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## SRB Insight:

# Deleuze, Peirce and the Cinematic Sign

By Roger Dawkins

In his books *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, Gilles Deleuze uses the cinema as his workbook for developing philosophical ideas. A predominant example is his thesis on cinematic movement. Deleuze grounds his study of the cinema in a Bergsonian understanding of the image. He claims that the cinematic image is a "movement-image", and from this he thinks through a whole gamut of philosophical problems, such as the relation between matter and image in terms of the question of movement/time.

Another idea in the cinema books, but one much less examined, is Deleuze's concept of the sign. Thinking about the image in terms of the problem of the sign and language is not itself new: it has been around since the 1920s, and in the 1960s Metz was the first to use modern structural/linguistic models to develop this problem (Guzzetti 292). For Metz, the image is a sign in so far as: 1) it is a material that represents reality; and 2) the nature of its representation of reality depends on the way the sign is shaped by social/cultural codes. Deleuze's perspective on the cinematic sign is a little different. First of all, his semiotics is developed in step with his determination of the image as movement-image. Consequently, since the image is movement-image, underlying Deleuze's entire cinematic project is the equation of image and matter. This makes Deleuze's cinema semiotics also a semiotics of the material world. Second of all, Deleuze dismisses the primacy given the role of the code in semiology. For Deleuze, a sign is meaningful because of its semiotic matter, *not* because of the code. He uses a concept of expression (from his earlier work on Spinoza) to describe sign-formation as a self-modulation that is independent of transcendent structures. Third, he adapts Charles S. Peirce's *semiotics* to describe a range of outcomes of expression — in other words, a range of different signs in the cinema.

In this essay I will explain Deleuze's semiotics in detail. There is a paucity of texts concerned with an examination of and engagement with Deleuze's concept of the sign. And more broadly, not much has been written on the potential of semiotics for a semiotic analysis of the moving image. There have been inroads into this problem, but these have only gone as far as to consider the moving image in relation to the typology Peirce builds around the *representative* condition of the sign — in other words, the sign-object relation as a First (Icon), Second (Index) or Third (Symbol) — using this range of representation as a way of offering an

alternative to semiology's preference for the coded sign. I will make clear how Deleuze's use of Peirce and development of a semiotics is much more complicated and yields a great potential for future semiotic analyses of the cinema.

Most important about my argument is the way Deleuze translates his concept of expression into semiotics and develops a rich and practical range of signs in the cinema. Looking closely at the cinema, reading between the lines of Deleuze's thesis, reveals a version of Peirce's Tri-Square of sign elements underlying the cinema books, and in terms of the (hierarchical) combination of these elements, a version of Peirce's triadic (completed) signs. The difference, however, is the sense in which Deleuze's signs are expressions of semiotic matter, and consequently, that the structure of Deleuze's semiotics is a *structure of immanence*. Deleuze doesn't say as much, yet I think breaking his argument down to its bare bones and thinking about his signs in this way gives us a practical semiotics we can take from the cinema books and apply to all films.

### 1. Background and Context

Consider a key relationship in the cinema books. This relationship involves a signaletic material on the one hand and the sign on the other. The signaletic material is the semiotic matter of the image, the stuff of the image. This is the image in terms of its qualities, colours, and sounds — the most *basic* sense of the image. Furthermore, since Deleuze specifies how the image moves ("movement-image"), *equating* the image and reality, the signaletic material of the image is the same underlying stuff that makes up the objects, bodies, sights and sounds of the material world. The sign is the image's function as meaningful unit for somebody. *Meaning* in this sense is identified with the particular way the signaletic material is embodied in an image; for example, the way qualities, shapes, colours and sounds are embodied in the image of a snarling dog. *Meaning* is *not* the end result of relating the image of a snarling dog to a code (snarling dog = rabies); meaning resides strictly in the nature of the embodiment.

Deleuze describes the signaletic material in the following way: he calls it 1) an "a-signifying and a-syntactic material" even though, 2) "it is not amorphous" (*Time* 29). From the first point, the a-signifying means that the signaletic material is not naturally a signifying matter — in other words, it is not naturally meaningful. Furthermore, the a-syntactic means much the same, but with a

subtle difference. The a-syntactic means that the signaletic material is not naturally organized into a structure of meaningful units. The second point tells us that the signaletic material is not amorphous: it is not indeterminate and without any shape or character. By putting these two points together, then, Deleuze is telling us that the signaletic material is not a meaningful or organized substance, but neither is it meaningless or amorphous. Consequently, Deleuze also explains how the signaletic material is virtual. It's real but not actual. We can't see it, but we know it's there.

Why does Deleuze determine the signaletic material according to the above two points? First, if the signaletic material is signifying/syntactic then it would already be meaningful in some sense. Thus the sign, in embodying the signaletic material, would in fact be functioning to uncover a latent or possible meaning. Now, if the meaning of the sign is possible, it is inseparable from actual existing meaning. Consequently, the meaning uncovered by the sign would always be determined in some sense by pre-existent meaning. Second, if the signaletic material was amorphous, then the sign would not uncover a latent meaning (for there is no meaning to be uncovered). Instead the sign, in embodying the signaletic material, would in fact be shaping the signaletic material and molding it into meaningful substance. For the sign to assume such a function it must already be meaningful in some sense, implying that the meaning resulting from the signaletic material–sign relationship would, at best, be a *version* of pre-existent meaning. For Deleuze, both the above positions on meaning have a negative impact on creativity in language.

Deleuze claims that the signaletic material is neither amorphous nor signifying/syntactic. It is an existing matter, but since its nature accords with neither of the above conditions, he calls it a "plastic mass" (*Time* 29), ensuring that the meaning produced in his conception of the sign is not a version of something pre-existent, but is completely new, fresh, original and spontaneous.

For Deleuze, what is the relationship of sign and signaletic material? We know that the sign, as the embodiment of the signaletic material, does not function to make actual some possible meaning, and neither does it shape the signaletic material. Deleuze tells us that the sign is 1) "irreducible" to the signaletic material, yet 2) "not without a determinable relationship to it" (*Time* 34). For Deleuze, then, the sign determines the signaletic material, but not in the sense I have noted so far. One way we can describe

this process is with Deleuze's concept of expression. Deleuze develops this concept in most detail in his monograph on Benedict de Spinoza. André Pierre Colombat (2000:16) gives us an insight into its meaning when he defines expression as a process of *unfolding* and *involvement*. What is suggested is a sense in which the sign is an expression of the signaletic material in so far as it marks the extension and transformation of the signaletic material into something different. Consider again the above example of a sign: the image of a snarling dog. For Deleuze this image is not a sign in so far as it is a jumble of stuff (qualities, shapes, colours) to which meaning is attributed (codes). To be sure, it is an *assemblage* of stuff that is meaningful because of the way, as an assemblage, the semiotic matter is unfolded, existing slightly different to itself in its form as a sign.

## 2. Enter Peirce and Spinoza

“Not a great deal can be done with codes” (Deleuze *Time* 28). This is the claim Deleuze makes in the cinema books when levelling a critique against semiology.

Keyan G. Tomaselli (1989 qtd. in 1996: 44-5) is of the same opinion. When considering a suitable model for the analysis of how meaning is made in ethnographic documentaries, he claims that semiology takes codes for granted. He writes that codes are not “natural, neutral or even necessary”. Tomaselli states that the coded sign brings with it a notion of meaning that is “saturated with the ideological imperatives of society” (45). Furthermore, he feels that these ideological imperatives unavoidably restrict the sign's ability to represent an experience.

For Tomaselli, Peirce's semeiotics is a theory of meaning that considers the sign independently of codes (transcendent structures). In Tomaselli's reading of Peirce, signs are the way a subject makes sense of an encounter, but this process of *making sense* does not depend entirely on the subject's reference to codes. Tomaselli explains this point in semeiotics when he notes three steps involved in a subject's attempt to make sense of an encounter. These steps correspond to the fundamental properties of the universe, or what Peirce calls the phenomenological categories of Being: Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness. Each step, taken separately, implies a different notion of what an encounter is, and each step implies a different notion of the sign (there are signs of Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness). And, the semiological sign is only one part of semeiotics: it falls among Peirce's logical or conventional sign of Thirdness (Symbol). Thus semeiotics supports a broader and more varied idea of the sign and meaning than semiology.

Similar to Tomaselli, Deleuze uses Peirce to move beyond the limitations of coded signs and transcendent structures. But Deleuze also uses semeiotics to develop a theory of expression in the cinema. Based on Bergson's matter/time ontology, Deleuze equates matter in the universe with the cinematic image (movement-image). He then uses Peirce's signs of Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness to conceive a theory of meaning in the cinema that is independent of transcendent structures — in

other words, he uses Peirce's signs to conceive of a semiotic idea of expression. Thus Deleuze's reading of Spinoza is also key here. Deleuze conceives of Peirce's signs as expressions because, from Spinoza, he understands Peirce's categories as immanent to the universe/cinema. The categories and the universe are “in immanence” (which I borrow from Deleuze) in the sense that the categories *rightfully* exist and are not *determined* to exist by a transcendent force in the material world.

Peirce's theory depends on his division of the universe into three fundamental categories. These are ordinal and hierarchical — in other words, Thirdness contains Secondness and Firstness, and Secondness contains Firstness — in the same way that a Russian doll contains a doll within a doll within a doll. When the categories are separated, Firstness is existence in-itself, for example, *redness* (independent of its embodiment in an object) is a First; Secondness is actual or genuine existence, when the redness is embodied in an object in a state of things (a rose, a fez, a Ferrari); Thirdness is logical existence, when an object in a state of things is conceived as a general type that is representative of some law.

Consider Peirce's concept of the sign. The categories of Being have a bearing on Peirce's concept of the sign in two ways: 1) For Peirce, a sign, like everything else in the universe, is divisible into the three categories. There are, then, three properties (or what I will call *aspects*) of every sign. These are apparent when Peirce defines the sign as *something that stands for something else (its object) for some interpreting mind*. From this definition a sign is first of all something in-itself, and Peirce calls this aspect of the sign the Representamen. Second, a sign stands in a relation with an object, and Peirce calls this aspect of the sign the Object. Third, a sign-object relation is interpreted by somebody, and Peirce calls this aspect of the sign the Interpretant; 2) The sign is the way a subject makes sense of an encounter. In semeiotics there are three kinds of Representamen, three kinds of Object, and three kinds of Interpretant.

For clarity I call Peirce's aspects of the sign, when considered from the perspective of their different categorical kinds, the *sign elements* of semeiotics. From the three aspects of every sign are nine sign elements of semeiotics. These elements are represented below in Peirce's Tri-Square:

**Table 1**

A Tri-Square of the Nine Sign Elements of Semeiotics:

	1	2	3
Representamen	Qualisign (quality that is a sign)	Sinsign (event that is a sign)	Legisign (general type that is a sign)
Object	Icon (qualitative relation of sign and object)	Index (genuine relation of sign and object)	Symbol (abstract relation of sign and object)
Interpretant	Rheme (general interpretation of some possible object)	Dicent (specific interpretation of actual properties of object)	Argument (logical interpretation or judgment)

Table 1 sets out the three different kinds of Representamen, Object and Interpretant of semeiotics. I will not explicate them here, instead I will simply note how each sign element is characteristic of a particular category of Being; for example, a Legisign is a general type that is a sign (a law), an Index is a genuine sign-object relation (*smoke* as a sign of its object, *fire*), and a Rheme, since it focuses on the Firstness (qualities) of an object, is a general interpretation.

When referring to the sign from the perspective of its combination of the sign elements in a practical context, I will call the sign a *completed sign*. The fact that there are nine sign elements suggests a certain amount of variation potential to the completed sign. But, it is important to remember that Peirce's categories are ordinal and hierarchical, and this means that the combination of elements involved in every sign is ordered by a certain leading principle derived from Peirce's phenomenology. This is what James Liszka calls the “qualification rule”, which states that a First cannot be combined with a Second or a Third, and similarly, that a Second cannot be combined with a Third (1996: 45). The result is that Peirce's sign elements combine to form only ten classes of completed sign:

**Table 2**

Ten Classes of Completed Signs of Semeiotics (Deledalle 2000: 19)

	R	O	I	
I	R1	O1	I1	Rhematic Iconic Qualisign
II	R2	O1	I1	Rhematic Iconic Sinsign
III	R2	O2	I2	Rhematic Indexical Sinsign
IV	R2	O2	I2	Dicent Indexical Sinsign
V	R3	O1	I1	Rhematic Iconic Legisign
VI	R3	O2	I1	Rhematic Indexical Legisign
VII	R3	O2	I2	Dicent Indexical Legisign
VIII	R3	O3	I1	Rhematic Symbolic Legisign
IX	R3	O3	I2	Dicent Symbolic Legisign
X	R3	O3	I3	Argument Symbolic Legisign

\* Note: All expressions such as R1, O2, I3 should be read according to Peirce in the following way: a Representamen that is a First, an Object that is a Second, and an Interpretant that is a Third (8.353).

I will not explain these completed signs here, but merely offer examples: a Rhematic Iconic Qualisign is a *feeling of red*; an example of a Dicent Indexical Sinsign is a *telephone ring*; and an example of an Argument Symbolic Legisign is a *syllogism* (Parmentier 1994: 18).

The most important thing about Deleuze's appropriation of Peirce is his understanding of the immanence of the categories. If the categories are immanent, then there is nothing transcendent that determines a certain kind of experience as a certain kind of sign. *This means that a sign simply exists*, and a subject's relationship with a sign is based on nothing more than the material properties of that particular encounter. In *The Movement-Image* Deleuze goes to great lengths to prove how the categories are immanent to the universe/cinema. And on this point Bergson's ontology is also key to Deleuze's argument. He equates Peirce's categories with what Bergson describes as different levels of subjectivity. Consequently, the *deduction* of subjectivity, according to which subjectivity is not determined by a transcendent force, is homologous to the



deduction of the categories — according to which the categories arise in the universe — and testimony to their immanence.

In so far as the categories are essentially immanent, it becomes apparent in the cinema books that the categories, in their naturally “tangled” form (Peirce 1.280), are the semiotic matter of the cinema (plastic mass). They are in immanence: nothing is transcendent to the signaletic material. Moreover, it follows that the signs produced from the categories/signaletic material are not rightfully formed as a result of any transcendent force. Their meaning is not rightfully pre-determined. Thus with the identification of the categories in the cinema Deleuze has the foundation from which to develop his semiotics.

From Peirce Deleuze notes three categories in the cinema, and I call these the image-types of the cinema. Deleuze calls Firstness the *affection-image*: similar to Peirce it is the category of matter’s existence in-itself, not as a real thing (a delimited thing in the universe, a Second), but a quality, a visual impression, an optical effect only. Deleuze calls Secondness the *action-image*: again it is similar to Peirce’s category in that it is the domain of real objects in real spaces: it is the domain of Realism (*Movement* 141). Deleuze calls Thirdness the *relation-image*: like Thirdness in semeiotics, the relation-image is also concerned with logical relations.

Next, while Peirce describes three aspects of the sign — Representamen, Object and Interpretant — Deleuze begins by noting only two aspects of the cinematic sign. He calls these Genesis and Composition. At this stage it is quite clear that Deleuze is sticking quite closely to Peirce’s concepts of the Representamen and Object respectively. Yet Deleuze’s terminology also emphasizes the importance of Spinozistic concepts in his semiotics.

In Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza’s *Ethics* he emphasizes Spinoza’s claim to *one immanent substance in the universe*. Spinoza defines substance as “absolutely infinite” being (*Ethics* ID4), and in this definition he conceives of God as that which is “in-itself and is conceived through itself” (ID3). Furthermore, human being “is a mode of the attributes of nature”, and is conceived as “part of a dynamic and interconnected whole” (Gatens 1996: 165). Deleuze identifies how, since Being is univocal, particular things (plants, animals, rocks) are produced as the effect of a two-fold process of the expression of substance. In the first stage of expression, attributes are constituted. Deleuze points out that attributes are “forms common to God” and contain the essences of substance (*Expressionism* 47). They are the basic forms from which life is developed and they are potentially infinite in number. For this reason Deleuze identifies attributes with genesis, calling them “genetic elements” (80). The second stage is based on the expression of an essence in the attributes by a particular thing, which Deleuze refers to generally as a body (a plant, animal and rock are all *bodies*). Deleuze (1978/2002: 6) notes that a body expresses a genetic element of substance (attribute) through the “composite or complex

relation” of its parts (my emphasis).

Deleuze’s understanding of these two stages of expression is key in his reading of semeiotics and his own development of the cinematic sign. I mentioned above that Genesis is the concept Deleuze uses to conceive of the sign in-itself (Representamen), but in my opinion this concept also reveals his understanding of how the sign, in-itself, is equivalent to the essence (*genetic element*) of a body in Spinoza’s theology. In respect of this equivalence, we can note that the sign (in-itself) is an essence of a category of Being and is immanent to the cinema. Composition is the concept Deleuze uses to conceive of the sign’s embodiment in a sign–object relation (Object), but continuing my argument, this concept also reveals Deleuze’s understanding of how the sign–object relations of semeiotics are equivalent to the way a body in Spinoza exists. For Spinoza, a body exists because the composite relation of its parts expresses an essence of substance, *not* because a transcendent God breathes life into its matter. In the same way, Deleuze is claiming that a sign is embodied when a Composition of elements in the cinematic frame express a category of Being characteristic of a Genesis. With Genesis and Composition Deleuze guarantees that a sign is an existing thing that is meaningful in-itself. Returning to his critique of structuralism, then, Deleuze now definitively rules-out the need for transcendent structures to shape what would otherwise be an amorphous blob of semiotic matter.

Although Deleuze’s concern for the bulk of the cinema books lies with the way the signs of the cinema are embodied — independently of their interpretation, he does eventually develop a third aspect of the sign quite clearly equivalent to Peirce’s Interpretant. Deleuze calls this aspect of the sign the Noosign, and I argue that it completes the (immanent) structure of Deleuze’s semiotics. Deleuze uses Genesis to describe a kind of sign particular to a category of the cinema; Composition to describe the different ways a sign is embodied particular to the different composite relations of a category of the cinema, and also, to demonstrate *how* and *why* a kind of sign is immanent (it is expressed in a composite body of cinematic elements); and the Noosign to describe the different kinds of interpretation forced by each category of composite whole. In the same way that Peirce’s three kinds of Interpretant represent a continuum of interpretation: from the most *general* kind of interpretation (a qualitative interpretation or sensation: Rheme), to a more *specific* or *factual* kind of interpretation (of an object’s properties: Dicent), and finally, to a *logical* interpretation of an object (the formation of laws, judgements or concepts: Legisign) — if we look closely at the latter chapters of *The Time-Image* then we can see how Deleuze’s Noosigns also represent a continuum of thought: from the most absolute kind of thought to conceptual thought. Most importantly too, since the composite whole (sign) exists rightfully in-itself (it expresses an essence of substance in the same way as a body in Spinoza’s theology), the meaning of

the sign is contained naturally in the material properties of the sign. In other words, an interpretation does not rightfully begin by attributing transcendent ideas to what is otherwise amorphous semiotic matter.

### 3. A Structure of Immanence

If we follow through this thesis of the triadic sign in the cinema books, then by the conclusion of Deleuze’s study we can note the following version of Peirce’s Tri-Square of sign elements:

**Table 3**

A Tri-Square of Nine Sign Elements of *The Movement-Image*

	1 (affection- image)	2 (action-image)	3 (relation- image)
Genesis	Qualisign	Imprint	Symbol
Composition	Icon	Synsign/Index	Mark/Demark
Noosign	Term	Proposition	Whole

Represented above is the principal structure of signs in *The Movement-Image*. It must be noted, however, that Deleuze is not explicit about presenting his signs in this way; it is my thesis that this structure is underlying in Deleuze’s study. The signaletic material is the tangled skein of affection-images, action-images and relation-images. From Table 3, a sign in Deleuze’s semiotics is something in-itself, an essence (Genesis); it is manifest according to the particular way that essence is expressed in a composite whole of images in the frame (Composition); and it forces a certain kind of thought (Noosign). It is a structure of immanence because there is nothing rightfully transcendent to Deleuze’s signs pre-determining their interpretation.

I will be brief in describing my understanding of the specific character of these sign elements. Similar to semeiotics, Firstness for Deleuze (affection-image) is the category of Being in-itself. He borrows directly from semeiotics when he describes its Genesis as the quality in-itself, or *Qualisign*, and describes a qualitative Composition based on Peirce’s iconic sign–object relation, or *Icon*. He uses an actor’s face as his predominant example of the Icon, stating that a facial expression can stand for the qualities of some object. He isn’t explicit about naming the Noosign of Firstness, but he is quite clear in asserting a kind of thought associated with the affection-image that is characterized as an interpretation of some *possible* state of things. This Noosign is equivalent to Peirce’s Rheme, and for the sake of my analysis I call it a Term (Peirce sometimes uses Term and Rheme interchangeably).

Deleuze calls Secondness the action-image. His Genesis and Composition of the action-image are much the same as Peirce’s Representamen and Object of Secondness, even though he uses different names. For Peirce, the Representamen of Secondness is the actual event constituted by the relation of two things, the Sinsign. For Deleuze, the *essence* of the sign of the action-image is much the same, the only difference being that he conceives of an event in terms of the relation between a *situation* and an *action*. To mark this emphasis, Deleuze calls the sign of the action-image the Imprint. Peirce

describes the sign–object relation particular to Secondness with the Index. Deleuze’s Composition of the action-image is a version of the same: he describes the expression of Secondness in a *genuine* relation of cinematic elements. Yet he uses two main scenarios to describe this category of Composition. First, Deleuze focuses on the relation between a situation and an action; for example, when a character responds to a crisis in the community and restores a sense of order. With this scenario Deleuze explains the first kind of genuine relation as a *binomial*, and modifying Peirce’s terminology slightly he states that the first kind of Composition of the action-image is a Synsign. Second, Deleuze focuses on the relations of actions themselves. Furthermore, in so far as Deleuze claims that actions typically disclose some kind of situation, he describes a version of Peirce’s Index and states that the second kind of Composition of the action-image (in Chapters 9 and 10 of *The Movement-Image*) is an Index.

With his discussion of Robert Flaherty’s documentary style, Deleuze implies a Noosign of the action-image equivalent to Peirce’s Dicent. He writes that films like *Nanook of the North* are predominantly action-images and simply present an “exposition” of the milieu, capturing in the “raw” a character’s “tête-à-tête with the milieu” (*Movement* 143). Another way of putting this criticism is to say that Deleuze (although he is not explicit about it) is noting a Dicent as the dominant mode of interpretation of Flaherty’s films. Logical claims are not made; instead a sign forces a kind of propositional thought only. For the sake of my analysis I name the corresponding Noosign the Proposition.

Deleuze’s relation-image is based on Peirce’s category of Thirdness. Consequently, his sign elements function in the same way as Peirce’s Legisign, Symbol and Argument. Deleuze, however, doesn’t label the Genesis of the relation-image with Peirce’s Legisign. Instead, it is my claim that he borrows Peirce’s *concept* of the Symbol for the Genesis of the relation-image, in order to emphasize the *plurality* of relations potential to the relation-image. Thus Deleuze shifts Peirce’s Symbol from its function as the second aspect of the sign of Thirdness to the first aspect of the relation-image. In this way, he shifts the emphasis from the Symbol’s sign–object relation, to the Symbol’s concept as an abstract and potentially open-ended relation (in the first third of Chapter 12 of *The Movement-Image*). What about the relation-image’s Composition and Noosign? Deleuze describes two kinds of Composition equivalent to the abstract sign–object relation characteristic of Thirdness, and he calls these the Mark and Demark. The Mark is an abstract relation of elements based on their common properties, and the Demark is an abstract relation of elements based on their differences. And if we shift the emphasis in Deleuze’s examination of montage (in his argument about “classical” cinema) away from an emphasis on historicity, it becomes clear that his discussion also describes the kind of thought particular to the relation-image. Montage refers to the relations of images, and more

specifically, montage is one way of describing a grouping together of elements that are otherwise unrelated — it refers us to a strictly logical Composition of elements. Thus the kind of thought Deleuze identifies with montage is the kind of thought characteristic of the Mark/Demark and the relation-image of the cinema. Furthermore, in so far as Deleuze (from Sergei Eisenstein) notes the “whole” (concept) as the outcome of a montage process that is essentially dialectical in nature, the immanence of Deleuze’s structure of signs is emphasized. This is due to the fact that thinking (in the case of a dialectical relation) is an evaluation based on the abstract relations of terms *not* determined by transcendent structures (*Time* 158). For the sake of my argument I name the sign of conceptual thought in Deleuze’s semiotics the Whole.

I mentioned above how, for Peirce, a sign is a combination of three aspects. This concept of the sign is much the same for Deleuze: what I call a *completed sign* is a combination of Genesis, Composition and Noosign. Again, Deleuze isn’t so explicit about this: he doesn’t use the words “completed sign” and he doesn’t render his semiotics according to Table 3, but his discussion nevertheless makes the structure I am identifying quite transparent. When he describes the dialectical relations of images in Eisenstein’s films, he is describing what I identify as a Whole Mark/Demark Symbol. When he describes Flaherty’s documentaries, most pertinently, to be concerned with a character’s battle with a milieu, he is describing an event that is a sign, expressed in a binomial, and forcing a range of propositional style thoughts: a Proposition Synsign Imprint. When he describes Joan of Arc’s face in Carl Th. Dreyer’s *Passion of Joan of Arc* as a quality expressed in-itself, a pure Icon, giving rise to an affective charge in the viewing subject, he is pointing to a [Term Icon] Qualisign (*Movement* 107; NB. I use square brackets here in order to denote those elements of the completed sign that do not have to be stated when discussing the sign, since a Qualisign necessarily includes an Icon and a Term).

Moreover, when Deleuze describes special signs of the relation-image — in the Western for example — it can be argued that he is alluding to the hierarchical flexibility of his semiotic structure and the sense in which, similar to semeiotics, a kind of sign (Representamen/Genesis) can be expressed in a range of different cinematic elements (Object/Composition), and accordingly, can force a range of different thought processes (Interpretant/Noosign). Taking the Western, Deleuze describes how the hero is often “representative” of a “collectivity”: “The hero becomes equal to the milieu via the intermediary of the community” (*Movement* 146). This suggests some cases where the hero acts as a result of the wishes of the community and, according to what these wishes may involve, we can assume they include the community’s desire for justice, and perhaps even vengeance. It can be said, then, that the binomial implied by the hero’s action is expressive of a Symbol. And it follows that the binomial is not interpreted logically, but in terms of the factual information afforded by the combination of

cinematic elements (Proposition), or qualitative information (Term). What is identified are the Proposition Synsign Symbol and the Term Synsign Symbol respectively.

When Deleuze describes a quality that is not expressed in-itself (Qualisign) but is tied to a state of things, it is clear to a reader of semeiotics that he is describing Peirce’s idea of an Icon that does not stand completely for its object. In this case Deleuze is identifying an *event* that is expressed *qualitatively* through an Icon: a Term Icon Imprint. Importantly also, Deleuze is pointing out how there are degrees of purity of the Icon and the thought process associated. In terms of a comparison to semeiotics, the most common Icon is tied to a state of things. This is the most common kind because, as Floyd Merrell makes clear, Peirce’s Qualisign (a *pure* Icon) is only given in fleeting moments of lost consciousness or forgetfulness (1995: 102). Thus Deleuze’s discussion of the construction of Qualisigns through editing and framing also reveals the potential of cinema, as a text, to readily present what may otherwise go unnoticed in everyday life.

Regarding my discussion of the completed signs of *The Movement-Image* (and taking into account the hierarchical flexibility of sign elements noted above), I will put forward the following table of completed signs in Deleuze’s semiotics:

**Table 4**

Ten Principal Completed Signs of Deleuze’s Semiotics

	G	C	N	
I	G1	C1	N1	Term Icon Qualisign
II	G2	C1	N1	Term Icon Imprint
III	G2	C2	N1	Term Synsign/Index Imprint
IV	G2	C2	N2	PropositionSynsign/Index Imprint
V	G3	C1	N1	Term Icon Symbol
VI	G3	C2	N1	Term Synsign/Index Symbol
VII	G3	C2	N2	PropositionSynsign/Index/Symbol
VIII	G3	C3	N1	Term Mark/Demark Symbol
IX	G3	C3	N2	Proposition Mark/Demark Symbol
X	G3	C3	N3	Whole Mark/Demark Symbol

In this paper I cannot describe each of these completed signs. Instead I hope only to give an overview of Deleuze’s (Peircian) semiotics of the cinema.

In this essay I have revealed the Peircian structure of signs underlying Deleuze’s cinema books. My aim hasn’t been to explain these signs in any great detail, but to make the structure, and its flexibility, clear. This is because it isn’t just a structure of signs in Deleuze’s cinema books, but it represents a Peircian semiotics of the image applicable to the entirety of the cinema, in the same way Peirce’s signs are applicable to the entirety of the material world.

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