Jean Epstein and *Photogénie*
narrative avant-garde film theory and practice in late silent-era French cinema.

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September 2010

I certify that all material in this dissertation that is not my own work has been identified and that no material is included for which a degree has previously been conferred upon me

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Abstract

In 1921 *Editions de la Sirène* published Jean Epstein's first book, *Bonjour Cinema,* a collection of writings which included the articles *Magnification,* and *The Senses I (b).* In both of these articles Epstein refers to *photogénie,* a term which he also used in many of his later writings on film, and which he made the central topic of two articles, one in 1924, *On Certain Characteristics of Photogénie,* and one in 1935, *Photogénie and the Imponderable. Photogénie* was an important concept for Epstein, although it was not only he that wrote about it. The term also appears in articles by Louis Delluc, Léon Moussinac, Ricciotto Canudo, Henri Fescourt and Jean-Louis Bouquet, all published in France between 1920 and 1925. However, as silent cinema gave way to sound cinema the term faded from use, with only Epstein retaining his commitment to the term.

When *photogénie* is written about today it is generally referred to as a mysterious, elusive, enigmatic, ineffable or indefinable term that refers to the magic of cinema, the essence or nature of cinema, and the power that cinema has to transform the everyday into something special. *Photogénie* is seen today as something vague, obscure, even mystical; something that was part of a more primitive attitude towards cinema. In this dissertation, Epstein's writings about *photogénie* and two of this films are analysed in order that more light may be shed on this term, and *photogénie* is shown to be a rich and complex term that functioned on a variety of levels; cultural, theoretical and aesthetic. These various aspects of the term are considered in detail, as is the general context in which the term was used, and *photogénie* is shown not to be vague and obscure, but to be an argument for a new and distinctly modern way of thinking about cinema.

Contents

Introduction

Heraclitus says somewhere that everything moves and nothing rests; and, comparing what exists to a river, he says that you would not step twice into the same river.

Plato, Cratylus, 402A

There is always something exciting about film-makers who were (or are) also film theorists. The most well known of these film-maker/theorists is undoubtedly Sergei Eisenstein, whose films have been widely available for decades, and whose theory of montage has enjoyed immense popularity. Considerably less well known is his French contemporary, Jean Epstein. Born only one year apart, Epstein in 1897 and Eisenstein in 1898, both men died in their fifties, Eisenstein at fifty and Epstein at fifty-six, leaving behind them a significant body of films and theoretical writings[1]. However, the reputations of these two men could scarcely be different. The translated volumes of Eisenstein's selected writings plus his memoirs runs to over two-thousand pages, whereas Epstein's two volumes of writings, *Ecrits sur le cinéma,* remains largely untranslated. The fact that we can read any of Epstein's work in English is thanks to the work of Richard Abel, Stuart Liebman and Tom Milne, most of whose translations have been collected in Richard Abel's anthology, *French Film Theory and Criticism, 1907-1939[2].* Epstein's films are also considerably more difficult to see than Eisenstein's, despite the fact that he made over thirty features and shorts, compared to around ten for Eisenstein. And whereas Eisenstein's theory of montage has enjoyed wide academic attention, Epstein's work on the theory of *photogénie[3]* has enjoyed comparatively little academic interest.

This dissertation seeks to begin to remedy this imbalance. Its subject is the concept of *photogénie,* and the way it was explored and understood in the films and writings of the French film-maker/theorist, Jean Epstein[4]. *Photogénie* is a concept that was used in France during the last decade of the silent era, and one which is broadly associated with the movement that has become known as French Impressionist cinema. However, both the concept and the associated movement have become marginalised over time, and today neither *photogénie* nor French Impressionist cinema are particularly well known, and nor is Jean Epstein, the film-maker/theorist who did the most to develop the term. In addition to its marginalisation, on the few occasions when it has been discussed in Anglo-American film studies, the full complexity of *photogénie* has rarely been addressed.

Photogénie is a complex theoretical concept that works in a number of ways. At its heart, *photogénie* seeks the essence of cinema. It is argument for the importance of cinematic specificity, and we can mark out two ways in which concept operates; the cultural and the aesthetic. In the cultural sense it proposes to legitimise the medium of film, arguing that film can transcend its photochemical/mechanical base, and, in the right hands, become art. Within this cultural sense it also offers ways of marking out those film-makers who are artists from those who are not, prefiguring the later *politique des auteurs* division between *auteurs* and *metteurs-en-scène*. In addition to the dividing film-makers, *photogénie* also divides audiences, separating those who can see and appreciate the art of film from those who cannot. In the aesthetic sense we see *photogénie* variously associated with transformation, expression, the close-up, movement, temporality, rhythm, and the augmentation of the senses. This multiplicity of aesthetic associations exists because of something that has gone almost entirely

unnoticed in Epstein's work, the assertion that there is not one *photogénie*, but many, some of which have yet to be discovered. The other major part of Epstein's work on *photogénie* that has been overlooked is the idea that has *photogénie* has an aural aspect, *phonogénie.*

The purpose of this dissertation is to rejuvenate and revitalise Epstein's concept of *photogénie,* and in order to do this we will need to address the following questions. What is *photogénie* and why was it such a central concept for Epstein? What is its purpose, and in what ways does it function? To address these questions we will examine Epstein's writings in which he discusses *photogénie,* (*Magnification, 1921, The Senses I (b), 1921, On Certain Characteristics of Photogénie, 1924, For a New Avant-Garde, 1925, The Cinema Continues, 1930,* and *Photogénie and the Imponderable, 1935*) and two of his films, (*Coeur fidèle/A Faithful Heart, 1923,* and *Le Tempestaire/The Tempest, Poem on the Sea, 1947*).

Rather than a chronological examination of these works, we will be much better served by a conceptual examination. Thus the first and second chapters of this dissertation will look at the contextual and cultural aspects of *photogénie*. The third, and most substantial, chapter will look at the various aesthetic ways in which the term functions. Organising the material thematically, we will analyse extracts from Epstein's writings alongside sequences from his films. In this we will hope to draw out the unifying themes of *photogénie* whilst simultaneously preserving its multifaceted character. In the fourth chapter we will look at *photogenie's* aural aspect, *phonogénie,* and in the fifth chapter we will consider some of the theoretical and

metaphysical issues raised by *photogénie.* Finally, in the conclusion we will attempt to answer the questions posed in this introduction.

One final point that it is important to note is that *photogénie* was a term neither invented by Epstein nor by any of the French Impressionists. The term existed in general usage long before Louis Delluc appropriated and re-purposed the term for the Impressionists in his 1920 article *Photogénie* (2004, pp.49-51)*.* According to Paul Willemen's researches (1994, p.126), it appeared as early as 1874 in the *Larousse* dictionary, and the director Louis Feuillade even wrote to the magazine *Cinéa* (Delluc's own magazine) complaining about Delluc's Impressionistic appropriation of the term. Nevertheless, it is Epstein's work on *photogénie* that is the most important because it was he who developed the idea most fully, in both his theoretical writings and in his films.

Chapter One

Photogénie **in context**

It is my intention in this chapter to provide the contextual information necessary for a clear understanding of *photogénie.* To fully grasp Epstein's concept it is important to understand something about the various different approaches to cinema that existed in France during the late silent era, and also to understand something about the specific film-making movement with which Epstein is associated. This chapter will deal with both of these issues.

I. Late silent-era French cinema

The years 1919 to 1929 were some of the most exciting years in French cinema, and our understanding of this period owes an immeasurable debt to Richard Abel, whose work on early French cinema is of great importance. The years between the end of the First World War and the end of the silent era saw the flowering and demise of four distinct schools of French film-making. The first school we would call popular or mainstream narrative film-making. This school comprises films that followed the codes and conventions of the Hollywood continuity system, and includes those French films designed to appeal to audiences who enjoyed American films. In this school we would note films such as Louis Feuillade's *Judex, 1917,* Jacques Feyder's *L'Atlantide/Queen of Atlantis, 1921* and *Crainquebille/Coster Bill of Paris, 1923,* and Jean Renoir's *Nana, 1926.* The second school is the narrative avant-garde, or French

Impressionist cinema. This is a cinema that was still concerned with narrative, but one which did not allow the narrative to dominate. It was a cinema which incorporated devices that challenged or disrupted the continuity system. Here we would include Epstein's silent films, plus films such as Abel Gance's *J'accuse/I Accuse, 1919, La roue/The Wheel, 1922,* and *Napoléon vu par Abel Gance/Napoleon as seen by Abel Gance, 1927,* Rene Clair's *Paris qui dort/The Crazy Ray, 1924,* Jean Renoir's *La fille de l'eau/Whirlpool of Fate, 1925,* and *La petite marchande d'allumettes/The Little Match Girl, 1928,* and Marcel L'Herbier's *L'argent/Money, 1929.* The third and fourth schools, surrealist cinema and abstract cinema are both closely allied with the art establishment. Surrealist cinema rejected conventional cause and effect, continuity and narrative, but still used actors and a recogniseable *mise-en-scène.* Abstract cinema (or *cinéma pur/*pure cinema) used no narrative, actors or any kind of conventional *mise-en-scène.* Examples of surrealist films would include Germaine Dulac's *La coquille et la clergyman/The Seashell and the Clergyman, 1927,* and the Luis Buñuel/Salvador Dali film *Un chien andalou/An Andalusian Dog, 1929.* Examples of abstract cinema would include Fernand Léger's *Ballet mécanique/The Mechanical Ballet, 1924,* Viking Eggeling's *Symphonie diagonale/Diagonal Symphony, 1924,* and Marcel Duchamp's *Cinéma anemic/Anaemic Cinema, 1925.*

In addition to these different schools, the period also saw the flourishing of film theory and criticism as practiced both by film-makers and dedicated film critics/theorists. As has been extensively detailed by both David Bordwell (1974) and Richard Abel (1984), what was happening on-screen in France was at least as exciting and important, if not more so, as what was happening anywhere else in Europe or America. What was happening off-screen, in terms of the development of film theory,

was, despite its current neglect, just as important as what was happening in the Soviet Union. What was particularly remarkable though was the development of a specific film culture in Paris dedicated to the avant-garde movement. During the final ten years of the silent period we see in Paris not only the flowering of an avant-garde, but a range of journals concerned with film theory and criticism, and the development of cinemas devoted to showing and promoting the films of the French avant-garde[5].

After the coming of sound cinema there was a rapid decline of interest in the late silent period in France. The French pioneers of cinema, Auguste and Louis Lumière, and George Méliès, have been widely discussed, as have the major companies *Pathé* and *Gaumont,* but in general, late silent-era French cinema has been overshadowed not only by the famous forefathers of French cinema and by contemporaneous silent cinemas, but also by subsequent developments in French cinema. To illustrate this phenomena one only has to compare this period in French cinema to that of the cinema in the Soviet Union or Germany. French silent cinema is as radical, innovative and important as the various forms of montage cinema in the Soviet Union or Expressionism, *Kammerspiel*, and *Neue Sachlichkeit* in Germany, but has received considerably less attention[6].

We might also compare the fate of late French silent cinema with the way that French sound cinema has been widely discussed, analysed and chronicled, from Jean Renoir, poetic realism and the popular front, through Andre Bazin to the *nouvelle vague,* the *cinéma du look,* and beyond. Furthermore, it is the case that rather than the period simply being ignored, would-be researchers have been warned off early

French cinema by comments such as Bertrand Tavernier's, that those with an interest in early French film, "would be in grave danger of 'imminent departure [to] a mental asylum.'" (Abel, 1988a, p.xiii). In a similar, albeit less dramatic fashion, Dudley Andrew remarked that no French film theory prior to Bazin, "has either the 'solid logic and consistency' or the 'diversity and complexity' of Bazin's influential ideas." (Abel, 1988a, p.xiii) Referring specifically to the Impressionists, Bordwell claims their writings to be, "a rough-and-ready assemblage of unacknowledged assumptions, casual opinions, and fragmentary aesthetic claims." (Bordwell, 1974, p.93) But he does point out that, "a set of broad theoretical assumptions pervade the movement's journal essays and public lectures." (Bordwell, 1974, p.94) In sum, Abel characterises the general attitude towards early French theory as one in which the writings, "can be dismissed ... as a repetitious series of enthusiastic yet rigourless pronouncements." (Abel, 1988a, p.xiii)

II. French Impressionist cinema

Epstein was an important figure in the school of film-making variously called *French Impressionism* by David Bordwell, *the narrative avant-garde* by Richard Abel, *the first cinematic avant-garde* by Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, and *the pre-war French school* by Gilles Deleuze[7]. This school flourished in France between 1919 and 1929, and the film-makers (and film-maker/theorists) most strongly associated with it were Louis Delluc, Germaine Dulac, Jean Epstein, Marcel L'Herbier and Abel Gance. Other directors that have been associated with the impressionist movement include Claude Autant-Lara, Luis Buñuel, Alberto Cavalcanti, Rene Clair, Carl Dreyer, Jacques Feyder,

Dimitri Kirsanov, Ivan Mosjoukin, Jean Renoir, and Alexander Volkov[8]. However, it is Delluc, Dulac, Epstein, L'Herbier, and Gance who form the core of the Impressionist movement. Other directors made one or two films in the Impressionist style, but their work is not of such central importance to the movement.

French Impressionist cinema is interesting for a number of reasons, but particularly for its aims and purpose. Two important interlinked aims of Impressionism were, firstly, the creation of a narrative alternative to the increasingly dominant mainstream narrative cinema, and, secondly, the creation of a distinctively French style of film-making. This was not specifically an anti-American attitude, as it was Louis Feuillade who was the target for much of the Impressionist vitriol, rather it was something that came from the search for an authentic cinema, one that was not merely a composite of theatre, literature and photography. The reason that Impressionism is sometimes known as the narrative avant-garde is because unlike the concurrent non-narrative avant-gardes (surrealist and abstract cinema) Impressionists never dispensed with narrative. They believed that narrative served a very important purpose in film, to hold audience attention and to provide a framework within which the emotions could be explored. What they resisted was the belief that everything should be subservient to the interests of the narrative. The Impressionist attitude to narrative and the way that it creates a different type of cinema is explained by René Clair in his article about Epstein's *Cœur fidèle*

> *Cœur fidèle* can be criticized for lacking unity of action. The film too often goes astray into technical experiments which the action does not demand. That is the difference between the advanced technique of our school and American technique, which is completely at the service of the progress of the story. That is also the explanation of the difference in the audience's attitude toward American film, in which expressions are immediately accessible, and ours, which require an effort of the intelligence alone.

Clair also articulates other important differences between the American and French styles, this time regarding cinematography and rhythm

> The study of the proper camera angle, the only angle right for a given image or scene, is far from having been exhausted. The Americans, who took the first steps in that direction, seem to have stopped short in fear of what still remained to be discovered. *Cœur fidèle*, among other films – and among other French films, I must add – points us once again in the direction of that study, progress in which is inseparable from progress in cinematic expression.
>
> People talk a lot about cinematic rhythm, and the question seems to be the most important one the cinema has to answer at present. It must be said that up to now no complete answer has been proposed. It appears that rhythm sometimes crops up spontaneously in film – especially American films – but too often it remains sketchy and disappoints us. When it is intentional – and it is in *Cœur fidèle* – it is created by means of the reappearance of earlier images

Clair goes on to note that neither the French nor the Americans have yet found a satisfactory approach to rhythm, but as for his overall attitude, there is little doubt that he believes the French approach to be superior to the American, because American films are too much in service to the narrative, because they require little or no effort on the part of the audience, and because they are failing to make cinematic progress. Clair's article on *Cœur fidèle,* barely two pages long, encapsulates all of the most important aspects of Impressionist cinema: the creation of a particularly French style of film-making which exists in opposition to the dominant American style; the restricted use of narrative and the importance of the emotions; the need for audience engagement with the film text; the need to make cinematic progress through experimentation with the camera, and; the importance of rhythm. Clair even manages to find space to articulate the very nature of cinematic art during his discussions

> The suppleness of cinematic expression, which passes in a flash from the objective to the subjective, simultaneously evoking the abstract and the concrete, will not permit film to confine itself to an aesthetic as narrow as that of realism.

> Clair, in: Abel, 1988a, p.305

This point is amplified and expanded upon by Bordwell, who notes that

> Broadly speaking, Impressionist film theory holds that art is expression. Like Romantic theories, the Impressionists assume that art resides in the transformation of nature by the imagination and that art yields not discursive truth but an experiential truth anchored in feelings. This concept of art as expression is extended to apply to the cinema ... Art is the transformation of nature by the human imagination, evoking or suggesting feelings and presenting 'truth' to such feelings

> Bordwell, 1974, pp.94 & 98

We should certainly say something here about the visual characteristics of Impressionist cinema, as this is the context within which Epstein was working, and it will help us to understand him a little better if we do so. In order to understand the style of Impressionist film-making it is essential to understand what the Impressionists were trying to achieve, which was, broadly speaking, the depiction of subjectivity. A great many films place the spectator within the physical space of the drama, but outside of the emotional space of the drama: the spectator is witness to the drama because she is placed in the optimum position to view the events unfolding, but only in a third person capacity. What the Impressionists sought to do was to create a different type of cinema, one which was more intimate, psychological and subjective, meaning that it would try to depict not only what the person was doing, but also how they were feeling. This was something that Shakespeare overcame via the soliloquy, but we must remember that we are dealing with silent cinema: thus the Impressionist film-maker cannot present the interior monologues of

the characters in the way that proved so effective in Terrence Malick's *The Thin Red Line, 1998.* Nor can she simply present them as intertitles, as this would be far too unsubtle an approach. What the Impressionists chose to do was to depict subjective psychological states by using a variety of cinematic devices, the most important of these being through the use of mobile cameras, optical effects and rhythmic editing. We will discuss these devices in more detail in the third chapter of this work, for the moment we need to clarify an important issue.

We know how other people feel not because we experience their feelings, but because we know that certain actions correspond with certain emotions. Thus, if we see someone crying we can usually make a correct judgement about their emotional state. So if we are presented with a shot of someone crying this would count as a shot in which the film-maker was conveying the emotions of the character. This was certainly not something new to the cinema, even in 1919, so what were the Impressionists doing that made their cinema different in this respect? The answer is that the shot of someone crying is still a third person shot, it is the witness or observer type of shot. What the Impressionists wanted to convey was not the fact that *x* is feeling despondent, or *x* is feeling joyful, but the phenomenological characteristics of those emotions, the subjective experience of someone experiencing those emotions. For the Impressionists, the question was not only how does one depict love, ecstasy, euphoria, terror, rage, anger, etc, but how is the world experienced by someone feeling those emotions?

This concludes our discussion of the broader context and specific movement within which Epstein was working and within which *photogénie* existed. We will now move on to discuss the way that *photogénie* operated on a cultural level.

Chapter Two

The cultural aspects of *photogénie*

The purpose of this chapter is to look at the cultural ways in which the concept of *photogénie* operated. Far from being a term which had only aesthetic and practical concerns, it was a term that sought to define and legitimise the art of cinema, and to provide a cultural framework within which one could distinguish the great artists of the cinema. Both of these aspects will be discussed below. Additionally, on a cultural level *photogénie* bears a close resemblance to Clive Bell's theory of significant form, and this we will discuss also, as it will help us to deepen our understanding of *photogénie.*

I. Film as art: arguing for a cinematic cinema

In Epstein's most detailed writing on *photogénie, On Certain Characteristics of Photogénie,* he points out that film art and the film industry are incompatible. They are conjoined by their use of the same technical apparatus, but otherwise entirely unlike each other. Epstein's interest, as we might imagine, lies not with the film industry, but with film art. Epstein then goes on to delineate his field of interest, which is to prise cinema away from the other arts and to consider what the essence of cinema is. He seeks to isolate the unique properties of film and to state the case that once one knows what is unique about the medium, one should utilise or exploit those unique properties. Epstein argues that,

every art builds its forbidden city, its own exclusive domain, autonomous, specific, and hostile to anything that does not belong. Astonishing to relate, literature must first and foremost be literary, the theater, theatrical; painting, pictorial; and the cinema, cinematic … the cinema should avoid dealings, which can only be unfortunate, with historical, educational, novelistic, moral or immoral, geographical, or documentary subjects. The cinema must seek to become, gradually and in the end uniquely, cinematic: to employ, in other words, only photogenic elements. *Photogénie* is the purest expression of cinema.

Epstein, in: Abel, 1988a, pp.314-5

This is, of course, not a view unique to Epstein. Rather it is, as Sandy Flitterman-Lewis puts it, part of the search for, "the famous 'cinematic specificity' that preoccupied all those concerned with film in the twenties." (Flitterman-Lewis, 1996, p.47) Noël Carroll explains the argument of the medium or cinematic specifict as follows:

the doctrine of medium specificity or, as it is sometimes better known, the problem of the purity of the medium [is] the view that artists should be true to the medium in which they work, or, in other words, [the view that artists] should not pursue effects that belong to some other medium. … Traditionally, purists with regard to film are particularly anxious that filmmakers not dilute the cinematic medium with that of theater.

Carroll, 2009, p.35

Not only does Epstein want to distance cinema from the theatre, but also from painting, photography and literature. The question to ask here is, what does Epstein hope to achieve by the creation of a cinematic cinema? Why does he need to assert its independence from the other arts? The answer is that in order for film to be a legitimate form of art, it must possess some valuable and unique quality that it alone is capable of utilising. For film to be art, it cannot exploit those qualities possessed by theatre, literature or painting, qualities which they are better suited to exploit. This striving for a cinematic cinema, or for cinematic specificity, is the striving for artistic legitimacy, and it is closely bound up with classical film theory.

The major goal of film theory before the 1960s – what today is known as 'classical' film theory – was to prove that the cinema is an art on a par with, or perhaps even superior to, the other arts. Due to its novelty, the prejudice against its photographic medium (the claim that photography is mere mechanical reproduction and therefore not art), and its quick development into a form of mass entertainment, the cinema was not accepted as an art, at least initially. Classical film theorists therefore set out to show why and how the cinema is art. They did this, as Noël Carroll has demonstrated, by answering a series of questions about the cinema's unique properties, the role or value of these properties, and the stylistic techniques best suited to exploiting such properties.

Turvey, 2008, p.3

Early film theorists were concerned with the unique properties of cinema, they wanted to find the nature or essence of the medium.

Since the beginning of film as a medium, analysts have sought its 'essence,' its unique and distinguishing features. Some early film theorists argued for a cinema untainted by the other arts, as in Jean Epstein's notion of a 'pure cinema.' Other theorists and filmmakers proudly asserted cinemas links to the other arts. Griffith claimed to have borrowed crosscutting from Dickens while Eisenstein found prestigious literary antecedents for cinematic devices: the changes in focal length in *Paradise Lost;* the alternating montage of the agricultural fair chapter in *Madame Bovary.*

Stam, 2000, p.33

These film theorists were concerned with the question of cinematic specificity, and few were more dedicated to this question than the Impressionists.

In the search for 'cinematic specificity' that preoccupied not only Dulac, but the other major directors (Louis Delluc, Jean Epstein, Marcel L'Herbier, and Abel Gance) as well, there is a simultaneous rejection of the theatrical and literary emphases of the traditional commercial cinema along with an appreciation of both the technical achievements and the purely visual conception of this same cinema. Out of this contradiction emerged some of the first attempts to subvert what came to be called the dominant 'Hollywood model' and to develop the systematic alternatives associated with this first cinematic avant-garde.

Flitterman-Lewis, 1996, p.78

It is within the context of classical film theory and the search for cinematic specificity that the concept of *photogénie* emerged. On this cultural level *photogénie* is broadly understood as a quality whose presence allows cinema to become art, and this is what was of vital importance to Epstein.

> With the notion of *photogénie* was born the idea of cinema art. For how better to define the indefinable *photogénie* than by saying that it is to cinema as colour is to painting and volume to sculpture, the specific element of this art.
>
> <div align="right">Drummond, et al., 1979, p.38</div>

On a purely cultural level, *photogénie* acts as a legitimising term, positing the existence of a very real, if elusive, quality that can only be utilised by film. However, this cannot be a quality that all films possess, because if this were the case then all instances of film would be art, and this would be an absurd conclusion. What Epstein needs to make clear is that *photogénie* is a quality that does not appear simply by the director calling *on tourne!* And this he does when he divides film-makers into 'locusts' and 'poets'.

II. Film-makers as artists: 'locust' film-makers and 'poet' film-makers

In *On Certain Characteristics of Photogénie,* Epstein states that

> a landscape filmed by one of the forty or four hundred directors devoid of personality whom God sent to plague the cinema as He once sent the locusts into Egypt looks exactly like this same landscape filmed by any other of these locust filmmakers. But this landscape or this fragment of drama staged by someone like Gance will look nothing like what would be seen through the eyes and heart of a Griffith or a L'Herbier. And so the personality, the soul, the poetry of certain men invaded the cinema.

In many ways this can be seen as an early version of the *auteur* theory, and is another important part of Epstein's striving to legitimise the art of cinema. *Photogénie* is not a quality that belongs only to the apparatus, but is an intermingling of the medium with the personality of the film-maker. Epstein tells us clearly that certain directors have an identifiable style, a style that marks them out and differentiates them from other directors. To use the language of the *auteur* theory, we would say that the poet/*auteur* is of importance because she has an identifiable authorial voice.

Epstein's other category of film-maker, the locust, is more pejorative in tone than the *auteu*r theory's *metteur-en-scène*, but the basic meaning is the same. We cannot identify one locust film-maker from another, and we cannot find any constant styles and themes in their films. Just like the *metteur-en-scène,* the locust film-maker does not add anything of herself to the film, no personality is evident.

As well as marking out the one set of films (or film-makers) from another, *photogénie* also marks out one set of viewers from another,

> *photogénie* is a term mobilised to demarcate one set of viewers – those able to 'see' – from others. In this context it functions like a mark of distinction conferred by a special set of viewers upon film-makers, differentiating those who are qualified to make cinema and so are entitled to a position of cultural power from those who merely manufacture cinema, however professionally ... *Photogénie* is presented as the distinguishing characteristic of cinema, but its effect is to institute demarcations between viewers by differentiating those who are 'sensitive' from those who are not.

> Willemen, 1994, pp.126-127

The problem here is that *photogénie* appears to be an elitist concept. However, provided that one can become aesthetically sensitised, i.e., that the sensitivity is learned and not innate, it cannot be condemned outright as being elitist. And Epstein certainly thinks that those who are insensitive to *photogénie* can learn to see it,

> 'Just as there are people insensitive to music, so there are those – in even greater number – insensitive to *photogénie.*' And Epstein immediately adds: 'For the moment at least', implying that this sensitivity is learned rather than innate.

<div align="right">Willemen, 1994, p.127</div>

III. *Photogénie* and significant form

An interesting parallel to *photogénie* can be found in the work of the Art critic, Clive Bell. Although it is highly unlikely that Epstein was aware of Bell's work, there are some interesting parallels between the two, and a shared philosophical heritage. The work of Bell that is of interest to us is contained within his book *Art. Art* was published in 1914, just five years before Gance's *J'accuse* began the Impressionist movement, and was intended by Bell primarily to be a defence of the French post-Impressionist artist, Paul Cezanne, whose work, Bell thought, was not being given the proper attention. Nigel Warburton (2003, p.13) notes that Bell's ideas bear a close resemblance to the aesthetic ideas of Arthur Schopenhauer, and this is a particularly striking factor because according to Bordwell (1974, p.97) and Aitken (2001, p.81) the Impressionist film-makers were influenced by the French Symbolists, whose Schopenhauerian heritage is noted by both A. G. Lehmann (1968, pp.55-67) and Doss-Davezac (1996, pp.249-276). Thus we have two strands of thought, Bell's and Epstein's, expressed within a similar time period, both concerned with the French

artistic avant-garde, and both with a shared, if somewhat diffuse, Schopenharian heritage.

Bell contended that when we view works of visual art we experience an aesthetic emotion. This emotion is not experienced in the presence of all visual works, but only in some of them. True works of art produce the aesthetic emotion, and anything that does not produce this emotion is not art. The aesthetic emotion is not experienced by everyone, but only by "sensitive people … capable of feeling it," (Bell, 1992, p.113) and the emotion is not precisely the same for every work of art, but is always a recognisably similar kind of emotion. The reason that we experience the aesthetic emotion is due to the presence of significant form in those visual works. Bell tells us that in the work of art,

> lines and colours combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms, stir our aesthetic emotions. These relations and combinations of lines and colours, these aesthetically moving forms I call 'Significant Form'; and 'Significant Form' is the one quality common to all words of visual art.
>
> Bell, 1992, p.113

Thus we may conclude that the concept of significant form traces its experiential origin back to the aesthetic emotion, for as Bell says, "[t]he starting point for all systems of aesthetics must be the personal experience of a peculiar emotion." (Bell, 1992, p.113) What Bell calls significant form in visual art, Epstein calls *photogénie* in film, and the presence of either raises the work in which it exists to the highest level.

What Bell's ideas illustrate is the fact that we will not be able to understand our concept via pure reason alone. This view is supported by Aitken, who writes that the

concept of *photogénie* is, "based on the premise that the aesthetic experience of *photogénie* … [is] in some sense, beyond rational explication." (Aitken, 2001, p.83) Certainly, we must understand what Epstein and other theorists said about *photogénie,* but ultimately its meaning is not something that can be known except through experience*,* and this is what Epstein meant when he said that, "*photogénie* … was not discovered by deliberate method." (Epstein, in: Abel, 1988b, p.67) *Photogénie* is not knowable *a priori,* it is only knowable *a posteriori.* We experience shots as being photogenic when we experience the aesthetic emotion, and we discover the *photogénies* not through thought, but through experimentation.

This concludes our discussion of the way that *photogénie* was intended as a legitimising quality of cinema. As we have seen, it functioned to make cinema an art, and to allow that certain directors could be artists, and it operated in a manner similar to Bell's theory of significant form. Nevertheless, the most important aspect of *photogénie* is its aesthetic aspect, and that is what will occupy us during the next two chapters of this dissertation.

Chapter Three

The aesthetic aspects of *photogénie*

We have seen the context within which *photogénie* exists, and we have discussed the cultural significance of the term. What we need to do now is look at the aesthetic meaning of the term. What kinds of films, or shots or sequences within films, are photogenic? What would we describe as an instance of *photogénie?* What kind of aesthetic phenomena does it describe? These are the key questions to ask at this point. However, any attempt to pin down *photogénie* leads us instantly into a problem; the fact that *photogénie* appears to be, as many commentators have pointed out, a somewhat elusive concept.

> *Photogénie* was ... the ineffable quintessence that differentiated the magic of cinema from the other arts.
>
> Stam, 2000, p.34

> the concept of *photogénie* ... [is] that sublime, indefinable, ineffable quality given by film to the objects and people within it (and found most readily in close-ups and slow-motion).
>
> Frampton, 2006, p.52

> For the impressionists, *photogénie* was an elusive and ineffable phenomenon, which could not be rationally conceptualised, as Louis Delluc made clear when he asserted that, in this case, 'Explanations here are out of place.'
>
> Aitken, 2001 p.83

Importantly though, Aitken goes on to explain that *photogénie,*

> has been harshly criticised within much recent film theory, which has regarded ... [it] as unnecessarily 'mystical', and as antithetical to the more rationalist paradigm of film theory that has dominated film studies since the 1960s. However, in many respects

photogénie remains a concept which has often been poorly understood within this dominant paradigm.

<div align="right">Aitken, 2001 p.83</div>

Additionally, some commentators have found *photogénie* to be less ineffable than others. Stuart Liebman notes that "[i]n general … *photogénie* refers to the rhythmic relationships visible in plastic forms moving in time." (Liebman, 1983, p.12) Deleuze tells us that, "Photogeny is the image as it is 'majored' [*majorée*] by movement." (Deleuze, 1986, p.45) Thompson & Bordwell say that, "*photogénie* is created by the properties of the camera: framing isolates objects from their environment, black-and-white film stock further transforms their appearance, special optical effects further change them, and so on. By such means … the cinema gives us access to a realm beyond everyday experience" (Thompson & Bordwell, 2003, p.91) And this view is shared by Abel, who states that *photogénie*, "assumed that the 'real' was transformed by the camera/screen, which, without eliminating that 'realness', changed it into something radically new … the effect of *photogénie* was singular: to make us *see ordinary things* as they had never been seen before." (Abel, 1988a, p.110)

In order to fully articulate the aesthetic meaning of *photogénie* we will need to construct our enquiry carefully. This is because of something that was noted earlier, the fact that there is not one *photogénie,* but many. Through a careful examination of Epstein's work on the subject, we are able to isolate four main types of *photogénie,* each of which we will analyse in detail. These *photogénies* are all concerned with mobility and its depiction via: (1) the close-up; (2) camera position & camera movement; (3) rhythm, and; (4) temporality. There is also a fifth type of *photogénie*, not related to mobility, which is the *photogénie* of character. We will discuss these

photogénies in relation both to Epstein's theoretical writings and to two of his films, *Cœur fidèle/A Faithful Heart, 1923,* and *Le Tempestaire/The Tempest, Poem on the Sea, 1947.* However, prior to this we will need to say something about the kinds of films that can accommodate *photogénie.*

I. The narrative pre-conditions for *photogénie*

Not all films are able to incorporate *photogénie.* The main reason for a lack of *photogénie* in films is due to its inability to exist within a highly plot driven film. This is discussed by Epstein in *The Senses I (b)* where he rejects the notion of cinema as filmed theatre, and argues that cinema should marginalise narrative and relegate plot and story to the periphery of the medium. Epstein's is an interesting position because he is still interested in human drama and emotion, so he requires a minimal narrative in order to achieve the emotional drama, but he does not want to create the drama from the plot. Thus he can side neither with mainstream directors such as Louis Feuillade, whose films were highly plot driven, and nor with the advocates of *cinéma pur,* such as Marcel Duchamp, Man Ray or Fernand Léger, as this would mean working entirely without plot.

Epstein's rejection of narrative as the central element of cinema is important, because it is intricately bound up with his notion of *photogénie.* It is also important because it goes some way to explaining how Epstein created some very modern works of cinema in the late silent-era, works that seem much more at home alongside post-World War II European cinema.

In *The Senses I (b)* Epstein explains that because stories do not exist in life, they have no place in cinema.

> The cinema is true; a story is false.
>
> There are no stories, there never have been stories. There are only situations, having neither head not tail; without beginning, middle or end.
>
> I want films in which not so much nothing as nothing very much happens.
>
> Yes, there are impurities [in cinema]: literature, plot and wit, incompatible accessories
>
> Epstein, in: Abel, 1988a, pp.242-245

Regarding this approach to narrative, Stam tells us that Epstein was, "Anticipating the existential scepticism of Sartre's *La Nausée* [when he] called cinematic stories 'lies'" (Stam, 2000, p.37) However, it needs to be maintained that although Epstein was rejecting the artificiality of narrative and plot, he was not rejecting drama and emotion in the cinema. Epstein believed that narrative served only to strangle the drama and emotion in cinema, the proper place for narrative was the theatre and the novel, and it was within these media that such devices should be dominant. The issue for Epstein is that if narrative is allowed to be dominant in cinema it suppresses what is truly cinematic, i.e, *photogénie*. By rejecting neatly developed stories of the classical *equilibrium > disruption > resolution* type, and preferring what we would now consider to be an interest in naturally arising situations or spontaneous encounters, the film-maker creates the space for moments of *photogénie* that would otherwise be lost. Epstein's attitude towards narrative is shared by René Clair, who writes that, "[a]ll we ask of a plot is to supply us with subjects for visual emotion, and to hold our attention." (Clair, in: Abel, 1988a, p.303)

Both of Epstein's films that we will discuss in this chapter follow a photogenically sympathetic approach to narrative. They both involve a simple, minimal plot, a small number of characters, and ambiguities and ellipses that require a more active spectator. The first film that we will discuss, *Cœur fidèle*, involves three primary characters, Marie, Petit Paul, and Jean. Marie is a downtrodden young woman who is forced to work in the bar owned by her adoptive parents. Petit Paul, a local rogue with a penchant for violence and drunkenness, desires Marie, but she is afraid of him. Marie is in love with Jean, whom she has to see secretly, as her parents want her to marry Petit Paul. Jean confronts Marie's parents and confesses his desire to marry her, but he is forced to leave by Petit Paul and his gang. When he finally catches up with Marie and Petit Paul at a fairground a fight breaks out between Jean and Petit Paul. The fight ends when Jean accidentally stabs a police officer with Petit Paul's knife. Petit Paul runs off, but Jean is imprisoned. When Jean is released from prison he seeks out Marie, but finds that she and Petit Paul are married and have a child. Petit Paul, drunk and armed, is told that Marie and Jean are once again lovers. He returns home to find Marie and Jean together. Petit Paul takes a pistol from his pocket and is immediately tackled by Jean. The pistol falls to the floor and is retrieved by Marie's crippled neighbour, who shoots and kills Petit Paul. An epilogue reveals an ambiguous ending.

We can see from this brief outline a very simple story that was crafted not for its narrative possibilities, but for the emotional and photogenic possibilities that such a tale could open up. René Clair described its plot as "banal, a sort of *Broken Blossoms* seen through French eyes." (Clair, in: Abel, 1988, p.303) Epstein even "confessed to a

group of students ... that he had written [the] scenario in a single night" (Abel, 1984, p.359-60) Regarding the simplicity of the story, Epstein gave two reasons for his choice,

> First of all, to win the confidence of those, still so numerous, who believe that only the lowest melodrama can interest the public ...
> The second reason which decided me on this story is that, on the whole, I would be able to conceive a melodrama so stripped of all the conventions ordinarily attached to the genre, so sober, so simple, that it might approach the nobility and excellence of tragedy. And in fact, by means of an insistent, studied, concentrated banality, I have made a rather strange film that is a melodrama in appearance only.

> Epstein, in: Abel, 1984, p.360

The plot of *Cœur fidèle* is photogenically sympathetic because it does not require that every shot be chosen in order to advance the plot or to develop the characters' motivation. Many of the shots presented in *Cœur fidèle* have little to do with advancing the narrative, and the best sequences exist as departures from the narrative space into the emotional space.

Our second film, *Le Tempestaire,* is a twenty-two minute short film, that was "Epstein's last masterpiece ... the most masterly, the richest and simplest. Striking in its profound poetry, its human quality and the exquisite balance of its compositions." (Langlois, quoted in: Stein, 2005) Like *Cœur fidèle*, it has a very simple narrative. Shot on location in Belle Île, Brittany, the film tells the story of a woman whose husband is about to leave the island to go fishing for sardines. The woman is concerned, as she believes that omens have portended a tragic outcome, but her husband leaves anyway. During his absence the weather changes and a storm breaks. The woman seeks out the Tempest Master, a man who has the power to calm the seas and subdue the storm. The Tempest Master successfully calms the storm using a glass globe, but

as the storm is finally calmed the globe falls to the floor and is broken. Nevertheless, the weather is now calm and the woman's husband has returned unharmed.

Like *Cœur fidèle,* Epstein devises a narrative for *Le Tempestaire* that is not concerned with plot details and complex character motivation, but with the emotions of the central character, the woman. However, one could argue that the central character of the film is in fact not the woman, but the sea, and that the narrative is composed in order that the sea becomes the main source of dramatic action. When we discuss the *photogénie* of character later on, we will discuss this idea in more depth, but for the moment we need to turn our attention to the first four *photogénies.*

II. The four *photogénies* (1): the close-up

The ultimate theme that binds together the four *photogénies* is mobility, and here we will pay particular attention to the way that mobility relates to the close-up. In *Magnification,* Epstein discusses the relationship of *photogénie* to the close-up and movement: both play an important part in the creation of a moment of *photogénie.* He also tells us what *photogénie* is not when he disassociates it from the picturesque, and this is a useful distinction for Epstein to have made because it would be all too easy for us to equate the two. Although he does not define the term, it is reasonable to say that he associates the picturesque with images of landscapes and sunsets that possess a banal kind of beauty. Epstein tells us that, "[t]he picturesque in cinema is zero. … [p]icturesque and photogenic coincide only by chance. All the worthless film shot near the Promenade des Anglais [in Nice] proceed from this confusion. Their sunsets are

further proof of this." (Epstein, in: Abel, 1988a, p.238) The photogenic does not become so purely because of the visual qualities of the shot, and it is only through coincidence that the picturesque is sometimes photogenic. Although Epstein does not like the standard conception of the picturesque landscape, he does grant that a moving shot of the landscape can be photogenic. The 'worthless film' shot in Nice must have all been static because

> the landscape's dance' is photogenic. Through the windows of a train or a ship's porthole, the world acquires a new, specifically cinematic vivacity. A road is a road, but the ground which flees under the four beating hearts of an automobile's belly transports me.
>
> Epstein, in: Abel, 1988a, p.237

If the photogenic is not simply a beautiful image then what is it? Epstein first proceeds by noting that *photogénie* is closely related to close-ups which depict movement and is not something that can be sustained for more than a short period of time. Rather, it is something that appears only for brief moments.

Epstein also notes the importance of the close-up, and its relationship to *photogénie,*

> The close-up is the soul of the cinema. It can be brief because the value of the photogenic is measured in seconds. If it is too long, I don't find continuous pleasure in it. Intermittent paroxysms affect me the way that needles do. Until now, I have never seen an entire minute of pure *photogénie*. Therefore one must admit that the photogenic is like a spark that appears in fits and starts.
>
> I have never understood motionless close-ups. They sacrifice their essence, which is movement.
>
> The close-up, the keystone of the cinema, is the maximum expression of this *photogénie* of movement. When static it verges on contradiction.
>
> Epstein, in: Abel, 1988a, p.236

The close-up intensifies and magnifies feelings and emotions, it limits and directs our attention. One of Epstein's most vivid accounts of the power of the close-up concerns the way in which subtle movements of the face are revealed in a close-up.

> Muscular preambles ripple beneath the skin. Shadows shift, tremble, hesitate. Something is being decided. A breeze of emotion underlines the mouth with clouds. The orography of the face vacillates. Seismic shocks begin. Capillary wrinkles try to split the fault. A wave carries them away. Crescendo. A muscle bridles. The lip is laced with tics like a theater curtain. Everything is movement, imbalance, crisis.

<div align="right">Epstein, in Abel: 1988a, p.235</div>

The close-up is of importance because it brings us into an unusual proximity with the world. It also reveals movement that might otherwise be hidden. Consider what we might have missed if the shot was a medium shot or a long shot. All those delicate movements would be lost. The close-up is vital to Epstein, not because it is important in its own right, but because of its ability to reveal movement. It is not the close-up *per se* that is photogenic, but the movement revealed in the close-up.

Close-ups in *Cœur Fidèle*

The preceding selection of stills from *Cœur fidèle* reveals much about Epstein's use of the close-up. If we look at Louis Feuillade's *Judex, 1917,* we find that during the thirty minute prologue the closest shot that Feuillade uses is just somewhere short of a medium close shot[9]. As the following two shots illustrate, both of which are the closest shots from *Judex's* prologue, Feuillade's camera is never as intimate as Epstein's.

Close-ups of Moralés and Diana Monti from *Judex*

Epstein does not use close-ups in a haphazard way in *Cœur Fidèle,* rather there is a clear theme running through his most intimate and expressive camerawork. Faces are certainly the predominant subjects for the close-up, but hands and bottles are also key subjects. These three subjects are all present in the seven shot sequence that occurs between the last of the opening credits and the first intertitle. The sequence lasts for approximately forty seconds and is arranged as a set of rhythmically alternating long and short shots[10]. The three short shots are all extreme close-ups of Marie, and although they could be cut-ins that depict the expression on her face as she goes about her work in the tavern, Epstein presents them in such a was to suggest that they are not necessarily temporally or spatially contiguous with the other shots in the sequence. Epstein's aim with these opening three close-ups of Marie is to not to present them as shots from a particular physical location within the story, rather it is to present them as shots that show us how she is feeling, rather than what she is

doing. The shots suggest to us that she is emotionally disconnected from the physical tasks that she is performing. The longer shots all show someone working in a tavern, cleaning a table, washing a glass and picking up a bottle, pouring a drink from a bottle, but as the shots are close shots all we see of the person are their arms and hands. This separation of the hands from the face deepens this idea of emotional disconnectedness. Only the last shot in the sequence ties up the face and hands of the previous six shots. Additionally, the longer shots all contain a good deal of movement, whereas the short shots of Marie contain only the slightest movements of her face. In this sequence "the film presents Marie as a divided character – her doing separate from her seeing, her body separate from her consciousness." (Abel, 1984, p.361)

The seven-shot opening sequence from *Cœur Fidèle*

As well as making frequent use of close-ups, Epstein enhances the effect of some of the close-ups by using superimpositions and distortions, and, unusually, in a number of shots he has the actor looking straight at, or almost straight at, the camera. In a significant number of the close-ups of Marie, her face is distorted or obscured in some way. Early on in the film she is seen from behind glass, a technique that visually suggests her sense of being unable to escape her miserable life in the tavern. Her

inability to escape her environment is made more acute by the fact that the tavern is located by the harbour, a place of constant arrivals and departures. One of close-ups places Marie both behind glass and underneath a superimposed shot of the flotsam strewn water from the harbour. This close-up suggests that rather than seeing the ships in the harbour as a means of escape, Marie's sees and identifies with the flotsam in the harbour, itself trapped by the tides and currents and unable to escape. Marie is, "so paralyzed by her environment, that she can imagine nothing other. The possibility of escape turns into residue, waste – the image of flotsam superimposed briefly over her expressionless face." (Abel, 1984, p.362)

Close-ups of Marie behind glass and the amongst the flotsam from the harbour

In all the close-ups of Marie from the early part of the film, especially those in which she is depicted working in the tavern or with Petit Paul, her expression is of a resigned sadness. We see her as both desperate to escape but completely unable to do so. What is most keenly felt in these often very brief close-ups is the ability of Gina Manès (the actor who plays Marie) to convey an immediate sense of Marie's tragic existence; her imprisonment, extreme sadness and complete disconnectedness from her physical surroundings. In many ways these close-ups of Marie seem to have been designed by Epstein and Manès to consciously resemble the expressions of female subjects in the drawings and paintings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti
Alexa Wilding (1868), Alexa Wilding (1873), Beatrice (1879), Blanzifiore (1873), Bruna Brunelleschi (1878)
La Donna della Finestra (1879), La Pia de' Tolomei (1868-80), Proserpine (1871-82), The Day Dream (1880)

A key moment in *Cœur Fidèle* is Epstein's shot/reverse-shot of Marie as she checks her reflection in the mirror. We see Marie in a close shot, and then in a much closer over-the-shoulder shot. In this shot we see Marie as she sees herself. But the point of the over-the-shoulder close-up is to show us that she cannot see herself fully in the chipped and worn fragment of mirror that she holds up. This shot reinforces the sense of personal discontinuity that opened the film. Marie, literally and figuratively, cannot see herself. Yet the mirror, because it is a broken and worn fragment, actually reflects a true image of Marie. It is, of course, not the mirror that is incomplete, but Marie. Other close-ups of Marie see her superimposed against shots of the ocean and waves. These examples are of Jean's emotional PoV shots. As he remembers her, he sees her face in the water and in the waves. Jean's emotional PoV shots of Marie are presented as alternatives to many of the other close-ups of Marie. Whereas beforehand she is seen trapped behind glass, within the harbour's flotsam, or reflected in a fragment of mirror, Jean sees her in the context of the ocean and in the waves, connoting ideas of freedom and escape, but also of mystery, depth, turbulence and, perhaps, danger. In many ways seas and oceans are the perfect photogenic subject for Epstein, as they are

continually in motion, often in an organic rhythmic motion: the regular rising and falling of waves, the movement of the tides, the ripples on the surface caused by the wind. Water is a frequent subject in many of Epstein's films, although he is not the only film-maker to appreciate its photogenic qualities

Water is fantastically photogenic. But of course, the world is four-fifths water, we're all born in amniotic fluid, water is a big cleansing medium whether it's literal or metaphorical … it literally is the oil of life, it is the blood of life, which splashes, dribbles, washes, roars – it's a great friend and a terrifying enemy, it has all those significances.

Peter Greenaway, quoted in Lawrence, 1997, p.98

Marie checks her reflection in her mirror   Marie superimposed against the ocean and waves

A number of Epstein's shots in *Cœur Fidèle* are of characters looking straight at the camera. This in itself is an unusual shot for 1923, but in a close-up it is especially unusual and startling. Epstein's desired effect is clearly to involve the spectator in the drama, and with many of the direct-to-camera close-ups we can read the shots quite straightforwardly, but a number of these shots are more complex. Petit Paul's direct-to-camera close-ups in the 'fight' sequence (see below) are presented as Jean's PoV shots, and they are there to create in the audience the sense of menace and intimidation that Jean feels. Epstein uses this shot four times in the sequence, each time with Petit Paul appearing larger in the frame. The effect works well and the shot is easily readable by the audience.

Jean's PoV of Petit Paul

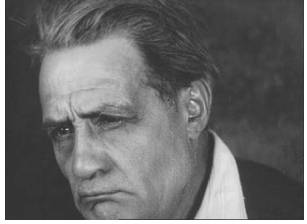However, how do we read the following this shot?

Petit Paul at the fairground

The shot of Petit Paul would make sense if it were Marie's PoV, but as she is sitting at Petit Paul's side it cannot be. It is not anyone's PoV. This seems to be a shot in which the character's gaze is intended purely for the audience. Petit Paul, having taken Marie from Jean, is taunting the audience. Whilst Marie takes no enjoyment from the fairground, Petit Paul's enjoyment seems all the more excessive: his pleasure is both in his own enjoyment at the fairground and at being the cause of Marie's suffering. Epstein increases the audience's dislike of Petit Paul by including the shot of Petit Paul looking at us, smiling defiantly and unrepentantly, almost goading us.

The most sustained use of the photogenic close-up in *Cœur Fidèle* comes from the 'fight' sequence, which is detailed in the table below. The sequence, which includes twenty-nine separate shots, starts with a medium full shot, cuts to a medium close shot, and cuts back to a medium shot. Next there is a continuous sequence of twenty-five medium or extreme close-ups, of which nineteen are close-ups of faces, five of

fists, and one of a hand grasping a bottle. The shots are all very short, with only two running longer than one-and-a-half seconds long, and as we shall note in more detail later, there is a clear rhythm to the sequence, which is most evident between shots eight and twenty-four. The sequence ends with slightly wider version of the first shot. The effect that Epstein's achieves here is to convey both the sense of menace that comes from Petit Paul and his friends, and the sense of anxiety and trepidation felt by Jean.

The 'Fight' Sequence from *Cœur Fidèle*					
Shot #	Shot Type	Length in Seconds [11]	Shot Content	Shot Description	Frame
1	MFS	8	Jean, Petit Paul, Marie, Marie's father & Petit Paul's three friends.	Jean is talking to Marie's father. Petit Paul and his friends walk over to their table. Jean stands up to confront Petit Paul.	
2	MCS	2	Marie.	Looks apprehensive.	
3	MS	25.5	Jean, Petit Paul, Marie's father & Petit Paul's friends.	A closer reverse angle shot from on the MFS. Petit Paul squares up to Jean. Two of Petit Paul's three friends enter the frame and surround Jean.	

4	FCU	2.5	Petit Paul.	Looks straight on at the camera, looking at Jean.	
5	MCU	2.5	Jean.	Turns his head away from Petit Paul (screen right) to look at one of Petit Paul's friends (screen left).	
6	MCU	1	Petit Paul.	Moves in towards the camera, towards Jean.	
7	MCU	1.25	Jean.	Turns head back rapidly to look at Petit Paul (screen right).	
8	MCU	1	Petit Paul.	Moves in further towards the camera.	
9	MCU	0.4	Jean.	Looking screen right at Petit Paul.	
10	MCU	1.5	Marie's Father.	Looking screen left at Jean.	

11	MCU	0.5	Jean.	Looking screen right at Petit Paul.	
12	MCU	1.25	Petit Paul's Friend #1.	Looking screen left at Jean.	
13	MCU	0.75	Jean.	Turns heads and eyes to look screen left.	
14	MCU	1.25	Petit Paul's Friend #2.	Looking screen right at Jean.	
15	MCU	0.5	Jean.	Continues movement of head to look screen left.	
16	MCU	1.25	Marie.	Looking downwards.	
17	MCU	0.5	Jean.	Continues movement of head.	

18	CS	1.25	Fists.	Pair of fists being clenched.	
19	ECU	0.4	Petit Paul.	Looks straight into the frame.	
20	WCU	1.25	Bottle.	Bottle being grasped by the neck.	
21	MCU	0.4	Petit Paul's Friend #1.	Looking screen left at Jean.	
22	ECU	1.2	Fist.	A fist, filling the whole frame.	
23	MCU	0.4	Petit Paul's Friend #2.	Looking screen right at Jean.	
24	CS	1.25	Fist.	Clenched fist being put into pocket.	

25	MCU	1.2	Marie.	Looking terrified.	
26	FCU	0.75	Fist.		
27	ECU	0.75	Fist.	A fist, filling the whole frame.	
28	MCU	1.5	Marie.	Looking terrified.	
29	FS	16	Jean, Petit Paul, Marie, Marie's father & Petit Paul's friends.	Back to a slightly wider version of the first shot. Jean, realising that he cannot win, leaves the tavern.	

What we see in the 'fight' sequence is the ability of the close-up to convey the emotional drama of a situation with precision and immediacy. There is almost no narrative in the sequence, and between shots four and twenty-eight, practically nothing happens. Yet in these twenty-five close-ups a complete emotional drama is played out without the use of dialogue or intertitles. Although we are positioned outside the dramatic space when we see Jean, the effect of the three initial direct-to-camera close-ups of Petit Paul is to place us inside the space, and, emotionally, in harms way. We sense that Petit Paul is threatening us, and that the fists and the bottle

could strike us. Because the sequence is filmed in entirely in close-ups, the proximity of these faces and fists appear to be our perceptions, rather than Jean's. This effect would be broken were Epstein to cut to a wide shot at any point, and he does not do this until Jean has backed down and lost his fight for Marie. The close-ups also gain their photogenic power from the tiny amounts of movement evident in the shots. The fists twitch and clench slightly, the bottle is lifted, Petit Paul moves slightly forward. In other close-ups it may be the hair being blown slightly in the breeze, or the rolling of the sea in the background that adds movement to the close-up, but always the close-up contains slight and subtle movements. The close-up also appears on screen only very briefly, usually somewhere between half and two-and-a-half seconds, because, "the value of the photogenic is measured in seconds … the photogenic is like a spark that appears in fits and starts". (Epstein, in: Abel, 1988a, p.236)

III. The four *photogénies* (2): camera position & camera movement

In his article, *On Certain Characteristics of Photogénie,* one of the most interesting things that Epstein offers is a definition of the term,

> What is *photogénie?* I would describe as photogenic any aspect of things, beings or souls whose moral character is enhanced by filmic reproduction. And any aspect not enhanced by filmic reproduction is not photogenic, plays no part in the art of cinema.
>
> Epstein, in: Abel, 1988a, p.314

And he later clarifies this definition by adding,

> I now specify: only mobile aspects of the world, of things and souls, may see their moral value increased by filmic reproduction. This mobility should be understood in the widest sense, implying all directions perceptible to the mind.

<div align="right">Epstein, in: Abel, 1988a, p.315</div>

Epstein further develops his ideas about mobility in, *The Cinema Continues,* where he discusses the "recreation of movement" something which he regarded as the "essential function of cinema." (Epstein, in: Abel, 1988b, p.66) In the article, Epstein makes some explicit references to the ways in which camera mobility might be achieved.

> It was and still is very important to set the camera free in the extreme: to place the automatic camera in footballs launched in rockets, on the back of a galloping horse, on buoys during a storm; to crouch with it in the cellar, to take it up to the ceiling heights. It doesn't matter that these virtuoso positions may seem excessive the first ten times; the eleventh time we understand how necessary and yet insufficient they are. Thanks to them, and even before the revelations of three-dimensional cinematography to come, we experience the new sensation of exactly what hills, trees and faces are in space.

<div align="right">Epstein, in : Abel, 1988b, p.64</div>

Epstein can only have been thinking of Gance's, *Napoléon vu par Abel Gance, 1927,* when he wrote these lines, as these are some of the techniques deployed by Gance in the film. What Gance achieves in terms of camera mobility in *Napoléon* is technically innovative, and has been detailed by Kevin Brownlow[12]. Brownlow even notes that Gance shot some colour sequences in 3-D, and Epstein's mention of 3-D cinematography suggests that he may have seen these sequences, or may have discussed them with Gance. What is useful in the Epstein quote is, for the first time, a tangible sense of what kind of visual impression Epstein was thinking about when he talks about mobility, and it is clear that he wants film-makers to use the camera in extreme ways in order to make us see the world afresh. Had he been writing about

painting, he would have told his readers to lash themselves to the mast of a tall ship in the manner of J.M.W. Turner. Epstein was certainly thinking about Gance when he wrote about both camera mobility and rhythmic montage editing (which we will discuss later), but one place where he may have been more critical of Gance would have been for his overdependence on plot.

Epstein's passion is clearly for the excessive and experimental ways that directors like Gance used the camera in the 1920s, and he would have been extremely interested in the ways in which camera movements have become perfected today (the smooth pans, tilts, tracks, etc, that have been perfected by highly skilled operators) and especially in the way that computers can precisely control complex and sophisticated movement via the kind of motion control rigs that were used in Sean Dower's *Automaton, 2006*[13]. Other developments that allowed for greater expression of movement, such as the SpaceCam and the Steadicam would also have appealed greatly to him. Both of these were used by Stanley Kubrick in *The Shining, 1980,* in the opening sequence in which the audience fly over the landscape and follow Jack Torrence's car as he drives up to the Overlook, and also within the hotel as we follow Danny as he rides through the hotel corridors on this tricycle.

Epstein tells us that the recreation of movement is photogenic, all the more so when one sets the camera free (from its tripod) and allows the audience to experience the world from fresh and unusual perspectives. The sequence in *Cœur Fidèle* in which Epstein's camera is at its freest and most expressive is the fairground sequence, and we will study this sequence in detail in order to learn more about Epstein's camerawork.

The fairground sequence is split into three parts, or, to use a musical analogy, three movements. The first movement begins when Jean seeks out Marie shortly after the 'fight' sequence. He is told by an old woman that she has gone, and an intertitle reads *"– Elle est partie … partie …"*. The shot then cuts to Marie and Petit Paul for the first fairground sequence. Unusually, the first movement ends with a cut back to Jean and the old woman, a move which could signal the fact that the event took place in Jean's imagination, but which does not seem to. The old woman then says to him *"– Elle est partie … avec Petit Paul."* This indicates that only a few seconds have passed for Jean, but a few minutes have passed in the film. This temporal mismatch would normally reinforce the idea that the first movement happened in Jean's imagination, but the fact that the events in all three movements correspond does not support such a reading. Thus we must conclude that we have simply moved back both spatially and temporally from the fairground to Jean and the old woman. The second movement opens with a white iris out, and ends with a fade to white, and shows Petit Paul and Marie at the fairground. This is the movement which interests us as regards Epstein's camerawork, and we shall say more about it below. The third movement opens with Jean walking to the fairground to confront Petit Paul. Shots of Marie and Petit Paul at the fairground are intercut with shots of Jean walking to the fairground and looking for them. This movement ends and a coda begins as Jean finally spies Marie and Petit Paul as they leave the fairground.

The entire fairground movement is interesting for its rhythmic construction, and we shall say more about this later; for the moment we are interested in the second

movement, and how Epstein uses the camera to recreate mobility and to create

moments of *photogénie.*

The second fairground movement from *Cœur fidèle*

The second fairground movement contains forty-nine shots, and only two of these shots feature both a static camera and a static subject (shots sixteen and thirty one). The rest of the shots can be grouped into three different types. The first type is the static shot of a moving subject, the second is a moving shot of a static subject. The third type contains both a moving subject and a moving camera, but in these shots the movement is restrained by the fact that both the subject and the camera move at the same speed and trajectory: thus the subject does not appear to be moving in relation to the camera, and the sense of movement comes from the burred and fast moving background. Although we might have imagined that Epstein would have desired an excess of movement, the result of this controlled use of camera and subject is much more effective in conveying a sense of mobility. Just as Epstein was interested in the close-up because it directed and intensified our attention, so his recording of movement seeks the same aim. In a shot which contains only one moving element, our attention will immediately be drawn to the specific movement, whereas in a shot that contains an excess of movement we will apprehend movement only in a very general sense. It is clear from the fairground sequence that Epstein is much more interested in focussing our attention on a specific movement, which can then be complimented with a similar movement or contrasted with a different or opposing one. By doing this he achieves a photogenically constructed sequence.

The major source of movement in the second fairground sequence is the circular anti-clockwise movement of the aeroplane carousel. This is occasionally contrasted with the vertical arcs of the swinging boats, and with the overhead shot of the wheels feeding the punched sheets of music into the pipe organ. As well as showing Marie and Petit Paul on the aeroplane carousel, Epstein also includes PoV shots looking out

at the crowds and in to people standing at the centre. The outward looking PoV shots compliment the anti-clockwise movement of the aeroplane carousel as the camera is moving to the left, whereas the inward looking PoV shots disrupt the movement as the camera is now moving to the right. On three occasions (shots twenty-three, twenty-five and thirty-nine) Epstein uses a reverse direction (to the right) outward facing PoV, a shot which is a visual impossibility, but which seems to be linked to Marie on all three occasions, signalling her resistance to, or refusal, of Petit Paul. On each occasion the reverse-direction shot is placed immediately after a shot of Petit Paul attempting to kiss Marie. The sudden change of direction is strange and disconcerting for the audience, but conveys Marie's sense of displeasure.

The sequence gains its energy from Epstein's concentration on limited sources of movement, and from the contrasting sources and directions of movement. With the exception of the final shot, no one shot in particular contains an excess of movement, but the number of shots and the contrasting movements within them does create an overwhelming sense of movement. Part of the purpose of the sequence is to convey to the audience Marie's perceptions of being at the fairground with Petit Paul. But part of Epstein's purpose is to say something about life in general, to visualise the world as a collection of indistinct bodies in constant motion. When we perceive, the primary focus of our perception is the object itself, distinct from other objects and from its own movement. What Epstein is trying to do with this sequence, especially in the shorter shots, is not to present the individual objects, but the sense of movement itself as it exists distinct from the object.

IV. The four *photogénies* (3): rhythm

The third of the *photogénies* that we will discuss is rhythm. In *The Senses I (b),* Epstein notes the importance of rhythm and the role it plays in creating the space for *photogénie*; but here Epstein is not so much interested in rhythm created through an Eistensteinian type montage (although after he has seen Gance's *La roue, 1922,* he will be), but of the spontaneous rhythms present in everyday life.

> One day, for instance, while the lions, tigers, bears, and antelopes at Regent's Park Zoo were walking or eating their food at 88 movements a minute, soldiers were walking on lawns at 88 paces a minute, the leopards and pumas were walking at 132, in 3/2 rhythm, *do-so,* in other words, and children were running at 116, in 3/4 rhythm, *do-fa.*

Epstein, in: Abel, 1988a, p.245

Epstein goes on to note what effect this can have on cinema

> It is known that crowd scenes in the cinema produce a rhythmic, poetic, photogenic effect when there is a real, actively thinking crowd involved. The reason is that the cinema can pick this cadence up better than the human eye and by other means; it can record this fundamental rhythm and its harmonics.

Epstein, in: Abel, 1988a, p.245

Thus we see that not only is Epstein interested in the film avoiding a strong narrative which would be at odds with the way that everyday life is, but he also wants the film-maker to be able to respond to the coincidental rhythms present in everyday life. There is a sense that it is not through a deliberate exaggeration of the everyday that Epstein's art is created, but simply through paying attention to what occurs naturally, the chance encounters and synchronicities.

In *On Certain Characteristics of Photogénie* Epstein discusses an example of what he believes to be an almost perfect film sequence, Abel Gance's accelerated montage sequence of the train crash in *La roue*. Epstein describes this sequence as comprising, "the most classic sentences yet written in the language of cinema … because in these images the most clearly defined role is played by its variations." (Epstein, in: Abel, p.316) What is particularly interesting about Epstein's praise for this sequence in *La roue* is that beforehand the inference drawn from Epstein's writings was that the rhythmic variations might be considered more photogenic if they were contained in a single shot. Now it seems that Epstein is allowing more space for montage to be photogenic. Why might this be? The answer is that *La roue* was such an important film, and had such an effect on Epstein that it caused him to revise and refine his idea of rhythmic *photogénie.* Jean Cocteau is often quoted as saying that 'there is cinema before and after La Roue as there is painting before and after Picasso'[14] and Gance has suggested that it was his achievements in *La roue* that inspired, amongst others, Sergei Eisenstein,

> If people had followed me, the cinema would have made rapid progress. There is one man who did follow me, actually two. First, Eisenstein, who came to see me twice and who told me it was from *La Roue* that he learned his art. Then Kurosawa, who was also very enthusiastic. Then Dovzhenko … also Pudovkin and Ekk. But it was mainly Eisenstein, Kurosawa and Dovzhenko who really too aesthetic lessons from me.
>
> Gance, quoted in: Brownlow, 2004, p.185

La roue's influence on Epstein, particularly with respect to *Cœur fidèle,* made just a year later, has also been noted[15].

We see Epstein's idea of *photogénie* being refined by the influence of montage. Movement and mobility is still a key part of the photogenic, but the rhythmic element

has been expanded to include variations within and between shots, because it is through these variations that the mobile aspect of the cinematic medium is foregrounded. The reason why Epstein was excited by Gance's cutting in *La roue* was because it was a uniquely cinematic event that combined the motion of elements within the shots, the movement between shots to different spatial locations in and around the train, and the accelerated rhythmic editing of the shots. In this sequence the emotions of the main character, Sisif, are perfectly synchronised with the visual elements of the film.

The sequences from *Cœur fidèle* that we already looked at have all contained a rhythmic aspect to them. The opening seven-shot sequence which ran, in seconds: 11 - 1 - 8 - 1-7 - 1 - 10.5, and the 'fight' sequence close-ups which ran: 2.5 - 2.5 - 1 - 1.25 - 1 - 0.4 -1.5 - 0.5 - 1.25 - 0.75 - 1.25 - 0.5 - 1.25 - 0.5 - 1.25 - 0.4 - 1.25 - 0.4 - 1.2 - 0.4 - 1.25 - 1.2 - 0.75 - 0.75 - 1.5. If we turn the numbers from the 'fight' sequence into figures (a=over two seconds, b=between one and two seconds, c=under one second), we see a clear musical pattern emerging: aa - bb - bc - bc - bc - bc - bc - bc - bc - bc - bb - cc - b. The same is true of the opening sequence (a=long, b=medium c=short): a - c - b - c - b - c - a. This suggests that although Epstein was impressed by Gance's use of accelerated montage in *La roue,* it was not something that he sought to imitate, rather he developed it into a form of editing based on musical patterns.

Although the shot lengths create a musical rhythm in themselves, the content of the different shots enhances the musicality of the sequence because there is a consistency to the 'a' shots and the 'b' shots, etc. If we take the opening sequence we see the following:
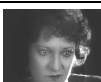
The seven shot opening sequence of *Cœur fidèle*

Although there is not much to distinguish the thematic content of the 'a' and 'b' shots, the 'c' shots are the almost static close-ups of Marie, which are contrasted with movement filled shots of her hands. Thematically we could see the sequence as hands and faces being resolved at the end with the wide shot in which the two are united in the whole person. Thus we could see the sequence as containing two complimentary rhythms, one derived from the shot length, and one from the theme of the shot:

Shot Length	Shot Theme
long 'a '	*hands* 'a'
short 'c'	*face* 'b'
medium 'b'	*hands* 'a'
short 'c'	*face* 'b'
medium 'b'	*hands* 'a'
short 'c'	*face* 'b'
long 'a '	*hands & face* 'c'

Exactly the same is true of the rhythms in the 'fight' sequence. By taking the shots as rhythmic pairs, grouping those who are with Petit Paul together, and considering that the shot of the bottle has the same effect as the shots of the fists, we can see a clear thematic rhythm emerging alongside the temporal rhythm. If we mark the themes as follows, a=Petit Paul (and associates), b=Jean, c=Marie, d=fists & bottles, we can see the following rhythms emerge.

Shot	Temporal Rhythm	Thematic Rhythm	First Frame	Second Frame
1-2	aa	ab		
3-4	bb	ab		
5-6	bc	ab		
7-8	bc	ab		
9-10	bc	ab		
11-12	bc	ab		
13-14	bc	cb		
15-16	bc	da		
17-18	bc	da		
19-20	bc	da		
21-22	bb	dc		
23-24	cc	dd		
25	b	c		

As well as these very detailed rhythmic micro-structures, we can also find much broader musical macro-structures at work in *Cœur Fidèle*, in the fairground sequence for example. Here we see a sixteen minute section of the film (with only five intertitles) structured as one might structure a sonata or a symphony; an introduction, three movements, bridges between the movements, and a coda.

The two-and-a-half minute introduction to the piece contains all three elements, or motifs, shown separately: Petit Paul and Marie walking to the fairground; a slow high-angle panning shot of the fairground itself; and Jean, searching for Marie. Unable to find Marie, Jean asks an old woman if she knows where she is, *"– Savez-vous où est Marie, le servante du cabaret?"* He is told she has gone, *"- Elle est partie ... partie".* The scene fades to black, then cuts from black.

Epstein then begins the first movement, Petit Paul and Marie at the fairground. This first movement, two minutes long, opens appropriately enough with a shot of the pipe organ music, the long roll of punched card that is being drawn through the organ. The theme of this movement is Marie's refusal to enjoy herself at the fairground, and her reluctance to go on any of the rides with Petit Paul. We see shots full of happiness and motion, shots of the crowds enjoying themselves at the fairground, intercut with shots of Petit Paul trying to get Marie to enjoy herself. At one point he suggests to her that they get married on the wooden horses of the carousel, *"- Nous allons nous marier sur les chevaux de bois".* This first movement contrasts the movement of the crowds and the children enjoying themselves on the rides, with Marie, immobile and refusing to go on the rides. The first movement ends, as the scene eventually fades to white and cuts to black.

We are then transported back to Jean and the old woman. This scene, just thirty seconds long, acts as a bridge to the second movement. The scene fades from black and the old woman tells Jean that Marie has gone with Petit Paul, *"- Elle est partie ... avec Petit Paul".* Jean walks away, and the scene fades to black and cuts to white.

With a white iris-out, we begin the second movement, which is a return to Petit Paul and Marie at the fairground. This movement opens with the figures on the pipe organ chiming their bells, and one pipe organ figure moving a stick, suggesting a conductor's baton. This brief introduction to the second movement concludes and the movement itself begins. The theme of the second movement is Petit Paul and Marie on the aeroplane carousel. Marie is still clearly not enjoying herself, and resists Petit Paul, but he has obviously persuaded her to come on one of the rides with him. He is clearly very happy indeed, throwing streamers and confetti. Here the theme of the movement is mobility, the varied and contrasting motion of the fairground. The movement ends with a fade to white and a cut to black.

Fading from black, the bridge between the second and third movement begins. For slightly less than a minute we are presented with shots of Jean walking towards the fairground. This bridge ends like the previous one, with Jean walking out of shot. A very quick fade to black and we are back at the fairground for the final movement.

This final movement and coda is just over seven minutes long. Jean arrives at the fairground, and Epstein cuts between shots of Jean searching for Marie, and shots of Marie and Petit Paul together. We see fairly static shots of Jean looking for Marie, intercut with rapid montage bursts of the fairground (suggesting Jean's frantic looking for Marie) and very mobile shots of Petit Paul and Marie. The third movement ends and the coda begins as Jean spies Petit Paul and Marie leaving the fairground. A cut to black and an iris-out marks the transition. A fight breaks out between Jean and Petit Paul in the street, Petit Paul produces a knife, but it is Jean who ends up stabbing a police officer, and Petit-Paul who runs away. The coda is linked to the fairground by

Epstein's inclusion of short montage sequences from the fairground, used to intensify the fight between Jean and Petit Paul. The final beat of this section of the film is Marie leaving the police station alone, and the fifth intertitle that tells us that Petit Paul evaded justice and Jean served a year in prison, *"Petit Paul avait échappé ux poursuites de la justice. Jean, tenu pour coupable, venait de faire une année de prison."*

Both the micro and macro rhythmic aspects to *Cœur Fidèle* are achieved mainly through the editing process. What we see in most cases is of individual shots that contain a single movement, and which are combined with other such shots as compliment or contrast this movement. This is how Epstein recreates mobility and produces rhythms, thus creating moments of *photogénie.* However, there are examples of shots in *Cœur Fidèle* that have their own internal rhythms, examples of the multiple spontaneous rhythms that Epstein discussed in *The Senses I (b).* Two examples of this kind of shot are the pan across the fairground, and the shot of Jean and the other men digging.
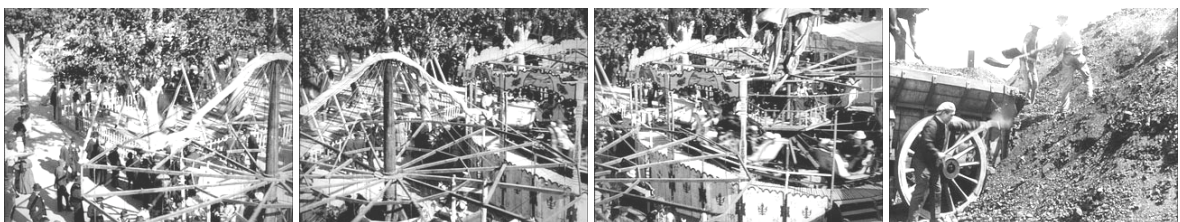
Panning across the fairground   Jean & the diggers

In the pan across the fairground we see the two carousels turning, and the swinging boats in the background. Everything in the scene is moving rhythmically, and the effect is highly photogenic because it draws our attention to and emphasises movement. The same is true of the eleven second scene of Jean and the other men digging. Without moving the camera, Epstein simply records the four shovels moving

in their different rhythmic patterns. This is what Epstein meant when he talked about, "lions, tigers, bears, and antelopes at Regent's Park Zoo ... walking or eating their food at 88 movements a minute, soldiers ... walking on lawns at 88 paces a minute, ... leopards and pumas ... walking at 132, in 3/2 rhythm ... and children ... running at 116, in 3/4 rhythm. (Epstein, in: Abel, 1988a, p.245)

V. The four *photogénies* (4): temporality

The fourth of the *photogénies* that we will discuss is temporality. In *The Cinema Continues* (1930) Epstein discusses temporality and makes reference to some visual ideas and techniques.

> Let us find the means somehow to explore time as well as space ... Through its variable lens aperture, which is more true to life than to banal appearance, the cinema divulges the existence of this fourth dimension because it treats time in perspective. Since our dramaturgy has rarely benefitted from variable speed recording – in order to make a psychological expression more accurate than it is in real life – we still don't realise how this technique can extend the signifying power of the animated images.
>
> Epstein, in: Abel, 1988b, p.65

When it comes to manipulating the temporal aspect of cinema, the director has fewer options than in rhythmic editing: one can only over-crank or under-crank the camera, giving, respectively, a slow-motion or a fast-motion effect. Silent cinema is often associated with the fast-motion effects of an under-cranked camera, often used in order to create a high-speed chase sequence for example. Over-cranking is much rarer in silent films, but is used to good effect by Epstein in *La chute de la maison Usher/The Fall of the House of Usher, 1928,* to convey Roderick's distorted senses. A

key question regarding the above quoted passage is what does Epstein mean by treating time in perspective, or of making psychological expression more accurate? Everyone is familiar with the phenomena of subjective time, i.e, the time not as it is measured by clocks, but as it is experienced, and it is this phenomena that Epstein is discussing when he talks about treating time in perspective. Our perception of space is perspectival, meaning that we can only experience something from a particular point in space, but Epstein is emphasising the temporal as well as the spatial here. Events occur over a certain duration, and although two durations may be objectively identical, we may have experienced time differently in both events. Thus Epstein is saying that the film-maker should pay attention to the way that she wants the audience to experience time in perspective, as well as space in perspective. We are used to seeing a subjective shot (the PoV, or Point of View shot) that shows us the scene from the viewpoint of one of the characters, but what Epstein is suggesting is the possibility of a temporal as well as a spatial PoV.

A different type of temporal *photogéni*e is suggested by Epstein in *Photogénie and the Imponderable.* What Epstein posits in here is a universe that is continually in motion, and he reveals his fascination with the way that variable speed recording reveals the flow of time in different ways. This is something that still interests us, and which has been a staple feature of big-budget nature documentaries for many years[16]. It is also something that has interested video artists. Bill Viola's *The Passions, 2003,* for instance is an example of the way that high-speed cinematography has been used to create a series of works that invite the viewer to scrutinise the emotions. Ori Gerscht's *Pomegranate, 2006,* looks initially like a high quality video of a renaissance still life, but as a bullet enters the frame and hits a pomegranate, the high-speed

cinematography reveals the explosion in great detail. Epstein's passion for variable speed recording is made clear when he says

> Slow motion and fast motion reveal a world where the kingdoms of nature know no boundaries. Everything is alive. Crystals become larger, growing one on top of another, smoothly uniting out of something like sympathy. Symmetries constitute their customs and traditions. Are they really so different from flowers of the cells of the noblest tissues? And the plant which bends its stalk and turns its leaves toward the light; isn't what opens and closes its corolla, what inclines its stamen to the pistil, in fast motion, precisely the same quality of life in the horse and rider which, in slow motion, soar over the obstacle, pressing close to one another?
>
> Epstein, in: Abel, 1988b, pp.189-190

It is important to remember that for Epstein the key to *photogénie* is still movement. Variable speed recording is valuable because it reveals more about the nature of movement; it reveals in different ways the continual flow and flux of the world.

The Tempest Master calms the storm in *Le Tempestaire*

Epstein makes considerable use of temporal distortions in *Le Tempestaire*, all of which are contained in the sequence where the Tempest Master attempts to calm the storm. Apart from the still frames present at the very beginning of the film, all of the other shots in *Le Tempestaire* are filmed at their proper speed. However, Epstein makes considerable use of slow-motion, high speed, and reverse action cinematography throughout this penultimate part of the film. The motivation behind Epstein's use of temporal effects is to create a perspective from the Tempest Master's viewpoint; to enable us to see what he sees and feel the wind and the seas as they come under his control.

As with all of his work, Epstein uses the different effects with precision and control, and in an ordered, rhythmic way. The sequence begins with the young woman going to find the Tempest Master. There is a brief interchange between them, as he initially refuses her request, but she persuades him, and he fetches and unwraps his globe. As he looks into the globe we are presented with the first two distorted shots; time lapse shots (or shots filmed at a very slow frame rate) of clouds racing across the sky. The middle section of the sequence contains high speed shots of the waves crashing on rocks, the effect when projected at normal speed being one of slow motion. The last section contains shots which are played backwards, so that we see the waves retreat from the rocks back to the sea. Throughout this sequence Epstein ensures that we understand that we are seeing the scene from the Tempest Master's PoV by cutting back to shots of him blowing on the globe, or to close-up shots of the globe with the images of the sea superimposed within it.

As with all the *photogénies* based on mobility, it is movement that is highlighted in these three types of temporal distortion. The movement of the clouds is heightened as we see them rush across the sky in the time lapse shots, but the slowing down and reversing of the shots of the waves also serves to heighten the effect of their movement. By using the shots in the order that he does (speed-up > slow-down > reverse) we understand that the Tempest Master is slowly bringing the storm under his control.

The key feature of the sequence as regards its photogenic quality is Epstein's choice of temporal distortion and subject matter, for he chooses both carefully to maximise the sense of movement. If, for example, we began the sequence with sped-up shots of waves crashing on the rocks, the effect would not work as the waves already move too fast for us to pick out the subtleties of movement. However, by using clouds, which we ordinarily perceive moving slowly, we see them in a different, unfamiliar aspect. The opposite is true of the shots of the sea. Ordinarily we cannot see the details in the crashing of waves, but rendered in slow motion a new aspect of their movement is revealed. And whilst both clouds and waves look different when their motion is reversed, it is certainly waves that have the most dramatic transformation when seen in reverse. "By means of such manipulation of time and motion whole new dimensions are opened up to us, we experience the movement of the ocean in a whole new way, a window is opened into the infinitesimal gestures of nature as it speaks with soundless utterance." (Rush, 2010)

The reason for the success of this sequence, photogenically speaking, is because it achieves a number of Epstein's aims. As well as heightening our awareness of

movement, which could have been done simplistically at any point by cutting in a slowed-down or sped-up shot, Epstein constructs the scene so that the presence of the manipulated shots are dramatically motivated character PoV shots. We see what the Tempest Master sees, and the temporal distortions create the impression that we see what he sees in the way that he sees it. This links with his aim of manipulating time in order to make, "psychological expression more accurate than it is in real life" (Epstein, in: Abel, 1988b, p.65) Epstein used the same slow-motion character PoV effect nearly twenty years previously in *La chute de la maison Usher,* in order to suggest Roderick's mental fragility, and although these sequences worked well, and the spectator clearly felt Roderick's tenuous grasp on reality, the sequence in *Le Tempestaire* is more successful. The reason for this is not only because of the wider variety of types of temporal manipulation and their compression into a short section of the film, but because it emphasises Epstein ideas about the essential nature of movement. "Slow motion and fast motion reveal a world where the kingdoms of nature know no boundaries. Everything is alive." (Epstein, in: Abel, 1988b, pp.189-190) The sense of the wind and the sea being living entities is accentuated through Epstein's exploration and manipulation of time, and the Tempest Master's ability to subdue the elements reinforces this idea that the elements are alive. And it is precisely this kind of photogenic animism that led Epstein to posit the final type of *photogénie.*

VI. A fifth *photogénie*: character

The last type of *photogénie* that we will look at is the *photogénie* of character, which comes from Epstein's belief that the cinema has certain animistic powers. In *On*

Certain Characteristics of Photogénie, he states that the camera grants, "a semblance of life to the objects it defines." (Epstein, in: Abel, 1988a, p.316) Objects become part of the drama and as such acquire a dramatic power. Epstein describes them as being like charms, amulets, fetishes or even cursed objects; they are those objects that have acquired a magical power through primitive or superstitious beliefs. This view links closely with Epstein's ideas about the apparatus, which will look at in more detail in a later chapter. The camera has a transformative, animistic power to grant a fetishistic, shadowy half-life to the objects it depicts. This power is often linked to the close-up, for it is in the close-up that the object is subjected to the full force of the camera.

> Through the cinema, a revolver in a drawer, a broken bottle on the ground, an eye isolated by an iris, are elevated to the status of characters in the drama. Being dramatic, they seem alive, as though involved in the evolution of an emotion ... To things and beings in their most frigid semblance, the cinema thus grants the greatest gift unto death: life. And it confers this life in its highest guise: personality.
>
> Epstein, in: Abel, 1988a, p.317

And he later elaborates as follows,

> A close-up of a revolver is no longer a revolver, it is the revolver-character, in other words the impulse toward or remorse for crime, failure, suicide. It is as dark as the temptations of the night, bright as the gleam of gold lusted after, taciturn as passion, squat, brutal, heavy cold, wary, menacing. It has temperament, habits, memories, a will, a soul. Mechanically speaking, the lens alone can sometimes succeed in revealing the inner nature of things this way. This is how, by chance in the first instance, the *photogénie* of character was discovered.
>
> Epstein, in: Abel, 1988a, p.317

Although these ideas may seem rather far fetched, Epstein is in fact making a very valuable point, and it is one shared by René Clair

The screen gives a soul to the cabaret, the room, a bottle, a wall. It is this soul alone that counts in our eyes. We move from the object to its soul as easily as our being passed from a sight to a thought. The screen opens onto a new world, one vibrant with even more synesthetic responses than our own.

<div align="right">Clair, in: Abel, 1988a, p.305</div>

In *For a New Avant-Garde,* Epstein expanded upon his idea of the *photogénie* of

character

I imagine a banker receiving bad news at home from the stock exchange. He is about to telephone. The call is delayed. Close-up of the telephone. If the shot of the telephone is shown clearly, if it is well written, you no longer see a mere telephone. You read ruin, failure, misery, prison, suicide. And in other circumstances, this same telephone will say: sickness, doctor, help, death, solitude, grief. And yet at another time this same telephone will cry gaily: joy, love liberty. All this may seem extremely simple; they may be regarded as childish symbols. I confess that it seems very mysterious to me that one can in this way charge the simple reflection of inert objects with an intensified sense of life, that one can animate it with its own vital import. Moreover, I confess that it seems much more important to me to concern ourselves with this phenomenon of cinematic telepathy than to cultivate two or three almost purely mechanical methods too exclusively.

<div align="right">Epstein, in: Abel, 1988a, p.352</div>

What is most remarkable about Epstein's thinking here is the connection to the work

of his Soviet contemporary, Sergei Eisenstein. What Epstein is telling us is that a very

important aspect of *photogénie* is the creation of concepts in the mind of the viewer,

and this is very close to the ideas expressed by Eisenstein.

The old film-makers, including the theoretically outmoded Lev Kuleshov, regarded montage as a means of producing something by describing it, adding individual shots to one another like building blocks ... According to this definition (which Pudovkin shares as a theorist) montage is the means of *unrolling* an idea through single shots ... *But in my view montage is not an idea composed of successive shots stuck together but an idea that* DERIVES *from the collision between two shots that are independent of one another.* THUS:

Eye + Water = Crying
Door + Ear = Eavesdropping
Child + Mouth = Screaming
Mouth + Dog = Barking
Mouth + Bird = Singing
Knife + Heart = Anxiety, etc.

Thus we have an interesting situation in which both film-makers are stating that one of the most important qualities of the cinema is the way that an image presented on screen can create an abstract idea or concept in the mind of the spectator. However, what is also of interest is the way that Eisenstein and Epstein differ in their ideas about how this *image > idea* transformation occurs.

Eisenstein believes that the essence of cinema is in editing, and that the image>idea transformation occurs through the power of montage editing, not as a sequential assemblage of related shots in the way Pudovkin and Kuleshov imagined, but where the collision of two independent shots creates a third meaning in the mind of the spectator. Thus, for Eisenstein, the *image > idea* transformation is prepared in the cutting room and made real when seen on the cinema screen. But for Epstein the *image > idea* transformation belongs within the shot and happens because of the transformative or animistic power of the camera.

The best way to describe the difference between Epstein and Eisenstein's approach is via an analogy with Locke's concept of primary and secondary qualities. A primary quality is one that an object possesses independently of any experience of that object, it is a quality that belongs to the thing itself. Qualities such as the size of the object, its shape, its position in space, whether it is in motion or at rest are primary qualities. A secondary quality is one that the object has the power to produce, but only when experienced by a person with the senses to experience it. Qualities such as colour, taste, and smell are secondary qualities. Epstein believed that the

animistic power of the camera literally inscribed the dramatic idea into the celluloid itself, the idea was like a fact contained within the shot: a primary quality. For Eisenstein the idea is a secondary quality, for it does not reside within either of the shots, rather it exists in the celluloid as a latent property of the juxtaposed images, ready to produce the idea in the mind of the spectators during the projection of the film. Epstein said that, "Each image of the filmstock carries within it an instant of the universe whose spirit we reconstruct progressively in the continuity of projection." (Epstein, in: Abel, 1988b, p.188) It is perhaps not possible to say precisely what Epstein means here, but what it does illustrate is the fact that Epstein really did believe that each image on the film carried within it something more than the recording of an image.

What is interesting here is not that these two great directors had differing views about the primacy of the camera or of the editing room, but their agreement about the existence of this phenomena (that Epstein called the *photogénie* of character) whereby specific images on screen call into existence abstract ideas in the minds of the audience. That Epstein saw it in an animistic way and Eisenstein in an intellectual way is less important that the fact that both recognised it as cinematic property of central importance to the medium.

There are examples of the *photogénie* of character to be found in both *Cœur fidèle* and in *Le Tempestaire.* A good example from *Cœur fidèle* regards Epstein's use of bottles in the film. Bottles are often shown in close-up, as they play an important symbolic role in the film, especially as regards Marie. She works in a tavern, thus bottles come to symbolise her working environment and the oppression that she

suffers there. Later in the film they symbolise her oppression in a different way, when her husband, Petit Paul, takes the last of the money and spends it on drink. Again, Epstein shows the tops of the bottles in close-up as Petit Paul looks at them. The significance of the bottles is further increased by the shots of Marie gazing out from behind the glass in the door of the tavern, her proximity to the sea, and the shots of her superimposed over shots of the sea. The binary opposition here between the bottle=oppression/prison, and sea=liberty/freedom is apparent.

Marie working in the tavern   Petit Paul's PoV   Shots of Marie superimposed over the sea

This sets up the context for a sequence that reveals the *photogénie* of character very well. Towards the end of the film Marie spends what little money she has on two bottles of medicine for her baby. Petit Paul comes home drunk, and demands his meal, but as Marie has been at the hospital with the baby she has not had time to prepare his meal. Petit Paul, enraged, throws the contents of the table to the floor and walks out, leaving the two broken bottles of medicine on the floor. Epstein constructs the sequence as follows:

Petit Paul breaks the medicine bottles in *Cœur fidèle*

As we noted earlier, Epstein said that "through the cinema, a revolver in a drawer, a broken bottle on the ground, an eye isolated by an iris, are elevated to the status of characters in the drama ... I confess that it seems very mysterious to me that one can in this way charge the simple reflection of inert objects with an intensified sense of life, that one can animate it with its own vital import." (Epstein, in: Abel, 1988a, p.317 & p.352) It is precisely the broken bottle on the ground that becomes animated and intensified in this sequence. Epstein uses the shot four times in the sequence, exaggerating the impact by choosing to use the same shot of the broken bottles, rather than different shots of the same bottles. Not only would it have been unnecessary to have chosen different angles for the four shots, but it may have detracted from the impact of the sequence as each shot would have involved an aesthetic response, rather than the purely emotional one that Epstein was looking for.

As Petit Paul enters the room, Epstein chooses a wide shot, placing the table with the bottle of wine and two little bottles of medicine on it in the foreground, and Petit Paul and Marie in the background. Once Petit Paul has finished threatening Marie, he sits at the table and demands to be served soup. Epstein films this in three ever closer shots, keeping the bottles at the front of the shot in the first two shots, and only one medicine bottle in shot in the last shot. The final close-up is the most menacing, with only Petit Paul's hand and one of the medicine bottles in shot. As he slams his hand on the table we see the medicine bottle jump into the air slightly. Suddenly he sweeps the bottles off the table and they smash on the floor. Here Epstein intercuts two shots of the broken bottles with shots of Marie holding her baby. Later in the sequence, after Petit Paul has taken the last of the money, we see the final two shots of the broken bottles, again intercut with close-ups of Marie. The final four shots of the sequence

show the broken bottles, Petit Paul leaving the room with the money, Marie holding her baby, and a close-up of the baby.

The bottles of medicine, which initially signified hope, now signify despair. As characters in the drama they have the most powerful presence in the sequence as they are the physical embodiment of Petit Paul's callousness and cruelty, and of the shattering of Marie's hopes. It is medicine that pours from the broken bottles, but symbolically it is the life and hope of Marie and her baby. What is of particular interest is the change in tone between the first two uses of the shot and the second two uses. To underline the sense of tragedy that the broken bottles give to the sequence Epstein has Petit Paul take the last of the money before he leaves, negating any chance that Marie might have to get some more medicine. It is in the first two uses of the shot that we see Petit Paul's cruelty, and in the second two uses that we see tragedy and Marie's despair.

Regarding *Le Tempestaire,* it was suggested earlier that we could argue that the central character of the film is not the woman, but the sea. The majority of the film is composed of various shots of the sea, and the juxtaposition of shots, coupled with Epstein's animistic camera, brings the presence of the natural environment to the fore.

> The longer we watch *Le Tempestaire* the more we become aware that Epstein is not filming the sea, for the sea is no longer the sea, but has become a thriving, spumous, thing with soul and character. There seems to be a certain animism that is imparted by the focus of his camera's lens. Here the sea becomes alive with passions as ardent as lovers, replete with the same desires as humanity, and susceptible to the same exigencies of existence.

> Rush, 2010

Many of Epstein's shots of the sea in *Le Tempestaire* appear to owe a debt to Claude Monet, who painted the sea and the rocks at Belle Île in the late nineteenth century.

Claude Monet
The Rocks of Belle Île; Belle-Île, Effect of the Rain; Storm, Coast at Belle Île; Tempest on the Coast of Belle Île.

Four shots from *Le Tempestaire*

However, unlike Monet's paintings, Epstein is able render the sea cinematically, as a living entity, as the main character in the drama. In many ways it resembles the ocean on the planet Solaris, in Tarkovsky's 1972 film, an ocean that was not merely alive in the figurative sense, but in the literal one. But it is here, in the differences between Monet's paintings and Epstein's film that the notion of *photogénie* is given clear expression. Because Epstein wanted to create a cinematic cinema, not one dependent on the other arts, this may have been why he chose to film an environment that had been extensively painted by one of the great French painters. Through the careful juxtaposition of shots and the judicious use of temporal manipulation, Epstein is able to animate the sea, creating a movement from the calm sea, slowly building up to the storm, and the final calming of the storm by the Tempest Master.

The *photogénie* of character is important because of the part it plays in transcending normal human perception, which is an idea that will be discussed in more detail later. Essentially the idea is that when we perceive an object in normal life we exist in a particular functional relationship to that object. We are interested in what it is, what it does, how we use it, whether it is suitable for the purpose we have in mind, etc. But in film, Epstein is suggesting that the functional relationship disappears and is replaced by a symbolic one where objects can represent abstract concepts and ideas, and it is this change in perception that is key to *photogénie.*

Chapter Four

Phonogénie – photogénie's forgotten aural aspect

In *The Cinema Continues,* Epstein introduces a concept related to *photogénie,* that of *phonogénie*. After the advent of sound, Epstein was keen to consider ways in which the sound track should be used, and he introduces the concept of *phonogénie;* the aural equivalent of *photogénie.* Epstein had discussed music in silent film in *Magnification,* and his concept of *phonogénie* builds upon these ideas. Regarding music for silent films, he said that a

> cinema orchestra need not simulate sound effects. Let it supply a rhythm, preferably a monotonous one. One cannot listen and look at the same time. If there is a dispute, sight, as the most specialised, and the most generally popular sense, always wins. Music which attracts attention or the imitation of noises is simply disturbing.
>
> <div align="right">Epstein, in: Abel, 1988a, p.240</div>

Unlike directors who believed that sound was a mistake (Charlie Chaplin, for example, said "I'll give the talkies three years, that's all" (Chaplin, quoted in: Robinson, 1985, p.389)), Epstein was not averse to sound cinema, but he was concerned at what we might now call the vococentrism of film sound. He noted that, "[a]ll films now speak with a single, sexless, flat voice. This monotony perfectly satisfies sound engineers. Their ideal is that the *s* be distinct from the *z*." (Epstein, in: Abel, 1988b, p.66) As soon as films could be commercially released with synchronised soundtracks they became dominated by the voice. Films became 'talking pictures', or 'the talkies', emphasising that it was not sound *per se* that was the issue, but speech and dialogue. Epstein's preference is for more experimentation in sound, not just the

slavish reproduction of what the ear hears to accompany what the eye sees, but a creative manipulation of sound, what we might call now a soundscape or a sound collage.

> It's across the sound fields of the vast world that we must spread our microphones, searching the fields with sound-sticks and selective filters ... To hear everything that a perfect human ear hears is merely apprentice work for the microphone. Now, we want to hear what the ear doesn't hear, just as through the cinema we see what eludes the eye."
>
> Epstein, in: Abel, 1988b, pp.67-8

Thus, we see that both *phonogénie* and *photogénie* are about going beyond normal human sound and vision in order to present us with something not normally encountered in experience.

Regarding sound, Epstein's ideas are again close to those of his Soviet contemporaries. Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Alexandrov, in their 1928 *Statement on Sound,* noted that initially there would be a period of sound cinema in which sound was used in the most obvious manner (i.e., to reproduce speech and create a realistic soundtrack), but they argued that cinema must move beyond this and create a soundtrack that goes beyond mimicking the human ear.

> In the first place there will be commercial exploitation of the most saleable goods, i.e. of *talking pictures* – those in which the sound is recorded in a natural manner, synchronising exactly with the movements on the screen and creating a certain 'illusion' of people talking, objects making a noise, etc ... Sound used in this way will destroy the culture of montage ... *Only the contrapuntal use* of sound vis-à-vis the visual fragment of montage will open up new possibilities ... *The first experiments in sound must aim at a sharp discord with the visual images.* Only such a 'hammer and tongs' approach will produce the necessary sensation that will result in the creation of a new *orchestral counterpoint* of visual and sound images.
>
> Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Alexandrov, in: Taylor, 1998, pp.80-81

Epstein's 1947 sound film, *Le Tempestaire,* provides us with an excellent example of his use of sound in film. Although sound plays a vital role in the film, there is very little dialogue, which allows Epstein a great deal of space to experiment with sound. Just as *photogénie* would be squeezed out by an overdependence on plot, *phonogénie* would be squeezed out by the overuse of dialogue. Although a sound film, the exteriors in *Le Tempestaire* would have been shot silent, and the soundtrack created in a studio. This means that although there are sounds that are presented as diegetic, there are few genuine sync-sounds in the film, other than the interiors[17]. Most European films shot on location at this time would have had post-dubbed soundtracks, as this was the norm for this time because portable sync-sound recorders were not available until the late nineteen-fifties. What is interesting is that whereas most of these films tried to recreate a realistic soundtrack in the studio, for Epstein the lack of portable sync-sound recording suited his intentions perfectly.

The soundtrack of *Le Tempestaire* comprises a number of different elements. Firstly, there is the fairly sparse dialogue that occurs in the film. This is presented naturalistically, and, like the plot, serves only to create the emotional space for the drama to unfold. There are some interesting uses of an echoing or repeating effect concerning the dialogue, which occur at three points in the film[18]. The repetitions are portions of longer sections of dialogue that are much quieter than the originals, and mixed in with the sound of the wind. This makes them harder to pick out, but they are clearly intended to be audible and discernable, but only just. Because of the accompanying visual elements and the sound of the wind, these repeated fragments of dialogue are presented as voices carried on the wind, or as voices heard by the wind, they are not presented as a character's remembrances. On the first occasion

that Epstein uses the effect he places the woman's dialogue about omens and her fear of the wind over a shot of the sea, with the sound of the wind high in the mix. The second time it is the old woman talking about the Tempest Master that is presented with a shot of the stormy sea intercut with a shot of the woman running to the lighthouse. Again the sound of the wind is high in the mix. The last time occurs at the end of the film, where the husband speaks about the calm sea. This time the accompanying shot is of the woman and her husband walking together, although it is a clear sky that is most prominent in the shot. The sound of the wind is much lower in the mix and calm music plays in the background.

Alongside the use of dialogue is the music and the atmospheric sound used by Epstein in the film. The film is dominated by the sound of the wind. It is a constant presence throughout the film, even during many of the interior shots. According to Stein (2005) and Rush (2010) Epstein experimented with slowed down sound in the film. "Epstein not only uses visual slow motion in this beautifully photographed and magical film [*Le Tempestaire*], but also experiments with slowed down sound." (Stein, 2005)

> The manner in which he [Epstein] allows nature to express itself poetically is exquisite, and it is not just the abstract images of nature that adds to this quality, but the artistic manipulation of sound. Epstein himself wrote of this process: 'The monotonous and blurred howling of the storm breaks up, in a more refined reality, into a crowd of very different and never before heard sounds.' The sounds of the storm in *Le Tempestaire* are throughout the film omnipresent, howling, and oppressive, refracted so many times that we imagine ourselves, like Odysseus, subject to a symphonic chorus of Sirens ...
>
> Rush, 2010

The atmospheric sound is presented very much as a soundscape, and although the sound and the images are complimentary, we don't often hear what we are seeing,

although we are not necessarily aware of this because of an aural association between the sound of the wind and the sound of the sea. However, if we pay attention we can rarely hear the sound of the waves, or of the sea crashing against the rocks. This is interesting because it allows Epstein to maintain a sense of verisimilitude, because the emotional content of the sound matches that of the shots.

Epstein builds up the atmospheric sound gradually in the film. We see the wind before we hear it, as the door is gently blown open during the first part of the film, allowing the wind to enter the room as a character in the drama. Shortly afterwards the sound of the wind increases, and the seas become stormy. Even though most of the shots in the film are of the sea, there are few places where we can hear the sea; most of the sound is of the wind.

Music also plays a key role in the film, both on a diegetic and a non-diegetic level. Epstein uses subtle atmospheric music to create a sense of the supernatural. There is the sound of an organ and a violin playing at various points, often using pitch bending or glissando type effects. At times it becomes hard to distinguish what kind of instrument is making the noise. Sometimes it sounds almost electronic, like the Theramin which was popular in nineteen-fifties American science-fiction movies. This may be due to Epstein's sound manipulation effects. The diegetic music comes from the woman, who sings quietly, trying to calm herself, and the wind perhaps. The song has a simple, repeating melody, and it is likely that it is a traditional Breton song.

The sounds in *Le Tempestaire* illustrate Epstein's thoughts about sound in general and about *phonogénie* in particular. With the exception of the music at the start of the

film, none of the sounds are overpowering or explicitly dramatic. Epstein's preference is for subtle, understated sounds that do not compete with the images. When compared to the image, the sound is the passive or submissive element. It tries to complement rather than compete with the image. With the exception of dialogue, the sound does not attempt to faithfully reproduce the original sounds that accompanied the image, but does reinforce the character and the emotion of the image. This is the phonogenic aspect of the sound. When Epstein presents the shots of the sea, the waves and the storm, he accompanies it with sounds that complement the image. Epstein understood that the real sound that occurs with an image is not necessarily the most convincing one. The wind provides a constant backdrop against which images and other sounds unfold, but the sound rises and falls, constantly reminding us of the threat of the storm. Coupled with the music and the occasional sections of dialogue (and their repetitions) the sound unsettles us, just as the storm has unsettled the woman

Chapter Five

The theoretical aspects of *photogénie*

The purpose of this chapter is to look at some of the theoretical ideas that underpin Epstein's concept of *photogénie.* Behind Epstein's cultural and aesthetic beliefs there are a collection of thoughts about such subjects as the cinematic apparatus and the way that cinema should progress via an evolving avant-garde. Most importantly are Epstein's thoughts about the relationship between cinema and reality, the nature and limitations of human perception, and the transformative and defamiliarising aspects of the cinematic medium. By looking at these aspects of Epstein's thought we will be better placed to appreciate the aesthetic aspects of *photogénie,* as we will more fully understand what Epstein thought was achieved during moments of *photogénie.*

I. The apparatus & the purpose of the avant-garde.

In *The Senses I (b)* Epstein reveals an unusual attitude towards the apparatus. What Epstein suggests is that it is the camera itself that is the artist: it is the apparatus itself that transforms reality and creates art.

> The Bell and Howell is a metal brain … which transforms the world outside it into art. The Bell and Howell is an artist, and only behind it are there other artists: director and cameraman.

> Epstein, in: Abel, 1988a, p.244

This view is echoed by Luc Sante in his discussion of vernacular photography, when he says, "that's one of the great mysteries … there is some kind of genius of the medium … When you look at enough vernacular photography of diverse sorts you begin to think that it's the camera that's doing the work, rather than the human operator who's just the one pushing the button." (Sante, in: Kirby, 2006, Ep.1)

Epstein says that "the artist is reduced to pressing a button … [t]he click of a shutter produces a *photogénie* which was previously unknown." (Epstein, in: Abel, 1988a, p.244) But he also refers to the cinema as being "psychic … [offering us] a quintessence, a product twice distilled." (Epstein, in: Abel, 1988a, p.246) Distilled once through the camera lens onto the filmstock, and a second time through the lenses of our eyes onto our retinas. Later he notes that "[t]he cinema is essentially supernatural." (Epstein, in: Abel, 1988a, p.246)

Epstein genuinely felt a sense of magic and wonder at the cinematic image. The camera was for him a crucible which distilled and intensified what it saw. He viewed the camera as an intentional machine, something that exerts its own will upon what it records. This seems today to be a rather primitive view of the cinema, but it does begin a chain of reasoning that would see the camera understood not merely as the benign and passive recorder of images, but as a machine deeply rooted in an ideology. Of course the camera itself does not have an attitude towards the world, but the men who made it do, and, to give one example, the fact that colour film is poor at recording non-Caucasian skin tones goes some way to suggesting what some of their attitudes might have been[19]. Thus, rather than dismissing Epstein's thoughts as superstitious, some credit should be given to him for appreciating that the camera is not a passive

instrument and does record the world from a certain viewpoint in which the image can conceal an attitude or an ideology.

Some years later, Epstein was more concerned with the issue of cinematic style, and the overuse of supposedly photogenic methods. His thoughts in 1925, in the article *For a New Avant-Garde,* refine his view of the apparatus, and show a dislike of overly mechanical working methods. They suggest that a technique that produces *photogénie* once may not necessarily produce it again and again. There is a need to find new expressions of *photogénie,* and to use the camera in new ways. *For a New Avant-Garde* is a polemical article in which Epstein expressed a dislike for three techniques that had become overused, and which no longer had a place in the cinema. Epstein's attitude towards cinematic styles and techniques is summed up by his belief that cinema is involved in a continual "overturning of friendships." (Epstein, in: Abel, 1988a, p.349) Epstein's point is that techniques that were radical or avant-garde in the past had become normalised and part of everyday practice in the present, where they cease to be radical and become firstly fashionable, and later tired and outmoded. "Being fashionable," Epstein said, "has always signaled the end of a style." (Epstein, in: Abel, 1988a, p.349) In this respect Epstein is a genuine advocate of the avant-garde, he is continually looking for the new, scouting the periphery of the cinematic terrain for new *photogénies*. The same stimulus does not produce the same response every time we are exposed to it, but a lesser response on each occasion until we eventually stop responding to it.

The three techniques that Epstein disliked were the abandonment of intertitles, rapid montage editing, and the over-importance or dominance of sets, particularly

expressionist sets. Where Epstein reveals something about *photogénie* is towards the end of the article, where he tells us that the problem with these methods is that they are, "purely material, purely mechanical." (Epstein, in: Abel, 1988a, p.351) What Epstein means here is that they do not strive towards what is cinematic, rather they are techniques used by film-makers who are more interested to see what it is possible to do with the mechanics of cinema. We might characterise these film-makers as asking the question *'what can I do with film?'* rather than, *'what should I do with film?'* Epstein's criticism would be all the harsher today, with film companies more interested in exploiting what is popular and using advanced technologies to create a more and more spectacular cinema of attractions. Regarding this mechanistic approach to cinema Epstein says, "[t]he mechanical period of cinema is over. The cinema must henceforth be called: the photography of delusions of the heart." (Epstein, in: Abel, 1988a, p.351)

Epstein's cinema is not a reliable one, in the sense that one cannot build up a store of tried and tested techniques that will produce *photogénie.* What is important for Epstein is artistic striving and experimentation. The camera, the 'metal brain' that was central in 1921 had become less important by 1925. The key to this change came in his 1924 article *On Certain Characteristics of Photogénie,* where he expressed his version of the *auteur* theory. These elements of his theory, that we discussed earlier, must have arisen because of a realisation that the camera does not always transform the world into art. The transformative element is a co-creation of the camera and the film-maker. At the end of *On Certain Characteristics of Photogénie* Epstein says that in cinema

> a new reality is revealed, a reality for a special occasion, which is untrue to everyday reality just as everyday reality is untrue to the heightened awareness of poetry … [t]he cinema is poetry's most powerful medium, the truest medium for the untrue, the unreal, the 'surreal' as Apollinaire would have said.
>
> Epstein, in Abel, 1988a, p.318

In the next part of this chapter we will look at the kind of transformation that cinema produces, or the kind of reality that the cinema reveals. We will also look at Epstein's attitude towards human perception and the limitations of vision. These ideas are central to a thorough understanding of *photogénie* as they show that cinema can reveal the world in new and unique ways, and can reveal truths about the world that no other medium can reveal.

II. *Photogénie:* revelation, vision & perception

In *The Cinema Continues* Epstein makes a curious claim: he says that, "needing to do more than see, man augmented the microscopic and telescopic apparatuses with the cinematic apparatus, creating something other than the eye." (Epstein, in: Abel, 1988b, p.64) The implication here is that whereas the microscopic and telescopic apparatuses simply allowed us to see more (i.e. they extended the capacities or capabilities of the human body), the cinematic apparatus allows us to do something that goes beyond simply seeing. Of course, we can imagine situations in which the camera acts in a similarly scientific way to a telescope or microscope in that it augments vision (endoscopy, for example) but Epstein has in mind something else. He says that the

cinema is a particular form of knowing, in that it represents the world in its continuous mobility, as well as a general form of knowing because, once it addresses all the senses, each will be able to surpass its physiological limitations

<div align="right">Epstein, in: Abel, 1988b, p.64</div>

What Epstein means here is that the knowledge that the cinema gives us is knowledge not of the appearance of things, but knowledge of things as they really are. It is during those brief moments of *photogénie* that we glimpse through appearance to reality. This also explains why Epstein saw the camera as being substantially different to the microscope or the telescope; for they simply revealed more about the nature of appearance, they could never allow us to see beyond the realm of appearance.

In *Photogénie and the Imponderable,* Epstein he adds some detail these ideas. He begins the article by reiterating the magical or transformative properties of cinema:

cinematography, like any other means of thinking, allows us to emerge victorious over that secret reality in which all appearances have their still invisible roots.

Years ago, certain signs indicated this to us. It happened so simply. To begin with, every wheel which revolved on the screen stopped turning, went first in reverse and then forward, in jolts, now quickly, now slowly. Calculations explained it. But if cinematic reproduction so grossly altered the nature of movement, transforming it into stops and countermovements, wasn't it necessary to think that many other recorded movements also were rendered with a specific kind of inaccuracy which was perhaps less apparent and more profound?

<div align="right">Epstein, in: Abel, 1988b, p.188</div>

We see here Epstein returning to his theme of cinema being able to see past appearances into reality. What is especially interesting about the passage on what is called the *stroboscopic effect,* is that Epstein knows that 'calculations explained it': thus he knows the scientific/mathematical reasons behind the effect but is still attracted by a 'magical' explanation. It is perhaps all the more strange given that he was, "a student of medicine and philosophy." (Abel, 1988b, p.240n) We might

reasonably assume here that his training in both the sciences (which would have underpinned his medical training) and philosophy would have led him both towards more rigorous thinking.

It appears to be the case that Epstein became fascinated by epistemological questions during his philosophical studies, and perhaps by Descartes, a philosopher who also had a great interest in medicine[20]. Epstein would have found in Descartes a philosopher with similar interests to his own. As we shall come to see, it seems likely that Cartesian epistemology, especially the methodological doubting of the senses discussed in both his *Discourse on the Method (1637)* and *Meditations on First Philosophy (1641),* had an effect on Epstein's thinking.

Descartes' interest in the eye and optics is shared by Epstein.

> The conduct of our life depends entirely on our senses, and since sight is the noblest and most comprehensive of the senses, inventions which serve to increase its power are undoubtedly among the most useful there can be ... Carrying our vision much further than our forebears could normally extend their imagination, ... telescopes seem to have opened the way for us to attain a knowledge of nature much greater and more perfect than they possessed.

> Descartes, 1988, p.57

This passage from Descartes' *Optics,* published in 1637, shows that Descartes was as enamoured with the telescope as was Epstein with the cinema. Were we to replace the word telescopes with the word cinema, the quote would not seem out of place in any of Epstein's writings. And just less than three-hundred years later, in 1930, Epstein wrote that

needing to do more than see, man augmented the microscopic and telescopic apparatuses with the cinematic apparatus, creating something other than the eye.

<div align="right">Epstein, in: Abel, 1988b, p.64</div>

Descartes' quest was to prove that although the world *beyond* perception was not knowable to us, it did in fact correspond to the world *of* perception. This he did via his use of the ontological argument. Descartes wanted to perceive the world with certainly, but three-hundred years later Epstein wanted to go beyond the world of appearance, and there is definite Kantian element to Epstein's thought here.

According to Kant, the outer world causes only the matter of sensation, but our own mental apparatus orders this matter in space and time and supplies the concepts by means of which we understand experience. Things in themselves [*noumena*], which are the causes of our sensations, are unknowable; they are not in space or time ... Space and time are subjective, they are part of our apparatus of perception ... What appears to us in perception, which he [Kant] calls a 'phenomenon', consists of two parts: that due to the object, which he calls the 'sensation', and that due to our subjective apparatus, which ... he calls the *form* of the phenomenon ... there are two such forms, namely space and time.

<div align="right">Russell, 1961, pp.680 & 685</div>

What Kant is telling us is that there is a world beyond perception, a world of 'things in themselves' or *noumena* which exist outside of the categories of space and time, as these are human categories that we apply in order and make sense of experience. The importance that Epstein attaches to space and time when he talks about *photogénie* suggests that he clearly understood Kant's idea of *noumena* and *phenomena,* and was excited by the possibilities that cinema allowed. Cinema offers us a way of manipulating both space and time simultaneously, thus allowing us to distort the concepts which have hitherto ordered and made intelligible our perceptions.

Given that Epstein studied philosophy he would certainly have been keenly aware of Descartes and Kant, but there is also a connection between Epstein and the French philosopher Henri Bergson, that Malcolm Turvey explores[21]. As well as the Bergsonian influences evident within Epstein's work, Turvey discusses the metaphysical elements of Epstein's theory, and shows Epstein's ideas about film to be fundamentally flawed. This is worth pursuing, as it may be possible to rescue Epstein's ideas if we read them in a different way.

Turvey sites Epstein alongside Vertov, Balasz and Kracaur, within what he calls the revelationist tradition. This tradition "argues that the cinema's most significant property is its capacity to reveal truths about reality that are invisible to the human eye … allowing us to see reality as it really is and not as it appears to our flawed sense of sight." (Turvey, 2009, p.93) Turvey's main line of attack on Epstein focuses on the fact that Epstein seems to be saying that human sight is flawed because it cannot perceive the mobility of the world. Epstein, claims Turvey, was influenced by Bergson's notion that, "to perceive means to immobilise" (Bergson, in: Turvey, 2009, p.95) There is not the space here to go into the detail of Bergson's theory, but in sum it states that "[p]erception cuts out objects from their temporal becoming and the spatial whole of which they are a part, much like a still camera does." (Turvey, 2009, p.97)

Turvey is certainly correct in asserting that if we try to read Epstein as making strong claims about cinema being able to reveal *noumema* rather than *phenomena*, then we will become rapidly unstuck. It is clearly nonsense to state that human perception is flawed, and such a position is certainly untenable. The fact that our eyes

are sensitive to only a small range of the electromagnetic spectrum, and our ears to a small range of frequencies, means only that perception is limited, not that it is flawed. What this really tells us is that human perception is only one possible way of perceiving the world. A better way of understanding Epstein is to read him as asserting a weaker and more tenable claim. Epstein understood that the world we perceive is just one possible world; it is the world as it appears to human beings. Beings with different senses experience the world differently, thus it makes sense to conceptualise a world as it is 'in-itself' [noumena], and a world as it appears to us in perception [phenomena]. Epstein was not really asserting that the cinema could penetrate the veil of perception, not even Stan Brakhage's *Dog Star Man, 1961-1964,* could manage that, although it is as good a depiction of *noumena* as exists in the cinema. What he was asserting was that by manipulating space and time, the film-maker could distort Kant's forms of the phenomenon, thus creating for the first time a perception that was not altogether human. This exposes the nature of human perception and makes the viewer sensitive to the fact that what they ordinarily perceive is not all there is to perceive.

Epstein says that cinema reveals a world in constant motion. But Epstein is saying nothing more than through cinematography, including high speed and time lapse cinematography, these are simply aspects of the world that we are able to pay attention to. Film reveals only what is there, it is just that we can more readily pay attention to it, especially in close-ups. The reason that close-ups can reveal the mobility of the world is not because of some metaphysical power of the camera, but because "the close-up limits and directs the attention." (Epstein, in: Abel, 1988a, p.239) Ultimately, what we must say is that the cinema does not see through the veil

of appearance to present the world as it is in-itself, rather it gazes intently at what is in its field of vision and shows us what is there. Its power lies in its ability to show us what is there from unusual (or non-human) temporal and spatial perspectives. The forest that appears to be static is shown to be a mass of movement when shown in a time-lapse sequence; the constant movements of the face are able to be analysed in detail when shown in a close-up; the world as it appears to a snowball, to the top of a tree, to a wave in a storm, or to a bird in flight can be experienced via camera movement.

III. *Photogénie:* transformation and defamiliarisation

Before we conclude this chapter it will be beneficial to note the idea of defamiliarisation and its connection to *photogénie.* We have seen that a successful understanding of Epstein needs to see him as saying that cinema is a tool for enhancing perception in one of two ways. The first way is when cinema allows us to experience the world in a way that is unusual for us, but not impossible. For example, using a SpaceCam we could experience the world from the perspective of a bird, but we could experience something similar if we went hang-gliding. However, the experience is markedly different because in the cinema our full attention is directed towards the visual experience in a way that it would not be if we were actually hang-gliding. The second way is when cinema allows us to experience the world in a way that is impossible for us to perceive it normally. Variable speed recording is an example of this, and so is rapid montage editing: both allow us to experience the world is a distinctly non-human way. Our normal perception is limited, but it is not

flawed: it is, however, frequently tired, automatic and dulled. Out of necessity we filter out much of what it is possible to see, often seeing what we expect to see, or what we have become accustomed to seeing. Cinema can help to reinvigorate perception. This links clearly to the ideas of defamiliarisation put forward by the Russian Formalist, Victor Shklovsky, whose ideas have been explored in relation to cinema by Kristin Thompson[22]. Thompson tells us that, "Art defamiliarizes our habitual perceptions of the everyday world … artworks engage us at every level and change our way of perceiving, feeling and reasoning." (Thompson, 1988, pp.10-11)

> If we start to examine the general laws of perception, we see that as perception becomes habitual it becomes automatic … art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone *stony.* The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived, not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar', to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. *Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important.*
>
> Shklovsky, in: Thompson, 1981, p.32

The links between *photogénie* and defamiliarisation are also suggested by Bordwell who notes, "Jean Epstein's suggestion that normal perception, dulled by routine, no longer discovers beauty directly, but the lens, 'centers, drains, and distils' beauty into *photogénie.*" (Bordwell, 1974, p.111) *Photogénie* is the unfamiliar, it is the *stoniness* of the stone which is revealed through the *photogénie* of character. It is prolonged perception via high-speed cinematography. Cinema allows us to experience the world in an unfamiliar way. Thompson's point that "if a series of artworks uses the same means over and over, the defamiliarizing capabilities of those means diminishes" (Thompson, 1988, p.11) is precisely the same point that Epstein was making in *For a New Avat-*Garde when he talked about, "fanatics devoted to

shopworn methods." (Epstein, in Abel, 1988a, p.349) Just as we have to find new ways of defamiliarising the world, so we have to discover new *photogénies.*

Conclusion

A number of questions were asked at the start of this dissertation. What is *photogénie* and why was it such a central concept for Epstein? What is its purpose, and in what ways does it function? We will answer these questions here.

Broadly speaking, Epstein's project was the attempt to codify the emerging language of cinema. He wanted to allow cinema to speak in its own language, not one composed from the language of literature, painting, photography and theatre, and he believed that the way to do this was through experimentation and discovery. Epstein traced a difficult line in his discussions of *photogénie.* He could have claimed, as Delluc did, that *photogénie* was beyond explanation[23]. Or he could have fallen into circular reasoning, as Bell did with his idea of significant form[24]. In both these cases one ends up not being able to say anything very meaningful about the subject in question. On the other hand, he could have resorted to the *a priori* reasoning of medium specificity. However, this is as problematic as vicious circularity, and ends up running into logical dead ends[25]. For Delluc and Bell, the problem resides in their failure to rationalise aspects of their aesthetic theories. Conversely, for the *a priori* medium specifict, the problem is their overdependence on the rational at the expense of the aesthetic. Where Epstein succeeds is in his understanding that *photogénie* requires both aesthetic and rational judgements. And this is why he stated that *photogénie* had to be discovered through experimentation. By thinking about the kind of medium that film is, we can begin to understand what its unique properties are, and we can devise methods for exploiting these properties. But this will not guarantee a moment of *photogénie,* because we will have to film the sequence and use

our aesthetic judgement to determine whether or not the sequence succeeds. Its aesthetic success cannot be pre-judged.

So what is *photogénie?* It is those moments where the shot or the sequence is the least indebted to human modes of perception, the moments when our attention is directed towards the mobility of (or in) the shot. It occurs when our awareness of spatiality and temporality as human constructs is at its most pronounced, and where the animism of the camera reveals objects and/or characters in the shot as being more than the sum of their appearances. *Photogénie* also refers to the imperfect transparency of the medium. Whereas the point of continuity editing was to disguise the audience's awareness of the film as a film, Epstein was appealing to film-makers to use devices that would draw attention to the nature of the medium through the use of extreme close-ups, experimental camera movements and temporal manipulation. In this sense *photogénie* can be likened to the painterly technique of van Gogh, in which there is no attempt to hide the physical presence of the medium, rather it becomes an integral part of the aesthetic.

There is no short and easy answer to the question of *photogénie*, because, as we have seen, it is a complex and multilayered concept. On a theoretical level, *photogénie* is certainly concerned with the essence of cinema, and with the establishment of a uniquely cinematic language. It is also concerned with the transformative nature of the medium and its potential to refresh and revitalise normal perception. Similarly, *photogénie* is about enhancing and breaking free of some of the limits of human perception. On an aesthetic level *photogénie* is concerned to distance itself from the other arts and to create its own independent aesthetic. Central to this aesthetic is the

rejection of films dominated by plot and narrative, and their replacement by a cinema of dreams, delusions and emotions. *Photogénie* is concerned with the use of uniquely cinematic devices and the depiction of movement, in particular through the use of close-ups, camera movement, rhythmic editing and temporal manipulation. It is also concerned with the power of cinema to imbue inanimate objects with a sense of life. On a cultural level *photogénie* is about legitimising the art of film. It promotes the idea that film can be art, and that film-makers can be artists. It also suggests to audiences that they cease to be passive spectators who simply consume film as entertainment, and begin to formulate critical aesthetic judgements about film. *Photogénie* creates space for a film culture and the serious discussion of film via film journals, critics, academics and audiences. Thus *photogénie* is not only a matter of the establishment of a language of film, but with extending the language we use to discuss film. On a national level, *photogénie* is concerned with the creation of a specifically French style of film-making, one that resists the hegemony of American films.

The reason that *photogénie* was such a central concept for Epstein was because it proposed a new type of film-making based on a new way of thinking about film. It presented the idea that film could be both popular and artistically valid. Its purpose was the legitimisation of film as art (and film-makers as artists), and, as we have seen, it functioned variously on cultural, aesthetic and theoretical levels to achieve its aims. The final answer to the question 'what is *photogénie?'* is to state that it is not any kind of *thing* at all. The attempt to reify *photogénie* ensures that it will remain elusive. *Photogénie* is not a thing that exists in film, but a way of thinking about film.

Filmography

Louis Feuillade - *Judex (1917)*

Abel Gance - *J'accuse/I Accuse (1919)*

Jacques Feyder - *L'Atlantide/Queen of Atlantis (1921)*

Abel Gance - *La roue/The Wheel (1922)*

Jean Epstein - *Cœur fidèle/A Faithful Heart (1923)*

Jacques Feyder - *Crainquebille/Coster Bill of Paris (1923)*

Man Ray - *Le retour à la raison/Return to Reason (1923)*

Rene Clair - *Paris qui dort/The Crazy Ray (1924)*

Viking Eggeling - *Symphonie diagonale/Diagonal Symphony (1924)*

Fernand Leger - *Ballet mécanique/The Mechanical Ballet (1924)*

Marcel Duchamp - *Cinéma anémic/Anaemic Cinema (1925)*

Jacques Feyder - *Visages d'enfants/Faces of Children (1925)*

Jean Renoir - *La Fille de l'eau/Whirlpool of Fate (1925)*

Germaine Dulac - *La coquille et le clergyman/The Seashell and the Clergyman (1926)*

Dimitri Kirsanoff - *Ménilmontant (1926)*

Man Ray - *Emak-Bakia (1926)*

Jean Renoir - *Nana (1926)*

Raymond Bernard - *Le Joueur d'echecs/The Chess Player (1927)*

Jean Epstein - *La glace à trois faces/The Three Sided Mirror (1927)*

Abel Gance - *Napoléon vu par Abel Gance/Napoleon as seen by Abel Gance (1927)*

Jean Renoir - *Sur un air de charleston/Charleston Parade (1927)*

Carl Th. Dreyer - *La passion de Jeannne d'Arc/The Passion of Joan of Arc (1928)*

Jean Epstein - *La chute de la maison Usher/The Fall of the House of Usher (1928)*

Man Ray - *L'étoile de mer/The Starfish (1928)*

Jean Renoir - *La petite marchande d'allumettes/The Little Match Girl (1928)*

Luis Buñuel & Salvador Dali - *Un chien andalou/An Andalusian Dog (1929)*

Marcel L'Herbier - *L'argent/Money (1929)*

Man Ray - *Les mystéres du château du dé/The Mysteries of the Chateau of Dice (1929)*

Jean Epstein - *Le Tempestaire/The Tempest, Poem on the Sea (1947)*

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Endnotes

[1] In addition to their theoretical works, Eisenstein wrote his memoirs, translated and published as *Beyond the Stars.* Epstein also wrote two novels, *L'Or des mers*, and *Les Recteurs et la sirène in Sein*, neither of which has been translated.

[2] Two of Epstein's writings, both translated by Stuart Liebman, that do not appear in Abel's anthology appear in the film journal *October, Volume 3 (Spring, 1977).* The articles are *Timeless Time* and *The Universe Head Over Heels.*

[3] Sometimes translated as 'photogeny'.

[4] Although he is generally known as a French film-maker, Epstein was born in Warsaw, and did not move to France until 1921.

[5] See Bordwell (1974) and Abel (1984) for the most complete account of this period in French cinema.

[6] Both of the key academic texts on the subject, Bordwell (1974) and Abel (1984), have long been out-of-print.

[7] In, respectively: *French Impressionist Cinema: Film Culture, Film Theory, Film Style* (1974); *French Cinema, The First Wave, 1915-1929* (1984); *To Desire Differently: Feminism and the French Cinema* (1996), and; *Cinema 1: The Movement Image* (1986)

[8] These directors have been linked to the Impressionist movement by David Bodwell (1974) and, Richard Abel (1984)*.*

[9] Shots are named in accordance with Katz, S. D. (1991) *Film Directing Shot by Shot: Visualizing from Concept to Screen,* California, Michael Wiese, p.122.

[10] The timing of the seven shot sequence in seconds is: 11; 1; 8; 1; 7; 1; 10.5.

[11] The standard convention for denoting the length of the shot is to give the number of frames. However, it would be misleading to state the number of frames in this case because additional frames have been inserted into the film in order that it can play on DVD at the correct running speed. Silent speed is usually around 20fps, but as European DVDs play at 25fps some frames have been duplicated to allow the film to play correctly at 25fps.

[12] Kevin Brownlow, *Napoleon: Abel Gance's Classic Film (2004).*

[13] Both Sean Dower's *Automaton* and Ori Gersht's *Pomegranate* (mentioned later) are short films that were produced in 2006 as part of the 'Single Shot' series of short films. These films were first shown at the Tate Modern, and are available to view at: http://www.single-shot.co.uk

[14] The original source of this quotation is unknown, but appears on the cover of the 2008 Flicker Alley DVD release of the film.

[15] See, for example, Abel (1984) p.359

[16] Time-lapse footage of plants growing, for example.

[17] It is very likely that the majority of the interiors were filmed in a studio, as the sound sync is too perfect to have been post-dubbed. Alternatively, Epstein may have found suitable interiors on Belle Île and set these up as temporary sound studios. At around 12:10, the woman's breath is visible in shot, which makes it more likely that it was a set on Belle Île, possibly with the roof removed to allow more light in. This was how Michael Powell filmed the interiors in the Shetlands for his film *The Edge of the World, 1937*, and he mentions the cold and the problem of breath appearing in shot in his account of the film, *200,000 Feet on Foula*.

[18] The timings of the dialogue repetitions are: (1) a portion of the dialogue that begins at 4:02 is repeated at 5:55, (2) a portion of the dialogue that begins at 11:05 is

repeated at 13:38, and (3) a portion of the dialogue that begins at 20:55 is repeated at 21:55. Timings are from the 2005 Kino Video DVD.

[19] See, for example, Winston, B. (1996) 'White Skin and Colour Film: The Ideology of the Apparatus', In: Winston, B. *Technologies of Seeing: Photography, Cinematography and Television, Chapter 2,* London, BFI Publishing, pp.39-57.

[20] Descartes' "deep and lasting effect on the development of medicine" (Anon, 1980, p.111) is discussed in detail in: Lindeboom, G. A. (1978) *Descartes and Medicine,* Amsterdam, Editions Rodopi.

[21] Malcolm Turvey, *Epstein, Bergson & Vision (2009)* and *Doubting Vision: Film and the Revelationist Tradition (2008).*

[22] Kristin Thompson, *Eisenstein's Ivan the Terrible: A Neoformalist Analysis (1981)* and *Breaking the Glass Armor (1988).*

[23] "*photogénie* was an elusive and ineffable phenomenon, which could not be rationally conceptualised, as Louis Delluc made clear when he asserted that, in this case, 'Explanations here are out of place'." (Aitken, 2001 p.83)

[24] See, Warburton (2003) pp.22-4, for an explanation of the vicious circularity in Bell's theory.

[25] See, Carroll (2008) pp.35-52, for an explanation of the problems of medium specificity.