

The Extension of Poetic Mind

Moving Visual Thinking in Chinese Cinépoetry

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Abstract

In the late twentieth century, the general world trend channeled our emphasis in education towards scientific, mathematical, and quantitative approach instead of that of art, the qualitative and subjective nature of which tends to be considered as sensuously stimulating but not intellectually instructive. Thus it has become a common philosophy that perceiving and thinking are separate cognitive processes. Worse still, there even turned out to be a traditional exclusion of fine arts from the Liberal Arts owing to this division, a prejudice which is still active today, because fine arts are by and large based on perceiving. In *Republic*, Plato recommends music for the education of heroes because it makes human beings partake in the mathematical order and harmony of the cosmos, located beyond the reach of the senses; whereas the arts, and particularly painting, are to be treated with caution because they reinforce man's dependence on illusory images. Frustratingly, Alexander Baumgarten, who audaciously added modern aesthetics to the western philosophical system by asserting that perception, just as reasoning, could attain a state of perfection, also continued the tradition of defining perception as the inferior of the two cognitive powers because it supposedly lacked the distinctness that is exclusive to the superior faculty of reasoning. The American avant-garde filmmaker Stan Brakhage, however, approaches the pristine question in a very different light. As German film critic Rudolf Arnheim brought up later in *Visual Thinking*, the Sensualist philosophers have reminded us forcefully that nothing is in the intellect which was not previously in the senses, though they too regarded the gathering of perceptual data as inferior to the higher cognitive functions of the mind. For Brakhage, a film's stream of images is ideally correlated with the filmmaker's experience of vision. In other words, Brakhage, as with his contemporary poets Charles Olson and Allen Ginsberg, identifies perception/vision as a corporeal phenomenon and believes that all emotional experiences ultimately register in sight. It was on this notion that Brakhage developed his seminal cinematic concept "moving visual thinking" from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s. By this sentiment, Brakhage proposes that film's greatest strength lies in that "it alone among art media can represent the prime matter of thought before it passes through the filter of language." This prime matter of thought, according to Brakhage, derives immediately from the synapses and reveals the nature of individual corporeal processes. It has been suspected that Brakhage's predilection for Charles Olson's anti-mimetic poetry and poetics has contributed significantly to his claim that a film, like a poem, generally does not depict what it is about but, rather, by reawakening the energies of an experience in a reader/spectator's body, actually recreates the experience. This very idea of recreating an experience through cinema immediately elevates the perceiving of a film to the same level with its cognitive counterpart. In this paper, I shall try and show how Brakhage's conception of cinema as "moving visual thinking" functions in Chinese cinépoetry, as well as how Maya Deren's dialectical real/imaginative is harmonized through the interaction of Brakhage's cinematography and Chinese poetics in the mediascape.

In the renaissance of public culture and the dawn of a new era of Hollywood masterpieces, the film as an art form is unnecessarily the condensed picturization of a novel or the celluloid record of a stage drama. Fredrick Aicken nonetheless suggests that the latter version of the cinema/text relationship is sheer misunderstanding, and the very reason underlying the difficult development of film appreciation in our age is that our approach to the subject matter has been fundamentally wrong. To prevent film appreciation from being reduced to "a superficial examination of the Hollywood conveyor belt at work" (Aicken 129), that is, an examination of the technique instead of the film as art, Aicken suggests that the ability of the film medium to create a sort of poetry for the spectator should be fully recognized and articulated. Aicken points out in particular that our wrong approach to film appreciation stems from our misconceptions about the film medium in general. In short, the long existing prejudicial discrimination between perception and thinking in human intellectual history has been the major blockage in the cinematic appreciation process in question. In the first place, what we expect from works of art after all is the ability of its visual or aural beauty to reveal the latent charm or significance of things around us by its power to awaken our imagination as spectators and audience. In other words, the appreciation of art demands the cooperation between the audience and the artist. Unfortunately, it is oftentimes the case that common screen fetishism leads to superfluity and redundancy engendered by cinematic techniques that eventually ruin the possibility of imaginative "omission" rendered by the film medium. Secondly, the reconstruction of the text in the language of the film relies on the movement of the camera thus enjoys a more flexible spectatorship. Yet, this does not necessarily mean that attempts to put the Bard on the screen are deplorably insoluble. For Aicken, a compromise can always be reached between the spoken word and the moving image, for the film medium and the written script tend to enrich each other so long as the film deals not only with the text's outward action, but also its non-active and psychological content. Aicken's eloquent question as whether it is possible for a film to "photograph" the mind as it can the body while in the mean time, leaving something for the audience to contribute proves to be a remedial gesture towards the seeing/thinking gap as mentioned earlier, which inevitably reminds us of Stan Brakhage's fascinating cinematography of moving visual thinking. Furthermore, his inquiry also directs our attention towards the artistic value of cinépoetry in the advent of what Adorno calls an age of culture industry, or what Benjamin calls the mechanical age.

Before going deeper, we might as well familiarize ourselves with the two key terms first: moving visual thinking and cinépoetry. In *Metaphors on Vision*, Stan Brakhage appeals to the development of the faculty of visual understanding. This faculty pursues “knowledge foreign to language and founded on visual communication, demanding a development of the optical mind, and dependent upon perception in the original and deepest sense of the word” (Brakhage 120). Therein developed the notion of “moving visual thinking.” Central to the development of this faculty of visual understanding is the “mind’s eye” (121), which for Brakhage is tragically contextualized in “an age which artificially seeks to project itself materialistically into abstract space and to fulfill itself mechanically because it has blinded itself to almost all external reality within eyesight and to the organic awareness of even the physical movement properties of its own perceptibility.” For Brakhage, our cave-dwelling ancestors had a greater understanding than we do that the object of fear must be objectified because it is only through beholding that the deepest possible human understanding (and possession) of fear can be realized. This ability to reach down to the deepest inner world through perception, according to Brakhage, is what we have lost today. However, there are still a few artist-filmmakers who have carried this tradition of vision and visualization into cinematic experiences. “They are essentially preoccupied by and deal imagistically with—birth, sex, death, and the search for God,” all of which purportedly belong to the range of subjects which the faculty of reasoning ought to deal with. Hence the ultimate motivation behind “moving visual thinking” is to exhaust contemporary spectatorship and obtain spiritual experience in celluloid illumination, namely, to “transcend the original physical restrictions and inherit worlds of eyes” (125) through sharp and associative receptivity. With a long-standing historical lineage in literature, cinépoetry is a fledgling cinematic genre that converges film with poetry. According to Michelle Brown, one pivotal convention of cinépoetry is the exclusion of text on screen, assuming that “the unfolding visual sequence itself IS the poem, presented as a visual interpretation of the written poem” (Brown 4). Brown also takes Mallarmé’s *Un coup de dés* as an example to pursue that whatever convergence takes place, a poem should never reveal anything explicitly, but use symbolic language that prompts the reader’s mind’s eye. These afterthoughts click with my own footing that the foregrounding of the bodily experience of the photographed mind in cinépoetry without the physical presence of the poet (or the presence of an invisible poet) is actually a *sine qua non* for the practice of the Brakhagian mind’s eye or what Guy Davenport defines as the “eye’s intelligence,” to wit, the ability of the eye to see and to articulate that seeing in a rational fashion. But how does this process come to pass?

In an interview with Suranjan Ganguly, Stan Brakhage described the process of “moving visual thinking” as “a streaming of shapes that aren’t nameable—a vast visual ‘song’ of the cells expressing their external life” (qtd. Sitney 10). Later at a Millennium Film Workshop, Brakhage explained further that “[since] [t]here’s thinking with words, numbers, symbols, which is essentially left-brain thinking; there’s thinking musically, gestalt-composition which is right-brain thinking,” what he meant by “moving visual thinking” is essentially “streaming of unnameable, or resistant to nameable, shapes, forms, even colors which [he] believe[d] is the largest part of thinking,” and is “composed of the electrical synaptic neuron feedback of the entire body” upon which “all original vision is made.” This definition of “moving visual thinking” is fully demonstrated in Brakhage’s experimental film *Visions in Meditation #3: Plato’s Cave*, in which the mental and bodily excitement invoked by vision is underscored by the instable movement of the camera and long shots of vast range of landscape sometimes overlapping with images of human dwellings that register a “radical subjectivity” (Pruitt 122) and painterly strategies that feature Abstract Expressionism. The deliberate overlaying of scenes within the cave with the thick detail of city views indicates that what Brakhage terms as “moving visual thinking” is constantly being processed between the mind and the eye in the film with the two apparatus inseparable. With a faint and fleeting sense of human presence within the film (through cross-cutting), the subjectivity of the filmmaker is nonetheless emphasized through the occasionally present window pane between the camera lens and the cinematic image, which reminds the spectator of the filmmaker’s physical and intellectual presence as a traveler and a camera holder in motion. The spectator, reciprocally, follows the fluctuating movement of the camera body and mind:



Cave and City Image



Vision through Window Pane Image



Landscape and Human Dwelling Image



Landscape Image

Given that Brakhage intrinsically resisted mystical interpretations of a "suprasensible universe" beyond the parameters of human perception, this cinematic poetics of bodily dynamism drawn upon the influence of Gertrude Stein and Charles Olson portended that Brakhage would embrace through poetic sensorium of the apparatus the same excitement from the perceived dissolution of the barrier between life and death, the imaginative and the real, as cinema sprang to life full-blown with the public screening of *Lumière Shots* in Paris on December 28, 1895.

This bodily excitement kindled by film medium, which underpins Brakhage's notion of "moving visual thinking," would be commenced by Maya Deren, Brakhage's most important immediate predecessor, in her seminal essay "Cinematography: The Creative Use of Reality" (1960). Deren maintains that by creating animated paintings, the graphic arts school of animated film represented by artists such as Hans Richter and Oskar Fischinger had long recognized the similarity between screen and canvas. However, they were attracted not by the cinematography's graphic possibilities but rather by the excitements of the film medium, in particular the exploitation of its time dimension, such as rhythm, spatial depth and the three-dimensional illusion created by spiral figures and so on forth. Deren summarizes that essentially speaking, it is these avant-garde artists who put their graphic skills at the service of the film medium, as a means of "extending film expression" (Deren 61), rather than the other way round. As with sound cinema that based its innovative revolution on silent films, animated paintings came along impressively with the heritage of plastic traditions and techniques. For Deren, the convergence of the mind and the eye in modern film medium tends to confront the cinematic art with a dialectical complex that involves an interplay between the imaginative and the real. In Deren's conception, this paradoxical tension is most exemplary when it comes to the two poles of cinematic art, namely, the documentary and the animated film. Deren asserts that the standard documentary needs "a greater range of formal options" (Pruitt 117) on one hand, which may "compromise the invisible presence of the filmmaker" in order to respond to the reality it purports to encounter. On the other hand, the animated films, however powerful may they be aesthetically, are animated paintings and not films *per se*, because "the photographic reality of the world itself has been bypassed altogether." We might as well hold on for a second to Deren's claim that the animated paintings "make use of the filmstrip but should be categorized elsewhere because they have the aesthetic principles of another medium." In "Cinematography," Deren holds that the motion-picture medium has an extraordinary range of expression, for as with the plastic arts it is a "visual composition projected on a two-dimensional surface" (Deren 62); as with music it can "compose in the rhythms and phrases of time and can be attended by song and instrument"; as with poetry it can "juxtapose images"; and as with literature in general, it can "encompass in its sound track the abstractions available only to language." Interestingly, Deren does define animated painting as "animated painting' film" in this essay. And all that she pursues in the medium's profusion of potentialities is a compromise between the lack of imagination in documentary and the lean reality in animation: "An artist", Deren argues, "should not seek security in a tidy mastery over the simplifications of deliberate poverty; he should, instead, have the creative courage to face the danger of being overwhelmed by fecundity in the effort to resolve it into simplicity and economy." In other words, though Deren believes that photograph differs from graphic image in that the understanding of photograph involves a double exposure that ought to begin by recognizing a reality, whereas the understanding of graphic image leads directly to meaning because "the intent of plastic arts is to make meaning manifest" (64), she agrees with Brakhage in the main that any artistic image presumes a mental activity, whether in the passive form of the Brakhagian mental image of perception and memory, or as the creative imagination realized by the art instrument. In this regard, the self-cooing tendency in Deren's theory regarding a confusion of photographic image with reality itself, as has been well argued by John Pruiit, as well as Deren's elaboration on the photographic process used in animated painting films, both suggest that Deren shares common ground with Brakhage on the theoretical and practical cogency of "moving visual thinking." Though R. Bruce Elder encapsulates that the two filmmakers go against grain with each other in that while Brakhage's advocates the Romantic tradition of revealing the operations of the imagination through transformations of the image with apparatus, Deren plays down the role of intrusive subjective mediation, appealing to an unmanipulated reality that rejects any unnatural distortion of reality by the cinematic apparatus, this tacit agreement between the two is almost indisputable. It is on this theoretical ground that the Brakhagian aesthetic of moving visual thinking is applicable to Chinese cinépoetry. It is also in Chinese cinépoetry that Deren's dialectical complex is to be harmonized when poetic association remedies the absence of reality. Since (as mentioned earlier) the genre of cinépoetry is still indefinable due to its technological complexity, and Deren and Brakhage's point of convergence lies in animated painting films, the rest of the article will mainly focus on a close-reading of a film clip from the last water-ink animation in Chinese film history—*Feelings of Mountains and Waters*.

According to Chris Berry and Lisa Rofel, "any attempt to understand China's visual culture today must start from an understanding of the New Documentary Movement" (Berry, Lu and Rofel 4), for the 1980s, which had been stamped by this movement that thoroughly transformed China's visual culture, cinematic aesthetic and film production, had witnessed "a flourishing of independent thought and questioning of the status quo in response to both the disillusion with Maoism following the fiasco of the Cultural Revolution (1966--1976) and changing nature of relationships with the West that had followed." Yet, this was also the eve of China's reform and opening-up, almost two years before China's planned economy came to an end and studios producing exquisite, non-market-oriented traditional visual arts were no longer sponsored by the government. This film was produced by the Shanghai Animation Film Studio in 1988—one of the above mentioned victims at the dawn of an era of market economy and culture industry. Many a master hands of Chinese traditional arts (such as water-ink painters, zither players etc.) participated in the filmmaking. In a period when the Procrustean operation of cultural hegemony had been uprooted and diversity in artistic forms started to be encouraged rather than be smothered, the gesture was both emancipation and lamentation. Paper-folding films and water-ink animated painting films, as two distinctive cinematic innovations in the 1960s, betokened a nostalgic resurrection of traditional Chinese poetics and virtues such as the literati culture of drawing artistic inspiration from the landscape, the Zen Buddhist view of understanding the mind and seeing one's disposition, the Taoist view of accomplishing detachment and self-cultivation by abandoning oneself to nature as well as the strength of character and ambition that traditional men of letters would regard as the pith of life. The film narrative describes the endearment and rapport between a zither master and a young boatman, who saved the musician when he fell ill, learned zither from the musician and became the successor of the musician's virtuosity in the end after the teacher faded into the vastness of the natural landscape to lead a life as a hermit. This motif is not uncommon in traditional Chinese poetry. Unfortunately, there is no way to confirm whether Wei Te, the film director and initiator of the water-ink genre, had been inspired by a specific poem in Chinese literary history. However, we may regard this film as the epitome of considerable poems with similar motifs. For example, a close inspection of the clothing and appearance of the musician reveals that his image may be modeled on T'ao Ch'ien (365-427) or Recluse T'ao, and Hsieh Ling-yün (385-433), two originary poets of the rivers-and-mountains tradition in the early 5th century C.E. between the Han and Tang dynasties:



FMW, Image 1

The rugged and remote images of the vast and untamed wilderness, which had been the central theme of T'ao and Hsieh, also predominate the screen throughout the film:



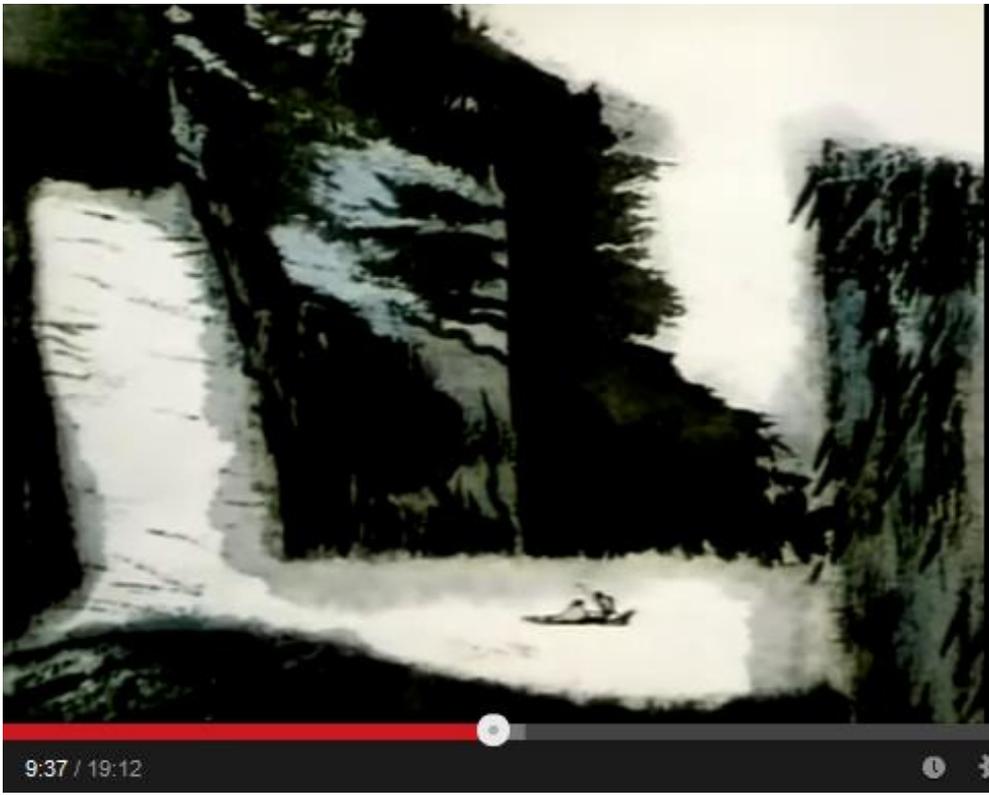
FMW, Image 2



FMW, Image 3



FMW, Image 4



FMW, Image 5



FMW, Image 6



FMW, Image 7

In a deeper sense of my statement, almost every single shot of the film is capable of matching with a particular poetic line composed by Chinese nature poets. The two screenshots below, for instance, perfectly visualize the poetic lines by Liu Tsung-yüan (773-819), one of the Tang Dynasty's leading rivers-and-mountains poets and China's most important Tang nature painter-poet Wang Wei (701-761), who was an adamant proponent and practitioner of Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism and the first to paint the inner spirit of landscape in his painting and weave consciousness into wilderness in his poetry:



FMW, Image 8

Though slightly different in image design and temporal setting, this shot was apparently inspired by a line in Liu's famous poem "River Snow": "In a lone boat, rain cloak and hat of reeds, / an old man's fishing the cold river snow" (trans. David Hinton). Spectators with backgrounds in Chinese art and poetics will naturally come up with this association and experience an excitement of thinking through seeing. The background music, which matches visually with the movement of the young boatman's hands playing the musician's zither, disturbs a bodily rhythmic movement in the viewer and the filmmaker at the same time through the neuron sensorium, which has been constantly emphasized in the process of Brakhagian moving visual thinking. Thus the zither, which does not make its visual presence all the time, actually serves as the mind's eye through *audiogenic synesthesia* (my emphasis).



FMW, Image 9

In the second shot, the musician is a white, ghostly shadow, accompanied by the hollow sound of the wind followed by the upbeat melody of a flute song (which precludes the emergence of the image of the young boatman and the unfolding of the film narrative), moving slowly into our vision, an image which corresponds to Wang Wei's poem "Vagary Lake": "Flute-song carries beyond furthest shores. / In dusk light, I bid you a sage's farewell. // Across this lake, in the turn of a head, / mountain greens furl into white clouds" (trans. David Hinton). To say that the film is an epitome of many poems is not whimsical, for this shot may also correspond to a verse line by T'ao Ch'ien that "[v]ast and majestic, mountains embrace your shadow; / broad and deep, rivers harbor your voice" (trans. David Hinton). This is especially true when the story draws to a close, where the teacher left his zither to the student as a gift, dissolving slowly into the vastness of the landscape as a white shadow again:



FMW, Image 10 (See lower right corner)

So to speak, the film medium does extend the poetic minds beyond the limit of temporality, though not necessarily of space. Since the origins of Chinese landscape painting (in the most conventional sense) can be traced to the illustrations of rivers-and-mountains poetry, the integration of image and text is almost acquiescence among critics of Chinese visual art. Small wonder the convergence of plastic painting and cinematography in this Chinese cinépoem will be seamless. But how does this Chinese cinépoem confront Deren's real/imaginative polarity? And in what aspects does the process of moving visual thinking differ in this film from in Brakhage's *Plato's Cave*, which is also a landscape painting on film?

The answer lies in the intervening mediation of the subjectivity of the invisible poet who conveys a moral message in *Feelings of Mountains and Waters*. In *Visionary Film: The American Avant-garde: 1943-2000*, P. Adams Sitney points out the prominent features of an avant-garde lyrical film: First of all, the viewer or spectator is fully aware of the presence of the filmmaker and his/her action of seeing despite his/her physical absence on the screen. In other words, in the lyrical form, "there is no longer a hero; instead, the screen is filled with movement, and that movement, both of the camera and the editing, reverberates with the idea of a person looking. As viewer we see this mediator's intense experience of seeing" (Sitney 161). Secondly, the space of a lyrical film transforms into the "flattened space of Abstract Expressionist painting." In that field of vision, depth and vanishing point are replaceable by the possibility that several perspectives occupy that space at one time through superimposition. Finally, in the lyrical mode, the actual flatness and whiteness of the screen tend to be affirmed by the filmmaker, who transforms these traits into illusion in place of the traditional use of the screen as a frame. The lyrical film is also characterized by freely swinging camera and rhythmic movements on the screen that formally resemble the genre of avant-garde poetry. Earlier on, these features were well demonstrated in the screen captures from Brakhage's *Plato's Cave*. Brakhage's filmmaking reiterates rhythm in its movements of image and shots and variously abstract uses of techniques such as montage, plastic cutting, passage and so on forth. As Henri Lefebvre recaps in the final part of his *Rhythmanalysis*, the complicated visuality of Brakhage's film as related to a bodily sense of the camera (or bodily excitement of the film medium), which is related to the impression created of the camera as an extension of, or part of, both the filmmaker and of the viewer by means of the multiple focus of blinking, shaking, shuddering, revolving, speaks of the collision of natural biological and social timescales. This visuality also speaks of the collision of the rhythms of our bodies and those of our society, as so brilliantly demonstrated in the technical spectacles in *Plato's Cave*. Empowering the "mind's eye" (Brakhage 2) by associating the imaginative (i.e. Plato's allegory of the cave) and reality (i.e. the natural landscape and the human conditions captured by the camera) with the rhythmic movement of the apparatus, Brakhage materialized "a nervous system feedback from the visual music" that derived from his emotional involvement in photograph shooting and the fact that this emotion enabled him to access a more profound understanding of his own being at the very contact between camera and his fingertips. Thus "the bodies of both the filmmaker and the viewer are seen as compositional, and receptive" (Mooney 10) in the process of the Brakhagian moving visual thinking.

As an animated painting film and most importantly, a cinépoem, *Feelings of Mountains and Waters*, owing to its rich context in Chinese aesthetics and poetics, has its special way of accommodating the polarity between the imaginative and the real through poetic mediation rather than the mediation of the apparatus and the filmmaker. There are two typical places where this poetic subjectivity intervenes in the film. One is the opening of the film featuring the musician moving among the boundless landscape as a white, transparent nonobject, the other being the ending of the film, as the musician entrusts his zither (thus his artistry and virtue as a literati-musician) to the young boatman who saves his life and shares his interest, and returns to his formal life as a hermit. The first film clip starts at 0:12 and ends at 0:24. The sequence starts with a long, consistent shot of a hazy, indistinct river bank, the luxuriant vegetation can only be identified through the foggy ink marks, the muzzy strokes and the emerald color of the original plastic painting. There is no artificial sound in the background, nor the least trace of human presence. A long silence and an overwhelming emptiness occupy the sequence until a phantasmagoric figure surfaces the unfathomable depth of the mist. That a zither master assumes a human form without identifiable details associates the spectator with many nature poems at the first sight, and at second glance, reminds one of the nature poets' life style in which the spiritual ecology of *tzu-jan* (or naturalness) was the very texture of everyday experience and that a reclusive retreat into the wilderness cosmology was the most ideal and spiritually fulfilling way of cultivating wisdom essential to sage governing. The scene between 13:20 and 13:23, which juxtaposes the student's vivid image on the left hand-side of the screen with the musician's blank figure fading silently into the more immense blankness, naturally associates the spectator with the Ch'an practice, which promotes that the self and its constructions of the world dissolve away until nothing remains but empty mind or "no-mind" (Hinton 57). The selfless clarity of this empty mind as "mirroring the world, leaving its ten thousand things utterly simple, utterly themselves, and utterly sufficient" is resounded by the disappearance of the sound of flute song, of zither at once in this very sequence. The alternate shots between the student's still image gazing into the distance and the blanking away of the literati image is intensified by the re-presence of the sound of the zither as the teacher looks back, musing. This sequence is followed immediately by a tracking shot up towards a mountain top, where the student continues playing the teacher's zither until the close-up switches to a crane shot that emphasizes the smallness of the sailing teacher in relation to the rest of his space. The frequent cutover between natural landscape and the hermit musician sailing among the vast emptiness on the screen reinforces the notion of selfless clarity of no-mind in Ch'an Buddhism, in which the simplest image resonates with the whole cosmology of nature:



FMW, Image 11



FMW, Image 12 (See upper right corner)

The young boatman (now the successor of the aged musician) playing zither in the background, along with the invisible literati teacher at the end of the film, makes up for the absence of reality in the motion-picture with a sense of poetic subjectivity because only spectators with a profound knowledge of Chinese literati culture are capable of associating all these cinematic fragments to form a coherent unity for further cognition. As with Deren's notion of "archetype" (Deren 66) in early Western films, archetypes in Chinese classical poetry also play a significant role in shaping poetic subjectivity in Chinese cinépoetry. For example, the recurrent close-up of the musician twisting his beard while shutting his eyes is a symbolic gesture of thinking/contemplation:



FMW, Image 13



FMW, Image 14

Not only does this move invoke the spectator's association of the invisible poetic minds behind the animated painting, but it also foregrounds the filmmaker's action of seeing – not through the rhythmic movement of the camera, but through a double exposure of the mind's eye.

As the renowned painter-theorist Francois Jullien argues in the "Gaze or Contemplation?" chapter of his book *The Great Image Has No Form, or On the Nonobject through Painting*, unlike the European consideration of painting that focused on THE gaze and, "in its quest for greater objectivity, has gone back to how the retina produces sight" (Jullien 161), the Chinese painter-theorist, such as Guo Xi, pursues a "spiritual gaze" (162) that mediates the communication between morality (the "inside," or what Europeans call ethics) and nature (the "outside," or what Europeans call the world's phenomena and transformations, which they believe to be separated from ethics). This is because Chinese morality partakes in the elements of the world (mountain and water, "landscape" in the first place). It is for this reason that the ancient Chinese believed that landscape has value only if one is internally available: we speak of the purity of the wind in the way that we speak (even though now we no longer speak under science) of the purity of the soul or heart. In other words, while the European tradition conceives the term "contemplation" (*recueillement*) (161) as opposed to "gaze" and as a "gathering up" of the landscape within oneself, the Chinese tradition declares that a painting, thus a poem describing the painting, bears the "imprint" (163) of the nobility or baseness of the artist and ends up his/her moral "signature." In a later article titled "Film as Poetry," Fredrick Aicken follows up on his notion of the misconceptualized film medium by pursuing that the film should have the capacity to create for the spectator a sort of visual poetry, which he expects to be "a selection of the sight of ordinary men just as Wordsworth's poetry was a selection of the speech of ordinary men" (Aicken 133). This statement apparently responds to the question of a photographed mind by continuing to emphasize that as an art form, a film must not be content to reveal and capture superficial beauty but should be able to explore the inwardness of things beyond mere perceiving. To consummate this position, Aicken moves on to challenge D. W. Griffith's maxim "[m]y job is to make you see" with this interior/exterior tension. Aicken argues that in a poeticized moment of the film, this interior/exterior tension is placated by the camera rather than the actor owing to the ability of the camera to wed sight with emotion. When it comes to film sequences, however, it is the art of editing that strikes the visual rhythm as akin to an equivalent emotional stir in poetry. For Aicken, the concept of the association of ideas, which evokes corresponding feeling in the audience and is a crucial element in the functioning of poetry, plays a critical role in ideal filmmaking. Not only can this concept be applied to visual effects, but it also applies to the dramatic effect produced by the background sound of the film. For Aicken, "sound, and dialogue in particular, should supplement sight in the poetry of the screen" in mind-photographing. An ideal film writer, therefore, is one with a gift for composing graphic visual images with "the minimum of dialogue or commentary" (209); and correspondingly, an ideal film director is one versed in making use of sight and sound to stimulate association of ideas (or to awaken dormant emotions and imaginations) beyond mere screen script and redundant commentary. Both Aicken's insightful comments on film medium and appreciation as well as his brilliant delineation of an ideal poetry film are excellent critical endorsements to the actual functioning of Brakhage's moving visual thinking mode in the making and appreciation of *Feelings of Mountains and Waters*. In conclusion, Brakhage's moving visual thinking functions in Wei Te's Chinese cinépoem only when poetic subjectivity intervenes through the association of ideas. It might also be safe to say that Wei Te's cinépoem identifies with Deren's definition of creative art based on T. E. Hulme's theory of the "modern primitive" (Nichols 283) in 1980s China. In a world so intimately overwhelmed by scientific discovery and global commercialization, how can a true artist in conflict with a nature which he finds dangerously uncontrollable resist the temptation of the authoritative and sober aspect of primitive culture?

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