

# Graig Uhlin

## Cinema at Sea: Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean Epstein, and the Quality of Wildness

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### Abstract

Nature is conventionally thought to be “wild” when it remains untouched by humans, often confined to sites of pristine wilderness. Against this opposition between subject and environment, this essay understands wildness as a quality linking together the human and the non-human. It examines philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s contention that artistic expression can produce a primordial perception, a contact with “wild being,” that refuses any distinction between self and world. The essay then considers images of water in the cinematic avant-garde, and in particular, the Breton films of French director Jean Epstein, to demonstrate the close association between the natural element of water and the cultural technique of filmmaking, in their mutual emphasis on mobility and luminosity.

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In “Cinema and Exploration,” Andre Bazin utilizes the images filmed from a raft adrift at sea to demonstrate cinema’s existential link to reality.<sup>1</sup> The French film critic contrasts the British Technicolor film *Scott of the Antarctic* (Charles Frend, 1948) to the black-and-white documentary *Kon Tiki* (1951), directed by biologist Thor Heyerdahl, and winner of the Academy Award for Best Documentary in 1952. Bazin complains that the former film, a dramatic reconstruction of Robert Falcon Scott’s failed attempt to become the first explorer to reach the South Pole, sacrifices authenticity through its staged depiction of the expedition. Bazin prized an aesthetic of film that respects and preserves the integrity of the profilmic event; editing practices that fragment and reassemble a scene according to a predetermined dramatic or ideological logic violate the autonomy and ambiguity of reality. As Bazin argues, Frend’s film attempts to “imitate the inimitable”—that is, “risk, adventure, death”—leading him to charge that a “simple snapshot of Scott and his four companions at the pole, which was discovered in their baggage, is far more stirring than the entire Technicolor feature.”<sup>2</sup>

By contrast, Bazin values *Kon Tiki* for communicating the danger of a seafaring voyage by a scientific crew. Heyerdahl and his associates constructed a raft using traditional techniques

in order to demonstrate the plausibility of the Polynesian islands being populated by South American explorers traveling by raft. The amateur quality of the filmmaking, Bazin argues, works in the film’s favor. The limitations of shooting on a raft prevented stylistic flourishes; when the crew encountered a storm, the camera was stowed safely, leaving no filmic record of the event. The remaining images are not necessarily dramatic, but, as Bazin stresses, the available filmic traces faithfully capture the experience: “Those fluid and trembling images are as it were the objectivized memory of the actors in the drama.”<sup>3</sup> Bazin cites one exemplary moment when a whale threatens to capsize the small vessel; the resulting footage is frustratingly brief, but that imperfection only heightens the existential risk posed by the whale to the vulnerable crew. The shaking image registers the force of this risk, such that “it is not so much the photograph of the whale that interests us as the photograph of the danger.”<sup>4</sup>

Bazin’s contrast between these two films provides a conceptual framework for cinema’s encounter with nature in the wild. The more controlled conditions of *Scott of the Antarctic*’s reconstructed expedition sacrifices authenticity for legibility, while conversely, *Kon Tiki*’s fidelity to the encounter with nature either results in an illegible image or no image at all. The direct encounter with the natural world

can have destabilizing effects on its representation, which is sometimes compensated for by creative reconstructions. The policing of authenticity around cinematic depictions of nature in the wild speaks to a desire to provide a representation of the natural world on its own terms, even as the wild resists its representation. Environmentalist thought has turned to a concept of wildness to displace wilderness for understanding humanity's contact with non-human nature. Wilderness emphasizes the conservation of natural spaces untouched by humans, and it therefore implies a separate of the subject from its environment. Wildness, on the other hand, is a characteristic of nature, applicable not just to particular spaces but to humans as well. It designates what remains untamed and uncontrolled. Michael Bess describes it as "the irruption of spontaneous, unbidden processes."<sup>5</sup> The attention to wildness as a quality, rather than wilderness as a designated site of untamed nature, overcomes the separation between the human and the non-human, since humans can also exhibit wildness. In other words, wildness deterritorializes wilderness.

If wildness is associated with the chaotic and uncontrolled, how might it then be possible to give aesthetic form to it when it is inherently a resistance to form? Bazin presents two extremes: the conventionality of the staged encounter that mimics nature, and the absence of the image produced by the risk of a direct encounter. There is room to maneuver, though, between the wholly artificial image and its total elimination. Bess points out that "by thinking wildness as a variable quality rather than as a fixed place or thing," we are no longer obliged to keep it isolated to pristine wilderness.<sup>6</sup> A wild image of nature thus captures, even in the presence of the human, some gesture toward the radical otherness of the non-human.

This essay first turns to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's efforts to think through how direct contact with nature can be achieved through cultural means; that is, how aesthetic form can capture "wild being," the self-expression of the natural outside conceptual understanding. As Sean Williams emphasizes, Merleau-Ponty, rejecting subject-object dualism, understands perception as the chiasmic intertwining of self and environment, as a sensory experience that both distinguishes and links together the human and non-human. He

writes, "relationships with what is called 'wild' tend to make us powerfully aware of and present to this existential and ontological intertwining of ourselves and the animate Earth."<sup>7</sup> As a particular cinematic encounter with the wild, this essay then examines avant-garde depictions of water, and especially, the preoccupation with the ocean in Jean Epstein's Breton films. Moving images of water—in their interplay of light and movement—both capture the quality of wildness in aesthetic form, and serve as a metaphor for cinema.

### Painting and Merleau-Ponty's "Wild Being"

In his posthumously published and incomplete *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty identifies the task of philosophy as "restoring a power to signify, a birth of meaning, or a wild meaning, an expression of experience by experience."<sup>8</sup> Vivian Sobchack sees film as the aesthetic medium best suited to the "expression of experience by experience,"<sup>9</sup> but Merleau-Ponty's more immediate reference is to the signifying capabilities of language, which expresses "the voice of the things, the waves, and the forests."<sup>10</sup> As Véronique Fóti indicates, language for Merleau-Ponty is not a "transparent conveyor of meaning"; rather it "retains an intrinsic opacity."<sup>11</sup> This opacity is the resistance of the world, the muteness of the things that language refers to but can never coincide with. For Merleau-Ponty, the central issue is how to give voice to this silence, to the "wild being" that necessarily escapes the grasp of language. The expressive act serves this function, since "expression is the language of the thing itself."<sup>12</sup>

Merleau-Ponty considers the expressive act to be rooted in the self-expression of nature. As Ted Toadvine elaborates, Merleau-Ponty understands consciousness as "ontologically continuous" with matter and life, where progression from one to the next represents higher levels of organization, more comprehensive stages of unities or *gestalts*.<sup>13</sup> Consciousness is therefore thoroughly embodied, and subjective perception does not stand opposed to the non-human world. Thus, expression, as Toadvine explains, "is not a creation of the subject but is formed at the confluence of the body and the world"; it is the "activity of nature with and through the body."<sup>14</sup> As "disclosing nature *on its own terms* requires taking it up in an expressive gesture,"<sup>15</sup>

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artistic creation is understood by Merleau-Ponty as providing a means for accessing this primordial perception, the wild being that precedes any separation of the subjective from the objective.

Merleau-Ponty takes up the question of how the creative act gives form to wildness in two essays on aesthetics, primarily on painting. In “Cézanne’s Doubt,” the philosopher confronts the artist’s efforts to give voice to mute nature. Merleau-Ponty understands Cézanne’s stated desire to erase the difference between nature and art as giving shape to primordial perception, a lived experience of the world prior to any conceptual understanding. His painting aims at depicting “matter as it takes on form, the birth of order through spontaneous organization.”<sup>16</sup> This type of perception thus admits no distinction between vision and touch; the expressive gesture that is taken up by the artistic gesture is the mode of nature’s disclosure. As Cézanne himself articulates it, “the landscape thinks itself in me.”<sup>17</sup> Artistic creation as an expressive act, for Merleau-Ponty, facilitates a contact with the world. This is what Toadvine refers to as the “paradox of expression”: “The paradoxical task of Cézanne’s painting...is to express nature – which includes the human visage as much as the natural landscape – on its own terms, in its brute inhumanity, all the while recognizing that this can be achieved only by way of a creation appropriation of the conventions and traditions of painting.”<sup>18</sup>

Cézanne’s aesthetic realization of a primordial world involves the depiction of things with little clear separation between them, achieved primarily through a preference for color over line. The line often functions to draw an outline around an object, but the primordial perception of the world draws no boundaries between things if it is to express “matter in the process of taking form,” to give “the impression of an emerging order, of an object in the act of appearing.”<sup>19</sup> Cézanne utilized color such that its application did not isolate the object from the environment. Color instead was used by the artist to provide depth to the object, the sense of something beyond the visible, something resistant to representation yet made present nonetheless. As Merleau-Ponty writes, “to trace an outline sacrifices depth – that is, the dimension in which the thing is presented not as spread out before us but an inexhaustible reality full of reserves.”<sup>20</sup> The artist,

in achieving a tactile vision, breaks apart aesthetic conventions such as perspective, and refuses to see the world through an abstract geometry. This does not entail, says Merleau-Ponty, the total elimination of lines from painting; rather, “it is simply a matter of freeing the line, of revivifying its constituting power.”<sup>21</sup>

Like the post-Impressionist painting of Cézanne, the liberation of the line from its function as contour can be seen in film animation and the avant-garde—for instance, in Len Lye’s scratch films, such as *Free Radicals* (1979). Andrew R. Johnston emphasizes that the rhythmically pulsing lines of Lye’s films are “formal expressions of a vitalistic energy” which originates in nature and places the viewer in contact with primordial forces.<sup>22</sup> Lye’s wavy lines recall an earlier cinematic experimentation in abstraction by filmmaker Ralph Steiner; namely, his 1929 short film *H<sub>2</sub>O*. In this film, waviness is replaced by waves. Steiner’s film is composed entirely of shots of water. In its earlier minutes, these shots feature recognizable objects or places – drain pipes, riverbeds, waterfalls, shorelines, etc. – as the images of water are localized at particular sites. These first images are grounded in realism, and the emphasis is on movement and the propulsive force of water. The film progresses toward abstraction, transitioning from wilderness to wildness; close-ups of the surface of water depict the reflection and distortion of light into undulating lines and morphing shapes that disappear as quickly as they appear. Occasionally a more distinct shape is recognizable—typically some off-screen object reflected in the water—but its hard outline bends and vibrates in the unstable mirror of the liquid surface. The dimensions of the image are no more easily determined. Not only does the abstract play with light eliminate any perspectival depth to the image, but neither its vertical nor horizontal axes provide a sense of scale. Our distance or proximity to the water’s surface is unclear. The free-floating image thus sets the spectator likewise adrift.

In its development from recognizable sites—the natural or industrial channeling of water—to freer images of water through a strategy of abstraction, Steiner’s film allows the wildness of the natural world to surface. Is this Merleau-Ponty’s wild meaning? The philosopher was skeptical of abstraction, and by extension of music. As Fóti notes,

“Merleau-Ponty finds the detachment of music ‘from the world and from what can be designated’ to be too extreme, thus rendering music self-contained rather than allowing it to function as a modality of proto-phenomenological interrogation.”<sup>23</sup> Abstract painting is likewise removed from the perceived world; however, as it concerns Steiner’s film, the abstraction of light on water is part of a process, as the film moves from concrete imagery toward a purely formal play with light and movement. This development then arguably shifts the film toward a more primordial perception, as solid boundaries dissolve into liquid perception. Merleau-Ponty further made a distinction between painting and photography, arguing that it was the former that could give expressive voice to the silence of nature: “Cézanne wanted to paint this primordial world, and his pictures therefore seem to show nature pure, while photographs of the same landscapes suggest man’s work, conveniences, and imminent presence.”<sup>24</sup> The “lived perspective” of the subject’s perceptual engagement with the world is not, Merleau-Ponty argues, “geometric or photographic.”<sup>25</sup> Natural perception diverges from photography by correcting “perspectival distortions” (seeing circles as ellipses) resulting from the relative distance and vantage point of an observer. Though Steiner’s film is clearly photographic, its surface abstractions negate any perspectival depth to the image. Just as Toadvine indicates that the self-expression of nature depends on “a creative appropriation of the conventions and traditions of painting,”<sup>26</sup> Steiner’s work critically engages with the conventions of the film medium – by treating the photographic medium as painting – and thus disrupts the transparency and perspectival depth that typically characterizes film’s depiction of nature.

Merleau-Ponty similarly referenced the sight of water as a metaphor for the resurfacing of primordial perception within ordinary vision. He describes, in “Eye and Mind,” the act of watching the “syrupey and shimmering” water of a swimming pool, taking note of the distorted reflections of the tiled floor or nearby cypresses. The “aqueous power” of this natural element, Merleau-Ponty argues, is not localized in the specific and circumscribed space of the pool. “It inhabits it [the pool], is materialized there, yet it is not contained there; and if I lift my eyes toward the screen of cypresses where the

web of reflections plays, I must recognize that the water visits it as well, or at least send out to it its active, living essence. This inner animation, this radiation of the visible, is what the painter seeks beneath.”<sup>27</sup> The dynamism of the water affects the entire scenic space; its distorting effects ripple outward, making matter luminous. For Gilles Deleuze, the “luminism” evident in the works of French “Impressionist” filmmakers stems from an expressive use of light as movement: “It is a light which constantly circulates in a homogenous space and creates luminous forms by its own mobility,” aptly describing the permutations of line and shape created the reflective surface of Steiner’s film or Merleau-Ponty’s swimming pool.<sup>28</sup>

### Jean Epstein’s Speaking Sea

Steiner’s *H<sub>2</sub>O* is part of a widespread fascination in the cinematic avant-garde in the 1920s with the filming of water. Tom Gunning notes this particular affinity, arguing that “water supplied a wide range of metaphors for the unique qualities of film and was a fluid enough medium to contain its protean forms.”<sup>29</sup> Films such as *Regen* [*Rain*] (Joris Ivens, 1929), *Arabesque* (Germaine Dulac, 1929), and *Battleship Potemkin* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925), all evidence this fascination. For Gunning, the appeal of water was that it provided a “new freedom of visual composition” that radically dissolved the rigid geometry of scenographic space that had solidified through the establishment of film conventions through the 1910s.<sup>30</sup> The exploitation of mobile framing and rhythmic editing by filmmakers of the period suggested new possibilities for conceiving the artistic medium of film along the lines of fluidity and continual transformation, similar to music, only grounded in the depiction of the everyday world. Individual practitioners, like the French filmmaker Jean Epstein, thought that film gave expressive form to the fluid nature of reality, the unceasing movement that subtends the calcifying and classifying tendencies of rational thought: “We say ‘red’, ‘soprano’, ‘sweet’, ‘cypress’, when there are only velocities, movements, vibrations.”<sup>31</sup> Gunning likewise notes that the filming of water permitted these filmmakers to supersede the rigid perspectival features of the medium: “Water cannot be framed. It flows beyond and around the borders of geometry.

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It can be placid and therefore clear and transparent, but also (more often in these films) in motion, and the range of its flowing plasticity produces a variety of visual effects.<sup>32</sup> The abstract sequences of Steiner's film, in their emphasis on perpetual movement, provide a glimpse into the otherness of non-human nature. Epstein's filmmaking is similarly invested in water's ability to allegorize the medium by distilling its capacity for movement and animism.

Intermittently over two decades, Epstein shot a series of films in the coastal region of Brittany in France. These proto-neorealist films featured an experimental combination of fiction and reality that was rooted in the island communities of the area, and particularly in the inhabitants' strenuous efforts to subsist on the scarce natural resources of the region. Epstein's Breton films, beginning with *Finis Terrae* (1929) and concluding with *Le Tempestaire* (1947) and the unfinished *Les Feux de la mer* (1948), exhibit the same fascination with the depiction of water that Gunning recognizes. For Epstein, as indicated by these films and in his theoretical writing on cinema, this natural element provided a succinct metaphor for the medium of film for its luminosity, mobility, and inherent instability (water is perpetually seeking its own equilibrium, and thus shares film's rejection of the static as one of the defining features of *photogenie*).<sup>33</sup> Even as cinema is a product of technological modernity, Epstein routinely emphasizes its privileged connection to non-human nature, and similar to Merleau-Ponty's assessment of painting, imagines that it is capable of giving rise to a primordial vision.

Epstein's Breton films exhibit a fear and fascination with the ocean as site of danger and risk. "The sea," John Durham Peters notes, "has long seemed the place par excellence where history ends and the wild begins: the abyss, a vast deep and dark mystery, unrecorded, unknown, unmapped."<sup>34</sup> The small fishing communities on the islands of Ouessant or Sein, where Epstein filmed, depend on the ocean for their livelihood, yet they are confronted with frequent reminders of its unforgiving nature. In *Mor Vran (The Sea of Crows)* (1931), a young man returning from the mainland with a gift for his beloved is shipwrecked during a storm and is discovered dead, flung among the rocks on the shore. In *Le Tempestaire*, a young woman, worried about

her fiancé as a large storm ravages the island, visits a "storm-tamer" who calms the tempest by using a magical glass ball. Across these films, the ocean is shown to exceed human control, being capricious and unpredictable, provoking fear and respect. These aspects are what drew the filmmaker to the sea and to the remote region of Brittany, "virgin terrain for cinema."<sup>35</sup> As James Schneider observes, for Epstein, "the ocean's forcefulness, unpredictability, and reign over humankind position it as an ultimate cinematic subject."<sup>36</sup>

The ocean occupies a central place in Epstein's ontology of film, as water provides a correlative for the contingent and irrational that underlies rational thought. Schneider argues that Epstein's "reigning metaphor" for film is "the ocean and seafaring vessels."<sup>37</sup> Peters utilizes the same metaphor for the ontology of the human. In his recent study of the intricate relations between nature and technics, he writes that "the ship is not only a metaphor; it is an arch-medium that reveals the ontological indiscernibility of medium and world. On a ship, existence and technology are one. Your being depends radically on the craft...The vessel stands in for being. Craft builds a surrogate for ontology, an artificial ground."<sup>38</sup> Peters outlines the various affordances and limitations to seeing, hearing, and fabricating enabled by the marine environment. He notes that while humans cannot live underwater "by nature," they can do so "by art."<sup>39</sup> The ship reveals the sea as a navigable medium. The technological vessel brings into relation the habitable zone of the human (ship) and inhabitable zone of the non-human (the wild seas), just as for Epstein, film captures—at a remove—the danger posed by the ocean.

Wildness as a quality is not confined to the open seas.<sup>40</sup> Instead, as in Merleau-Ponty's encounter with the swimming pool, wildness is a non-localized presence, a characteristic of both the human and the non-human, linking them together. In Epstein's Breton films, he utilizes non-professional actors drawn from the local communities. These inhabitants of the outlying islands served as Epstein's guides to the area, and provided suggestions that were incorporated into storylines. As with Italian neorealist filmmakers, Epstein's casting was intended to heighten the authenticity of these fictionalized scenarios, and

one feature of this authenticity was his actors' connection to both the land and sea. Schneider writes:

Having spent their lives on and surrounded by water, these actors possessed an oceanic quality peculiar to the region: "Isn't their character a reflection of it? Have you noticed that they never affirm how much volatility, fluidity there is in them; in the very way they look, their physical appearance, there is something moving." For Epstein, cinema is seen to invest all filmed subjects with a trace of the oceanic.<sup>41</sup>

The "trace of the oceanic" visible in Epstein's actors emphasizes the link between the human and the non-human produced through cinema's recovery of primordial vision. As indicated before, the ocean is also the "medium of all media," the source of all life, and all these forms of life bears the trace of this evolutionary progression. Like Merleau-Ponty, Epstein sees matter, life, and consciousness as continuous. Cinematic perception, he argues in his 1946 book *The Intelligence of the Machine*, upends "the hierarchy of things" by which distinctions are made between humans, animals, plants, minerals, and so on. In cinema, he writes, "all the partitioned systems of nature are disarticulated. Only one realm remains: life."<sup>42</sup> Slow and accelerated motion unlock the rhythmic unity of all life, and Epstein contends that a vision of the primordial is opened up by sliding along this scale:

[D]uring a slow motion projection we observe a degradation of forms as they undergo a diminution of their mobility and thus lose their vital quality...The whole human body is but a being of smooth muscle swimming in a dense medium, in which thick currents always carry and shape this clear descendent of old marine fauna and maternal waters [*eaux-mères*]. Regression reaches even

further, beyond the animal stage. It rediscovers, in the movements of the torso or the neck, the active elasticity of the stem; in the undulating of hair or a horse mane, the swaying of a forest; in the beating of fins and wings, the palpitating of leaves; in the coiling and uncoiling of reptiles, the spiral sense of all vegetal growth.<sup>43</sup>

Film therefore can express the "wild being" of the natural world as a quality that appears in both the human and non-human. Epstein understood the medium as capable of expressing nature on its own terms—one intertitle from *Mor Vran* reads "The sea speaks"—with the recognition that this did not mean eliminating cinematic techniques like slow motion. Rather, the expressive gesture of the filmmaker discloses non-human nature while maintaining its alterity and mystery. In *Le Tempestaire*, for instance, Epstein depicts both the rising strength of a torrential storm—visualizing the sublime power of the natural world—and the magical calming of that storm through use of slow and reverse motion. Nature remains both within our control and exceeds it.

The intertwining of self and environment through a chiasmic wildness, as theorized by Merleau-Ponty, is expressed by the close relation forged by avant-garde filmmakers between the natural element of water and the cultural technique of filmmaking. The natural world is not what is revealed when everything human is subtracted from it. Rather, as Peters stresses, the entanglement of nature and culture "goes all the way down": "Nature is always nature-through-culture to us, and yet nature is not culture. Nature's otherness to culture is revealed through the culture of the species in question."<sup>44</sup> Technics is not opposed to nature; instead, it can be the means of its expression. The artistic gesture, whether Steiner's abstraction or Epstein's slow motion, can then give form to the very wildness that resists that form.

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## Notes

- 1 Andre Bazin, "Cinema and Exploration," in *What is Cinema? Volume 1*, ed. and trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967).
- 2 Bazin, "Cinema and Exploration," 158, 159.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 161.
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 Michael Bess, *The Light-Green Society: Ecology and Technological Modernity in France, 1960-2000* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 270.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 271.
- 7 Sean Williams, "Chiasmic Wildness," *Environmental Philosophy* 3:1 (Spring 2006): 7.
- 8 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, ed. Claude Lefort (Chicago, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 155.
- 9 Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).
- 10 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 155.
- 11 Véronique Fóti, *Tracing Expression in Merleau-Ponty: Aesthetics, Philosophy of Biology, and Ontology* (Chicago, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2013), 28.
- 12 Quoted in *ibid.*, 16.
- 13 Ted Toadvine, *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Nature* (Chicago, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009).
- 14 *Ibid.*, 19.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 15, emphasis original.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 13.
- 17 Quoted in *ibid.*, 17.
- 18 Toadvine, *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Nature*, 14.
- 19 Merleau-Ponty, "Cézanne's Doubt," 14.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 15.
- 21 Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," in *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting*, ed. Galen A. Johnson (Chicago, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 143.
- 22 Andrew R. Johnston, "Signatures of Motion: Len Lye's Scratch Films and the Energy of the Line," in *Animating Film Theory*, ed. Karen Beckman (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 169.
- 23 Fóti, *Tracing Expression*, 42.
- 24 Merleau-Ponty, "Cézanne's Doubt," 13.
- 25 *Ibid.*, 14.
- 26 Toadvine, *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Nature*, 14.
- 27 Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," 142.
- 28 Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 44.
- 29 Tom Gunning, "Encounters in Darkened Rooms: Alternative Programming of the Dutch Filmliiga, 1927-31," in *The Emergence of Film Culture: Knowledge Production, Institution Building and the Fate of the Avant-Garde in Europe, 1919-1945*, ed. Malte Hagener (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2014), 87.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 88.
- 31 Jean Epstein, "The Senses 1(b)," in *French Film Theory and Criticism: A History/Anthology, 1907-1939*, ed. Richard Abel (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 244.
- 32 Gunning, "Encounters in Darkened Rooms," 88.
- 33 *Photogenie*, a term coined by filmmaker Germaine Dulac, is an amorphous concept that generally designates those qualities of the world that are enhanced by cinematic depiction. For Epstein, mobility is an essential feature of the photogenic.
- 34 John Durham Peters, *The Marvelous Clouds: Toward a Philosophy of Elemental Media* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 53.
- 35 Quoted in James Schneider, "Cinema Seen from the Seas: Epstein and the Oceanic," in *Jean Epstein: Critical Essays and New Translations*, eds. Sarah Keller and Jason N. Paul (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), 196.
- 36 *Ibid.*, 199.
- 37 *Ibid.*
- 38 Peters, *The Marvelous Clouds*, 102.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 56.
- 40 In fact, Nicole Starosielski warns against understanding the ocean in opposition to fully social and political terrestrial environments. See her "Beyond Fluidity: A Cultural History of Cinema Under Water," in *Ecocinema Theory and Practice*, eds. Stephen Rust, Salma Monani, and Sean Cubitt (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), 149-168.
- 41 Schneider, "Cinema Seen by the Seas," 198.
- 42 Jean Epstein, *The Intelligence of the Machine*, trans. Christophe Wall-Romana (Minneapolis, MN: Univocal, 2014), 3.
- 43 *Ibid.*, 29.
- 44 Peters, *The Marvelous Clouds*, 111.