THE POETRY OF FILM MONTAGE:
AN ANALYSIS OF MONTAGE AS A POETIC ELEMENT OF FILM

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ABSTRACT

Because film montage has figurative properties equivalent to poetic imagery, filmic expression has been able to explore paths similar to those of poetry. By examining some of the basic principles of montage as well as the meeting point of filmic and literary techniques, a clearer idea may be gained of how certain areas of film have followed the lead of modern poetry. Like modern poetry, for example, the ciné-poem has come to rely less on overt statement than on imagery that encourages participatory experience. Moreover, film like modern poetry has rediscovered the picture language of juxtaposing two images to establish a third concept. Small wonder, then, that avant-garde film-makers have found metaphorical montage and the metamorphosis of superimposition invaluable in their search for new filmic modes. Indeed, their discovery is the conclusion of this essay - that poetic figuration is compatible with filmic as well as poetic expression.

RESUME

Etant donné que le montage de film a des propriétés figuratives équivalentes aux images poétiques, l'expression filmique a donc pu explorer des domaines similaires à ceux de la poésie. En examinant quelques-uns des principes de base du montage ainsi que le point d'union des techniques filmiques et littéraires, une idée claire jaillit à l'esprit d'après laquelle certaines zones du film auraient suivi les traces de la poésie moderne. Comme cette dernière, par exemple, le ciné-poème compte moins sur des phrases explicites que sur l'image qui encourage l'expérience participatoire. De plus, le film comme la poésie moderne a redécouvert le langage imagé de juxtaposer deux images afin d'établir un troisième concept. L'on ne s'étonne donc pas trop que l'avant-garde des producteurs de film aient trouvé le montage métaphorique et la métamorphose de la superimposition sans valeur aucune dans leur recherche pour de nouveaux modes filmiques. Evidemment, leur découverte est la conclusion de cet essai - que la figuration poétique est compatible avec l'expression filmique de même que poétique.

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THE POETRY OF FILM MONTAGE

Mention the word montage in Hollywood today and the term will most likely be understood as a series of brief shots evoking in a narrative film a particular atmospheric mood surrounding an event or passage of time - a series of shots, for example, conveying at the most the headiness of a liberated Paris, or, at the least, a series of newspaper headlines illustrating the dramatic rise in popularity of an aspiring politician or entertainer. The word, montage, once the topic of considerable debate when first coined from French by the early Russian film theorists, seems to have been translated by Hollywood technicians into a more simplified, more pragmatic technical term devoid of its original subtleties and connotations. Yet, among contemporary theorists the broader implications of film montage survive, still debated but generally contended (with some exceptions) to be one of the most essential ingredients of filmic expression. It is in the context of these broader implications that this essay will examine the close association of film montage with the imagery of poetic expression.

An analysis of film montage cannot ignore those pioneers who first theorized

on its practicalities. Russian film-makers Vsevolod Pudovkin and Sergei Eisenstein examined and practised extensively the peculiarities of montage technique. In particular, Eisenstein's references to literary equivalents serve as a valid introduction to the trend of modern poetry whose search for freer expression begins with Walt Whitman and leads on to the traditional verse form of Japanese haiku that so fascinated the Imagist poets. It is Eisenstein's own reference to haiku that points out the common ground between his theory of montage as "collision" and the figurative forms of poetic technique. Moreover, it was the metaphorical aspects of montage that spurred on the early avant-garde film movements to explore new avenues devoid of literary and narrative influences and geared toward purely filmic modes.

To show how the various forms of montage contribute to these modes, this essay will examine the figurative and symbolic content of montage. At the same time comparative examples will be found in poetry. Filmic techniques of split-screen, racket-cutting and superimposition, all aspects of montage, will likewise be seen in this context. Nor would it be fair to ignore the critical voice of André Bazin whose refusal to accept the subjectivity of the photographed image led him to reject the liberty of montage cutting. Yet it is the very subjectivity of filmic techniques, particularly metaphorical montage and the metamorphosis of superimposition practised by experimental film-makers like Kenneth Anger and Stan Brakhage, that so successfully enables the film-maker to parallel what Maya Deren calls the "poetic construct." Such is the direction this essay follows as it seeks to determine what constitutes the poetry of film montage.

FOUNDING FATHERS: THE SEARCH FOR DEFINITION

D.W.Griffith was among the first to explore the editorial devices of film by cutting up the single fixed shots and wide-angled compositions of early films with camera mobility, multi-shots, varied focal lengths, and the inter-cutting and parallel construction techniques taken for granted today. Whereas Griffith's techniques grew largely out of his strong intuitional and dramatic sense, the formal aspects of his techniques became widely emulated by others, among them the Russians whose clinical analysis and experiments (especially those of Kuleshov) opened up more theoretical horizons. With the discovery of editorial continuity and the orderly arrangement of separate shots, a new mode of communication was born - the technique of montage.

Montage had to pass through a formative phase before arriving at a definitive position. Editing (apart from some degree of selective control while filming) was seized upon by the Russians as being the one creative process in film-making that might adequately support the notion of film as an art form. It was considered a means whereby the film artist could manipulate the reactions of an audience towards his own personal modes of expression. Pudovkin had this to say about editing:

> To the film director each shot of the finished film subserves the same purpose as the word to the poet.... Editing is the basic creative force, by power of which the soulless photographs (the separate shots) are engineered into living cinematographic form...editing is the creative force of filmic reality, and...nature provides only the raw material with which it works. That precisely is the relationship between reality and the film.[1]

Kuleshov together with Pudovkin, his pupil, through a series of experiments, strove to show how the raw material of film, the simple shot, when juxtaposed with several different shots, could offer a number of varied meanings. In one often cited experiment, the same neutral facial expression following a bowl of soup, a woman in a coffin, and a child playing seemed to acquire the pangs of hunger and grief and the pleasure of human joy correspondingly. Indeed, Pudovkin is inclined to downgrade the importance of the individual shot except in its relationship with the whole. He likens a shot to the word "beech" which in itself conveys little impact or artistic merit but when supported with the additional words "the tender green of a young beech" begins to acquire life and vitality.[2] A filmic representation of this would resemble characteristics of literary form if the single shot of the beech were supported with a series of qualifying detailed shots. But more significantly, Pudovkin maintains that the manner in which the synthesis of these shots is built (montage) is a filmic form of artistic expression that transcends the mere mirroring of nature by the photographic image. A refutation of this theory by André Bazin will be discussed later.

It was this notion of Kuleshov's and Pudovkin's which treated montage as a linkage of shots, a laying of "bricks" end to end, that incurred the criticism of Sergei Eisenstein. Eisenstein, in his two major works Film Form and The

Film Sense, sees the shot not as an element of montage assembled into a chain of elements but rather as a cell whose interaction with other cells forms a cluster of cells fused together into "a phenomenon of another order, the organism or embryo...." Eisenstein argues, moreover, that the juxtaposing of two shots does not merely produce their sum but in fact an entirely new concept or idea. This concept is achieved not by linkage but by a collision between the two opposing pieces in conflict with one another.[3] Moreover, he implies that the mind has a natural propensity to find a relationship between two separate entities. He quotes, from a story by Ambrose Bierce, an example of a married woman dressed in mourning weeping by a grave. The impression drawn from the two images, a woman mourning and a grave, is that she is a widow, whereas in fact she is mourning not for her husband, who is alive, but for her dead lover.[4] The error arises from the fact that the idea of "widow" hypothesized from the juxtaposition of two representational images is, in itself, unrepresentational and cannot be confirmed without further representational evidence.[5]

The mind in the above instance makes a judgment which on the surface would seem to be straightforward and yet it is misled by an associative literary or experiential assumption. The same phenomenon may be related, perhaps, to the mind's innate desire to work out an order in the midst of apparent chaos. Thus, in certain experimental films (and indeed certain poems), a string of seemingly unrelated images may provoke a viewer or reader to feel compelled to find meaning rather than allow the images to awaken in him an intuitive identification with (if not understanding of) them through an interplay between image and subconscious associations. Even when confronted with the speed of

projected film the mind is confused into believing that what it sees is not in fact a series of still frames lacking motion but a constant image that is moving. Similarly, the mind is all too eager to find a common relationship between two images and in its confusion can sometimes accept an illusion that is erroneous in the context of reality. It is this illusionary quality that disturbs André Bazin as will be seen in his criticism of montage.

Eisenstein carries on his analysis of montage by alluding to painting, drama, and literature. Since the main emphasis in this essay is on the latter, reference will be limited to his comments on prose and particularly poetry. Eisenstein finds several examples which indicate that writers have long been using montage technique. In dealing with the "word" he refers to Lewis Carroll's introduction to The Hunting of the Snark where Carroll explains the rationale behind the "portmanteau word." The two words "fuming" and "furious" when pronounced equally together have a tendency to form "frumious" the composite of the two.[6] In this instance no new concept is born but his reference to an example by Freud illustrates how the compound word "alcoholidays" (Christmas) has established an effectively new concept from the combination of its two separate entities.[7] Eisenstein's notion of montage as collision becomes clearer, and in this instance both the result and its components are readily discernible at one and the same time. The portmanteau is notably similar in its simultaneity to the filmic devices of split-screen and superimposition which are close approximations of montage, as will be noted later.

At one point Eisenstein comes very close to Pudovkin's linkage principle when he talks of the mechanics that occur in life in the formation of an image: "To create an image, a work of art must rely upon a precisely analogous method [to that of real experience], the construction of a chain of representations."[8]

He refers to his own mental images contrasting Forty-second and Forty-fifth Streets in New York through a reconstruction of a number of distinct representative details of those streets. Not until this initial reconstruction of the separate parts is recollected can the image of each street as a whole be achieved. Apart from Pudovkin's greater concern with montage as story-line linkage, it is perhaps only the cellular concept of the representations unified as the total image (the second stage of the memory process) that here distinguishes Eisenstein's montage from Pudovkin's.

Eisenstein differentiates between the process of image-making in life with that in a work of art. Whereas in life the first stage of assembling the representations is quickly superseded by a recognition of the total image, in a work of art considerable attention must be given to the process of building in the mind of the viewer those details necessary for the most effective conceptual result. He writes, "Consequently, in the actual method of creating images, a work of art must reproduce that process whereby, in life itself, new images are built up in the human consciousness and feelings."[9]

Eisenstein emphasizes that no matter how static in itself each representational shot may be, when placed in juxtaposition with another in a series, there occurs a dynamic interaction that should activate the emotional sensibilities of the viewer in much the same way it does the film-maker's. Thematically the reaction should be the same for both, though emotionally each individual's reaction will differ slightly according to his psychological makeup and background. It is this dynamism that differentiates the bland recording of an object with a single shot or statement from the more expressive representation of it with a series of complementary shots or sub-statements that construct the whole and better stimulate the senses. The "bricks" of Kuleshov and

Pudovkin acquire more life for Eisenstein.

Eisenstein supports his views with an example from Pushkin's narrative poem, Poltava:

> "Too late," someone then said to them,
> And pointed finger to the field.
> There the fatal scaffold was dismantled,
> A priest in cassock black was praying,
> And onto a wagon was being lifted
> By two cossacks an oaken coffin....[10]

The total image of the aftermath of the central character's execution is supported by three concrete details that in juxtaposition convey the emotional mood to the reader: the dismantled scaffold, the praying priest, and the coffin being loaded onto a wagon. Moreover, in this example each detail combines with the other two to form a concept difficult to recognize in any of them separately.

The danger of Eisenstein's notion, of course, is that to use the method constantly may be to subject the viewer to a more laborious process than is actually necessary to fully comprehend the image. There may appear to be in Eisenstein some distrust of the viewer's own sensibilities and the rapidity with which he is able, from the representations of his own memory experience, to identify with the simplicity of a single image. Eisenstein seems in danger of threatening, through over-manipulation, the very participation he hopes to encourage from the spectator. Overstatement can be as self-defeating as understatement.

In the material presented thus far as an overview of Eisenstein's montage theory, two major forms have been delineated. There is montage, in the one instance, where a shot fuses with a preceding one to form a new conceptual idea not revealed in each of the shots separately. The collision of the two independent images involves the first of the two shots conditioning the viewer's

reaction to the second. For this reason Rod Whitaker in The Language of Film refers to the form as Conditional montage.[11] The Kuleshov experiment as well as Eisenstein's reference to the graveside woman weeping for her lover will serve for the moment to illustrate this category. In both cases the initial image, bowl of soup or grave, conditions the viewer to interpret the subsequent shot in a specific fashion.

The second form of montage involves a series of individually representative shots which combine to build a total effect or thematic concept. Thus in Pushkin's poem three distinct details combine to create the emotional mood following an execution and in similar fashion Pudovkin's "beech" acquires greater fullness when represented with sub-images of its "beechness." Whitaker classifies this form as Substantive montage because the additional details (adjectives) construct a representative nounal concept.[12] This latter type of montage also includes the Hollywood version mentioned in the introduction to this essay.

Unlike Conditional montage the Substantive form may (or may not) reveal the thematic concept within the separate, individual shots themselves. In the Pushkin example the concept of execution is not readily evident in the three separate shots. An illustration where the whole is recognizable in the parts may be observed in a series of shots where the thematic unit, such as vulgar opulence, is discovered in detailed shots of, for example, an ornately gilded cornice, a ponderous chandelier, and any other extravagant furnishings that exude overindulgence.

A study of the various types of montage in relation to their poetic counterparts will be made further on under the terms Conditional and Substantive. In the meantime the broad definitions of montage offered above will help in the

search for comparable forms in modern poetry. It should be mentioned that today's theorists have added little that is new to the montage theories of Pudovkin and Eisenstein, a tribute to the exhaustive efforts of these giants of the early cinema.

MONTAGE IN THE MODERN POEM

Any comparison of film montage with the elements of poetic form requires some understanding of the growth of modern poetry and its influence on modern film style. Robert Richardson in Literature and Film makes a significant contribution in this respect. He sees in the poems of Walt Whitman the first major rift with the traditional orderliness of poetic form. Whitman ignored the traditional templates of rhyme and metre, the standard verse forms, and introduced to Western poetry a liberated style reflecting, as some would suggest perhaps, a New World enthusiasm for pioneering free horizons. With the dropping of the metrical foot, length of line no longer remained fixed. The use of the sentence to convey linear logic and theme was complimented by a number of parallel statements expressed mostly through images.[13]

Whitman's technique of arranging images in the following excerpt from Miracles is notably similar to the methods of montage introduced later by film:

> Why, who makes much of a miracle?
> As to me I know of nothing else but miracles,
> Whether I walk the streets of Manhattan,
> Or dart my sight over the roofs of houses toward the sky,
> Or wade with naked feet along the beach just in the edge
> of the water,
> Or stand under trees in the woods,
> Or talk by day with anyone I love, or sleep in the bed at
> night with anyone I love
> Or sit at table at dinner with the rest,
> Or look at strangers opposite me riding in the car,

> Or watch honey-bees busy around the hive of a summer forenoon,
> Or animals feeding in the fields,
> Or birds, or the wonderfulness of insects in the air,
> Or the exquisite delicate thin curve of the new moon in spring;
> These with the rest, one and all, are to me miracles,
> The whole referring, yet each distinct and in its place....[14]

After anticipating, in the first two lines, the thematic unit as the miracle of life, Whitman proceeds to state the particulars in a series of representative images all of which in their individual uniqueness build toward a totality suggestive of an inner life force. The simplicity of each image allows the reader's associative memory to participate and share something of the poet's feeling. Even the word "wonderfulness" is but a simple generalization of an intense inner feeling and its repetition in the next line seems to imply acceptance of the limitations of verbal explanation - the experience itself can only be felt not described. In the last two lines Whitman underlines his intentions with a literal statement and a matter-of-fact tone. It is not difficult to recognize in Whitman's juxtaposition of images the substantive form of montage later found in Eisenstein's film theory.

There is in Whitman already a hint of the dry, mostly impersonal treatment of images which was to become one of the trademarks of the Imagist school of poetry. As Richardson writes of Whitman;

> ...the poet is not a maker who constructs things, not a seer set apart who reveals his vision to us, not an arguer, a polemicist or a teacher. He is simply one who bears witness to things, and his habitual set of mind is acceptance.[15]

In many of Whitman's smaller poems a single image may structure an entire poem and by an ordering of detail can offer a simple declaration of that image's existence. A modern film may likewise have little explicit purpose beyond directing our attention to experiencing the effects of a montage of images.[16]

Whitman was the forerunner of a number of late nineteenth century poets (eg. Rimbaud, Hopkins, even Browning) whose styles constructed sequences of images for their experiential rather than conceptual value. Not until the second decade of the nineteen hundreds, however, can more solid evidence of the effects of modern poetry on film style be found.[17]

In 1913, Ezra Pound helped consolidate Imagism, a poetic movement that had been slowly forming since the latter years of the nineteenth century. The seeds had been sown by Henri Bergson whose philosophical search for reality lay in two directions, either through means of intellectual analysis or through instinctive intuition. The respective language for each alternate was the intellectual language of prose and the imagistic language of poetry. Bergson stated furthermore that "many diverse images, borrowed from very different orders of things, may, by the convergence of their action, direct consciousness to the precise point where there is a certain intuition to be seized."[18] An interest in the language of images that resulted was furthered in the twentieth century by the extensive research of Ernest Fenollosa into the pictorial language of the Chinese ideogram. Fenollosa pointed out that the syntactical limitations of a subject-object-verb format were not present in the hieroglyphic language of juxtaposed images. Single word abstractions became more alive when written as a sequence of representative images.[19] Likewise, Rémy de Gourmont, editor of the Mercure de France from 1890 to 1915, claimed that it was the responsibility of the poet to keep his art of language alive by using ideographic techniques to fuse images together and that the juxtapositioning of two images can prod the mind into creating a third image, the central meaning of a poem for example.[20]

Eisenstein was quick to discover this ideographic concept as the principle of film montage. He draws upon information from Jean Pierre Rémusat when he writes in "The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram":

> ...the picture for water and the picture of an eye signifies "to weep"; the picture of an ear near the drawing of a door = "to listen";
> a dog + a mouth= "to bark";
> a mouth + a child = "to scream";
> a mouth + a bird = "to sing";
> a knife + a heart = "sorrow," and so on.
> But this is - montage.[21]

It is also the basic structure for a form of Japanese poetry known as haiku that had captured the attention of the Imagist poets and subsequently Eisenstein. The true haiku, consisting of three lines only and involving a particular season of the year, relies upon precise imagery to arrive at a mostly intuitive metaphysical abstraction. The poem deliberately avoids didacticism in favour of an instinctive understanding of reality through implication.[22]

Jones, with quotes from Pound, writes an accurate account of the haiku in relation to Imagism:

> It [haiku] was the basic unit of the imagistic poem, juxtapositioning two images often in contrast, and containing them within a brief, epigrammatic form, omitting all moral and intellectual comment and allowing the images to form a "visual chord" in the mind - a third image that unites them - so that a "thing outward and objective transforms itself or darts into a thing inward and subjective."[23]

Nor was the haiku simply a juxtapositioning of two images to create a third. Pound proceeds further: "The 'one image poem' is a form of super-position, that is to say it is one idea set on top of another."[24] The following quotation, "Fan-Piece for her Imperial Lord," although not a true haiku, offers a good illustration of what Pound meant by "super-position":

O fan of white silk
  clear as frost on the grass-blade,
You are also laid aside.[25]

Here the two images are the white silk fan and frost on a blade of grass which is the "super-posed" image. Through a fusion of rhythms and images, and the "super-position" of frosted grass-blade upon the silk fan, the poet implies that as the frost melts so does the beauty of the concubine and the attentions of her lordly master. It should be mentioned, however, that the original tenets of the haiku have become blurred in this poem which emphasizes love rather than the metaphysical aspects of nature.[26]

Although not an Imagist, Archibald MacLeish has written at least one poem, "Ars Poetica," that clearly illustrates the Imagist concept of directness, economy and juxtaposition in using images:

A poem should be palpable and mute
As a globed fruit,

Dumb
As old medallions to the thumb,

Silent as the sleeve-worn stone
Of casement ledges where the moss has grown -

A poem should be wordless
As the flight of birds.
.....

A poem should not mean
But be.[27]

Although MacLeish uses a string of images here to convey a sensual quality of silence and spiritual essence, he interrupts the juxtaposition with a didactic comment to form a simile in each case. This is, of course, not inherent in the haiku where the objects (particularly the natural objects of fruit and birds) would imply meaning for themselves. Indeed, the last line appears to contradict

the very meaning the poem communicates and can only be excused because of its philosophical form of traditionally expounding the art of poetry. Nonetheless, the predominant emphasis in the poem is for the image itself to help engage the understanding and thus impart meaning; the poet's commentary points out in what direction the application should be made. There might be little difficulty in presenting on film this juxtaposing of objects as a substantive montage on "silence" or the serenity of spiritual "being"; there would be infinite difficult however, in visually relating these objects through film as a commentary on the form poetic essence should take.

Another poem by MacLeish that relies less on didacticism (though meaning is still strongly implied) is "Eleven." The visual images are so arranged as to develop within the reader a subjective association with the boy in his identification with nature:

> And summer mornings the mute child, rebellious.
> Stupid, hating the words, the meanings, hating
> The Think now, Think, the O but Think! would leave
> On tiptoe the three chairs on the verandah
> And crossing tree by tree the empty lawn
> Push back the shed door and upon the sill
> Stand pressing out the sunlight from his eyes
> And enter and with outstretched fingers feel
> The grindstone and behind it the bare wall
> And turn and in the corner on the cool
> Hard earth sit listening. And one by one,
> Out of the dazzled shadow in the room
> The shapes would gather, the known plowshare, spades,
> Mattocks, the polished helves of picks, a scythe
> Hung from the rafters, shovels, slender tines
> Glinting across the curve of sickles - shapes
> Older than men were, the wise tools, the iron
> Friendly with earth. And sit there quiet, breathing
> The harsh dry smell of withered bulbs, the faint
> Odor of dung, the silence. And outside
> Beyond the half-shut door the blind leaves
> And the corn moving. And at noon would come,
> Up from the garden, his hard crooked hands
> Gentle with earth, his knees still earth-stained, smelling
> Of sun, of summer, the old gardener, like
> A priest, like an interpreter, and bend

Over his baskets.
And they would not speak:
They would say nothing. And the child would sit there
Happy as though he had no name, as though
He had been no one: like a leaf, a stem,
Like a root growing - [28]

The filmic possibilities of this poem are evident in its close resemblance to a sequence of film montage. In the description of the shed's interior (lines 11 - 18), the eye is led from one object to another much like the roving eye of a camera or the optical dissolving of images as they take shape from out of the shadows. Senses are intermingled - the tactile sense is visually perceived in the texture of grindstone and wall (lines 8 - 9). Other senses of smell and sound are brought into play through the visual connotations of bulbs and dung, and the movement of leaves and corn (lines 18-22) all of which intensify the sensory effect of the montage sequence.

Raymond Spottiswoode makes an interesting comment on the ability of film to stimulate the senses: "Close-up photography of silk or wrinkled skin, or dough being squeezed and moulded, will, under proper conditions of lighting, produce a tactual sensation which strongly reinforces the visual."[29] He also implies that smell, though more difficult to create, can be suggested by sense memory; a shot of a hayfield, for example, can provoke a sensory recall of the smell of hay. This writer was strongly affected by the choking clouds of dust in the brawling scenes of the Italian town square in the Franco Zeffirelli production of Romeo and Juliet.

Silence only implied in "Ars Poetica" is even more acute in "Eleven." Silence becomes almost a sound in itself and even tactile, as suggested in lines eighteen to twenty. Stan Brakhage remarks on the visual effects of film image in creating sound: "The sound sense which visual images always evoke and which can become

integral with the aesthetic experience of the film under creative control, often makes actual sound superfluous."[30]

The visual focus in "Eleven" is on the shapes of objects themselves and the relation of the parts to the organic whole all of which culminates with the boy beatifically experiencing his "oneness" with the gardener "priest" and natural surroundings. A counterpart to a similar experience of total joy may be found in Pudovkin's film Mother where a prisoner has just learnt he is shortly to be set free. Rather than simply show an expression of joy on the actor's face, Pudovkin constructs a poetic montage of shots revealing parts of his face and hands intercut with shots of rushing spring waters, sunlight playing on water, birds fluttering in a pond, and a child laughing. The audience's association of these shots with many others elsewhere in the film, all symbolizing the coming of spring, creates a powerful emotional identification with the prisoner's experience of joy.[31] The parallelism, then, between the poem "Eleven" and the film sequence from Mother is notable. In both cases, a montage of representative details unites around a central image of, in the first instance summer, and in the second spring, and the resultant abstraction both felt and understood by reader or viewer is the spiritual and mental release of freedom.

Richardson confirms the similarities between poetic imagism and film montage further when he compares Pound's two line poem, "In a Station of the Metro," with a sequence from Pudovkin's Mother (which he mistakenly attributes to Eisenstein). The lines, "The apparition of these faces in the crowd / Petals on a wet, black bough," are likened to a shot of militant workers gathering in anger juxtaposed with a shot of river ice beginning to break up. The relationship

between the two images in both the poem and the film are left undefined; neither has a verb or uses the word like (signalling a simile) as syntax to clarify the connection. Yet both pairs of images form a unit the metaphorical meaning of which is left to the viewer's or reader's discretion.[32]

What Walt Whitman began as a simple though unorthodox switch from the more structured patterns of traditional poetry, thus set the trend for a greater reliance on images to impart their own meanings. This not only enabled greater interplay between image and image but also between image and reader. For much the same reasons, experimental film-makers drew heavily upon montage to help them avoid traditional film styles and to place greater emphasis on the interaction of images and on image-viewer relationships.

THE RISE OF THE EXPERIMENTAL FILM

While Imagist poetry in the 1920's was spreading its roots and Eisenstein was beginning to explore his montage theories in the narrative film, new experimental film movements were developing in Europe. Whereas in Germany, Expressionism was projecting mental fantasies through lighting and set design, in France, the French avant-garde was divorcing itself from linguistic and narrative structures. Imagism was relying upon the images of external detail for more natural ways of imparting significance, Eisenstein was expounding on the dynamics of montage for stressing emotional impact in the narrative film, and the avant-garde film-makers were avoiding for the most part the logical limitations of the story film.

The avant-garde film aligned itself with the other arts (painting, music, poetry, drama) to explore, with some intermingling of styles, the predominant movements of the 1910's and 1920's: Cubism, Dadaism, Surrealism, and Expressionism. While in Russia, Dziga Vertov was rebelling against the narrative dramatics of Eisenstein and Pudovkin, the French avant-garde found a renewed interest in the camera tricks of Georges Méliès. These cultural cross-currents resulted in films that reduced storyline and character development to a minimum - when they didn't eliminate them entirely - and constructed meaning out of such devices as

image distortion, variable focus, superimposition, freeze frames, masking, film loops, slow and fast motion, the juxtaposition of seemingly unrelated images and other manipulations of montage.

Despite the advent of sound around 1930, the resurgence of avant-garde film in the form of the American "psycho-dramas" of Maya Deren, Curtis Harrington, Sidney Peterson, and others in the 1940's, perpetuated the silent film's emphasis on camera and montage trickery. This emphasis divorced avant-garde films from the sort of "reality" that Bazin, for instance, favoured, and encouraged the kind of film "magic" that Parker Tyler has called "the kindergarten stuff of film experimentalism." While recognizing the splendid opportunities such film techniques offer "to create extraordinary visions," Tyler has pointed out that:

> For all this to comprise more than a talented exercise, a stimulating blackboard lesson, film workers have to try very hard and must possess, to begin with, an innate gift for inventing with images and controlling the space in which images move of themselves and are moved by the camera; beyond this, in order to get something on film that is distinguished and memorable, film-makers must have something of their own to say: a personal message as well as poetic inspiration.[33]

Two experimental film-makers who fulfil Tyler's criteria for distinction through their personal identification with film and its unique qualities are Kenneth Anger and Stan Brakhage. Their early ciné-poems, particularly the lyrical films of Brakhage in the fifties, bridged the gap between the surrealistic psycho-dramas and today's American experimental movement. Their control over film imagery through imaginative use of montage and other filmic techniques entices the viewer into sharing experiences that run the gamut from delicate sensitivity to extreme sensuality, from latent meaning to blatant parody. As we shall see, the experimental film can afford what the commercial narrative seldom allows

itself, time to pause and exploit a moment of "poetic inspiration."

TYPES OF FILM MONTAGE: POETIC COUNTERPARTS

Before examining the contemporary use of montage in the ciné-poems of Kenneth Anger and Stan Brakhage, it may be as well to identify some of the various types of film montage and clarify any similarity that might exist in a poetic counterpart. Film montage, it has been suggested, can be identified under two broad headings offered by Rod Whitaker - Substantive and Conditional.

Substantive montage, whereby a series of shots joins together to build a total impression as a single nounal concept, has already been discussed at some length with respect to film and references have been made to several poems that offer literary equivalents. To these one further example might be added from Richard Wilbur's "Marginalia," a poem Wilbur himself suggests as a possible illustration of the influence of the camera on the poet's eye:

> Things concentrate at the edges; the pond surface
> Is bourne to fish and man and it is spread
> In textile scum and damask light, on which
> The lily-pads are set; and there are also
> Inlaid ruddy twigs, becalmed pine leaves
> Air baubles, and the chain mail of froth....[34]

Unlike several examples of poetic or filmic montage quoted previously, the continuity from one detailed image to another is not interrupted by a change of shot. In Wilbur's poem, after a general wide-angle view of "the pond surface," the attention zooms in to scan (pan) the water from detail to detail developing a strong visual impression of scum and suggesting the organic domain that lies

beneath. A striking comparison can be made with a short sequence in this writer's own film, Primal Path, in which most of the details mentioned in Wilbur's poem are included in a single pan of a portion of spring pond (to which complementary shots have been added). Thus montage editing, by a careful selection of juxtaposed detail, is just as possible within the single shot as it is within the camera and splicing processes.

Whitaker uses the term conditional montage to cover the broad range of montage other than substantive although he cautions that some conditional tendencies may also exist between individual sub-images in the substantive form. This form of montage, it will be remembered, is conditional in the sense that the subsequent shots in a sequence are conditioned by the first, out of which interaction a specific new conceptual interpretation is born. In the case of the Kuleshov experiment, mentioned earlier, the audience's reaction to the actor's facial expression is conditioned by the image of a bowl, coffin, and child to arrive at a conceptual notion of hunger, grief and love respectively. Conditional montage differs from substantive in that the conceptual notion of the whole is unrecognizable in the parts which in themselves are normally unrelated. Substantive montage on the other hand builds from the parts a total concept or mood which is common to all shots and therefore is more likely to be identifiable within the individual part.[35]

Whitaker is careful to stress that conditional montage is not to be confused with the cause and effect relationship in a sequence of continuity editing that simply indicates a logical narrative progression between two shots. He suggests that the juxtaposing of a shot of an elderly man reading in his chair can offer a significantly different interpretation when placed either before or after a

shot of a cottage. In the first instance, the man may be reading about the cottage, whereas in the second, he may simply be reading in a room of his cottage. In film continuity, therefore, placement determines meaning through cause and effect and not through the collision of montage.[36]

Perhaps the most common form of conditional montage and one of the most commonly used in poetry is the trope, specifically the simile and metaphor. In film the distinction between these two modes of comparative technique is less clearcut than in poetry. In poetry, it is generally accepted that the simile makes a direct comparison between two dissimilar entities by using linking words such as like, as, than, similar to, or resembles - the similarity is expressed.[37] For example, in "Eleven," the child is "like a leaf, a stem, like a root growing." In "Fan-Piece to her Imperial Lord," the "fan of white silk" is "clear as frost on the grass blade." The metaphor, on the other hand, makes an indirect comparison without resorting to a linking word - the similarity is implied, as in "Marginalia" when Wilbur refers to "the chain mail of froth."

The use of simile in film does not have an established technical equivalent for a linking word such as "like." Spottiswoode suggests using the wipe as a substitute for "like."[38] This optical effect, however, has a tendency to remind the viewer of the filmic process and for that reason has been in disfavour for some time. Linguistically though, the word "like," even when repeated to the extent it is in "Eleven," is readily accepted as a verbal connective because it has little visual significance and is over-powered by the correlative images of the comparison. If there is to be any differentiation between simile and metaphor in film it will most likely lie in the degree of explicitness inherent in the particular filmic statement. This explicitness will also be determined by

the extent to which the statement stands out in relation to the shots before and after the montage sequence. Thus the film metaphor will tend to be more subtly oblique (both in itself as well as in relation to its surrounding shots) than its overt counterpart the simile, although it may be identically structured as a montage sequence.

Admittedly, the exact distinction between simile and metaphor in film is difficult, and perhaps unnecessary, to define, but Ernest Lindgren offers two film samples that may well point the way towards clarifying the differences, particularly with regard to the story film. An escaped prisoner in Antony Asquith's film Cottage On Dartmoor, having decided to return to his love, is shot by a guard and flings himself in his final death struggle against her cottage door. Immediately the scene changes to a wave breaking against rocks, the intention presumably being to underline the emotional surge and power of love that can lead a man to his death in this way. Lindgren continues:

> I always feel, however, that imagery and symbolism of this kind is far more effective if the shots which are juxtaposed are a natural part of the background of the film, and not introduced arbitrarily, as the wave has been introduced here. A second example from the same film will illustrate the point. The chief character, a barber, tormented with jealousy because the girl he loves is herself in love with a customer, finds himself shaving the customer; holding the razor near his throat, he begins to upbraid him, to frighten him. The girl standing by suddenly moves to intervene, there is a momentary struggle, things are overturned, and suddenly everyone stands transfixed with horror. At this moment we are given a close shot of a bottle lying on the floor, and from its narrow neck a dark fluid pours out into a pool on the floor. We do not need to be told that the customer has been gashed with the razor. In this case the bottle is a natural part of the scene, one of the things knocked down in the struggle, and at the same time it gives the director precisely the image

> he wants at that point. This second kind of imagery (of which the shots expressing the prisoner's joy in Pudovkin's Mother are another example) is more effective than the first, I suggest, not simply because it is more difficult to achieve, but because the film medium, being essentially visual and photographic, demands a higher standard of objective realism than the other representational arts.[39]

Whereas, in the first example (of the wave) the content may be more subtly implicit than the second, as a filmic statement the figurative image stands out boldly and seems forced and out of place. That is, the juxtaposition of shots is explicitly underlined as being a comparison and thus has the characteristics of the simile. Conversely, in the example of the overturned bottle the meaning has more clarity but the manner in which the meaning is expressed is more metaphorically subtle and blends in well with the total scene. In his reference to "the joy of freedom" scene in Mother, mentioned earlier in this essay, Lindgren shows that the images expressing joy are in keeping with the natural images of Spring expressed repeatedly in that sequence of the film. It might be assumed, therefore, that, being in context, they are closer to metaphor than simile. Rudolf Arnheim has similar reservations regarding the explicit use of trope in narrative film but unlike Lindgren would even apply his dissatisfaction to the Pudovkin scene when he claims:

> It is, moreover, very questionable whether the symbolic connection of smile, brook, sunbeams, "happy prisoner," and "joyous child" can add up to visual unity. It has been done thousands of times in poetry; but disconnected themes can easily be joined in language because the mental images attached to words are much vaguer more abstract and will therefore more readily cohere. Putting actual pictures in juxtaposition, especially in an otherwise realistic film, often appears forced. The unity of the scene, the story of the prisoner who is rejoicing, is suddenly interrupted by something totally diff-

> erent. Comparisons and associations like the brook and the sunbeams are not lightly touched upon in the abstract but are introduced as concrete pieces of nature - and hence are distracting.[40]

Undoubtedly, Arnheim's reaction would be much the same to a scene from Eisenstein's Strike where the shooting of workers is intercut with the slaughtering of a bull in an abattoir:

> 1 The head of a bull jerks out of the shot, beyond the upper frame-line, avoiding the aimed butcher's knife.
>
> 2 (c.u.) The hand holding the knife strikes sharply - beyond the lower frameline.
>
> 3 (l.s.) 1,500 persons roll down a slope - in profile.
>
> 4 50 persons raise themselves from the ground, arms outstretched.
>
> 5 Face of a soldier taking aim.
>
> 6 (m.s.) A volley of gun-fire.
>
> 7 The shuddering body of the bull (head outside the frame) rolls over.
>
> 8 (c.u.) Legs of the bull jerk convulsively. The hooves beat in a pool of blood.
>
> .....
>
> 33 The soldiers' feet walk away from the camera (seen at a further distance than previously).
>
> 34 The bull's skin is stripped off.
>
> 35 1,500 bodies at the foot of the cliff.
>
> 36 Two skinned bulls' heads.
>
> 37 A hand lying in a pool of blood.
>
> 38 (c.u.) Filling the entire screen: the eye of the

dead bull.

39 (title) THE END.[41]

This montage sequence, even more elaborately detailed as a whole than presented here in part, would destroy the continuity of setting for Arnheim and jar his credulity in the objectivity of the scene.

There may be some truth to the view that the trope, particularly the simile, is susceptible to being obtrusive in the narrative film where linear logic is predominant, especially since montage is an abstraction of objective reality. In the avant-garde ciné-poem, however, where emphasis on the abstraction of juxtaposed images is prevalent, the trope becomes much more acceptable. Even here, the simile, because of its tendency toward didacticism, becomes obstrusive when the content is subtle. The ciné-poem is more amenable to the nuances and imaginative invitations of the metaphor. In the experimental imagist films of Stan Brakhage, for example, the use of the metaphorical trope is common practice; seldom does one find the pointed statement of the simile.

Another form of montage is that which employs the filmic symbol. The literary symbol is generally recognized as an entity which has meaning both in itself as well as beyond itself. The fence in Carl Sandburg's poem "The Fence," for example, refers both to its concrete image as well as to several interpretative connotations beyond itself.

> Now the stone house on the lake front is finished and
> the workmen are beginning the fence.
> The palings are made of iron bars with steel points
> that can stab the life out of any man who falls on
> them.
> As a fence, it is a masterpiece, and will shut off
> the rabble and all vagabonds and hungry men and all
> wandering children looking for a place to play.
> Passing through the bars and over the steel points will

go nothing except
Death and the Rain and Tomorrow.[42]

The fence is, of course, a physical barrier that protects a mansion from undesirable trespassers. Ironically it also represents an abstraction separating the inhabitants from the realities of life and allowing the destructive forces of Death and Time to enter.

Now it is perfectly possible for film to imitate this literary technique of static symbol and have it recognized and understood by the viewer. In the National Film Board of Canada production No Reason To Stay, for example, a schoolyard fence becomes an imprisoning barrier separating from the remote reality of life's experience a potential "drop-out" talking to his girlfriend. Unfortunately, the danger of relying on literary association is not only one of cliché but also of neglecting the full potential film has of using techniques peculiar to itself, including montage. Through montage the static image can be energized into an expressive symbol in a unique manner. For example, in Eisenstein's Battleship Potemkin, three stone lion statues are converted, through a short sequence of racket cutting, into one lion rising from sleeping and awakening postures - an awakening to the guns of revolution. Like metaphorical montage the filmic symbol is most effective when the symbol fits in unobtrusively with the action of the situation.

As filmically original as Eisenstein's awakening stone lions may be, they are still narratively oriented, and indeed both Eisenstein and Pudovkin were very much tied to literary and dramatic influences. It took the radical departure of the surrealistes, notably Cocteau and his Blood of a Poet, to seek new forms of symbolic montage and even they were hard put to avoid literary interference.

Symbolic content can very often be intensified in meaning through contrast.

A montage of contrasting images can condition the audience's reaction to the initial image by offering for comparison an image in direct opposition. Thus shots of lavish wealth may be intercut with shots of abject poverty to increase the impact of the former, as in the banquet scene of Griffith's Intolerance. As much as the rich may seem to be made richer, so too may the poor appear to be made poorer.[43] The collision of two polarized images forces them apart to an even greater dichotomy. The effect can be as equally powerful in poetry. Consider the contrasting images presented in the first two stanzas of A. E. Housman's poem, "To an Athlete Dying Young":

> The time you won your town the race
> We chaired you through the market-place;
> Man and Boy stood cheering by,
> And home we brought you shoulder-high.
>
> Today, the road all runners come,
> Shoulder-high we bring you home,
> And set you at your threshold down,
> Townsman of a stiller town....[44]

The triumphal mood of the first stanza is immediately subdued by the ironic and sombre tones of the second. In this instance the anti-climactic effect of the second of the two images, the funeral, is heightened by conditioning the reader to expect the same exhilaration as in the first. Similarly, it is a funeral passing outside a window that adds a touch of foreboding to a wedding in Eric Von Stroheim's film, Greed. This contrast is shown within the same shot of the couple being wed as a simultaneous form of montage.

There are several cinematic techniques which, though not considered true montage, are sufficiently similar to it that they bear comparison at this point. In searching for pure forms of cinematic expression, experimental film-makers today take full advantage of these techniques to create their film poems.

Superimposition, the first of these techniques, rather than juxtaposing images in sequence, overlays them on top of each other. The result is an integrated composition of several simultaneous images which can interact with each other in much the same way as montage images.

Stan Brakhage is probably the most prominent of current experimental film-makers to use superimposition with significant breadth of vision. P. Adams Sitney writes of the "Prelude" to Brakhage's epic, Dog Star Man:

> I could go on for pages enumerating the visual connections rushing by on the screen. What is most significant about them is their variety and the completeness with which the range of analogy spreads from microscopic cells to stellar eruptions. The forms of superimposition are numerous: explicit illusionism (the moon moving through the Dog Star Man's head); reduplication; conflicts of scale (the sun's corona over a lonely tree); conflicts of depth (the mask-like face of the hero over a deep image of a city street at night); colour over black-and-white (bluish waves on the white moon); one distinct and one blurred figure; finally, the superimposition can recur synchronously, two images at a time, or, as is more usual, the alternations may be staggered, eliding the changes.[45]

In superimposition the fusion of montage is complete. Images intermingle, lose shape and re-combine to create other shapes in constant metamorphosis. In what Gene Youngblood calls the "synaesthetic" cinema of superimposition, montage becomes a form of collage with dualistic opposites such as foreground and background simultaneously perceived though individually undefined:

> Synaesthetic cinema subsumes Eisenstein's theory of montage-as-collision and Pudovkin's view of montage-as linkage. It demonstrates that they were certainly correct but didn't follow their own observations to their logical conclusions. They were restricted by the consciousness of their times. Synaesthetic cinema transcends the notion of reality. It doesn't "chop the world into little fragments," an effect Eisen attributed to montage, because it's not concerned with the objective in the first place. The new film-maker is showing us his feelings.... synaesthetic syncretism is the only

mode in which the manifestations of one's consciousness can be approximated without distortion.[46]

Thus superimposition for Youngblood becomes a means for transcending the "one-at-a-timeness" or traditionally linear pattern of the montage mode in order to reveal the "all-at-onceness" of the visionary.

One is reminded, perhaps, of the style of Dylan Thomas whose images though linearly structured, as they must be in print, nonetheless give the impression of blending into and out of each other in metamorphosis:

> The force that through the green fuse drives the flower
> Drives my green age; that blasts the roots of trees
> Is my destroyer
> And I am dumb to tell the crooked rose
> My youth is bent by the same wintry fever.
>
> The force that drives the water through the rocks
> Drives my red blood; that dries the mouthing streams
> Turns mine to wax.
> And I am dumb to mouth unto my veins
> How at the mountain spring the same mouth sucks.
>
> The hand that whirls the water in the pool
> Stirs the quicksand; that ropes the blowing wind
> Hauls my shroud sail.
> And I am dumb to tell the hanging man
> How of my clay is made the hangman's lime....[47]

The effect here is of a continuous dissolving of images, and if the images are applied to a statement by Youngblood this superimposition may be better understood:

> The classical tension of montage is dissolved through overlapping superimposition. For example: we have shots A, B, and C. First we see A, then B is superimposed over it to produce AB. Then A fades as C fades in. There's a brief transitional period in which we're seeing ABC simultaneously, and finally we're only looking at BC. But no sooner has this evolved than B begins to fade as D appears, and so on.[48]

This pattern found in any of the stanzas above is most noticeable in stanza three. The first line of stanza three has one main image (hand whirling water) which might be likened to a shot A. But the total meaning of line one has not been completed and is carried over the natural line break into line two using a poetic technique called enjambment. This subsequent portion is in itself another image, shot B. The poetic effect is of tying the two lines together in a tight structure; filmically it is a fading in of shot B into shot A to form AB. The second half of line two is yet another image (shot C) which knit grammatically with a semicolon to the first half is effected filmically by fading in shot C as A begins to dissolve. If A still lingers, as it does literally in the poem by having a common subject of action, the result is a momentary superimposition of shots ABC before BC is left only to have B begin to dissolve with shot D of line three fading in and so on. The final two lines end with a striking example of image metamorphosis. Eisenstein himself mentions this run-on effect of poetry and its coherent flow of imagery though he refers to it more in terms of montage cutting than the dissolves of superimposition.[49]

A similar technique to superimposition, but one which is more frenzied and tense is racket-cutting, a device related to what Eisenstein calls rhythmical montage. Basically this is an almost subliminal flashing of images (a few frames at a time) which creates the illusion of images being laid one on top of the other. Eisenstein's rising stone lion is a very brief instance of this but one of the most notable experimental films using the technique in conjunction with superimposition is Cosmic Ray by Bruce Conner. The film, a satirical view of war as a releasing of Man's pent up sexual energies, reveals shots of a dancing nude interspersed with war film, westerns, advertisements, cartoon animations,

and other popularized social symbols. The result is a potpourri of split-second images structured en masse in the form of a collage and to the tune of the popular song, "Tell me what I say," sung by Ray Charles.[50] A similar visual style is found in Arthur Lipsett's films such as Very Nice, Very Nice and A Trip Down Memory Lane constructed for the National Film Board from old photographs and film out-takes. The general feeling in these high speed films is one of great intensity and chaotic disorder.

Rhythmical montage concerns the length of shots in relation to each other and more directly their length as determined by the content of each shot. The speed of flash frames in racket montage allows no time for content analysis and barely enough for iconic recognition. Similarly, in poetry, length of line usually determines rhythm; the shorter the line the faster the metrical rhythm. Richardson offers as a poetic example of speeding imagery related to length of line, John Skelton's "The Tunning of Elinour Rumming." Probably far more relevant to the racket montage in the films above, however, is this excerpt from "Poem, or Beauty Hurts Mr. Vinal" by E. E. Cummings. Notice the vertical piling on of images and the frenetic staccato phrasing:

> Take it from me kiddo
> believe me
> my country, 'tis of
>
> you, land of the Cluett
> Shirt Peston Garter and Spearmint
> Girl With The Wrigley Eyes (of you
> land of the Arrow Ide
> and Earl &
> Wilson
> Collars) of you I
> sing: land of Abraham Lincoln and Lydia E. Pinkham,
> land above all of Just Add Hot Water And Serve
> from every B.V.D.
>
> let freedom ring

amen....[51]

Apart from presenting a poetic collage of flashing imagery similar to the filmic styles of Conner and Lipsett, the fragmented pieces of dialogue in Cummings' poem are particularly reminiscent of the discordant soundtrack montage of Very Nice, Very Nice.

This bombardment of images is not uncommon in modern poetry and is observed yet again in these first two stanzas from "The River" section of Hart Crane's The Bridge:

> Stick your patent name on a signboard
> brother - all over - going west - young man
> Tintex - Japolac - Certain-Teed Overall ads
> and lands sakes! under the new playbill ripped
> in the guaranteed corn - see Bert Williams what?
> Minstrels when you steal a chicken just
> save me the wing for if it isn't
> Eerie it ain't for miles around a
> Mazda - and the telegraphic night coming on Thomas
>
> a Ediford - and whistling down the tracks
> a headlight rushing with the sound - can you
> imagine - while an EXpress makes time like
> SCIENCE - COMMERCE and the HOLYGHOST
> RADIO ROARS IN EVERY HOME WE HAVE THE NORTHPOLE
> WALLSTREET AND VIRGINBIRTH WITHOUT STONES or
> WIRES OR EVEN RUNNING brooks connecting ears
> and no more sermons windows flashing roar
> breathtaking - as you like it...eh?...[52]

Both poems underscore the hard-sell pace of Madison Avenue; small wonder television advertising has borrowed the racket montage technique.

Split screen techniques, prominent for a time as a result of their resurgence at Expo '67 in Montreal, are a form of mosaic collage similar to simultaneous montage. The multiplicity of images on the screen at any one time can cause the film-maker some difficulty in controlling the viewer's eye in the selection of images. The advantage of this, however, is that the resulting freedom of

selection invites greater audience participation. Nonetheless, criticism is sometimes made of the constant reminder to the viewer of the mechanics involved, a criticism more likely forwarded by those used to vicarious involvement in the linear story film.

Emphasis in this essay has thus far centred on visual montage as a juxtaposition or superimposition of images. Exactly the same principles of substantive and conditional montage may be applied to creating a film soundtrack. Little need be said regarding the purists who blame the advent of sound as a blight on the pure silent film. This writer believes that sound can add great dimension to film provided that there is a need for it, that the two can complement each other in an effective vertical montage, and that sound does not conflict with the film's internal visual rhythms.

A detailed account of the use of sound montage in film is beyond the scope of this essay which deals in the main with the visual image. Some mention need be made, however, of the synthesis of sound and visual image. Eisenstein coins the term vertical montage when he compares the vertical arrangement of sound and visual image to the marrying of base with treble instrumentation in a musical score. Music or background sound effects can act as a binding agent by bridging two shots in sequence or as a separating device when a musical score or sound effect signals a visual cut into the second of the two shots. Sound montage also can either complement the image by effecting a mood or concept in harmony with its visual counterpart or, when in opposition to the visual image, serve as an ironic commentary. Furthermore a particular musical or background sound can be used repetitively as a leitmotif to link a specific image or sequence of images with similar ones later in the film.[53] This repetition of sound bears resemblance to

the poetic refrain, and indeed in poetry there is continual interplay between sound and image through repetition and the melodic devices of end-rhyme, assonance, alliteration, and onomatopoeia.

A DISSENTING VOICE

Lest the impression be given that the use of montage as a recognized filmic element escapes criticism, it should be pointed out that montage does indeed meet with disapproval from at least one prominent source. The primary thesis of André Bazin, French critic and director for a time of Les Cahiers du Cinéma, is that the photographic image is merely a "mechanical reproduction" of objective reality and a form of "death mask" that "moulds" itself with light inseparably around the photographed object. In the semiological terms of Peter Wollen, the photographed image as considered by Bazin would be an indexical representation rather than iconic. That is, it is a sign which remains inseparable from its object and is not merely an approximation of it.[54] Thus Bazin maintains that photography is unlike painting which permits considerable subjective interference through the mental as well as manual processes of reconstructing the object. Any manipulation of the camera to alter the photographic image, says Bazin, is merely a distortion of reality and not a recreation of it. It is the very lack of the photographer's interference with the essence of the image that permits the natural object to speak out for itself. Bazin admits that the photographer's personality may be revealed in the style of the image but in a manner different from the painter's total creative involvement.[55]

Cinema may likewise, according to Bazin, be considered in terms of its objectivity so that the natural object remains the primary source but retains its integrity in the inseparable realism of its filmed image. Any technique that interferes with the continuity of this reality is thus artificial. Editing is a reconstruction of this reality, says Bazin, and montage "which we are constantly being told is the essence of cinema is, in this situation, the literary and anticinematic process par excellence."[56] Any technique which preserves the pure reality of the image is for Bazin upholding the original nature of film. For this reason, Bazin takes an interest in Orson Welles' Citizen Kane, which uses depth of field for greater focus control thereby eliminating the need for many cuts in the playing of a scene. And so, "Essential cinema, seen for once in its pure state...is to be found in straightforward photographic respect for the unity of space."[57] Documentaries such as Nanook of the North (though romanticized) and the narrative films of Italian Neo-realism, which are governed by reality in their cutting so as to play down their fictional aspects, are exemplary for Bazin. On the other hand, the montage antics of Russian films are a distortion of reality.

The limitation of Bazin's argument lies perhaps in his central assumption of the photographed image as being inseparable from the object itself. Jean Mitry, film historian and aesthetician, refutes Bazin's notion of accepting the photographed image as an objective extension of the object itself. Rather, he maintains, the camera perceives the object (regardless of the photographer's interference) and records its perception as a new reconstruction of the original. That is, the camera interferes with the recording process so that the image cannot be regarded as purely objective.[58]

Moreover, Bazin's insistence on the camera's fidelity to objective nature seems contradictory when one considers the illusory characteristics of film, specifically the projection of still frames to create the optical illusion of motion. Film is an illusory representation of reality in that sense. A further contradiction lies in Bazin's willingness to accept (by ignoring) this illusion and regard the moving picture as an extension of objective reality in motion, while at the same time reject montage and all other subjectively motivated devices for being "illusory" or untrue to "reality." By its very nature film provides its own mechanically "unnatural" means for communicating reality. To ignore the mechanics is to imply that running the camera at forty-eight frames per second should be no different than running it at twenty-four frames per second. Yet the resulting slow-motion is decidedly "unreal" to the human eye irrespective of whether the static image within the single frame itself is objectively real or not. In what way is the cutting up of a scene into pieces of action any less real than this? The reality of the filmic image cannot be looked at separately from the mechanics of its being. The mechanics of film interfere no matter what with the filmic recording of objective reality so that every moving image in some small way is really a distortion of that reality and is artificial. Montage is no less so. To the extent that cinema is committed to encouraging audience response or participation, montage is as valid as allowing the film image to communicate for itself.

MONTAGE IN THE EXPERIMENTAL FILM

Scorpio Rising, completed in 1963 by Kenneth Anger, is a prime example of the use of vertical montage and its interaction between sound and image. The film is built around a montage chain of thirteen popular songs, the lyrics of which serve as an ironic counterpoint to the visual image.

After introducing the erotic fetish of a leather-clad motorcycle rider preparing for his role at large, the film presents various insights on a sociological or socio-political level including the distortions of hero-worship, the subliminations of perversity through ritual and the equating of motorcycle gangs with Hitler's fascism. In the opening sequences, montage is used both symbolically and metaphorically when shots of the motorcyclist tightening a bolt on his motorcycle (to the lyrics, "Wind me up") are intercut with a child winding up and releasing toy cycles. The motorcycle becomes a love-object symbol and the hero a child playing with its toys. The montage, supported vertically by lyrics from Wind Up Doll, helps to link the comparative images significantly. Later, Anger achieves Eisenstein's dialectical form of montage by comparing the motorcycle hero walking down a street with Christ parading

past his followers. The complementary lyrics here are "He's a rebel and we'll never know the reason why." The parody is all the more effective, somehow, when the latter sequence is recognized as a scene from Cecil B. DeMille's King of Kings, a film extravaganza out of all proportion to Anger's film.[59]

Sitney describes Anger's unusual method of creating a simultaneous montage subsequent to the hero's dressing ritual. The room in which the hero (Scorpio) dresses is shown as a metaphor in itself, revealing through its furnishings characteristics of Scorpio's personal make-up. A television set in the same room becomes a means of underlining the events taking place in the room; in a sense it creates a collage image. While Scorpio is sniffing cocaine two birds are seen on the television screen escaping a cage. Simultaneously in the total frame a bright red image with an insert of a picture of a purple Dracula is flashed. The television set is incorporated again into the total frame when it reveals a shot of Marlon Brando in The Wild One. Brando, who along with James Dean is one of Scorpio's heroes, is seen with a rapturous smile, his eyes closed as though he too has been sniffing cocaine. The entire sequence is supported vertically with the song Heat Wave.[60] A powerful tightly knit film, Scorpio Rising makes every use of intellectual montage to convey impact.

In Anger's ritualistic, mythographic film, the individual hero is observed within the film. In the lyrical film, on the other hand, the hero is the film-maker. Through his eyes we are able to observe the personal vision of the poet revealed in a manner intrinsic to film alone. The following might serve as a fitting introduction to Stan Brakhage, lyrical film-maker par excellence. Sitney without doubt has Brakhage in mind when referring to this notion of the film-maker as protagonist:

> The images of the film are what he sees, filmed in such a way that we never forget his presence and we know how he is reacting to his vision...the screen is filled with movement, and that movement, both of the camera and the editing, reverberates with the idea of man looking. As viewers we see the man's intense experience of seeing. In the lyrical film, the space of the trance film, that long receding diagonal which the film-makers inherited from the Lumières, transforms itself into the flattened space of Abstract Expressionist painting. In that field of vision depth and vanishing point become possible, but exceptional options. Through superimposition, several perspectives can occupy that space at one time.... Finally the film-maker working in the lyrical mode affirms the actual flatness and whiteness of the screen, rejecting for the most part its traditional use as a window into illusion.[61]

Brakhage's unique blending of personal vision, camera technique (or the intentional lack of it) and metaphorical montage has enabled him to create sensitive works of pure film poetry. Many of his montage effects are achieved through superimposition in addition to juxtaposition. A sample study of his lyrical 8 mm Songs uncovers a host of interacting images. Objective images interlock to form a rhythmically fluctuating play of light and form. His colourful optical effects simulate what he refers to as "closed eye vision."[62] By scratching and painting on the film image Brakhage approximates the pulsating phosphenes or patterns of light that form when pressure is applied to the closed eye. In the "Metamorphosis" of Song Twenty-One, by bleaching and painting over floral backgrounds, Brakhage creates a two-dimensional field in a state of flittering agitation like the frenzied undercurrent of the insect world. Song Twenty-Two on the other hand appears interested simply in the lyrical touch of light on water, a seething display of rhythmically sparkling dots.

In Song Seventeen loosely titled "Cathedral and Movie House" in Brakhage's catalogue, there is a hint of the haiku structure mentioned earlier. Various

shots of a church's stained glass windows are superimposed with neon lights, red stage curtains, and a theatre notice from management to patrons. The most blatant superimposure is that of the title "A Jerry Bresler Production" on top of a large stain glass window. The subject matter is not typical of haiku but the simple dualistic nature of the imagery is reminiscent of the haiku metaphor and Pound's notion of one image superimposed on the other. The film is one of the few Songs where comment lies so close to the surface.

Song Eight, "Sea Creatures," creates a strong visual impression of undersea life. The film begins on a shoreline by looking at waves stretched and distorted by the anamorphic effect of a glass ashtray revolved before the lens. At one point a large wave suddenly appears to threaten, ready to engulf. A sense of the powerful force of undulating currents prevails. There is a feeling of being submerged beneath the waves into a strange world of filtered light and prehistoric shapes. A gigantic turtle (image enlarged) looms and silently glides by. The silence is acute. Images of lobster, silver schools of fish, plants and other marine life flash by in rhythmical sequences simulating the reflections of undersea light. The entire film montage in its simple brevity creates as much atmospheric impact as the poetic imagery of Whitman's poem, "The World Below the Brine":

> The world below the brine,
> Forests at the bottom of the sea, the branches and leaves,
> Sea-lettuce, vast lichens, strange flowers and seeds, the
> thick tangle, openings and pink turf,
> Different colours, pale gray and green, purple, white, and
> gold, the play of light through the water,
> Dumb swimmers there among the rocks, coral, gluten, grass,
> rushes and the aliment of the swimmers,
> Sluggish existences grazing there suspended, or slowly
> crawling close to the bottom,
> The sperm-whale at the surface blowing air and spray, or

disporting with his flukes,
The leaden-eyed shark, the walrus, the turtle, the
hairy sea-leopard, and the sting ray,
Passions there, wars, pursuits, tribes, sight in those
ocean depths, breathing that thick-breathing
air, as so many do,
The change thence to the sight here, and to the subtle
air breathed by beings like us who walk this
sphere,
The change onward from ours to that of beings who walk
other spheres.[63]

Whitman's substantive montage of undersea images covers far more marine detail than Brakhage's, yet Brakhage's selective choice of a few details makes use of film techniques distinct from literary to convey an equally expressive sensory experience. Moreover, Brakhage allows the viewer's imagination more leeway to interact with his own. Nonetheless, the common bond here between poem and film is the juxtaposition and superimposition of montage images.

Ezra Pound's influence on Brakhage has already been suggested. A passage from Pound's Gaudier Brzeska serves to define the concept behind his Vorticist theory, an offshoot of Imagism: "The image is not an idea. It is a radiant node or cluster; it is what I can and must perforce, call a VORTEX, from which and through which, and into which ideas are constantly rushing."[64] This might also define Brakhage's particular style of montage. He himself claims the quotation provided the structural inspiration behind Part One of Dog Star Man (1964), the central image of which, in bare terms, is a man climbing a mountain with his dog. The image is presented not only narratively but filmically on several levels. The symbol of man versus mountain is staged amid the passing of the seasons, and Fall becomes the figurative (and literal) fall of Man (man) down the mountainside. But it is the metaphorical images, presented in multi-layered superimpositions, that become the ideas that both feed, and at the same

time gain nourishment from, the central image that Pound speaks of as a "Vortex." It is this constant bombarding (or in effect montage "collision") of central image with supporting images that provides the film's multi-faceted themes and concepts - the birth of the universe and Man's individual consciousness, his conflict with nature, his creative inspiration, his sexual awakening and so on. And what is more, the viewer is constantly reminded by the scratching and painting, by the handheld camera and the interplay of superimposed images that this is a film artist using filmic means to communicate his personal vision.

Brakhage's poetic eye (at one time he seriously considered a literary career) is very much in evidence when examining one of his verse scripts. Consider the following as film montage written in a style suggestive of poetry:

> A moon uncentered, round and white as ice.
> A sun scratched mud-pool. The revealing of fingers of snow
> which feed it. Then the pure white of their source.
> Night and the uncentered moon overcome by clouds
> A street lit passageway of stairs leading nowhere.
> Stars.
> House lights patterning a mountainside with squares of black.
> Fast movement over snow to a child's hand scooping a white
> ball.
> The alive face of a child.
> The sun.
> The slow movement of the snowball breaking the mudpool into
> its components.
> The hand of the child flowering open against the sky.
> The laughing face and eyes of the child and a movement of
> laughter across town houses blurred across valley
> to the daylit mountain side....[65]

A glance back at Whitman's "Miracles" reveals similar parallel statements, similar representative images building towards a total emotive experience It is true that Brakhage makes greater use of figurative comparison, the simile in line one for instance, and the metaphorical images of "fingers of snow," "Stars,"

and "House lights," "alive face" and "sun," and "The hand...flowering open." For the most part, however, images are treated with the matter-of-factness of Whitman and it is the manner in which they are juxtaposed as montage that reveals the personal expression or interference of the creative artist.

The above verse script is merely a verbal representation of a filmic idea and as such would be a poor substitute for the film, had it been completed. Similarly, Spottiswoode seems to recognize the spoken word of a soundtrack as redundant and inadequate when it accompanies the non-literary format of the filmic image:

> The imagist film, using plain naturalism with every device of montage in the simpler passages, symbolism when it is available without straining, and the visual simile to convey more complicated concepts, is the most powerful silent film. It cannot well be combined with speech, which in larger quantities will upset its construction, and in small quantities will refuse to amalgamate with the visual film, if music is already playing an important part.... If true films can never be subtle, they will ultimately be profound as well as simple.[66]

Despite Spottiswoode's qualifying last sentence, there is in Brakhage every evidence of the "true" film being subtle. Surrounding the linear central image of Dog Star Man lies a wealth of images which because of the very obliquity of the montage arrangement demands audience involvement in an experience which can be both "profound as well as simple."

Like Spottiswoode, American playwright Arthur Miller disputes the idea of marrying in this case the poetic word to film. In a symposium on "Poetry and the Film," he reflects that, "the possibility for the poet or writer to tell a story or to transmit an emotion in their films...is contained within the image, so that...even though I'm much in sympathy with...[the] desire to join poetic speech

with images, that, possibly, in the long run, it will be discovered to be a redundancy - that the poetry is in the film..." [Italics mine.] [67] Miller recognizes film as a medium that, with its power of visual imagery, has a poetic language of its own.

Maya Deren, participating in the same symposium with Miller, while admitting the complexities of an inquiry into the nature of poetry, makes an interesting attempt to clarify her interpretation of poetry in film. She suggests that in contrast to the "horizontal" movement of plot line in a play or film, a poetic pause may occur through a "vertical" movement which "probes the ramifications of the moment, and is concerned with its qualities and its depth...in a sense, not with what is occurring but what it feels like or what it means." Deren likens these vertical moments to the periodic soliloquies interrupting the horizontal plot lines of Shakespearean plays. She then relates the concept to film:

> It seems to me that in many films, very often in the opening passages, you get the camera establishing the mood, and, when it does that, cinematically, those sections are quite different from the rest of the film. You know, if it's establishing New York, you get a montage of images, that is, a poetic construct, after which what follows is a dramatic construct that is essentially "horizontal" in its development. The same thing would apply to the dream sequences. They occur at a moment when the intensification is carried out not by action but by the illumination of that moment. Now the short films, to my mind (and they are short because it is difficult to maintain such intensity for a long period of time), are comparable to lyric poems, and they are completely a "vertical," or what I would call a poetic construct, and they are complete as such....[68]

Deren's reference to montage as "a poetic construct" of an illuminating moment deserves particular attention under the terms of this essay. For as a means of generating the most stimulus out of a maximum of visual images and as

a means of inviting viewer participation in a sensory, emotional or conceptual experience, montage is without parallel as a filmic device. The ability to construct a total form out of a cluster of sub-images and to blend images into new conceptual notions not recognizable in the parts is the magical accomplishment of film montage. To compare or contrast different images, whether subtly or overtly, and by so doing to strengthen the emotional response of the viewer is the nature of poetic figuration, and film, like poetry, is compatible with its use. Thus, montage through juxtaposition or superimposition of images is the catalytic agent of the creative film-maker expressing personal vision.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Vsevolod Pudovkin, Film Technique (London: Newnes, 1935), pp. 14 - 16, quoted in Ernest Lindgren, The Art of the Film, 2nd ed. (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1963), p. 201.

[2] Lindgren, pp. 81 - 82.

[3] Sergei Eisenstein, Film Form, ed. and trans. Jay Leyda (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1949), pp. 36 - 37.

[4] Sergei Eisenstein, The Film Sense, ed. and trans. Jay Leyda (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1942), pp. 4 - 5.

[5] Ibid., p. 8.

[6] Quoted in Eisenstein, Film Sense, p. 6.

[7] Sigmund Freud, Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious, trans. A. A. Brill (Dodd, Mead, 1916), pp. 22 - 23, quoted in Eisenstein, Film Sense, p. 7.

[8] Ibid., p. 19.

[9] Ibid., pp. 17 - 18.

[10] Quoted in Eisenstein, Film Sense, p. 46.

[11] Rod Whitaker, The Language of Film (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1970), p. 131.

[12] Ibid., p. 130.

[13] Robert Richardson, Literature and Film (Bloomington / London: Indiana University Press, 1969), pp. 24 - 25.

[14] Walt Whitman, Complete Poetry and Selected Prose, ed. James E. Miller

Jr. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959), p. 274.

[15] Richardson, p. 27.

[16] Ibid., pp. 27 - 28.

[17] Ibid., p. 31.

[18] Henri Bergson, work not cited, quoted in A. R. Jones, "Imagism: A Unity of Gesture in American Poetry," in American Poetry, assoc. ed. Irvin Ehrenpreis (London: Edward Arnold, 1965), p. 117.

[19] Richardson, pp. 31 - 32.

[20] A. R. Jones, p. 118.

[21] Jean Pierre Abel Rémusat, Recherches sur L'origine et la Formation de L'écriture Chinoise, quoted in Eisenstein, Film Form, p. 30.

[22] Jones, p. 120.

[23] Ibid., pp. 120 - 121.

[24] Ezra Pound, "Vorticism," The Fortnightly Review (September 1, 1914), quoted in Earl Miner, "Pound, Haiku, and the Image," The Hudson Review IX (Winter 1955 - 57): 575.

[25] Work not cited, quoted in Miner, p. 580.

[26] Ibid., pp. 580 - 581.

[27] Archibald MacLeish, Collected Poems (1917 - 1952), (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1952), pp. 40 - 41.

[28] Ibid., p. 26.

[29] Raymond Spottiswoode, A Grammar of the Film (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), p. 130.

[30] Stan Brakhage, Metaphors on Vision, ed. P. Adams Sitney, Film Culture No. 30 (1963), n. pag..

[31] Lindgren, pp. 86 - 87.

[32] Richardson, p. 32.

[33] Parker Tyler, The Three Faces of the Film (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1960) p. 63.

[34] Richard Wilbur, "A Poet and the Movies," Man and the Movies, ed. W. R. Robinson (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), p. 224.

[35] Whitaker, pp. 131 - 132.

[36] Ibid., p. 132.

[37] Laurence Perrine, Sound and Sense: An Introduction to Poetry, 2nd ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963), p. 54.

[38] Spottiswoode, p. 253.

[39] Lindgren, pp. 95-96.

[40] Rudolph Arnheim, Film as Art (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966), p. 90.

[41] Eisenstein, "A Sequence from Strike," The Film Sense, pp. 234 - 235.

[42] Carl Sandburg, Complete Poems (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1950), p. 16.

[43] Whitaker, p. 135.

[44] A.E.Housman, Collected Poems (London: Jonathon Cape, 1939), p. 32.

[45] P. Adams Sitney, Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 218.

[46] Gene Youngblood, Expanded Cinema (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1970), pp. 85 - 86.

[47] Dylan Thomas, "The Force That through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower," The Collected Poems of Dylan Thomas 1934 - 1952 (London: J. M. Dent, 1952), p. 9.

[48] Youngblood, p. 86.

[49] Eisenstein, Film Sense, pp. 55 - 57.

[50] Sitney, Visionary Film, pp. 118 - 121.

[51] E. E. Cummings, Complete Poems (1913 - 1962) (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1972), pp. 230 - 231.

[52] Hart Crane, The Complete Poems and Selected Letters and Prose of HART CRANE, ed. Brom Weber (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1966), p. 62.

[53] Whitaker, pp. 137 - 138.

[54] Peter Wollen, Signs and Meaning in the Cinema (London: Thames and Hudson, 1970), p. 125.

[55] André Bazin, What Is Cinema?, ed. and trans. Hugh Gray (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 12 - 13.

[56] Ibid., p. 46.

[57] Ibid., p. 46.

[58] Hugh Gray, "Introduction," Ibid., p. 6.

[59] Sitney, Visionary Film, pp. 118 - 121.

[60] Ibid., pp. 119 - 120.

[61] Ibid., p. 180.

[62] Sitney, "Interview with Stan Brakhage," Film Culture Reader, ed. P. Adams Sitney (New York: Praeger, 1970), p. 223.

[63] Whitman, p. 189.

[64] Ezra Pound, Gaudier - Brzeska: A Memoir (New York: New Directions, 1960), p. 92, quoted in Sitney, Visionary Film, p. 220.

[65] Brakhage, portion of "Untitled Script Fragment, Central City, Colorado, 1953," Metaphors on Vision, n. pag..

[66] Spottiswoode, pp. 298 - 9.

[67] Maya Deren et al., "Poetry and the Film: A Symposium," ed. Amos Vogel, Film Culture Reader, p. 177.

[68] Ibid., pp. 174 - 175.

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pp. 115 - 33.

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