



Perception and affect in Peter Greenaway's Z.0.0. / A Zed and Two Noughts

Costa de Beauregard Raphaëlle

Pour citer cet article

Costa de Beauregard Raphaëlle, « Perception and affect in Peter Greenaway's Z.0.0. / A Zed and Two Noughts », *Cycnos*, vol. 26.1 (Peter Greenaway), 2010, mis en ligne en janvier 2012.

<http://epi-revel.univ-cotedazur.fr/publication/item/254>

Lien vers la notice <http://epi-revel.univ-cotedazur.fr/publication/item/254>

Lien du document <http://epi-revel.univ-cotedazur.fr/cycnos/254.pdf>

Cycnos, études anglophones

revue électronique éditée sur épi-Revel à Nice

ISSN 1765-3118

ISSN papier 0992-1893

AVERTISSEMENT

Les publications déposées sur la plate-forme épi-revel sont protégées par les dispositions générales du Code de la propriété intellectuelle. Conditions d'utilisation : respect du droit d'auteur et de la propriété intellectuelle.

L'accès aux références bibliographiques, au texte intégral, aux outils de recherche, au feuilletage de l'ensemble des revues est libre, cependant article, recension et autre contribution sont couvertes par le droit d'auteur et sont la propriété de leurs auteurs. Les utilisateurs doivent toujours associer à toute unité documentaire les éléments bibliographiques permettant de l'identifier correctement, notamment toujours faire mention du nom de l'auteur, du titre de l'article, de la revue et du site épi-revel. Ces mentions apparaissent sur la page de garde des documents sauvegardés ou imprimés par les utilisateurs. L'université Côte d'Azur est l'éditeur du portail épi-revel et à ce titre détient la propriété intellectuelle et les droits d'exploitation du site. L'exploitation du site à des fins commerciales ou publicitaires est interdite ainsi que toute diffusion massive du contenu ou modification des données sans l'accord des auteurs et de l'équipe d'épi-revel.

EPI-REVEL

Revue électronique de l'Université Côte d'Azur

Raphaëlle COSTA DE BEAUREGARD

Raphaëlle COSTA DE BEAUREGARD est Professeur Emérite, Université de Toulouse II, Fellow de Clare Hall (Cambridge, G.B.), Membre de SCM, AFECCAV, NECS, fondatrice en 1993 de la SERCIA (Société d'Etudes et de Recherche sur le Cinéma anglophone). Elle a dirigé en 2009 *Cinéma et Couleur - Film and Colour*, Paris : Michel Houdiard, et publié sur Greenaway 2010 "Green Apples and Red Prawns : the Colour of Time in Peter Greenaway's *A Zed and Two Noughts (Z.0.0.)*", *The Journal of British Cinema and Television*, volume 7, 1, pp. 82-94; accessible en ligne Avril 2010. 2007 "From Screen to Flesh : The Language of Colour in *The Belly of an Architect*", Wendy Everett dir. *Questions of Colour in Cinema - From Paintbrush to Pixel*, *New Studies in European Cinema* n°6, Peter Lang : Bern, pp. 57-66. 2007 « *The Belly of an Architect* (1987) de Peter Greenaway ou l'art du clin d'œil en trompe l'œil » in *Les autres arts dans l'art du cinéma*, Dominique Sipièrre et Alain Cohen, dirs. Rennes : Presses Universitaires de Rennes, pp.31-48. Recherche en cours : ouvrage sur le temps au cinéma.

Université de Toulouse II.

Dessins, peinture, chant, calligraphie, danse ou théâtre, le cinéma de Greenaway, à l'interface des genres et des langages, englobe tous les arts et en explore les limites. Dans *Prospero's Books* (1991), film qui adapte librement *La Tempête* de Shakespeare, les procédés réflexifs et méta cinématographiques - mises en abyme, texte calligraphié et visible à l'écran, incrustations d'images ou images-miroirs - permettent de surenchérir sur la veine métathéâtrale essentielle dans la pièce et opèrent comme des révélateurs esthétiques et culturels. Les merveilles artistiques et scientifiques de la période sont présentées en un catalogue exubérant qui évoque les collections hétéroclites de ces cabinets de curiosités chers aux princes mécènes, qu'il s'agisse de François 1er de Médicis ou de l'empereur mélancolique Rodolphe II de Habsbourg, peut-être un modèle pour le personnage de Prospero. Ici, le cumul de merveilles visuelles et auditives contribue à faire du film lui-même un cabinet de curiosités. Dans *Nightwatching* (2006), la mise en abyme du célèbre tableau de Rembrandt sert de révélateur à un discours social moralisateur. Du théâtre au cinéma, de la peinture au cinéma, le processus méta-artistique opère dans les deux films d'une manière dialectique, à la fois comme

illustration explicite d'un contexte et exercice de style esthétique. L'esthétique évoquée (maniériste pour le premier ; baroque pour le second) contamine à son tour tout le film, soulignant ainsi toute la magie de l'artifice artistique.

Drawing, calligraphy, dance, painting or drama, Greenaway's cinema encompasses all arts. Whether it explores the genesis of a work of art or the complex processes at stake in artistic creation, it is always meant to show art as magic and the work of art as an artifice. This is particularly true for *Prospero's Books*, the 1991 exuberant adaptation of Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*. Metacinematic or framing devices, mise en abyme effects and mirror-images enhance the nature of cinematic art, taking up and amply expanding on the meta-artistic vein present in the play. The eclectic erudite references to mannerist artists or great scientific and historical figures of the Renaissance also powerfully illustrate the context while succeeding in imitating the artists' virtuosity, style and "bella maniera". Such comprehensive contextual evocation also reminds one of Renaissance habits. One may think for example of princes indulging in the contemplation of heteroclite collections of marvels in their secret curiosity chamber, hence Francesco de Medici in his studiolo in Florence or Rudolf II in Prague Hradschin castle Wunderkammer. The great melancholy emperor could well be considered a model for erudite Prospero "rapt in secret studies in his poor cell". Such erudite Borges-like cataloguing partakes both of an irony and of a genuine wish to evoke the context and tends to turn the very film itself into a cabinet of curiosities.

In *Nightwatching*, the mise en abyme of Rembrandt's painting serves to reveal the mystery of a plot and a murder, thus pointing at the dark underworld of 17th century thriving but corrupted Amsterdam. It also serves an aesthetic purpose, as the filmmaker attempts to "match the painter's mystery of light". Baroque aesthetics are not only shown in the film; they become the matter and essence of the film. Here again self-referential constructions serve a two-fold purpose, cultural and aesthetic.

This paper discusses the importance of Bergson's *Matter and Memory* as a hypotext to the film¹. I had first in mind to discuss only the way the film seems to me to be referring to Bergson's first

¹ It is noticeable that in the French edition of Gilles Deleuze's *Cinéma I* (Paris : Minuit, 1983) and *Cinéma II* (Paris : Minuit, 1985) the name of Henri Bergson does not appear in the Index; only the footnotes indicate the importance of *Matter and Memory* in the elaboration of Gilles Deleuze's theory about the image.

chapter of his 1896 book², bearing in mind the commentaries Gilles Deleuze makes on this first chapter as he transferred his earlier reading of Francis Bacon's painting into philosophical enquiries about film. However, what seems to me remarkable is that, in *Z.O.O.*, both the philosopher Henri Bergson, and the film director, Peter Greenaway, actually translate earlier visual models into new applications.

Z.O.O. provides an interesting case of the use of visual puns which amount to an exploration of Bergson's theory that the surface of the body, the common limit of the external and the internal, is the only portion of space which is both perceived and felt. I quote the passage by adding the remark that 'images' is the term Bergson is using for bodies in the space continuum which I also call below the 'continuum mobile' a phrase I am borrowing from the Renaissance.

Everything then will happen as if, by a true return of real and virtual actions to their points of application or of origin, the external images [i.e. 'bodies'] were reflected by our body into surrounding space, and the real actions arrested by it within itself. And that is why it s surface, the common limit of the external and the internal, is the only portion of space which is both perceived and felt. (*Matter and Memory*, 58)

This statement comes as a conclusion to Bergson's theory of perception in his first chapter. In particular he argues that perception has to do with distance, as if, it seems to me, he were offering to re-write or displace the theory of frontal perspective from the field of visual illusion to the realm of our body; the Albertinian semantic pair, perception and distance, are actually defined in new terms: perception measures our possible action upon things and thereby, inversely, the possible action of things upon us; perception is virtual action³.

The correlative of this translation of the spectator's body relation to distance is analogical: it is the proportionality between virtual and real in regards to his theory of perception. More simply, when the distance decreases, the virtual draws nearer the real. When distance is zero between perceived object and body, meaning: our body is the object to be perceived, action is not virtual but real action: this is what affection is.

This correlation implies that visuals are not about appearances versus truth, as in the Renaissance, but about apprehension, being, consciousness and a space-time continuum.

Significantly, the theory which emerges is that the surface of the body, the common limit of the external and the internal, is the only portion of space which is both perceived and felt. This paper argues that this concept becomes a major issue in Peter Greenaway's film *A Zed and Two Noughts / Z.O.O.* For instance the insistence on planes as fields of interaction between elements is a result of the concepts of surface and continuum, as thresholds, borderlines, which transgressive visual ambiguities bring into the cinematographic composition. The film uses different modes of translation of these views into cinematography, among which fragmentation is prominent.

Sequencing movement and the expression of affect by the re-writing of frontal perspective

In *Z.O.O.* there seem to be two kinds of movements and two kinds of perception-images. One is relative to the diegetic level and the movement of subjects as 'sensitive membranes' (to use a phrase coined by Henry James who saw his own work as an intuitive exploration of the later Bergsonian

One needs to use the English editions of the two volumes, *Cinema I* (translated by H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam London : The Athlone press, 1986) *Cinema II* (tr. H. Tomlinson and R. Galeta (1989) London : The Athlone Press, fifth ed. 2008), to fully become aware of the fact; Bergson's name does not appear in the French edition of *Francis Bacon- Logique de la Sensation*, but the Introduction to the English edition by Daniel W. Smith (*Francis Bacon – The Logic of Sensation*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), makes the fact quite clear.

² Henri Bergson *Matière et mémoire* (1896) English translation N.M. Paul and W.S. Palmer from the 1908 fifth edition: *Matter and Memory*, London: George Allen & Co., (1912) Mineola (N.Y.): Dover Publications, 2004.

³ "The more I narrow this horizon, the more the objects which it circumscribes space themselves out distinctly according to the greater or less ease with which my body can touch and move them" (Bergson *Matter and Memory*, p. 6).

theory of ‘duration’⁴): animals or humans. The other is relative to the perception level (enunciation) and these are conditioned by visual games or puns : the laboratory sequences, for example, all rely on a fragmentation of our perception.

On the diegetic level of significance, we find animals, mostly mammals, and, to start with, the tiger and the ape, who are shown to operate in two planes, or axes, as seen from our viewpoint: one is a parallel plane, the other is a plane in depth. The tiger moves within a plane which is parallel to the plane of the screen, from left to right and back: the parallelism of the two planes is visualized by the iron bars of its cage along which it moves regularly and steadily. It appears to be enacting its original relation to wild space in a reduced, nearly metonymic, way, with a difference however, since its action is not triggered by the stalking of a prey and a predatory urge for food, but is only miming its previous life. Moreover, just as the tiger is seen moving from left to right and back, so is the ape seen walking from background to foreground; I would suggest that it is miming its earlier life not according to a linear predatory action, but rather a watchful one, as if it were on the look out for its potential enemy’s possible attack.

Significantly, the diegetic structure of these two parallel sequences from the opening minutes of the film – they are edited so that they appear to be simultaneous, in the same time unit – introduces the fact that this continuous interaction of bodies upon bodies (predatory or watchful) is submitted to a rhythm which is foreign to them : Oliver’s chronometer in the foreground cuts the continuous flow of the tiger’s movement into tiny time units, and Oswald’s camera⁵ cuts the ape’s movement into slices of visual impregnation resulting in snapshots which he later edits in a documentary.⁶

Remarkably, later on in the film, we see Oswald moving to and fro in his room; the repetitive to and fro swing from the left of the screen to the right leaves a deep scar on the wall as the padded shoulder of his jacket has peeled off much of the wall-paint along a horizontal line. This is metonymic of his aimless quest for his lost wife. No longer a predatory male nor a watchful lover, so to speak, his apprehension of the continuum of life has been reduced to the linear editing of his snapshots into a documentary which initially must have been a watchful observation of a possible change in the ape’s to and fro movement, but has now become a mere recording of open-ended repetition.

This sequencing of the continuum which is so characteristic of the scientific observation of the two scientists, endlessly compiling measurements and observations in the Darwinian tradition, is also found on the level of enunciation, i.e. the manipulation of our own ‘perception’ of the film as ‘distant’ – as a Darwinian computerizing of data must appear to a filmgoer who expects action and entertainment – as well as so close to our body as to reflect it in a mirror, a ‘body whose surface is both perceived and felt’.

This shows that the two axes of frontal perspective, the lateral one and the in-depth one, are transferred from a theory of the representation of the illusion of space (Alberti) to a theory of the

⁴ Henry James is reputed to have said he was sorry to have been born a generation earlier than Bergson; as for Henry James’s ‘sensitive membrane’ theory, it was of course his brother William James who late in life coined the phrase “stream of consciousness” to express his brother’s artistic achievement, as he was formulating his own “Pragmatics”.

⁵ Interestingly, the same word ‘camera’ in English means both photographic and cinematic devices, while in French it is not the sequencing into photograms which is considered but the product, “appareil de photo” being used as opposed to “caméra” (film).

⁶ *ZOO* is a film about Darwin’s evolutionary theory : the action takes place in a zoo and the main characters are two brothers, Oliver and Oswald, both biologists observing animal behaviour. The film opens as their wives are killed in a car-crash caused by a swan colliding into the car’s windshield and the driver, Alba Bewick, losing control as her head smashes the windshield. The two bereaved young widowers use the zoo to explore the causes of the accident in an obsessional and hopeless series of moves which eventually lead to their death; another character plays an important part in the action, the surgeon van Megeren who is an addictive admirer and fakist of Vermeer paintings, not as the historical fakist did, but as a photographer. He has a model who plays the part of Vermeer’s wife as well as his medical assistant; another female character, Venus de Milo, also appears in the film : she works at the zoo and is also a seamstress and would be love companion for the brothers, though they prefer Alba herself, who has had one leg amputated, and then both. She is credited for inventing another character, Felipe Arc en Ciel, whom we see shifting from the virtual to the real when he issues from a door on which a rainbow is painted.

expression of affects (here the melancholy of the subject imprisoned in the gaol of his melancholy, whether captive tiger and ape or bereaved widower).

Other Renaissance visual apparatuses which are implicit in Bergson's text are used in the film, as I wish to argue such as: chiaroscuro, anamorphosis, and movement (Lomazzo's 'flame'). Frontal perspective and chiaroscuro are closely linked in search for the metamorphosis of the orthogonal surface of the canvas into a three dimensional space.

Chiaroscuro: depth as distance vs. proximity

A few pages earlier, it seems to me Bergson actually discusses perception in terms of 'chiaroscuro' when he writes that, for virtual perception of images in the continuum to become actual, shadows are cast on some to the aspects of the thing in order to isolate it from the world of things in which it constantly interacts and transforms itself : I quote "instead of being encased in its surroundings as a *thing*, [it] should detach itself from them as a *picture*.." (Bergson *M&M* 28). Strikingly, in these lines, Bergson, it seems to me, refers to this visual school or art to formulate his theory of perception. In order to argue about the fact an image may be present without being represented, the concept of addition and subtraction is used in a way that recalls Leonardo da Vinci's translation of vision versus non-vision into a scientific theory of reflected light versus reflected shadows; to put it differently, instead of adding light to increase vision, Leonardo argues one has to add shadows⁷; his theory is that reflected shadows, added to projected shadows and the shadows, 'penumbra', caused in the foreground by background lighting, are the means by which a painter will render the continuum of bodies as an indistinct mass out of which a detail becomes noticeable, visible, and significant, by the painting of the reflected shadows which surround it.

Peter Greenaway's *Nightwatch* fully explores this visual apparatus which is used by Rembrandt, particularly with the presence of the 'painter's eye' right in the middle. To go back to Bergson, he writes:

... if the representation of an image were less than its presence; it would then suffice that the images present should be compelled to abandon something of themselves in order that their mere presence should convert them into representations. (*M&M*, 27)

Such chiaroscuro effects are noticeable in *Z.O.O.*, in sequences in the laboratory and in the aquarium. The crowded fish are constantly on the move, and appear or disappear according to the moment when they cross a beam of light. In the laboratory sequences, the dead bodies of mammals such as the Dalmatian or the zebra move under the life energy of the feeding maggots. These two representations of Bergson's continuum are sliced into perceptible units which have an iconic significance. The 'fish' icons appear when the fishes enter a beam of light. As for the laboratory continuum, it is sliced into fragments of perceptible icons of putrefied flesh by the flash of the stop-motion camera. To explore the possibilities of the Bergsonian analysis above, it seems to me that the stop-motion camera sequence uses the black screen as a cast shadow which actually obliterates our viewing of a fragment of the continuum, and suggests a gap which is different from the gap or interval in which the visuals reappear with the flash light.

What the slicing does is actually different here from the above quoted sequences of the tiger and the ape because in these earlier sequences a flood-light fills the animals' cages. In the aquarium, and more specifically in the laboratory stop-motion sequence, the light is turned on and off at regular intervals; in this case what is screened is what chiaroscuro is about : the selection of a fragment within the continuous flow of things which makes it an image by the casting of shadows on parts of the continuum or 'perpetuum mobile'.

Thus in *Z.O.O.* the use of chiaroscuro as a structural element actually resonates throughout the film by the parallel between the selection of an element in the flow of things which transforms it into an image, in the Bergsonian sense of a virtual perception becoming actual as it is extracted from its content by cast shadows, and the rhythm of the chronometer and the camera in which the actualisation

⁷ This is my reading of the fragmented text known as Leonardo's "Treatise on Shadows" in which he distinguishes between three shadows: the projected shadow on a wall or plane, secondly, the dark part of a volume hit by a beam of light (backlighting), in which reflected lights add to the visibility of the opaque surface, and, third, the ambiance shadows resulting from reflected shadows from all the objects in the field of vision and outside as well (as in his *The Last Supper*): all three shadows reflect their own shadow around them which hits other bodies or objects.

of virtual precepts is achieved by the slicing of the flow of consciousness into time units and photograms.

Visual anamorphosis⁸

Chiaroscuro and frontal perspective are not the only Renaissance visual apparatuses in use in *Z.O.O.* which I suggest can be traced back to Henri Bergson's lines; 'visual anamorphosis' is another. By 'visual anamorphosis' I mean the structural modification of the Figure in a frame without any movement on the part of the image or the viewer's body. It is different from anamorphosis as it is usually analysed in Holbein's *The Ambassadors*: in this painting, the canvas must be seen first frontally, then from the side: one has to move around the image, or the image must move⁹.

In 'visual anamorphosis' as I see it, only our eye suddenly sees the image in a different light, as for instance the curtain hanging behind the ambassadors in Holbein's painting which can be seen either as a curtain framing the action, or an uncanny surface on which weird threatening faces appear in the velvet design.

In *Z.O.O.*, examples of this are the various visual puns on stripes. Initially, the pun is suggested as the tiger's stripes seem to disappear among the vertical bars of its iron cage. Later, a zebra's constant movement in a similar cage in the middle-ground of the frame provides a background for Felipe Arc en Ciel's legless body standing on stumps. His artificial legs and his crutches add their vertical lines to the cage bars: the visual pun in which we associate the zebra's striped hide, the stripes of the cage bars and the uncanny visual mediation of Arc En Ciel's stumps and crutches echoes the earlier tiger hide/iron cage bars anamorphosis. The question of perception is raised in Bergsonian terms: the tiger's body is very close to the bars of its cage which itself is in the foreground, Oliver's chronometer belonging to the same plane, so that fur and metal fuse into a single plane to the point of arousing a hallucinatory sense of touch for the spectator. In the Felipe Arc en Ciel sequence, the distance between the plane of the visual anamorphosis and the spectator's eye, which is necessary for an iconic perception of the visual pun, stands out in the foreground due to the to and fro movement of a zebra in another cage behind, in the middle-ground properly speaking, while the background is devoted to the zoo park.

A further exploration of the analogy between distance/proximity and virtual image/real image is the unexpected editing of this shot of vertical black lines and the vertical black stripes of a close up. The invisible cut to van Meegeren's black and yellow jacket produces a sudden sense of absolute tactile proximity which echoes Bergson's above quoted theory of proximity between object and body. The swift and seamless editing forces us to shift from a sense of a virtual image – the improbable Felipe Arc en Ciel who is the fruit of Alba's fantasy – to our identification with van Meegeren's gaze. We actually cross the threshold of fiction to watch the Vermeer with him in the extreme close-up of his striped jacket as he turns his back to us. The focus of the camera on the photographer's back is then fully developed by a zoom backward which leads from our initial sense of figurative confusion to the assumption of the encoded subjective camera effect. Distance is slowly measured out as we observe the model and the reconstructed Vermeer painting which we watch with the photographer/painter's eyes. The perturbation of our senses which this visual commotion introduces causes us to re-examine the act of perception itself, by the unexpected proximity of the screen at that moment.

⁸ For a discussion of anamorphosis the standard example is Holbein's Tudor painting *The Ambassadors*, in which two French ambassadors stand side by side staring at us frontally from the background in which they are standing against a setting including a green velvet curtain and scientific instruments of cosmic observation; in the foreground, a carpet with geometrical designs is spread, and floating in an improbable space an indeterminate oblong shape is seen to be suspended. There is a notch on the side of the frame and when observed through this special eye hole, the oblong shape now appears to have been a skull.

⁹ I believe that in Shakespeare's plays, as I see it, concepts are first presented frontally (for example 'Rebellion' in *Richard II*) and the audience's allegiance adheres to the opinion of one party in the onstage conflict; as the characters start talking and acting, our point of view shifts to the opposite party's, or, more subtly to the opposite understanding of the concept.

Another effect of the visual pun on animal stripes and the human body is that of rendering perceptible the stripes as a pictorial analogy of a painter's brushstrokes¹⁰ which compete with the iconic illusion. As the surface of a canvas comes to mind, the striped fur motif and its perpetual 'continuum mobile' constitute a zone of confusion between the human and the animal worlds: the blurring of such limits is indeed a recurring theme in the film and inscribes the plot within a preoccupation with Darwin's reflection upon the origin of the species. Other already observed metaphors suggest such a blurring, as when Oswald adopts the same to and fro movement as the tiger's.¹¹

One is reminded here of Deleuze's insistence on the role of the Figure in Francis Bacon's paintings, and the fact that the Figure is the form that is connected to a sensation that conveys the violence of the sensation directly to the nervous system (Smith, Intr. p.xiii), not on the level of the iconic but on the level of the affect. Though this is reminiscent of abstract expressionism (Pollock) which dissolves all forms into a fluid and chaotic texture of manual lines and colour (as in Scorsese's contribution to *New York Stories*), it is essentially different since it relies on a visual pun which involves our visual perception of a form, all the more so since the pun introduces a commotion in our visual habits.

Tension on the surface: a Bergsonian concept?

It seems to me the opening shot of the film which frames, in a rather improbable manner, two children who are engaged in dragging a recalcitrant Dalmatian dog behind them, is actually drawing our attention to a visual tension between the world of colour and the world of black & white. Indeed, the contending Dalmatian's spotted black and white fur contrasts with the colourful costumes of the kids, which introduces a purely visual tension. Later in the film, some of the documentaries are in black and white, while others are in bright saturated reds, blues and yellows. The tension between the children in the world of colour and the dog in the world of black and white suggests a dramatization of hidden and otherwise imperceptible forces reminiscent of the invisible attraction and repulsion forces of Newton's theory of gravitation. As to the very posture of the two children, their bodies rotate around an oblique axis, the location of their small feet being their unique contact with the plane of the asphalt, the rest of their bodies swinging and swaying around the oblique axis which is materialized by the taut lead. Thus the movement of their twin bodies makes them unite in the common effort as if they were 'Siamese twins', a theme which is developed later. The next time we see them, they are sitting prostrate on the pavement, contemplating the Dalmatian on the zebra crossing where it seems to have been run over by a car.

The form of the twisted bodies thus makes invisible forces perceptible by the representation of movement, a central concern of Painting Treatises from Lomazzo¹² onwards: maybe it is relevant to recall here that Lomazzo's reference is to Michelangelo and the cone of the S line which rises from a circular basis on a plane to a tapering top. Particularly if one compares this visual metaphor of movement in space to the one used by Henri Bergson in his *Matter and Memory* in which he visualizes the point of contact of perception as an inverted cone standing on its point upon a plane. For Bergson the inverted cone image sums up his theory of the sensory-motor equilibrium of our nervous system which is a sort of constant stretch and pull between perception and action, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, between reflex action and suspended action.¹³ Within the general economy of my paper, I

¹⁰ See the difference between Velasquez's use of brushstrokes as signatures of his hand and Vermeer's invisible 'hand', or Italian Old Masters (Titian) as opposed to Rembrandt's use of expressive brushstrokes within the varnish.

¹¹ See Smith (Introduction to *Francis Bacon: Logic of Sensation*), p.154, note 6.

¹² Paolo Giovanni Lomazzo - *A Tracte Containing The Artes of Curious Paintinge* (Engl. Tr. Sir John Harrington, 1598, New York and Amsterdam: Da Capo Press, 1969, p. 17) : "the form of the flame thereof is most apt for motion : for it has a Cone or sharp point..."; the reference is to Michael-Angelo; for the link with Bergson below, it is interesting to notice that "the cone or pyramid can be either base downward or the cone downward", the resulting letter S either horizontal or vertical being the line of beauty in movement. The similitude with Hogarth's 'ogee' line is striking. Another paper could discuss Mannerism in the film with sound arguments. D. Bindman, *Hogarth*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1981,p.149 ff.. That Hogarth's use of saturated reds and bright yellows was what caused his work to be the reference for the Pre-Raphaelites is well-known.

¹³ Henri Bergson, *Matière et mémoire – Essai sur la relation du corps à l'esprit*, ((1896) 1939) Paris : P.U.F., 1999, p. 103 : « la conscience pratique et utile du moment présent : l'équilibre sensori-moteur

suggest that Lomazzo's cone diagram of the flame of life is but another of the visual apparatuses displaced by the philosopher to make his understanding of perception clearer.

Tension as symmetry: from classicism to the expression of forces

In fact reading Bergson's study brings together a set of concepts which are astonishingly akin to the imperceptible forces which are dramatized in the film. For instance, the perception of the world in Bergson has to do with the body as periphery *vs* centre, and reaction to the exterior world by centripetal and centrifugal information, and the semantic pair of interior/exterior as a mode of perception. Shot 7 in the opening sequence gives us a striking instance of this mode of perception as the swan crashes inside the car head-on through the windshield, and Alba's head symmetrically crashes outside the same windshield. The visual dramatization of the central Darwinian concept of the accident as the cause for change in evolutionary theory, Man himself being the product of such an 'accident', a concept which sets the whole plot into action, is thus clearly formulated in Bergsonian terms of movement, perception and tension.

Another important Bergsonian concept which the film uses to dramatize the human situation of bereavement due to irrecoverable loss is the concept of difference and repetition¹⁴. The setting of the shots are mostly characterized by scrupulously symmetry, elements on either side of the central axis of the composition carefully mirroring one another. The repetition of colours adds to the insistence on symmetry, as for example the way in which Alba's central position in her white bed in a white hospital room -- which echoes the meaning of her name, as opposed to her red hair, or later the red robe she wears -- provides a chromatic alternative to black & white, mainly red and white. On either side sit or stand the twin brothers : dark-haired Oswald in a grey, monochrome, suit, (though of course grey is the value for red) on the right side, and fair-haired Oliver, first in a tawny jacket, then in white pyjamas spewing red bits of glass which he has been ingesting; later, when the twins attempt to be united as the Siamese twins they were at birth, we see them in a red sports suit jogging along the discoloured and dimly-lit morning streets, and eventually coming upon the dead Dalmatian's black and white body.

Repetition is an aesthetic characteristic of the film in other fields as well, such as the closed series – Beta saying her alphabet – or the open-ended series of documentary films which, more interestingly maybe, combine both repetition and difference since they are a history of evolution, from bacteria to flowers, snails, saurians and apes to man. The brown – or in chiaroscuro terminology 'burnished'-- snail is pivotal to the repetition and difference structure of perception, being hermaphrodite and thus symbolizing the invisible unity which is manifested by these structures of perception.

By its interference with the programmed registration of their deliberately plotted common death, the snail actually brings the film to an end, thus making a statement on human existence as a mere accident within natural history. The end of the film echoes its beginning and the accident caused by the swan, the double death of the women, an accident which interferes with the consciousness and body movement of the two young husbands till the end. Symmetry between beginning and end appears to underscore in its very artifice the lack of symmetry, or circularity, in the general movement of time, which only moves, i.e. relates to space, through repetition and difference, ingestion and expulsion or spasmodic movement. The tension created by this circular but open structure reformulates the Golden Section in a manner which would have to be discussed as well; whatever the Renaissance (or earlier) visual apparatus considered, their re-appropriation in Henri Bergson's philosophy of perception and action is, it seems to me, remarkably appropriate to highlight some structural and aesthetic aspects of Peter Greenaway's extraordinary cinema.

d'un système nerveux tendu entre la perception et l'action ». The difference between the two cones lies in the difference between painting as representation of observed movement and a psychology of sensation and motricity combined to define duration, or consciousness.

¹⁴ Bergson distinguishes between memory which uses repetition : acquired memory, habit, know-how, and memory which uses difference, which would be spontaneous memory, affective and subjective (Proust's madeleine), op. cit; p. 88 and ff. Gilles Deleuze, *Différence et répétition*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 1968. See also Céline Murillo, *L'Esthétique des films de Jim Jarmusch : répétition et référence*, Unpublished Ph.D. Doctorate, Toulouse : Université Toulouse II, 2008.