cinema can convey an idea as abstract as silence, the cinematic language should capitalize the representation of ephemeral states as its hallmark.

Let us begin with memory – an experience which does not obey the natural chronology of events and circumstances. “On the contrary, memory has access to all our experiences simultaneously...becoming a dynamic relationship of functioning parts.” (Sullivan, 1997, p. 44) In memory, influenced by forces of imagination, what was once real suddenly becomes unreal and abstract. The formation of memory in our consciousness resembles the process of montage, where film footage acts as “fragments of a permanent incorruptible memory.” (Deren, 1947, p. 123) Thus, film becomes a medium with creative chronology, giving birth to infinite forms and the memory-like changingness of things.

In film, the memory-like logic defines the relationship to time and space, abandoning the logic of reality, creating continuous spatial and non-linear disproportions, which can go as far as to defy gravity. However, it is worth to note, that the ways of comprehending space and time in life and film are not as distinct as those may seem. Our temporal relationship to both concepts is rather subjective as it evolves based on our preferences. Space expands and shrinks as we walk through it, while time acquires and loses meaning based on whether we follow it or are indifferent

towards it. The present moment is the most elusive, “flanked as it is by the future time that is not yet, and past time that is no longer. How can we measure time since what we measure is either not yet or no longer in existence?” (Gombrich, 1976, p. 298) Thus, to exist in time and space is a subjective experience, which arguably when rendered cinematically, should evoke familiarity instead of dissonance.

Arthur Rimbaud’s famous phrase *I is another* acquires a curious meaning in this context. “The form of time presumes a division of the subject into a passive Ego (Moi) that is in time and constantly changing, and I (Je) that actively carries out a synthesis of time by continually dividing up the present, past and the future.” (Rodowick, 2003, p. 128) This very well describes the relationship of the protagonist to her/his environment, central to films of Deren as well as my own. In *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943) and *At Land* (1944) the inner state of protagonist expands to become a part of her environment. The agency shifts from Deren (who acts in both films) to her surrounding space – the two constantly trick and manipulate each other. When Deren becomes passive, the space around her animates and vice versa, finally letting the identify of movement transcend time and space. (MacDonald, & Stauffacher, 2006, p. 30)

Deren categorized film as a temporal art form along with poetry, music and dance and advocated for the experience of relativity in cinema. Film is concerned with how one moment becomes the next one. Such relativistic approach seems to suit well the distorted and chaotic perception of contemporary reality. On one hand because of our weakening ability to grasp this fleeting moment of transformation, while on the other hand, striving to recover that very sensibility. In the age when technology and machines develop quicker than the human consciousness, both spatial and temporal realities become blurred. “Those are so mutually accessible, that in effect, almost identical.” (Butler, 2007, p. 2) Within such unusual circumstances

the protagonist, can assume both active and passive role. The representation of action is more characteristic of narrative development. While the state of passivity is more characteristic of poetic logic.

In *Soundportrait*, the protagonist most of the time assumes a passive role, trying to define her relationship with the surrounding space and sounds, by poetically reflecting upon them and accepting their transitory nature. The lines “All sounds are low-pitched. You cannot hear them one by one. I know sometimes you wish,” hints at the holistic perception, which the film has created, trying to convey a state of being instead of a story. While the lines “Moved everything, not now then. Trees withstood the wind, now they just stand. Not now then,” reveal the ephemeral nature of the inner state of connection with her environment as well as time. Thus, films of Maya Deren and films like *Soundportrait* also fulfill Deleuzian concept of time-images, where actions and developments are subordinated to the exploration of time per se. Thus, the time-image breaks away from the movement-image, which sticks to cliched representation of reality, returning poetry to cinema.

Deleuze believed that instead of representation, cinema could create its own movements and temporalities. Such movement is not bound to one type of shot, instead it spreads along the movement from one frame to another. He rejected any metaphorical interpretation by stating that “These are not metaphors, but a becoming, which can by right continue to infinity.” (Deleuze, 2009, p. 58)

Cinema’s temporality is a question that as well occupied Bergson, as his concepts of time, space, intuition and memory merge well with experimental cinema. “Intuition is rather the movement by which we emerge from our own duration, by which we make use of our own duration to affirm and immediately to recognize the existence of other durations, above or below us.”

(Deleuze, 2011, p.97) Intuition thus can foster new thought processes “not through external determinism but through a becoming that carries the problems themselves along with it.” (p. 99) For him perception is the influence of images upon one another. This view of imagery is reminiscent of Vertov’s theory of intervals, which claims that cinematic language should be built upon the movement between pieces. Such was the case with films *Crookedness* and *Whistle Move*. The visual logic within frames revealed itself intuitively to me while editing. In both films shots are assembled following a logic of movement above any other. In case of the first film, it is the logic of bent camera angles and the wind, while in case of the second the logic of the moving body – following the dynamics of moving and static states.

In all my films durations are realized intuitively. In *Soundportrait*, the ego-dissolution enables the protagonist to get insight into durations of time and space. In *Crookedness*, the intuition reveals the duration of movement stretching from one shot to another. While, in *Whistle Move*, the contrasting duration of static and dynamic time and movement is realized. “Pure duration is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself live when it refrains from separating its present state, from its former states.” (Bergson, 1960) The art of the moving picture is a flow, without no anchor point or a center of reference but movement itself.

## Japanese Aesthetics as a Source of Revival for Experimental Film

*Synesthesia Effect in Poetry*

*the sea darkens —*

*a wild duck's call*

*faintly white*

Bashō

*The apparition of these faces in the crowd;*

*Petals on a wet, black bough.*

Ezra Pound

Above is a haiku by a prominent Japanese poet Matsuo Basho and an Imagist poem by Ezra Pound. In two and three lines, these poems make a statement about synesthesia in poetry - first characteristic of the haiku but later also of the modernist poetry of not only Pound but Rimbaud (notably his poem Vowels) and others. It is no secret, that modernist poets looked back at Japanese art and literature as a source of inspiration and revitalization of their own poetic practice. Given its synesthetic quality, cinema can and should, as Eisenstein insisted, draw inspiration not only from Kabuki theater but Japanese aesthetic in general. Haikus are the best place to start such exploration, as their purpose is to communicate a state of being.

In the most laconic way haikus and haiku-inspired works seek to achieve a complete experience that engages all the senses, much like cinema apart from the smell. The transition from the darkening sea to the duck's call and then to the impression of white, is very swift as the temporality that most haiku poems depict. Their one-breath duration enables the words that create the experience and the experience to become one. The impression of the reader becomes one, where one sense does not dominate over the other. Such reading is reminiscent of a film viewing

- heightened awareness of hearing and seeing, stretching between frames - creating a continuous moment in space in time. Inseparable from Eastern philosophy, the haikus hide hints of concepts of calamity and eternity, achieved through silent observation.

In such context, my comprehension of silence described in the introduction acquires a new meaning. Silence as a state of oneness and ego-dissolution was possible to comprehend only through the multiplicity of elements that made it up, without one sense dominating the other. In my case, the whiteness of the elaborate space, the movement and the sounds, suddenly became one giving birth to the concept of silence. Thus, my conviction that such feeling was cinematic, was exactly a result of all the senses shaping each other in my moment of oneness with the transitory nature of reality and the infiniteness of space.

Eisenstein praised the Kabuki theater exactly for its monism of ensemble. Synesthesia is achieved by “rapid juxtaposition of sense impressions.” (Odin, 1989, p.73) Manipulating all the sense experiences the performance, therefore, builds “to a grand total provocation of the brain.” Indeed, through the equal use of image, words, and sound in *Soundportait*, the result strives for a whole, with the oneness of senses constructing a complete emotional state. While *Whistle Move* and *Crookedness* do so by activating the logic of movement. To hear movement and to see sound was Eisenstein's dream for the synesthetic montage. Referencing the American novel about a man who had his seeing and hearing nerves transposed, which enabled him to perceive light vibrations as sounds and to see air tremors as colors. Even though Eisenstein did not intend for dance and poetry to become part of film, the three films nevertheless fulfill the synesthetic vision in their own way.

In “Synaesthetic Cinema: The End of Drama” Youngblood remarks that avant-garde cinema has evolved as the only aesthetic language that can represent the reality continuum of

contemporary consciousness. (2001, p. 77) The synesthetic quality of cinema itself guided me to work with it intermedia, because in a way it helped me to deal with the chaos of the mind, becoming an extension of all my senses. By letting myself disorganize all my senses (which Rimbaud believed to be a necessary process for a poet) did I emancipate myself to strive for oneness.

The juxtaposition of Basho's and Pounds poems is not accidental. Basho drew his inspiration from nature, while Pound was a poet of industrial progress. While the landscapes changed, the poetic approach did not. Youngblood argued that when we say expanded cinema what we also imply is expanded consciousness. Thus, the expanded cinema of the 21st century is one of chaotic mind of the artist trying to catch up and have a say amid the speed and chaos of one's time. However, it would be wrong to argue that our consciousness had to expand to manifest itself poetically. Seeing the world poetically has always been possible and has found its expression in painting, music and all other art forms that existed long before cinema. If one thinks of it, it took the tradition of painting quite a long time to break away from realistic representation to a more subjective experience. If we put cinema in that picture, it is natural that it still lacks authenticity outside the narrative, representational form.

“The poet writes in a temporal frame that has a beginning and end. However, during that brief moment of "oneness" with the object, when awareness of self as a distinct entity from other objects is transcended, his finite nature is lost in timeless consciousness, or is a state of "pure" awareness that does not acknowledge the passage of time....” (Johnson, n.d. p. 221) To achieve oneness with something a collision of multiple elements must take place. In case of cinema, it could be the unification of words with the image, of dance and movement or any other possible combination that the medium would allow, especially when approached as intermedia. In the film *Ծռուվայրուկ* (Crookedness) the sudden oneness of poetry and image was an experience of

synesthesia. At some point during editing, I had started perceiving the assembly of images as a flow of words. Indeed, the poem written for the film was written in one breath - without thinking, just letting the two senses merge.

Such duration Shikin argues lasts in one breath, after which the poet is transported back into the temporal consciousness. But in that one breath haiku manages to express sounds, images, the passage of time, and the process of movement, yet thanks to its brevity the reader instantaneously perceives “the whole” as the poet did in a moment of oneness. (Johnson, n.d, p. 223)

Of course, I cannot speak for how the poetry and the images of the film were perceived as one by the audience however, my experience was close to the experience of writing a haiku. Moreover, if one does a close reading of the poem, it becomes evident that by itself it also resembles a haiku. The lines “where were we walking, against the wind we were walking” address logic of movement in the film. While the line “what were we doing in noise” is a reference both to space and to sounds. And finally, “as the people going against the wind are described as formless” also reveals the relation of objects to space and movement. Yet the poem itself was written in a state of meditative silence. This proves for cinema to be the closest art to synesthesia and paradoxically silence. As upon the viewing of the film, several audience members agreed that despite the presence of the voiceover in the film, the overall experience of it was silent.

Other elements of Eastern philosophy underpin my view of cinema. The first and the most persistent is the concept of *mono no aware*, vaguely translated as sensitivity to ephemera and all in all is a term for the awareness of impermanence. But it is also characterized by the feeling that accompanies it - a feeling of sadness towards the transience of thing and the realization that it is the ultimate state of reality.

In frames of art, *mono no aware* can be prescribed to the experience of inspiration, a momentary insight into the depth of one's own self, object or concept, and the poignancy of its premature loss. It is this feeling of being drawn to the ever-changing landscape experienced from behind the window of a car or a train. But most of all, it is cinema itself - the way it's one frame gives way to another and how this continuum brings to us the most fleeting experiences. The experience of *mono no aware* closely resemble our subjective experience of cinematic space and time, with their everchanging nature.

However, does ephemerality mean that cinema cannot depict a moment? Not necessarily. The representation of the moment is a concept that refers to all visual arts. However, unlike other arts that deal with stillness like painting, photography and sculpture, cinema's relationship to the moment is unique and little researched. According to Gombrich, while the problems of space in art has occupied art historians to an exaggerated degree, the problem of time has been highly neglected. (1976, p. 40)

Indeed, one peculiarity of cinematic experience is its ability to expand the moment - to make what is fleeting to last longer. Think of a film where over a course of its thirty minutes events unfold, characters develop, but the atmosphere of the film remains consistent. Therefore, a momentary experience can through cinema be transformed into something consistent and lasting. Thus, the choice of cinema as the medium enables the artist to add another dimension to the moment through movement. Thus, the moment will acquire continuity without being frozen in space and time but be finding its place within those.

Let us return to *Soundportrait* again. A state of inner and outer exploration presented through the logic of continuity. Here it is important to distinguish between the concept of continuity and development. The latter is an attribute of storytelling rather than poetic treatment

of film. In fact, this nuance differentiates experimental poetic from narrative-based filmmaking. Development constitutes mostly a change of events, actions and therefore relies on external triggers to advance the narrative. While continuity, as in experimental filmmaking, aims inward and therefore sustains a state of being and thus creating mood instead of a story. The protagonist shares the moment with her surroundings - trying to create a moment of oneness. Such moments of oneness, if we are lucky to have them, last a glimpse of a second, as if cut out of time. Thanks to cinema those can acquire new temporal existence, and therefore a possibility a sensual or philosophical investigation.

Second concept from Eastern philosophy is the concept of wu wei, meaning strategic non-action. The idea suggests acting without forcing oneself and even sometimes subsiding to non-action. However, after periods of non-action one will be able to do something filled with more genuine energy and purpose. Taoist storyteller Chuang Tzu explained the idea around 350 BC in the following way: "From the sage's emptiness, stillness arises; From stillness, action. From action, attainment." Not initially on purpose, but the idea of wu wei relates *Soundportrait*, the existence of the protagonist is engulfed by passivity, which however does not mean the absence of desire, but only its temporary termination. The moments of stillness become moments of awareness and interaction with the surrounding space, objects, and sounds. Thus, creating a unique relationship between the protagonist and the ephemeral realities. The concept of wu wei is especially applicable to observational films. The process of observance requires strategic non-action on behalf of the filmmaker.

Another term from Japanese aesthetics is wabi-sabi, which stands for transience and imperfection. It is centered around the kind of beauty that is impermanent, imperfect and incomplete. Thus, this attitude in art manifests itself in forms of roughness, simplicity, modesty,

and intimacy. Such a view is close to experimental and amateur filmmaking. With few technical resources, usually, one-person films are closer to the aesthetic of wabi-sabi than any other. A popular definition of amateurism is associated with being unskillful. Meanwhile the etymology of the term shows us a different take. Amare means “to love” in Latin. To love something for itself without expecting any gain. The American avant-garde was in fact driven by the amateurs working outside Hollywood. Not pressured by the commerce, amateurs could exercise cinematic standards that would drive the motion picture forward. Experimental cinema can continue benefiting from the work of amateurs, who like me, with limited technical resources will enrich the medium with its conceptual possibilities, many of which are still waiting to be discovered. Experimental film should embrace the roughness and imperfection of experimenting. Imperfect experiments are a sign of search, where the artist trusts the most impulsive choices, which also happen to be the most honest.

Somewhere in between the blurred boundaries of the past, present and the future and the unification of the senses is the experience of the moving image. In contrast to painting or photography, where we imply movement and continuity, in cinema we can see it. Cinema satisfies our primal instincts of seeing. It is not a coincidence that many film theorists consider cinema to be born before the birth of its machine, citing cave paintings, which in their study of movement as well as human and animal anatomy, much resemble the chronophotographic experiments of Muybridge. Indeed, we are used to seeing the world in terms of this indistinct time frame. Thus, my conviction is that cinema can best represent ephemeral and fleeting experiences as well as to gift brief moments a sense of continuity.

## CONCLUSION AND QUESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Cinema's complexity and uniqueness as an art form lie in its holistic use of the senses. However, often those elements are used rather carelessly without consideration for medium specificity that would foster the art form's creative potential. Intermedia approach, without solid theoretical ground, can become a threat to cinematic autonomy. Only after reaffirming its artistic integrity can experimental film freely cooperate with other art forms. The unique hallmarks of experimental film proposed in this paper were the following.

First, cinema would benefit from looking back at its brief history, to understand its relationship to the concept of silence both practically and conceptually. As by engaging the senses, the depiction of silence becomes a uniquely cinematic possibility. Instead of engendering the gap between the artist and the audience, silence can become a tool for exercising attention and honest communication. Second, experimental film should reevaluate its relationship to language, with a special focus on the revival of poetic films and the parallels between cinematic language and inner speech.

The next urgent task for experimental film is to foster the exploration of dancefilm. Thanks to the movement of bodies on the screen, the abstract features of film such as space and time acquire certainty. The parallels between choreographic and cinematic logic can develop into new creative uses of the medium. And finally, more attention should be paid to experimental cinema's unique capacity to depict transience and ephemerality, which best of all translate into *states of being* instead of stories and can gift brief moments of transcendence a sense of continuity. After all, behind all cinematic variations and experiments, there is a desire for synesthetic unity, in which lies a unique, raw, and only half-discovered cinematic force.

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