



*The Image of Walking. The Aesthetics and Politics of Cinematic Pedestrianism*  
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*English Summary*

*The Image of Walking: The Aesthetics and Politics of Cinematic  
Pedestrianism*

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This dissertation investigates the ways in which pedestrianism, as an everyday act of engagement with the dominant politics of space, has informed, shaped, or inspired cinematic aesthetics. Through a cultural analysis of six film historical moments, this study approaches the history of cinema from the perspective of urban walking experience. Such approach is informed primarily by three key theories: firstly, Henri Lefebvre's contention that all spaces, including the public space of cities, are constructions that are shaped by certain ideologies that determine and control the ways in which the constructed spaces function; secondly, Michel de Certeau's focus on the pedestrian as an everyday practitioner of the city and on the everyday pedestrian acts that elude, subvert, or disrupt the dominant spatial order of the city; and finally, Jacques Rancière's notion of *distribution of the sensible*, which sheds light on the political structures implicated in all constructed spaces and shapes all sensible experience, i.e. what is allowed or not allowed to be said, seen, or shown. From this standpoint, pedestrianism can be perceived as a constructed aesthetic experience in the city, and *pedestrian acts* as dissenting practices, which transgress the established aesthetic order of the public space by walking the unwalkable trajectories, saying the unsayable, or showing

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the unshowable. This study elaborates on the ways in which the cinematic medium evolved in conversation with such experiences and the new images, styles, and techniques that emerged to articulate such dissent.

Even though the cinematic image of walking is abundant in film history especially in scenes that depict everyday life in a city, it has not been analysed as an aesthetic practice that has informed film theory and praxis since its earliest days. This research into pedestrian acts in the history of cinema revisits a selection of canonical works to investigate the transposition of specific walking experiences and pedestrian acts into cinematic aesthetics. In this way, it aims to draw attention to an under-examined dimension in film historiography, namely the influence of the changing aesthetic experience of pedestrianism with the rise of modernity on the aesthetics of the emergent filmic medium. Alongside canonical works, a selection of relatively understudied films, filmmakers and theorists, which have been overlooked in canonical film historiography is also examined. Given this historical dimension, this study can be seen as a historical revisionist venture, in which I seek to re-interpret and re-explain certain moments in canonical and non-canonical film history through pedestrian acts.

Chapter One analyses the philosophy of movement that informed the scientific studies of human locomotion in the nineteenth century before the rise of the Lumière cinématographe. Through a comparative analysis of Muybridge and Marey's studies, this chapter focuses on pre-cinematic images of walking and explores the aesthetics that resulted from dissecting movement, or aiming to capture the ephemeral and unrepresentable movement.

Chapter Two, taking its departure from a conceptual affinity between the flâneur and the ungraspable movement explored in the previous chapter,

investigates flânerie as a filmmaking practice undertaken by Lumière cinématographe operators. Exploring the socio-historical context that vilified flânerie as unproductive movement, it analyses the flânerie-inspired cinematography in Lumière filmography.

In nineteenth century, women did not enjoy the same freedom as men to flâner in the city. By the turn of the century, however, the ethics that prescribed women's movement, visibility and behaviour in public spaces became strongly challenged as women were increasingly integrated into the urban workforce. This sociological phenomenon transformed both public space and the cinematic aesthetics that reflected those public spaces. In Chapter Three, I analyse the pedestrian acts in Lois Weber's progressive film *Shoes* (1916), a powerful discussion of underpaid female labour, the bourgeois ethics imposed on lower-class women and the ways in which their increasing visibility in the public space challenged those ethics. I also discuss Lois Weber's activist filmmaking as an aesthetic practice that ruptures the distribution of the sensible by questioning middle-class ethics, consumerism, class struggle and power balances in the family.

In Chapter Four, extending my focus on the pedestrian acts of working-class, I analyse Dziga Vertov's theory and practice of filmmaking to investigate the function of pedestrianism. Through the analysis of a stop-motion sequence from *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), where the revelationist aspirations of Vertov's cinema are manifested through the image of what I call a *kino-pedestrian*: a camera which is mounted on a tripod and which can walk, observe, and record at its own will. The combination of machine-like qualities of camera, which is superior to human sense of vision and can show what remains unrecognisable to human eye, and the anthropomorphic qualities of walking,

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which allow the camera to be constantly on the move, could be seen as a prototype of drifting prosthetic camera, which characterises the realistic and documentary-like aesthetic of uncut long takes in the later years of film history.

In Chapter Five, I research the writings of filmmakers from fascist and post-fascist Italy to explore their conceptions of the city and everyday life. Going out on the street with a camera to observe the everyday life in its uninterrupted flow and to shoot without intervention was a recurrent urge voiced by many filmmakers, primarily Cesare Zavattini. Taking departure from Zavattini's concept of *pedinamento*, I analyse cinematographic images of pedestrian acts in three films – *Romà, Città Aperta* (Roberto Rossellini, 1945), *Germania Anno Zero* (Roberto Rossellini, 1948), and *Ladri di Biciclette* (Vittorio de Sica, 1948) – which I selected for comparison to explore the alteration of social and political background and its effect on the cinematic image of walking.

Chapter Six focuses on Agnès Varda's filmography and practice of *cinécriture*. Through the analysis of three films – *Cléo de 5 à 7* (1962), *Sans Toit Ni Loi* (1985), and *Les Plages d'Agnès* (2008) – it explores the female protagonists' experiences of public space, which contain significant parallelisms with Varda's journey as a woman filmmaker in a male dominant industry. I approach these films and Varda's filmmaking through Deleuze and Guattari's concept of nomadism, which provides a philosophical angle to discuss pedestrianism as a signifier for constant transformation and transgression of established conventions.

Consequently, this study on the pedestrian acts in the history of cinema has revealed an aesthetic connection between the corporeal experience of the city on foot and the transposition of that experience into cinematic aesthetics. In each

socio-cultural context that is analysed in each chapter, the aesthetic connection between walking and filming differs to some extent, making this research relevant to other social, cultural, and political contexts that remain beyond its scope.