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EXTRACT (pre-publication)

The Movement-Image, The Time-Image and the Paradoxes of Literary and Other Modernisms

Garin Dowd

Which modernism or modernisms circulate in Deleuze's two-volume work on cinema? Can one meaningfully claim that both or either *The Movement-Image* (*Cinema I*) and *The Time-Image* (*Cinema II*) maintain connections with literary modernism? What relationship if any may be forged between theoretical debates in the areas of literary and film studies as these have been influenced by engagement with Deleuze's work on cinema? The first obstacle to any successful negotiation of these questions lies in the absence in the books of any reference to the category of modernism – a fact which is after all hardly surprising in a French author of Deleuze's generation. A second consideration is summed up well by Joost Raessens when he argues that “For Deleuze the term ‘modernity’ is not a neutral category. In effect modern cinema is a representation of differential thought which is determined [...] as a fundamental critique of the classic thought of Plato and Hegel.”¹ Scholars often assert that Deleuze's modernity owes much to Nietzsche, in the shape of the latter's demand for a new approach to questions of truth and knowledge. Once life is no longer judged in the name of a higher authority such as the good or the true, the stage is set for Nietzschean transvaluation. This is a process which subjects “every being, every action and passion, even every value, in relation to the life which they involve” (*TI* 141) to evaluation. This normative model of a cinema which has the capacity to carry out a Nietzschean total critique by means other than philosophy presides over *The Time-Image* in particular. In terms of the trajectory of Deleuze's thought, total critique is opposed, in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and *Difference and Repetition*, to Kantian critique as well as to Hegelian sublation. The thinking images of modern cinema, more specifically of its preeminent auteurs in Deleuze's pantheon such as Welles, Resnais, Godard, and others, can effectuate this new image of thought.² Thus is rendered tangible Deleuze's claim that films think, that cinema thinks. Thus are linked a modernism of cinema and a project which dates back to *Difference and Repetition*, namely the challenge to a certain image of thought. In this challenge the allies include the two philosophers who dominate the film books – Bergson and Nietzsche. This chapter assumes the position that it is impossible to consider Deleuze's modernism as being in any way other than intrinsically linked to his overall philosophical system and therefore that it is only in this context that connections with literary modernism can be explored.

¹ Joost Raessens, ‘Deleuze et la modernité cinématographique’, in O. Fahle and L. Engell (eds), *Der Film bei Deleuze/Le cinéma selon Deleuze* (Berlin and Paris: Verlag der Bauhaus-Universität Weimar and Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1997) pp. 669–675 (273).

² Nietzsche, Deleuze points out, opposes judgement as it is embodied in Kant's “fantastic subjective tribunal.” For the latter model depends upon the prior inscription (in short, the prescription – the writing in advance and ordaining) of a form (to inspire conformity). To this is opposed Nietzschean transvaluation, giving rise to a “justice beyond all judgement” (*Essays Critical and Clinical* 27).