

imperceptible dimensions

Argentine SF Cinema & the Media City

				-----1895-----	Birth of Cinema
1900s	Attractions				
				-----1902-----	<i>A Trip to the Moon</i>
1910s	Narrative 1: Continuity Editing				
1920s	Narrative 2: Classical Film Forms / Montage Theories				
				-----1917-----	Tanizaki 'Pure Film'
				-----1924-----	<i>Aelita</i>
				-----1924-----	Epstein 'Photogénie'
1930s	Sound	↔	Radio & Telecommunications		
				-----1932-----	<i>FP1 Doesn't Answer</i>
1940s	Color & Plasticity				
				-----1938-----	Imamura, 'Cartoon Film Theory'
				-----1940-----	Eisenstein, 'Notes on Disney'
				-----1941-----	<i>Princess Iron Fan</i>
1955-65	Expanded Film Form & Genre	↔	Television		
				-----1958-----	<i>Invention for Destruction</i>
				-----1960-----	<i>Silent Star</i>
				-----1965-----	Sontag 'Imagination of Disaster'
1965-1975	New Waves				
				-----1972-----	<i>Solaris</i>
1980s	Global Waves 1				
				-----1986-----	<i>Peking Opera Blues</i>
1990s	Global Waves 2				
				-----1995-----	<i>The Ghost in the Shell</i>
1990s	Digital Media: From Recording to Processing				
				-----1996-----	<i>Moebius</i>

THE MOVEMENT-IMAGE  THE TIME-IMAGE
(1955-1975)

The movement-image does not just turn into the time-image. The time-image does not replace the movement-image.

What is the relation between them?

THE MOVEMENT-IMAGE

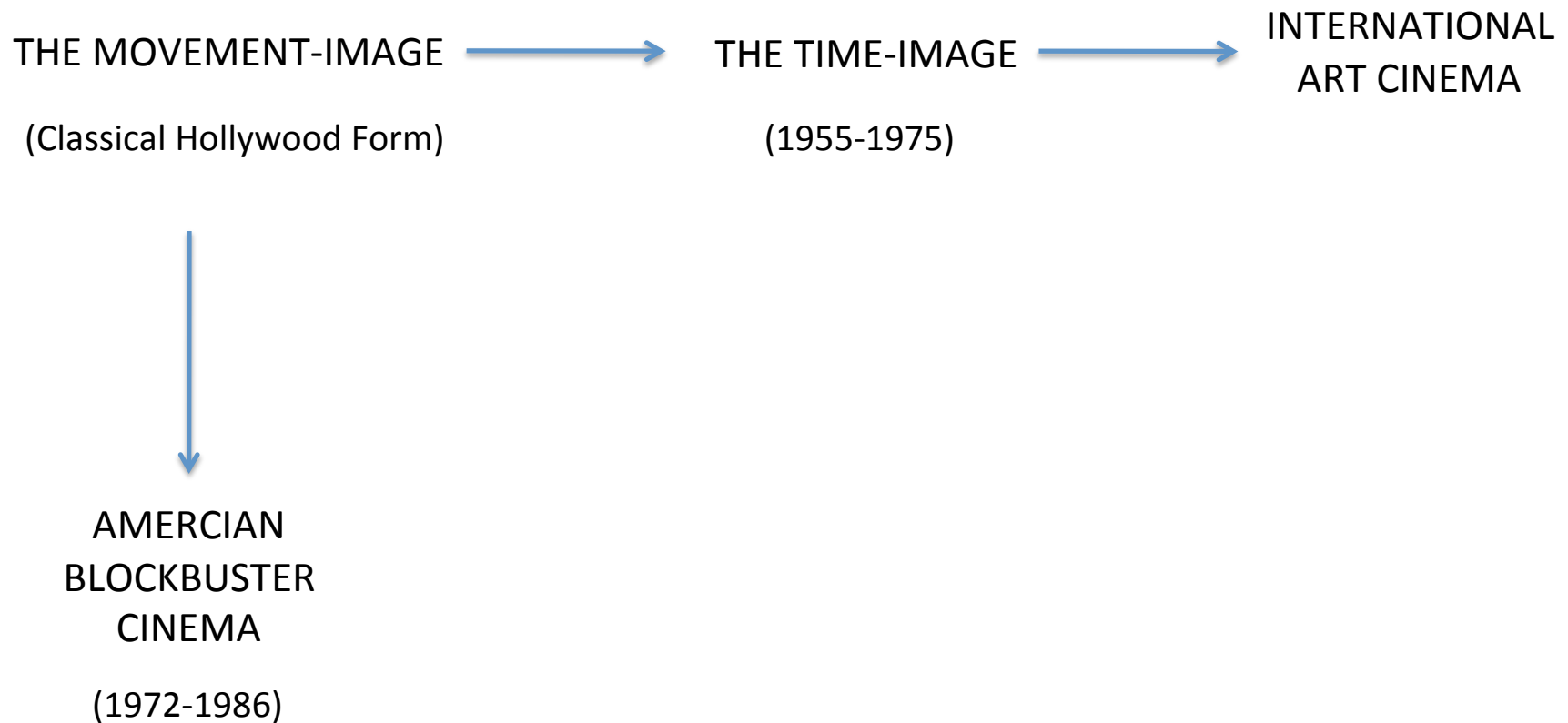


THE TIME-IMAGE

(1955-1975)



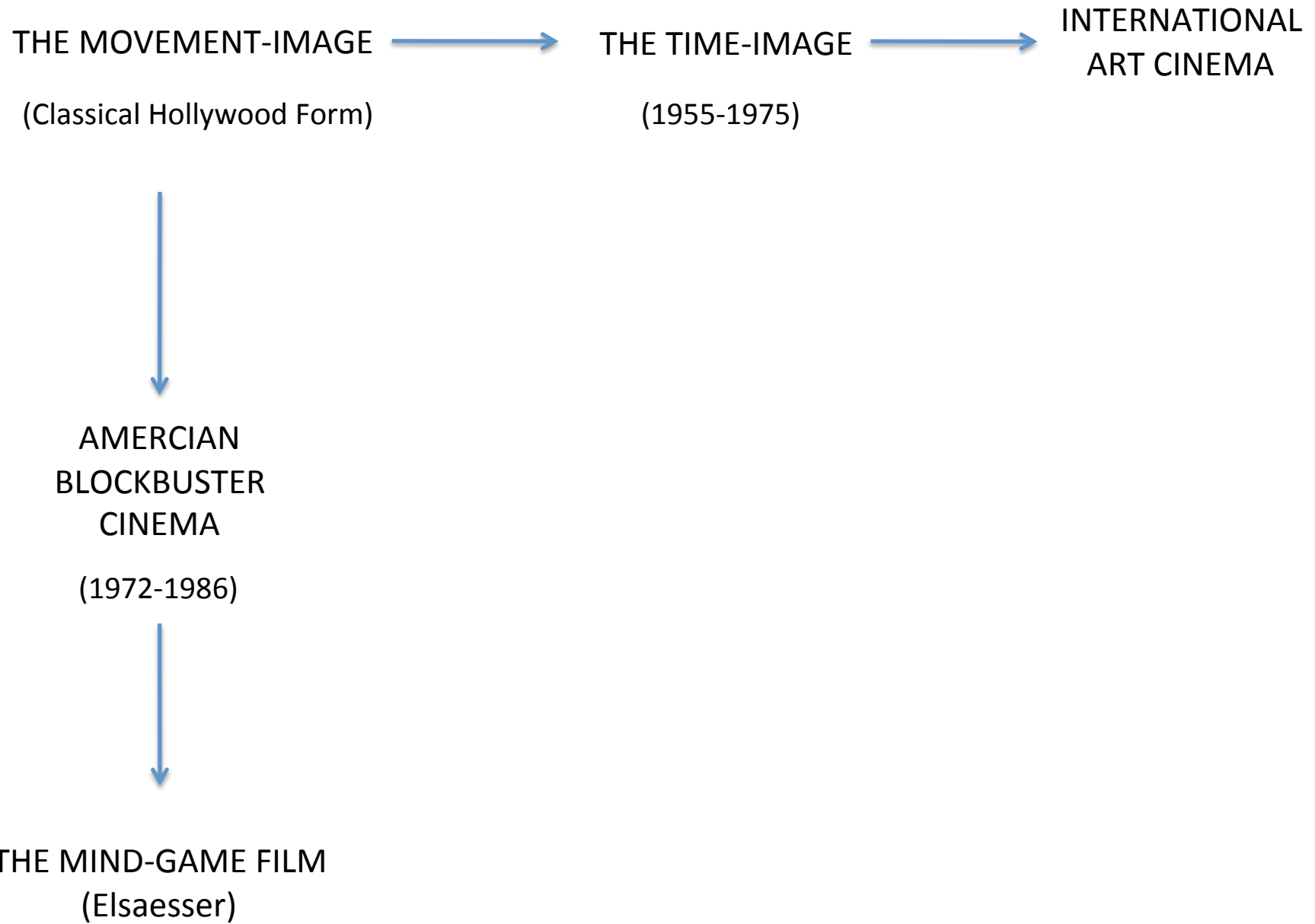
INTERNATIONAL
ART CINEMA



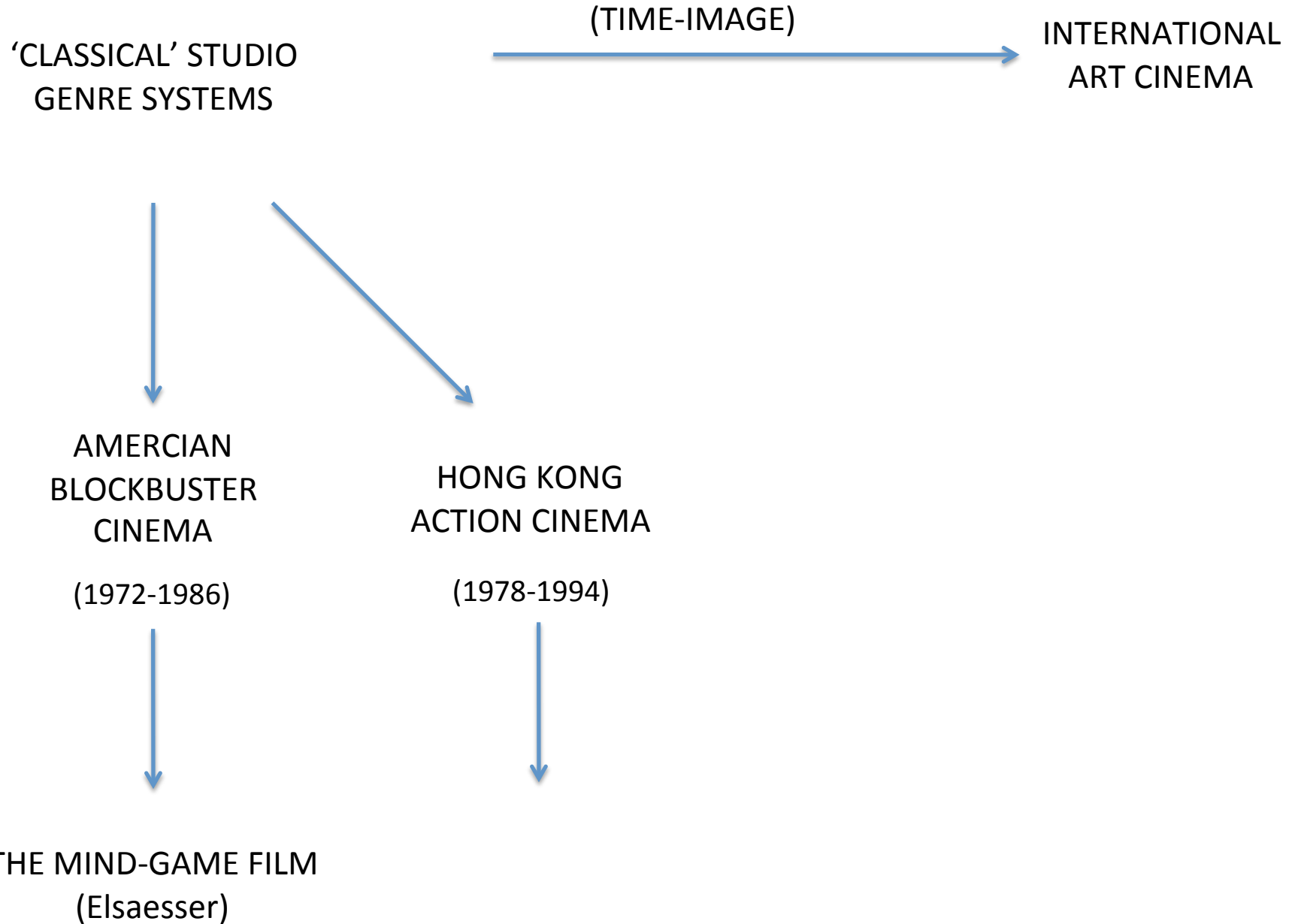
How does classical film form turn into 'blockbuster cinema'?

Gunning suggests it entailed a shift in emphasis in the relation between narrative and attractions.

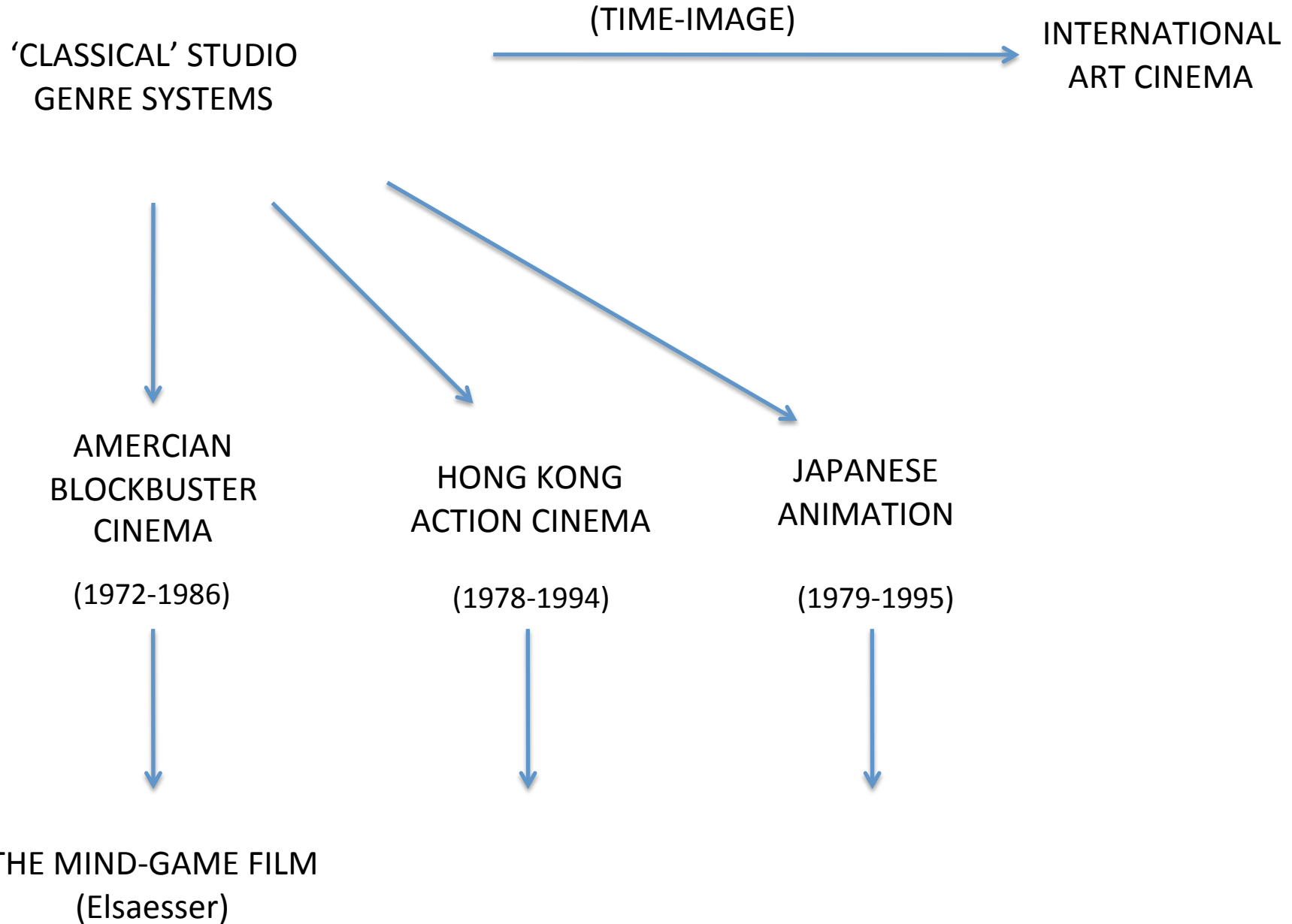
Of course, as Hansen and Bao remind us, classical film form never did away with attractions but put them in the service of narrative.



GLOBAL WAVES



GLOBAL WAVES



PART 1: THE DIGITAL

THE DIGITAL

By 1995, the year often credited with the invention of the DVD format, debates had already begun over the impact of the digital image on cinema. How do we assess this so-called digital revolution?

Victor Fan offers a good point of departure:

“What I suggest... is not that the digital image has actively transformed the ontology of the moving image, but that it inspires us to think ‘retrospectively’ and ‘retroactively’ that the way we used to define cinema was in itself limited by certain historical imaginations.”

“Approaching Reality: Epistemic Distance, Political Crises and Temporal Imaginations in the Sino-French Dialogue on Cinema Ontology.”

http://www.worldpicturejournal.com/WP_7/PDFs/Fan.pdf

What are some of the key distinctions between analog and digital in the context of cinema?

THE DIGITAL

1. index and imprint

...the digital camera no longer preserves an imprint of the physical object through optical perception; rather, its microchip analyzes and records the thermal energy emanated from light, which is then scrambled and stored as digital data. In this sense, each time the camera itself or a computer program shows the user an image, the process is no longer one of re-activating an indexical trace, but of recomposing the image by means of informational analysis.

In addition, what seems to the user to be a simple process of touching up, animating or transforming an existing photographic trace is in fact interfaced by the computer as an emulation of its analogue predecessor. What the computer does is recompose each image with the available information. (Fan)

THE DIGITAL

2. The ability to produce fake realities

...it is now possible to generate photorealistic scenes entirely in a computer using 3-D computer animation; to modify individual frames or whole scenes with the help a digital paint program; to cut, bend, stretch and stitch digitized film images into something which has perfect photographic credibility, although it was never actually filmed... (Lev Manovich)

THE DIGITAL

3. temporality

What is at stake is the temporal dimension of this process of preservation and reactivation. What is captured in a photographic image is not a state of being but a process of becoming—and with it, a passage of time. The screening process, meanwhile, reactivates not only a state of being, but also a process of becoming in the past (that is, a process that has been dead) that is re-enacted as the present that opens up new potentialities in the future. (Fan)

THE DIGITAL

4. animation and 'live action'

All cinema is becoming animation. (Manovich; Oshii)

Live action footage is now only raw material to be manipulated by hand, animated, combined with 3-D computer generated scenes and painted over.

THE DIGITAL

5. media convergence

Increasingly fast conversion across media formats becomes possible.

THE DIGITAL

6. digital actors and acting

THE DIGITAL

7. history of cinema

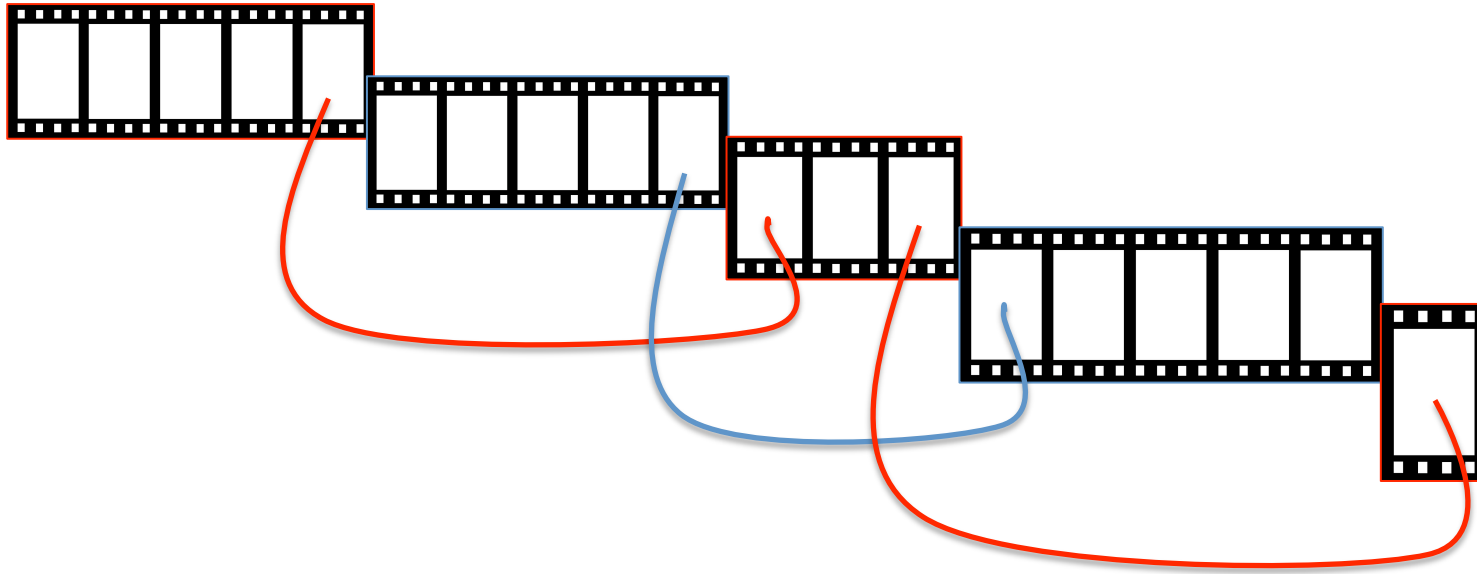
We no longer think of the history of cinema as a linear march towards only one possible language, or as a progression towards more and more accurate verisimilitude. Rather, we have come to see its history as a succession of distinct and equally expressive languages, each with its own aesthetic variables, each new language closing off some of the possibilities of the previous one — a cultural logic not dissimilar to Kuhn's analysis of scientific paradigms. (Manovich)

THE DIGITAL

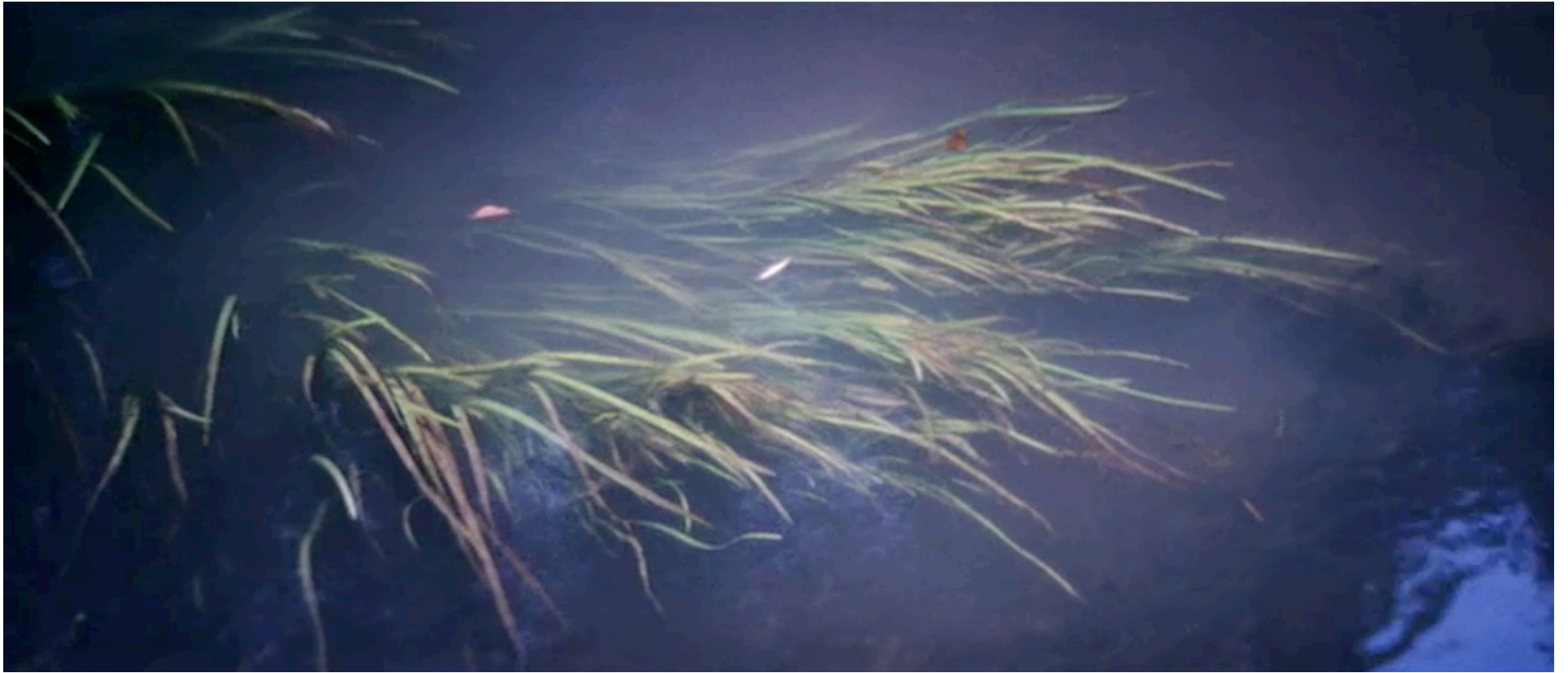
8. non-linear editing



Eisenstein



Montage theory built on 'cross-cutting' or 'parallel editing' associated with continuity editing.

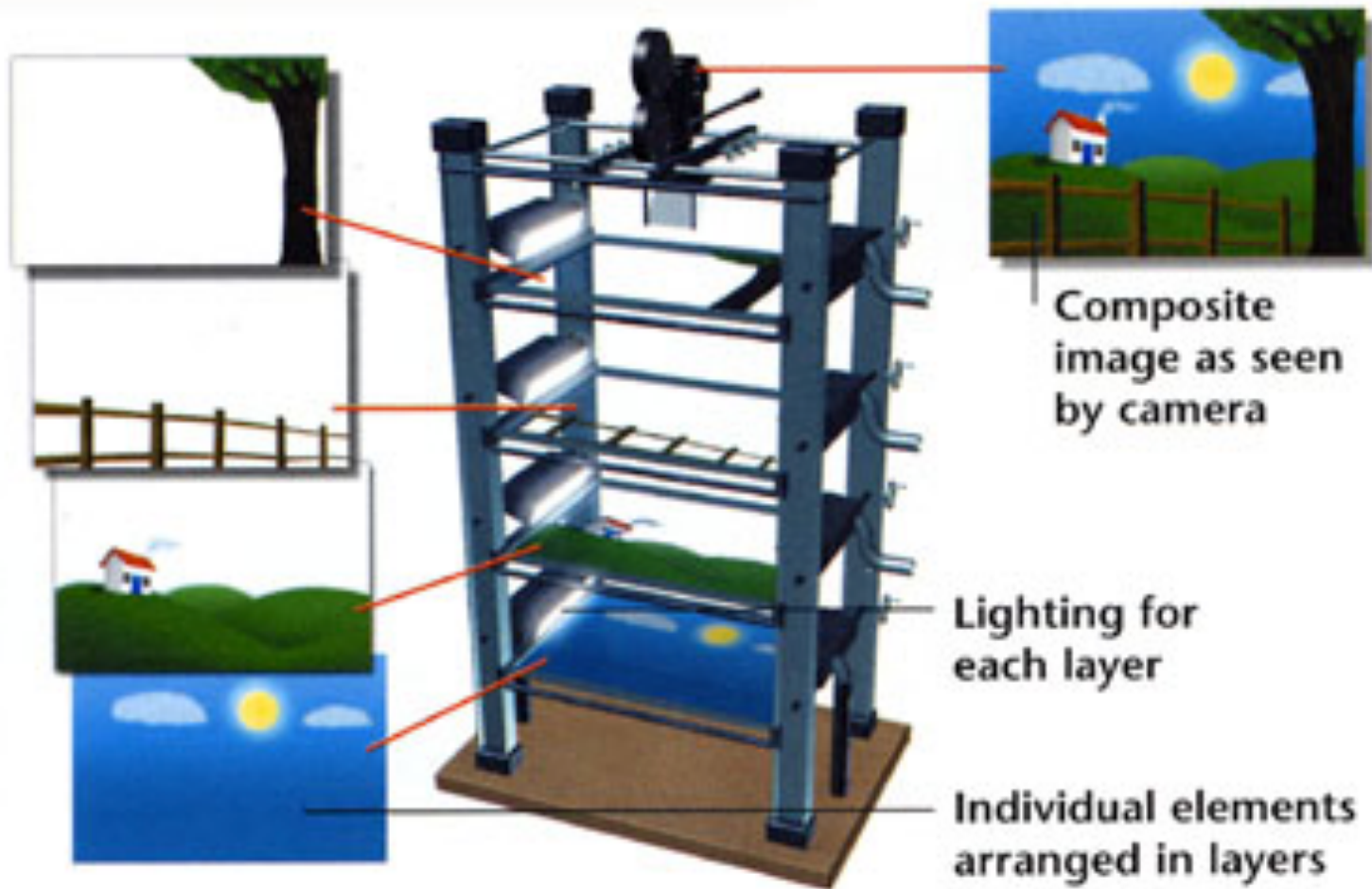


Tarkovsky

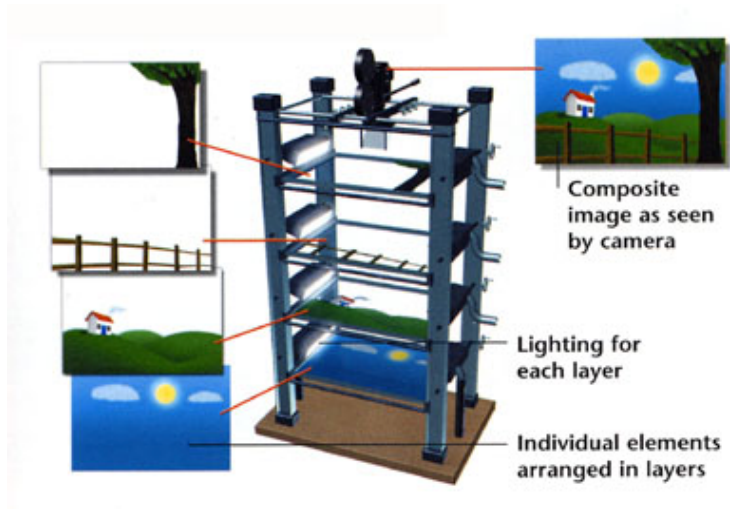


I got one right
in the license plate.
Pretty good, huh?

Oshii

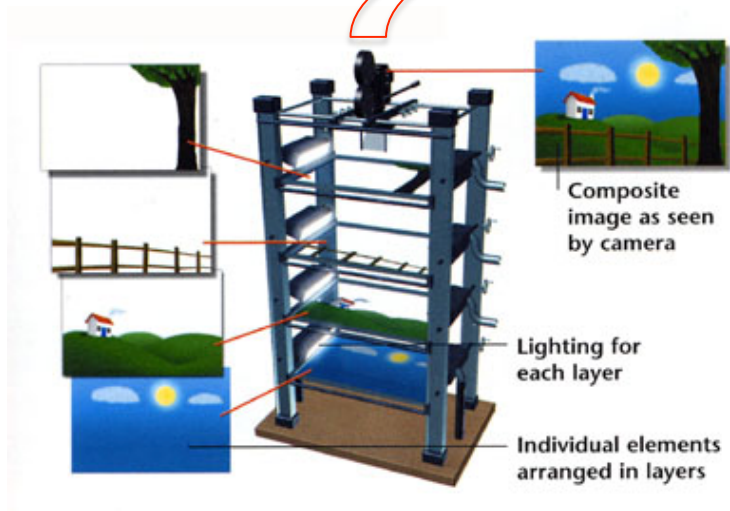


COMPOSITING AND EDITING

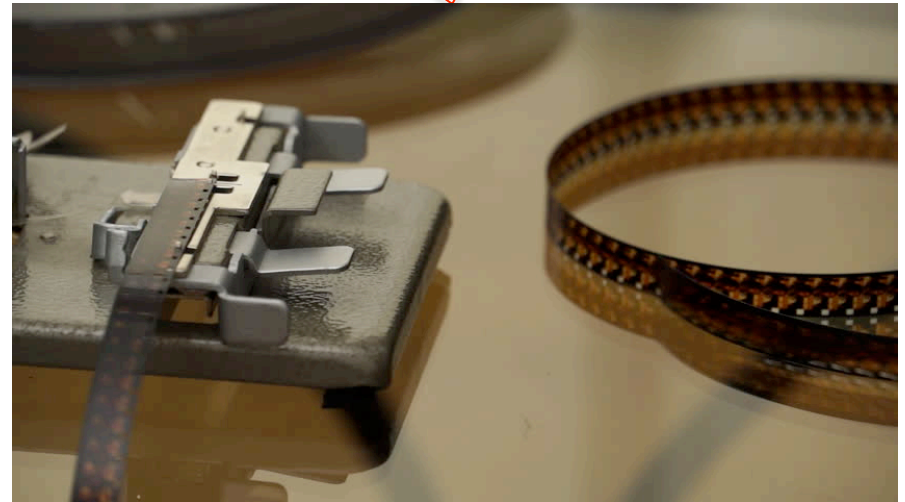


Compositing is non-linear
(unless you impose the
'abstract machine' of
geometric perspective).

COMPOSITING AND EDITING

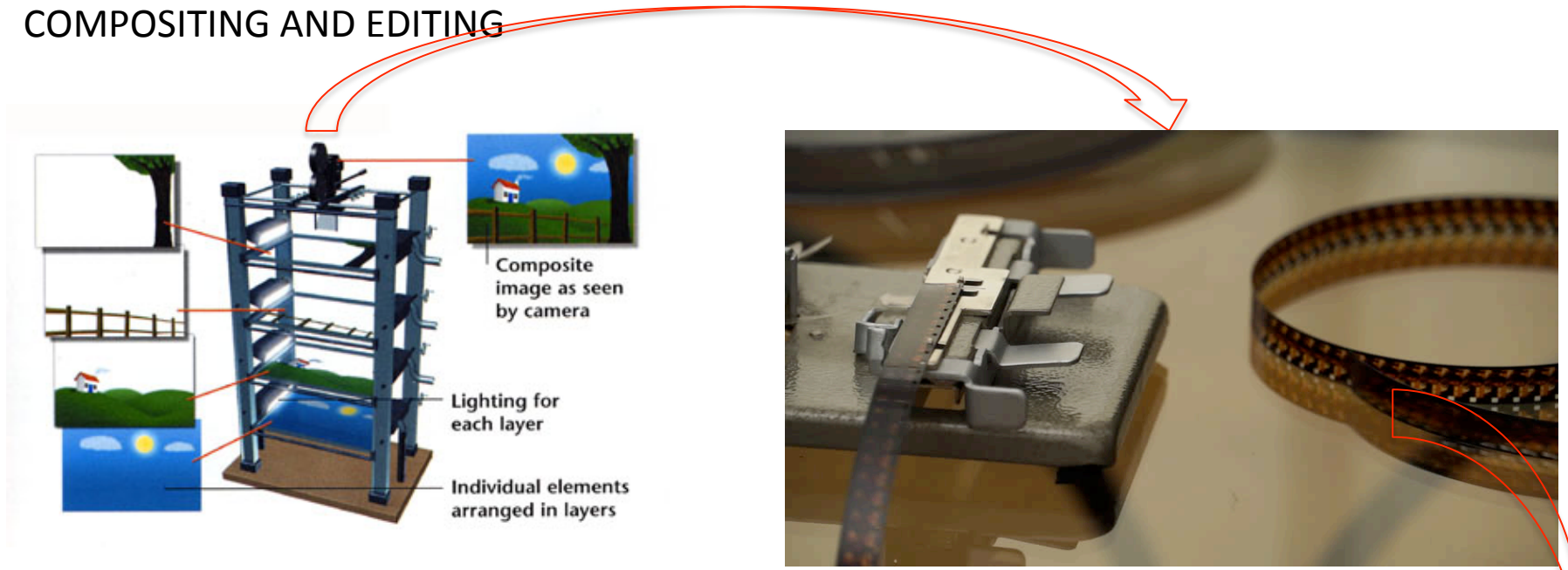


Compositing is non-linear.



Editing is linear.

COMPOSITING AND EDITING



Compositing is non-linear.

Editing is linear.



But with video editing you can add more layers from different media sources (video camera footage, movie camera footage, graphics).

COMPOSITING AND EDITING





**Helluva car. My 9mm
didn't even scratch it.**

With such animation, the 'non-linear' pressure within the image is as strong as (or greater than) the linear procedures introduced through editing (both continuity and montage procedures).

While Oshii owes a good deal to artists like Tarkovsky, what he is doing is somewhat different from the time-image.

We begin to feel the pressure of information, media, processing, and electromagnetic forces.

This kind of non-linear pressure within the image is the precursor of the digital.

Not surprisingly, Oshii will leap into the digital with two remarkable films, *Avalon* (2001) and *The Ghost in the Shell: Innocence* (2004).



OSHII Mamoru, 2001



OSHII Mamoru, 2004



Gustavo Mosquera, *Moebius* (1996; Argentina)

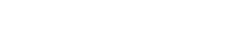
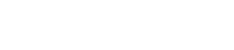


Today, both editing and compositing are readily non-linear.

The question then is, how does this affect the way in which filmmakers deal with the 'pressure' or 'force' of the moving image? Will they subordinate it to rational cuts in the manner of the movement image? Is there a new kind of force to the image?

THE MOVEMENT-IMAGE

THE TIME-IMAGE



digital media

THE MIND-GAME FILM
THE PUZZLE FILM

THE NEURO-IMAGE?
THE PROCESS-IMAGE?



THE ILM STYLE
(Turnock)

This moment also marks the beginning of the transformation of film studies into media studies, and so it is worthwhile to consider (again) some of the implications for:

7. history of cinema

We no longer think of the history of cinema as a linear march towards only one possible language, or as a progression towards more and more accurate verisimilitude. Rather, we have come to see its history as a succession of distinct and equally expressive languages, each with its own aesthetic variables, each new language closing off some of the possibilities of the previous one — a cultural logic not dissimilar to Kuhn's analysis of scientific paradigms. (Manovich)

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PART 2: THE CITY IS A MEDIUM

In “The City is a Medium” (first published in 1988), Friedrich Kittler looks at how cities, like media, “record, transmit, and process information.”

He proposes a major shift in emphasis — from recording to processing.

He feels that prior accounts of the city as a medium (Lewis Mumford) have focused too much on how cities record and transmit information, in order to preserve a humanist vision of the city.

Kittler will focus on how processing information comes to take precedence over recording and transmitting information.

He first considers how “processing elements” of the city enter into our terminology for information networks: gates, ports, built-in memory, and formatting (traffic and addresses).

But he has a larger agenda. He wants to show how the city starts to exceed our technological grasp.

On the one hand, it is no longer possible to stand over and above the city, to see it all and thus understand it all .

“Since cities no longer lie within the panopticon of the cathedral or castle and can no longer be enclosed by walls or fortifications, a network made up of intersecting networks dissects and connects the city — in particular its fringes, peripheries, and tangents. Regardless of whether these networks transmit information (telephone, radio, television) or energy (water supply, electricity, highway), they all represent forms of information (if only because every modern energy flow requires a parallel control network).”

On the other hand, the relations between the various networks in the city cannot be flattened in a single layer: “A city, likewise, is not a flattenable graph. In a city, networks overlap upon other networks.”

As such, while we might try to understand and control the networks, one by one, or in bundles, we cannot understand and control all the relations arising between them. The city exceeds the human, taking on a degree of organizational autonomy.

Simply put, there is an “imperceptible dimension” that remains autonomous of human intervention.



Kittler's paradigm — the city is a medium — is well suited to *The Ghost in the Shell* and *Moebius*, for these two films strive to address an imperceptible dimension of the city, albeit in very different ways and for different reasons. Do you think his approach might also shed new light on the *déjà disparu*?

PART 3: ARGENTINE SF CINEMA

ADOLFO BIOY CASARES

LA INVENCION DE MOREL



1940

Magical realism, magic realism, or marvelous realism is a genre of narrative fiction and, more broadly, art (literature, painting, film, theatre, etc.) that, while encompassing a range of subtly different concepts, expresses a primarily realistic view of the real world while also adding or revealing magical elements. It is sometimes called fabulism, in reference to the conventions of fables, myths, and allegory. “Magical realism,” perhaps the most common term, often refers to fiction and literature in particular, with magic or the supernatural presented in an otherwise real-world or mundane setting.

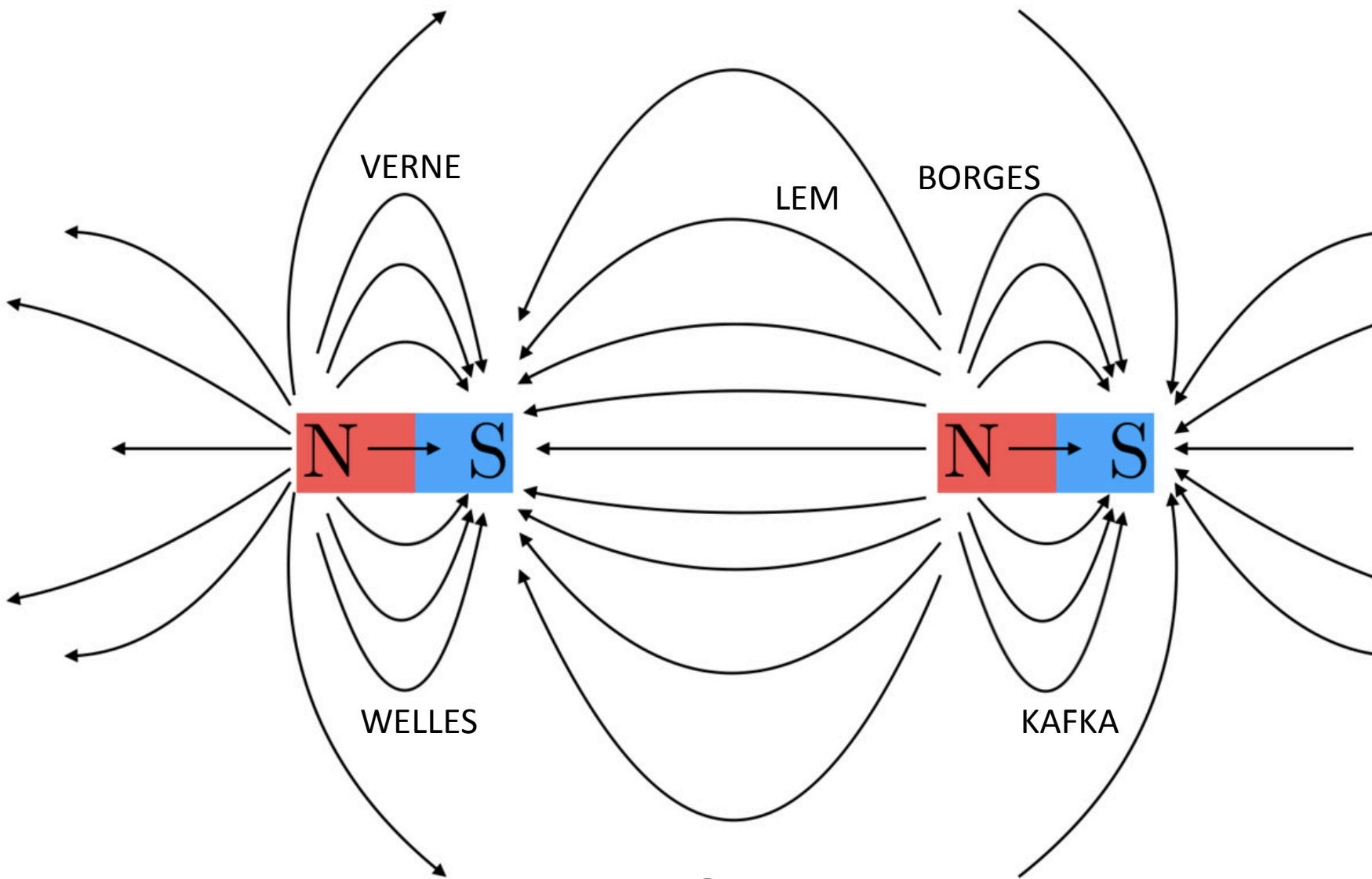
Magical realism is often associated with Latin American literature, particularly authors including genre founders Miguel Angel Asturias, Jorge Luis Borges, Elena Garro, Juan Rulfo, Rómulo Gallegos, Gabriel García Márquez and Isabel Allende.

The terms are broadly descriptive rather than critically rigorous.

(Wikipedia)

How can we think about the relation between the fantastic (Bioy Caseres) or magical realism (Borges) and science fiction?

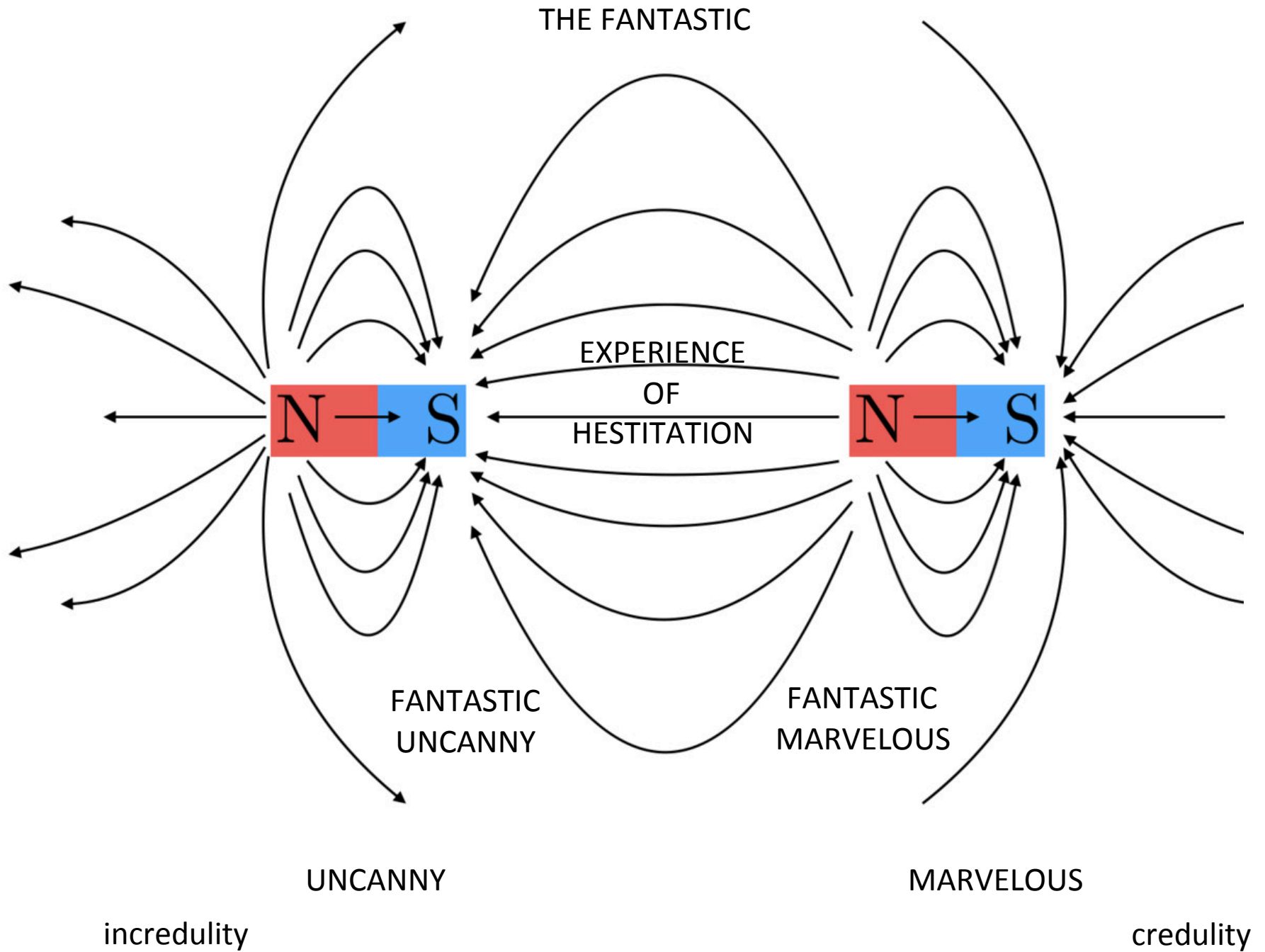
Do you recall how Darko Suvin situated the works of José Luis Borges?



COGNITIVE ESTRANGEMENT
EXTRAPOLATIVE MODELING

SF

COGNITIVE ESTRANGEMENT
ANALOGIC MODELING





1969

NUEVO ESTRENO NACIONAL EN EL
COMPLEJO DEL CINE ARGENTINO

Cineastas Argentinos
Instituto Nacional de Cine y Artes Audiovisuales

ADOLFO BLOY CASARES

PEPE SORIANO

OTRA ESPERANZA

GRAN
EXITO

UNA PELÍCULA DE MERCEDES FRUTOS

Héctor Bidonde-Constanza Maral-Héctor Calori-Norma Ibarra

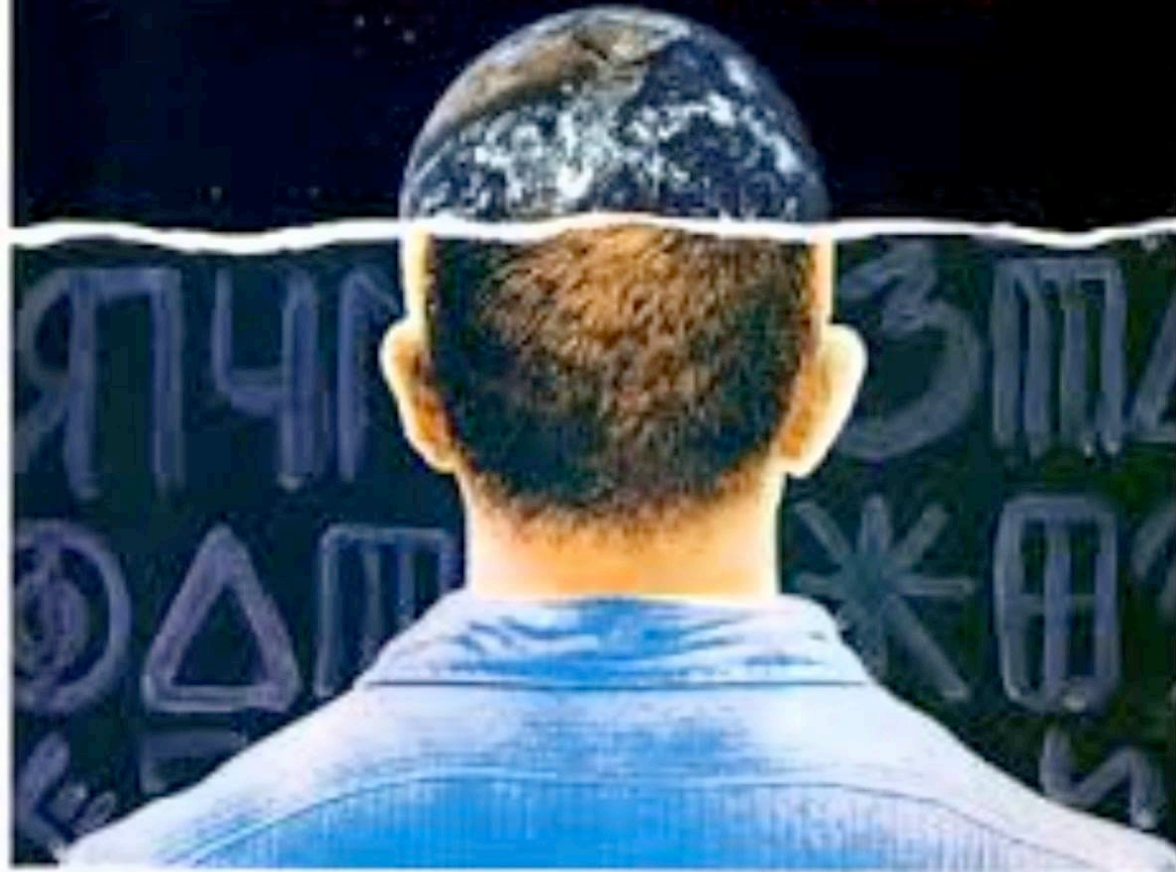
Ave
Asunción

COMPLEJO DEL CINE ARGENTINO "TITA MERELLO" Cine 3 "DELIA GARCES", Suipacha 442

1986

P E D R O A Z N A R

MÚSICA ORIGINAL DEL FILM
HOMBRE MIRANDO AL SURESTE



1986

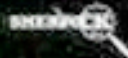
Un electrizante viaje a la 4^a dimensión



MOEBIUS

Un film realizado por los alumnos de la Universidad Del Cine
de Buenos Aires bajo la dirección del profesor Gustavo Mosquera
GUILLERMO ANGELELLI ROBERTO CARNAGHI JORGE PETRAGLIA
y la presentación de ANABELLA LEVI

Cast: de Arturo Oteiza, Natalia Urezo, Gabriel Lifshitz, Pedro Chiniari, Prof. M. Anselm Mira y Prof. Gustavo Mosquera
Director de Fotografía Abel Peralta - Música original Mariano Wiza





1986

During Argentina's 1976-83 "Dirty War," over thirty thousand citizens were labeled as dissidents, forcibly removed from their homes, and "disappeared" by a military dictatorship. Infants and young children were separated from parents and given to childless officers and bureaucrats; adults were hooded, tortured in 340 clandestine detention centers, and eventually shoved from cargo planes over the South Atlantic.

Another twelve thousand people were held as political prisoners but survived, and countless others were threatened with similar treatment should they fail to comply with military orders.

In some ways, this "Process of National Reorganization" was not unique: twentieth-century Argentine politics featured a seemingly endless cycle of promises of democratic freedoms and national reforms that never quite materialized. And, of course, atrocities occurred elsewhere in Latin America, too, especially as US officials became willing to lend material and ideological support to virtually any regime willing to repudiate communism.

What stands out in Argentina, however, is the extent to which fear and passivity dominated citizens not only during but after the junta years.... Even when the dictatorship collapsed, threats and violence continued for decades against those who would speak out against the nation's former leaders.

(Everett Hamner)

The director Gustavo Mosquera says, “In fact my films are not about the disappeared but those who survived and have internalized the topic of the disappearances.”

Everett Hamner agrees and adds: “the people on the train [in *Moebius*] are not simply the disappeared, but Argentina’s memories of them and that the scene is not about romanticizing history, but about completing the work of mourning.”

“... the film’s science-fictional elements provide the audience with emotional distance from the horrors of the Dirty War [1976-83], then unflinchingly return to those events in a manner defying further attempts at repression.”

How do “science-fictional” effects work in *Moebius*?

Hamner explores two registers of the film — VFX and their temporal effects.

VFX

Hamner writes, “*Moebius* used a more restrained — though no less ingenious — brand of special effects to urge audiences to face events some Argentines still find difficult to discuss.”

He calls attention to two kinds of effect: “inlaid screen” and “filming film.”

He argues that these effects make for an experience of an “imperceptible dimension.”

How exactly do effects make for an experience of an “imperceptible dimension”?

Do you feel this is an experience of the ‘fantastic-marvelous,’ or of the ‘fantastic-uncanny,’ or both?

Hamner also suggests that the use of special effects affects narrative form:
“Moebius uses metanarrative imagery to reach beyond both linear and circular notions of temporality toward a combined, spiraling form.”

PART 4: THE MIND-GAME FILM

Definition

First of all, a broad description of the mind-game film. It comprises movies that are “playing games,” and this at two levels: there are films in which a character is being played games with, without knowing it or without knowing who it is that is playing these (often very cruel and even deadly) games with him (or her)...

Then, there are films where it is the audience that is played games with, because certain crucial information is withheld or ambiguously presented...

Other films of the mind-game tendency put the emphasis on “mind”: they feature central characters whose mental condition is extreme, unstable, or pathological... (Elsaesser)

Yet one overriding common feature of mind-game films is a delight in disorienting or misleading spectators (besides carefully hidden or altogether withheld information, there are the frequent plot twists and trick endings).

Another feature is that spectators on the whole do not mind being “played with”: on the contrary, they rise to the challenge.

Spectators can get passionately involved in the worlds that the films create – they study the characters’ inner lives and back-stories and become experts in the minutiae of a scene, or adept at explaining the improbability of an event.

(Elsaesser)

In sum, “the main effect of the mind-game film is to disorient the audience.”

For Elsaesser, this points to some kind of underlying crisis in the relationship between spectators and movies.

So he begins with a hypothesis or problematic: Is the mind-game film a response to that crisis? Is it a solution?

He delineates a number of approaches:

“the mind-game film can usefully be analyzed under several headings: for instance, one can foreground issues of narrative and narratology (by concentrating on the unreliable narrators, the multiple time-lines, unusual point of view structures, unmarked flashbacks, problems in focalization and perspectivism, unexpected causal reversals and narrative loops); one can highlight questions of psychology and psychopathology (characters suffering from amnesia, schizophrenia, paranoia, “second sight” or clairvoyance); philosophers of mind can find conundrums about the relation of body, brain, and consciousness that challenge concepts of “identity,” or ask what it means to be “human” as we share our lives with ever smaller machines and ever more “intelligent” objects.”

He opts for three lines of inquiry:

1. complex storytelling (and the possible disjuncture between “narrative” and “database,” “narrative logic” and “game logic”)
2. productive pathologies (identity crises and personality disorders)
3. “social uses” of mind-game films as helping either to “discipline and control” or to “teach and train.”

complex storytelling

“Several of the features named as typical of the mind-game film are grist to the mill of professionally trained (literary) narratologists:

- single or multiple diegesis,
- unreliable narration and missing or unclaimed point-of-view shots,
- episodic or multi-stranded narratives,
- embedded or “nested” (story-within-story/film-within-film) narratives, and
- frame-tales that reverse what is inside the frame...”

Ultimately, however, he doesn't think narrative-centered analyses are enough.

He concludes: “narrative (as the traditionally most efficient organizing principle of connecting disparate information to a user) has to contend and rival with the archive and the database and their forms of organization and user-contact.”

productive pathologies

Still, Elsaesser doesn't think that characterizing mind-game films in terms of "database + narrative" addresses the key question.

'The question then becomes: do the films "lie," or is it the very opposition of truth and lie, between the actual and the virtual, the subjective and the objective, that is at stake?'

Thus he looks at how mind-game films explore paranoia (and conspiracy theory), schizophrenia, and amnesia.

He calls attention to their productivity:

'But "trauma-theory" is only one path to access the mind of mind-game protagonists. If we understand these illnesses as anthropomorphized versions of mathematical code and automated programs, then they seem to liberate and create new connections, establish new networks, but these are not "open" and "free."'

Which raises questions about the social implications of mind-game films.

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social uses

On the one hand, Elsaesser first considers how mind-games might be construed critically, in terms of the social formation of neoliberal subjects.

...madness... becomes a way of “socializing” subjectivity in bourgeois society and under the conditions of liberal market economics.

...“aberrant” mental states signify the effects of the new disciplinary machines of which they are the early warning systems...

On the other hand, commentators praise such mind-games for the training they offer:

‘[Game media] are “good” for the young, because they train new cognitive skills and teach appropriate ways of responding to and interacting with automated systems of surveillance and control, such as increasingly predominate on the work-floor and in offices, as well as in the home and in interpersonal discourse.’

Ultimately, Elsaesser cannot decide: ‘..we cannot be sure if contemporary cinema is “part of the problem” (Foucault, Deleuze) or already “part of the solution” (Johnson, Gladwell)...’

And so he turns to conditions of production.

conditions of production

‘Hollywood has always had to produce “texts” that are highly ambiguous, or permeable, when it comes to meaning-making: movies had to permit multiple entry-points without thereby becoming incoherent. This is what David Bordwell has called the “excessively obvious” nature of the classical film...’

‘...in order to exist at all, [Hollywood] has to be “a major presence in all the world’s markets,” but also, one can add, “a major presence in all the world’s modes of representation.” This is no longer only “no small achievement,” but a truly daunting challenge, when one considers the proliferation of reception contexts and media-platforms. What once was “excessively obvious” must now be “excessively enigmatic”...’

‘...the new contract between spectator and film is no longer based solely on ocular verification, identification, voyeuristic perspectivism, and “spectatorship” as such, but on the particular rules that obtain for and, in a sense, are the conditions for spectatorship: the (meta-)contact established by the different interpretative communities with the films...’

conclusion

'I can now conclude that as a solution, the mind-game films set out to aggravate the crisis, in that the switches between epistemological assumptions, narrational habits, and ontological premises draw attention to themselves, or rather, to the "rules of the game."' "

'Mind-game films may show how the cinema itself has mutated: rather than "reflecting" reality, or oscillating and alternating between illusionism/realism, these films create their own referentiality, but what they refer to, above all, are "the rules of the game."' "

EN UNA CIUDAD SIN VOZ... HABLAR PUEDE SER MUY PELIGROSO.



LA ANTENA

UNA PELICULA DE ESTEBAN SAPIR

VALERIA BERTUCCELLI JULIETA CARDINALI ALEJANDRO URDAPILLETA
RAFAEL FERRO FLORENCIA BAGO
SOLMOGINS JONATHAN SANDOR RICARDO MERLIN RAUL HOCHMAN CARLOS PILEYTO

LADOLEA PRODUCERS presenta "LA ANTENA" VALERIA BERTUCCELLI ALEJANDRO URDAPILLETA JULIETA CARDINALI RAFAEL FERRO FLORENCIA BAGO JUDY CHRISTIAN COFFEY LEO SUMATOVICH
DANIEL GINSBERG ANDREA MATTO PABLO BARBERO TITO CINZANO AGUIA ROSE URNAL ALVARO CINELLI CLAUDIA FERRERO ANA LAURA CASSANO
TOMAS (SOGAS) TONAS CARON FERNANDO SARMENTO ESTEBAN SAPIR

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