

# **BETWEEN STILL AND MOVING IMAGES**

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excepting chapters 1.1, 1.4, 4.1 and 5.2*

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refers to pure perception – a theoretical requisite for Bergson – and to matter, all of which is movement. In the second case, it refers to perception even though perception is considered from a negative angle, as what distorts the very essence of reality, which is duration. The conceptual cluster associated with photography is very different in these two cases: what is of particular interest to us here is that photography is movement when associated with matter, but it is stillness when perception is analysed as an illusion.

In the end, two photographic paradigms coexist for Bergson: one in the photographic metaphor, the other in the cinematographic model, the latter being a stage towards the double paradigm that was to oppose photography and cinema as still image and moving image (Table 2).<sup>36</sup>

Table 2

Photography and movement	Photography	Referred to...
Photographic metaphor	Photography = Movement Matter Perception	–
Cinematographic model	Photography = freezing the moving object (still image)	Movement of the moving object
Double paradigm constituted	Photography = still image	Cinema = moving image

The photographic metaphor stands poles apart from the photographic image as defined in the stillness/movement paradigm. A photograph is indeed a still image, materially and technically, and could as such be opposed to the moving image. Yet concepts associated with it do not take this characteristic into consideration. The reverse happens, in fact: photography is not referred to a movement that would be exterior to it since, referring to matter, it is movement.

It is from within cinema in its chronophotographic stage that the opposition between stillness and movement began to consolidate, with photography being related to movement while it was itself identified as still. This movement, however, was first and foremost that of the moving object, not that of the image projected on a screen. Indeed, what interested Bergson the most was the movement of reality, which chronophotography distorts by breaking it down.

The double paradigm truly materialized from the moment when the photographic image was related to another movement, which was then privileged: the synthetic movement associated with cinema.

36 It should be mentioned that the opposition is not between Matter and Memory and Creative Evolution. Both models of photography had already appeared by 1896. We will later return to this question.

## A subjectivity torn between stasis and movement: Still image and moving image in medical discourse at the turn of the 20th century

### Mireille Berton

This study, which attempts to relate the history of media to the history of sciences, falls within the scope of a broader research on the role of audiovisual media in the construction of a body of knowledge pertaining to medicine and related disciplines such as psychology. The epistemological implications of practices and knowledge founded on the application of photography and cinema to the various taxonomies of the visible world have already been the object of a sizeable literature.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, what I propose instead is to examine the ways in which the photographic and cinematographic paradigms have been used in a series of texts that reflect a specific image of the psyche. Indeed, medicine – vying with philosophy for the prerogative of the so-called scientific psychology – had diagnosed new neuroses by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was thus able to produce a genuine social discourse on psychic morbidity as the sign of a crisis in a human civilization alienated by the effects of modernity.

Within such a dark vision of the world, saturated with “anxiety-inducing predi-

1 Thierry Lefebvre, Jacques Malthête and Laurent Mannoni, eds., *Sur les pas de Marey : science(s) et cinéma* [“In Marey’s Footsteps: Science(s) and Cinema”] (Paris: L’Harmattan/SEMIA, 2004); François Albera, Marta Braun, and André Gaudreault, eds., *Arrêt sur image, fragmentation du temps/Stop Motion, Fragmentation of Time* (Lausanne: Éd. Payot, 2002); Christian Pociello, *La science en mouvements: Étienne Marey et Georges Demeny (1870–1920)* [“Science in Movements: Étienne Marey and Georges Demeny, 1870–1920”] (Paris: PUF, 1999); Roland Cosandey and François Albera, *Cinéma sans frontières 1896–1918* [“Cinema without Borders, 1896–1918”] (Lausanne: Éd. Payot; Quebec: Nuit Blanche Éditeur, 1995); Michel Frizot, *Avant le Cinématographe, la Chronophotographie : temps, photographique et mouvement autour de É.-J. Marey* [“Before the Cinematograph: Chronophotography, Time, Photography, and Movement around E.-J. Marey”] (Beaune: Les Amis de Marey/Ministère de la culture, 1984); Georges Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the Photographic Iconography of the Salpêtrière* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003) [1982].

cates" ("prédicats anxigènes"),<sup>2</sup> cinema and photography provided rhetorical and epistemological tools which made it possible to explain the psychic activity of a perceiving subject. The said subject then became the productive site for and the receptor of atypical perceptive phenomena such as the sudden subjection to the apparition of still as well as moving images (but also to the perception of sounds, and sometimes even tactile sensations). The psychic system was thought of as a machine capable of accumulating sensory impressions and reactualizing them owing to some hallucinatory, oneiric, or anxious episode. It thus appeared to combine a system of perception and representation intersecting the functional logic of both technologies.

My hypothesis is that modernity, through photography and cinema, provided medical discourse with an idea of still images and moving images which, in their hypertrophied version (extreme stillness and mobility), constituted a semiotics of disruption in the function of the real.<sup>3</sup> The crisis of the subject, variously articulated by such twentieth-century discursive formations as Lacanian psychoanalysis, accordingly appears like a possible repercussion of this codification of subjectivity and its reassessment in the light of modernity.

### Stasis and flux

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, commentaries on modernity and its different effects regularly mentioned cases of patients whose psychic and perceptive system had been seriously disrupted. This restructuring process at work in perception could be measured among healthy perceiving subjects (city dwellers) as well as sick ones (neurasthenics or hysterics). It was problematized in terms that articulated in various ways two opposed, apparently contradictory states or moments, stillness and mobility, which involved vision, perception, and thought alternately. Accordingly, these discourses make it possible to bring to light two extreme models of subjectivity actualized in notional pairs such as atrophy and hypertrophy, absorption and distraction, insensitivity and irritability, inhibition and automatism. The twin paradigms of hypnosis (divided between anesthesia and perceptible over-acuity) and hysteria (divided between paralysis and convulsion) spectacularly corroborate these dualisms.<sup>4</sup> Perceptive disorders thus seem to fall along an axis running between two types of psychic conditions – one where forces of association predominate (attention, tension, resistance, wholeness, immobility, stability), and another where forces of dissociation prevail (distraction, relaxation, suggestibility, lability, multiplicity, transitivity).

2 Marc Angenot, 1889. *Un état du discours social* ["1889: a Snapshot of Social Discourse"] (Quebec: Le Préambule, 1989) 34.

3 In Pierre Janet's sense, namely, as a dysfunctional relation to reality or, to put it in Freudian terms, as a dysfunction of the reality principle.

4 On the "twinship" of hypnosis and hysteria, see Pierre-Henri Castel, *La Querelle de l'hystérie* ["The Dispute over Hysteria"] (Paris: PUF, 1998).

It appears very tempting, that being the case, to see a symmetry between the dual paradigm of stasis and flux and that of photography and cinema – and to attempt and connect them, following the assumption that medical discourse itself considered the techniques as the epitomes of fixity and movement, respectively. Still, the two apparatuses seem to have been approached as the sites of a subjective absorption, ambivalent in its effects, related to both paralysing captivation and dissolving stream. Cinema and photography could potentially weaken attention, will, and memory, causing various forms of perceptive instability detectable in the subjects of neurosis as well as in the subjects deemed vulnerable, such as children and women. However, while both cinema and photography were able to account for the dynamic model of the psychic system, shot through as it was by fields of opposite forces, their models were often apprehended through their individual components as well as according to concepts or ideas exclusively associated with them.<sup>5</sup> Photography and cinema could thus function without distinction, providing either the explanatory principle of a psychic phenomenon (in the theories of hallucination, for instance) or the objects, parts, and specific effects needed for a piecemeal approach. Photography was then often associated with mnemonic images, while cinema tended to be attached to delirious images. The present analysis rests on the examination of a corpus of sources constituted from a larger research on the relations between the cinematographic apparatus and the sciences of the psyche at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup> It makes it possible to draw up the inventory of a series of actions performed by the psyche, some shared by both apparatuses, some others the prerogative of only one of them. For its part, photography exposes or records, fixes, preserves, focuses, haunts, freezes, or produces hallucinations whereas cinema exposes, thinks, dreams, projects, traumatizes, excites, or produces hallucinations. I should mention at this point that, while theories of the psyche generally referred to both models (with that of cinema appearing in its pre-cinematographic variations before 1900), the distribution of these occurrences involved slightly different domains. While the cinematographic model garnered the favours of the theories of dreams and consciousness, the photographic model seems to have been preferred in essays bearing on memory and attention. Systems of production or reproduction of icons in general (painting, panorama, magic lantern, etc.) appear to have entered massively the conceptual and didactic apparatus of the sciences of the psyche. This may be explained by the figurative capacities of apparatuses enrolled in the

5 My methodology rests on the founding principles of the epistemology of cinema put forth by Maria Tortajada and François Albera in "L'Épistémè '1900'", in *Le Cinéma, nouvelle technologie du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle/ The Cinema, A New Technology for the 20th Century* [proceedings of the 2002 Dömitor International Conference on Early Cinema] eds. André Gaudreault, Catherine Russell and Pierre Véronneau (Lausanne: Payot, 2004) 45–62.

6 This article is part of a doctoral thesis currently in progress titled "Le dispositif cinématographique comme modèle épistémologique dans les sciences du psychisme au tournant du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle. L'invention du sujet moderne" ["The Cinematographic Apparatus as Epistemological Model in the Sciences of the Psyche at the Turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The Invention of the Modern Subject"], under the supervision of Professor François Albera.

service of theories that granted the image a fundamental position, with the mind seen as a machine ceaselessly expressing its various contents in visual terms.

### Théodule Ribot and the mental image

As François Brunet underscores in his book on the idea of photography, the technology truly became a commonplace in social, cultural, and scientific discourse as early as the mid-nineteenth century, lending itself particularly well to thinking on the functioning of the psyche.<sup>7</sup> The modern, metaphorical use of photography as an automatic system for the production of shots emerged around 1880. Distinct from a classical mode that centered around the mimetic valency (a common trope since around 1850), this use coincided with the advent of neurasthenia, a nosological entity grouping together an infinite variety of symptoms linked to unbalance in psychological operations tied to concentration, memorization, or the action of the subject.

Théodule Ribot, the founder of scientific psychology in France, took much interest in disorders affecting memory, will, and attention, and he synthesized and actualized the totality of available knowledge on these disorders.<sup>8</sup> While willingly exercising one's capacity of attention was the privilege of an elite gifted with a level of intelligence lacking among "degenerates",<sup>9</sup> it nevertheless presented itself as a momentary, intermittent, fixed, and fundamentally punctual state that took the form of an obnubilation of the mind freezing the course of thoughts. Indeed, according to Ribot, the mental life of a fit man consists in "a perpetual coming and going of inward events, in a *marching by of sensations, feelings, ideas, and images*, which associate with, or repel, each other according to certain laws", like a "mobile aggregate which is being incessantly formed, unformed and re-formed".<sup>10</sup> The statement calls to mind the theories of the English associationist school, notably represented by Alexander Bain. Bain postulated that the mind comprised psychological data, simple (sensations) as well as complex (voluntary actions), combined according to a set of precise laws, conditions, and causes.<sup>11</sup> All events pertaining to consciousness associated in accordance with a causal logic linking psychological states to one another, a state always being the product and the result of a previous state. Ribot viewed attention as a kind of freeze frame, which he called monoideism. Coming to interrupt a continuous and chaotic

7 François Brunet, *La naissance de l'idée de photographie* ["The Advent of the Idea of Photography"] (Paris: PUF, 2000).

8 Théodule Ribot, *The Psychology of Attention* (Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 2006) [1889].

9 The term was disseminated by Bénédict-Augustin Morel in France and was frequently used at the time to refer to marginal populations in general. See *Traité de dégénérescences physiques, intellectuelles et morales de l'espèce humaine et de ses causes qui produisent ces variétés maladives* ["Treatise on Physical, Intellectual, and Moral Degeneration in the Human Species, and on the Causes That Produce These Various Pathologies"] (Paris: Baillière et Fils, 1857).

10 Ribot, *The Psychology of Attention* 3. My emphasis.

11 Alexander Bain, *The Senses and the Intellect* (Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 2004) [1855].

psychic flux (polyideism), it thus appeared as "the momentary inhibition [...] of this perpetual progression".<sup>12</sup>

While polyideism and monoideism naturally alternated in the mind of a sane individual, the morbid states of attention led to an atrophy or a hypertrophy of the faculty of attention, exacerbating the intensity of these variations usually tied "to the law of rhythm".<sup>13</sup> The pathology was therefore always heralded by a sudden freeze or by a rush in the process of thinking. Ribot introduced all the agents playing a part in the projection of images in a passage on mania, which is characterized by a lack of attention that takes the form of a rapid association of ideas and images against which the subject is powerless. He referred to the attention-related excess as a "general and permanent over-excitation of the psychic life":

The state of consciousness is *immediately projected outwards*. [...] sensations, images, ideas, feelings *follow each other* with such astonishing rapidity that they scarcely attain to the condition of complete consciousness, and so that frequently the bond of association uniting them is totally undiscoverable to the *spectator*. Or in the very words of one of these maniacs, "It is really frightful to think of the extreme rapidity with which ideas succeed one another in the mind". To recapitulate, we find here, in the mental order of things, a disordered flow of images and ideas; in the motor order, a flux of words, shouts, gesticulations, and impetuous movements.<sup>14</sup>

The maniac subject thus turned into a kind of machine producing in an automatic and irresistible manner images projected outside of oneself in the form of essentially motor and verbal releases. This type of description certainly does not allow us to assume the existence of a psychic screen on which the byproduct of such an inner agitation would appear. By contrast, such an assumption appears quite reasonable with another case of mania, that of a young law student obsessed by the fluctuations of the stock exchange and who "at last retained permanently before his eyes the image and picture of the bank-notes themselves, in all their varieties of form, size, and colour. The idea, with its incessant repetitions and intensity, *came to assume a force of projection that made it equivalent to reality*. Yet he himself had ever the full consciousness that the images floating before his eyes were merely a freak of his imagination."<sup>15</sup> The passage implies the presence of a virtual screen upon which the tormented mind projects its obsession. As though placed in front of the eyes of the perceiving subject, the screen receives a series of endogenous images through an exogenous projective process, as the subject expels the product of his affliction. This clearly involves the paradigm of an apparatus for the projection of – presumably moving – images. Still, questioning

12 Ribot, *The Psychology of Attention* 4.

13 Ribot, *The Psychology of Attention* 9.

14 Ribot, *The Psychology of Attention* 96. [My emphasis] The excess of attention paradoxically results in a stagnation of attention, a sort of paralysis that prevents consciousness from channeling and organizing what is perceived, leading to an expression of thinking both disorderly and anarchical.

15 Ribot, *The Psychology of Attention* 82. My emphasis.

as to the nature of these images described as diverse, repeated, and ceaseless is not exhausted, as it seems difficult to clear up the ambiguity on the localization of movement. Is it in the image itself, *between* images succeeding one another according to a logic of successiveness or superimposition, or both?

Generally, the image for Ribot was always the reactivation of a perceptive stimulus that took a hallucinatory turn in proportion to the intensity of the force that had presided over the impression upon the psyche of traces of the perceptive act. The process of projective emission was directly correlated to the hold of an obsession transformed into a hallucination, the consciousness of illusion notwithstanding. It thus remained tied to the idea of a psychic dissociation between seeing and knowing, a regime of belief that also shaped a number of traditions in spectacle over the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. At the time, Ribot insisted that “the image is not a photograph but a revival of the sensorial and motor elements that have built up the perception”,<sup>16</sup> that is, not a mere copy of what was perceived and which as such would always lack the vividness of the original impression. These reservations towards the photographic metaphor, often used at the time to refer to the capacity of the psyche to retain the perceptive impressions issuing from the outside world, do not sound unlike comments by Hippolyte Taine on the plainly automatic character of a technique seemingly limited to unartistic redundancy and machine-produced mimeticism.<sup>17</sup> The photographic model nevertheless pervaded a theory of the image that could be summarized in a formula later corroborated by psychophysiology as well as the psychoanalysis of perception: seeing is always seeing again.

### *Idée fixe* and psychic automatism

For philosopher and psychiatrist Pierre Janet, who taught at the Collège de France, the *idée fixe* – or hypertrophy of attention – took the form of hallucinations and machine-like acts, pointing to an altered state of consciousness, which dissociated itself from the self to grow “in an automatic and independent manner”.<sup>18</sup> He found that his patient Marcelle, a young woman suffering from abulia (a state of mental weakness) as well as *idées fixes*, swung from so-called crises of “cloudiness”, with ideas and images passing through her mind in a chaotic way, to “clear instants” – clear-headed parentheses temporarily breaking the trance characteristic of the cloud.<sup>19</sup> These crises of ideas, which were also crises of images, threw “the patient in a sleeping state punctuated by dreams”, cutting her

16 Ribot, *The Psychology of Attention* 48.

17 Taine made a clear distinction between photography and painting: in his view, photography produced a mechanical image of the real while painting tended to imitate a reality but preserved a ratio of invention and creativity which the operation of the photographic camera would always lack. Hippolyte-Adolphe Taine, *The Philosophy of Art* (New York: Holt and Williams, 1867) 36–40.

18 Pierre Janet, *Leçons au Collège de France (1895–1934)* [“Lectures at the Collège de France, 1895–1934”], *Encyclopédie Psychologique* series (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2004) 49.

19 Pierre Janet, *Névroses et idées fixes* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1898).

off completely from the outside world. They were “accompanied with sheer hallucinations”<sup>20</sup> and visual in nature, streaming through a mind forced to attend to a spectacle at once fast, iterative, and unavoidable. As often stated in medical discourse, the hallucination produced a very “vivid” and “intense” image, at once “precise”, “detailed”, “perfect”, and “stable” – qualifying adjectives that could equally apply to the photographic and cinematographic images.

The study of psychic dysfunctions also made it possible to emphasize two fundamental tropes, unimpeded automatism and intense focalization. On the one hand, the perceiving subject may fall prey to an irrepressible production of images appearing either in the form of an uninterrupted and overpowering stream of images or as the apparition of a single image soon superimposed with a new image and gradually covered over by it. On the other hand, the mind of the patient may be equipped with “a mechanism of excitability that reinforces images”, in Charles Richet’s expression,<sup>21</sup> a mechanism particularly developed among subjects suffering from *idées fixes*. According to Ribot, unbridled monoideism led to the concentration of consciousness on an image or a cluster of images, a phenomenon akin to astonishment and surprise and which he explained in terms of a brutal and impetuous image breaking the natural flow of the stream of consciousness: “The state of surprise or astonishment is spontaneous attention augmented”, Ribot wrote, and that notably involves “the augmentation of nervous influx in consequence of the impression [...] Surprise, and in a higher degree astonishment, is a shock produced by that which is new and unexpected [...] and in its strong form, it is a commotion. Properly speaking, it is not so much a state, as an intermediate condition between two states, an abrupt rupture, a gap, an hiatus”.<sup>22</sup>

In both cases, the pathogenous mental image appears as an excessive image – excessively mobile in some cases, excessively immobile in others. The abnormal mobility of the neurotic psyche thus encompasses states of stasis as well as states of feverishness, a fundamental duality accounted for by the law of association by contrast, according to which opposed facts of consciousness combine in a determinist logic.<sup>23</sup> For many doctors the law explained the cyclothymia of neurotics, whose overworked brains ceaselessly shuttled back and forth between phases of excitement and depression. The thermodynamic model of human psychology put forth by Charles Féré demonstrated that the “degree to which the subject is vibratile”<sup>24</sup> depended on such alternation. In an overworked brain, excitation

20 Janet, *Névroses et idées fixes* 18.

21 Charles Richet, *Essai de psychologie générale*, 4th edn. (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1901) 7.

22 Ribot, *The Psychology of Attention* 23–25. The psychological notion of the augmentation of attention, widespread in the sciences of the psyche, was to be reinterpreted in filmic terms by psychologist Hugo Münsterberg, who in 1917 explicitly associated attention with the close-up in photography and cinema. See *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study and Other Writings*, ed. Allan Langdale (London: Routledge, 2002).

23 See for instance Frédéric Paulhan, *L’activité mentale et les éléments de l’esprit* [“Mental Activity and the Elements of the Mind”] (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1887).

thus caused fatigue, which in turn was transformed into overstimulation.<sup>25</sup> The aberrant fixation on an image caused the perceiving subject to plunge into a state that was both its inverse and its complementary reverse, thereby revealing their reciprocal, periodic, and syntagmatic perpetuation. The association between stillness and movement thus concerned not only the agitation of nervous bodies at once unfocused and petrified,<sup>26</sup> but also the idiosyncratic excitability of their psychic system.

### Trauma and cinematographic stream

The film apparatus subjects the spectator to a spectacle both all-powerful and irrefragable and is in that respect comparable to the many devices meant to take over from a failing or refractory perception, as Jonathan Crary has demonstrated.<sup>27</sup> The dread of a consciousness slipping into marginal states, perceptible in a medical discourse whose theoretical, clinical, and therapeutic instruments it exceeded, echoed the concerns raised by the deleterious effects cinema was assumed to have on its audience. Indeed, while cinema may be approached as a disciplinary apparatus, it was also a place of alternative scopic regimes.

The cinematographic paradigm was widely used in the theories of dreams and of their possible pathologies (insomnia, hypnosis, somnambulism) as well as in the psychopathology of traumas. So was the photographic paradigm as a consequence, since the lexicon of cinema includes it: each time, then, a whole interdiscursive chain formed by their technical contiguity was put into play. A good example of such paradigmatic solidarity is an article by Dr. Laupts, "Le fonctionnement cérébral pendant le rêve et le pendant le sommeil hypnotique" ["The Operations of the Brain during Dreams and Hypnotic Sleep"],<sup>28</sup> in which the notions of impression, fixation, blur, sharpness, and tableau may be found next to those of streams of visual or sound images, impressions during sleep, images "following each other and running into each other",<sup>29</sup> "transforming very rapidly".<sup>30</sup> Photographic and cinematographic images with their main characteristics gradually appear in the description of the typical dream of the high-strung patient, whether hypnagogic or clear-headed: sharpness, hallucinogeny, fleeting or intermediate states of consciousness.

24 Charles Féré, *Sensation et mouvement. Études expérimentales de psychio-mécanique* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1887) 126.

25 On the alternation between irritation and inhibition, see also Jean Soury, rev. of *I Fenomeni di contrasto in psicologia*, by Dr. Sante de Sanctis (Rome, 1895), *Annales médico-psychologiques* 4 (1896): 148.

26 Albert Londe's photographs both challenged and confirmed this, as André Gunthert's research has shown. See André Gunthert, *Albert Londe*, Photo Poche series (Paris: Nathan, 1999); "Entre photographie et cinéma: Albert Londe", in *Le Cinéma et la Science*, ed. Alexis Martinet (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 1994) 62–69; Denis Bernard and André Gunthert, "Albert Londe, l'image multiple", in *La Recherche Photographique* 4 (May 1988): 7–15.

27 Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999).

28 Dr. Laupts, *Annales médico-psychologiques* 2 (1895): 354–375.

29 Laupts, *Annales médico-psychologiques* 358.

30 Laupts, *Annales médico-psychologiques* 359, note 1.

Before 1900 direct references to cinema remained hypothetical, notably with regard to the use of the term "stream" ("défilé") and its probable origin in the magic lantern. A few years later, these references had become quite explicit in an article by physiologist and psychologist Henri Piéron on the speed of psychic processes.<sup>31</sup> The phenomenon at stake occurred following poisonings or accidents in which the subject came within a hair's breadth of death and saw the outstanding episodes of his/her life unfold as though in speeded-up motion – an acceleration which the subject interpreted as such in retrospect:

Why does the acceleration appear to be more important than it actually is? First, because some images are rich and take time to narrate and describe; second, and mainly, because a *cinematographic stream* takes place. Images have clear outlines: they are *cinematographic tableaux* and abruptly succeed one another, without a bridge or a transition between them [...] and afterwards, and even at the time, there is a tendency to fill in the gaps, or at least to consider them filled. As a few salient episodes of a life pass through the mind, it appears as though this life in its entirety has unfolded without anything missing, as in a *genuine cinematograph*. And even when the said reconstruction is impossible, given the fact that images have nothing in common, their number will be noted, whereas a single image undergoing distortion, even when it features an equal number of transformations, will always appear to be but a single image. It is the observers themselves who consider it multiple, as they turn their attention to processes of association.<sup>32</sup>

The imagination of the still and the moving image, in conjunction with that of the single and the multiple image (whose distinction seems blurred by the metamorphoses of what is perceived), mingle again in this case. The notion of "cinematographic tableaux" undoubtedly refers to the aesthetics of early cinema, characterized by the primitive mode of representation as defined by Noël Burch: autonomy of the image, gaps in the narrative structure, lack of a logical spatiotemporal articulation between shots.<sup>33</sup> In a regime of representation in which theatricality, monstration, and punctual events predominate over narrativity and vectoriality, the fixity of a tableau appears quite relative. It points to the self-sufficient dimension of each shot – a tableau working like a stage on which the various important phases of the subject's past play out recursively.

What stands out in medical discourse is the recurrent idea that the mentally ill subject turns into a machine, producing and sometimes projecting still and/or moving images. Hysterics and neurasthenics were notably considered as such – doctors then used the expression "hysterogenous machines"<sup>34</sup> – as they ceaselessly translated their inner impressions into representations. The parallel between psychic disorders and the (audio)visual apparatuses of modernity finds an appar-

31 Henri Piéron, *Revue philosophique* 28.1–6 (January–June 1903): 89–95.

32 Piéron, *Revue philosophique* 95. My emphasis.

33 Noël Burch, *Life to those Shadows*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: BFI, 1990).

34 See for instance Paul-Émile Lévy, "Traitement psychique de l'hystérie. La rééducation" ["The Psychic Treatment of Hysteria: Therapy"] in *La Presse médicale* 34 (29 Apr. 1903): 333–336; Alexandre Cullerle, "Hypnotisme et suggestion", in *Annales médico-psychologiques* 18 (1903): 253.

ent confirmation in the alarmist discourses directed at cinema from the 1910s on. Indeed, concerns about the damage caused by cinema as a pastime do not seem to have taken hold in the community of social and mental hygienists until the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Film spectators, as the healthy counterparts to neurotics, were deemed particularly susceptible to the fast stream of enlarged, projected images and to the violence and vividness of some motifs or narratives. Accordingly, while experts listed the harmful physiological, psychological, and emotional consequences of film screenings, they backed up their clinical observations according to a conception divided between intense focalization on a “frozen” image and fast-paced attention to a continuous stream of images.

In 1911 an Italian psychiatrist, Giuseppe d’Abundo, mentioned the various possible dangers of cinema for structurally fragile individuals.<sup>35</sup> In his view, such a hallucinogenous machine could destabilize overly emotional and excitable subjects and lead to a confusion between images and reality which could have repercussions in the patient’s life during the day or at night. A symbol and product of modernity, cinema thus shaped a psychophysiological posture – during the screening, but also after the event, as the trauma was (re-)lived later – and epitomized the contradictions inscribed in the perceptive system and its various dysfunctions. Using the metaphor of the cinematographic apparatus, the doctor considered that film images were stored in a part of the psychic system, then revived during dreams and other intermediate states (hypnagogic images, fits of hysterics, vigilant hallucinations, etc.). Moving images then appeared in an unpredictable, involuntary, and sudden manner before the eyes of the patient. The doctor also noted that the subject often remembered but a striking detail from the film – a detail which assumed outlandish and gigantic proportions once transposed in the realm of hallucination or reminiscence, while retaining its intensity and repetitiveness. D’Abundo thus described hallucination as an eminently suggestive scenario whose photographic trace remained in the visual cortical area, and which may be easily summoned up in the form of a projection at once “imitative, striking, and exaggerated in appearance”. The text is remarkable for its redundancy, as it is engaged, literally as well as metaphorically, with both cinema and photography. It summarizes a number of points broached so far with respect to the paradigms of still and moving images. Both pressing and stupefying, imaginary and more than real, shifting and univocal, indiscernible and incredible, the cinematographic image seems ideally suited for the agitated, forceful, and disconcerting world of psychopathology.

35 Giuseppe D’Abundo, “Sopra alcuni particolari effetti delle proiezioni cinematografiche nei nevrotici” [“On a Few Particular Effects of Film Screenings upon Neurotics”] in *Rivista italiana di neuropatologia psichiatria ed elettrotapia* (Oct. 1911), published in *Bianco e Nero* 550–551 (March 2004–Jan. 2005): 61–65. Translator’s note: the passage was translated from the French, after the author’s initial translation from the Italian.

### The dread of the subjective split

The dual paradigm of stasis and flux ran equally through the medical discourse on mental and nervous diseases and the discourse on cinema as a potentially pathogenic agent. Cinema and photography allowed to describe the functional modes of perceptive disorders in detail because both apparatuses were clearly referred to as emblems of modernity in social discourse, intellectual as well as general. In return, discursive formations related to the study of the psychophysiological reception of films largely tapped into the topical pool of specialized medical knowledge, which comprised analyses issuing mostly from psychologists or psychiatrists. Photo-cinematographic apparatuses and psychic systems thus traded their respective models. Such reversible modelization shows an interstitial space at the crossroads of the history of sciences and the history of techniques of representation, in which the principles of a theory of images that was to influence the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a whole were forged.

Still, the issue of the difference between photography and cinema, and its necessarily restrictive corollary of still and moving images, remains current. My tentative answer would be that, while photography allows to figure the work of a psychic system busy managing an economy of relationships between conscious and unconscious, cinema tends to deal with multisensorial shocks undergone by the psyche under the pressure of new living conditions. The photographic apparatus is rather well-suited in clarifying a play of lights and shadows taking place on the intimate scene of the mind; cinema accords better with a neurotic psychic system, at once hallucinogenic and hypnotic, and at odds with an outside environment notable for its aggressive potential. At any rate, the photographic model was approached relatively neutrally in texts of the period – or was at least considered independently from psychopathological etiologies, which indicates that it was largely accepted as a modern technology. By contrast, the cinematograph and its novelty raised concerns as to mental and social repercussions. More than photography, then, it seems to me that cinema (but also radio and television later) became a point of fixation for a host of anxieties on the susceptibility of the subject to suggestion and manipulation – a fact attested by the extraordinary growth of a literature on the psychology and sociology of crowds as well as on criminal anthropology at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>36</sup>

Film spectators and neurotics as hypnotic subjects were but possible incarnations of such a fear of a subjective split, both uncontrolled and uncontrollable since they were the easy preys of a stream of images and sounds of which they had no real command. While medicine investigated intrapsychic dissociations which shattered subjective certainty (and social relations), the cinematograph put forth, in the form of both a scientific attraction and an entertainment – an experimental lab of sorts which could gauge the ascendancy of what was perceived over the perceiving subject, as well as the effects of a dissolution of the self that threatened

36 See for instance the works of Gustave Le Bon, Gabriel Tarde, Sigmund Freud, and Cesare Lombroso.

the principle of reality. Bearing out this hypothesis is the fact that consciousness was often described by medical and paramedical discourse as the mere spectator of a scene taking place out of its reach: with this split, the subject appeared deeply self-alienated.<sup>37</sup> The whole history of the sciences of the psyche at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, haunted right through by the specter of the double and multiple personality, raises a series of questions – questions that exceed by far the small circle of specialists, if we consider their later, significant echoes in the cultural, social, and political arenas.<sup>38</sup>

## 4

## 'A series of fragments': Man Ray's *Le Retour à la raison* (1923)

**Samantha Lackey**

Man Ray showed his first solo film short *Le Retour à la raison at the Théâtre Michel in Paris on July 6, 1923 at the dada Soirée du Cœur à Barbe*. According to his account the film was greeted with derision and catcalls from the audience. However, as Man Ray noted in his autobiography (in a moment of candour rare for a dadaist) this reception was due in part to his technical inadequacies with film stock – the reel of film broke at least twice during the showing.<sup>1</sup> The apocryphal story of the film's creation relates how it was made last-minute at the behest of Tristan Tzara who had informed Man Ray that a small film by him had already been included in the programme of the evening. In response Man Ray hastily composed a work consisting of certain pre-filmed images (including a field of daisies, a nude torso moving in front of a window and images of revolving objects: an egg box and a paper spiral) and new footage – a development of his photographic rayograph process whereby objects were placed directly on the celluloid and then exposed to light, effectively producing a negative shape of the object on the film.<sup>2</sup>

Generally, it is true to say that the subsequent reception of the film has stressed its role within the Dada movement and its import as an innovative early work of anti-diegetic, abstract, avant-garde cinema. With the exception of the insightful publication, *Man Ray directeur du mauvais movies*, which presented the film as resisting singular meaning, critics have posited Man Ray's involvement in film as quite simply symptomatic of an attempt to extend photographic or object based experiments, or as a form of film poetry.<sup>3</sup> Rather than dismiss these readings out

<sup>1</sup> Man Ray, *Self-Portrait* (1963), London, Bloomsbury, 1988, pp. 212–213.

<sup>2</sup> Man Ray's description of the film is at odds with the extant version and there is some confusion as to the actual content of the film. Within this essay I will be referring to the version released on video to accompany the seminal exhibition mounted by the Centre Georges Pompidou in 1998, *Man Ray: directeur du mauvais movies*.

<sup>3</sup> See Jean-Michel Bouhours and Patrick de Haas, eds., *Man Ray directeur du mauvais movies*, Paris, Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 1997, Steven Kovács, *From Enchantment to Rage*, New Jersey, Associated University Presses, 1980 and Carl Belz, 'The Film Poetry of Man Ray', in *Man Ray*, exhibition catalogue, Los Angeles, Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1960, pp. 43–52.

<sup>37</sup> See for instance Charles Richet, *Essai de psychologie générale* 161.

<sup>38</sup> On this issue, see Stefan Andriopoulos, *Possessed: Hypnotic Crimes, Corporate Fiction, and the Invention of Cinema*, trans. Peter Jansen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).