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# The Inevitability of Teleology: From le *Dispositif* to Apparatus Theory to *Dispositifs* Plural

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Résumé de l'article

L'auteure, ayant participé à une table ronde intitulée "Que reste-t-il de la théorie du dispositif?", lors du colloque Impact, s'interroge sur les problèmes historiographiques que soulève cette question. Elle y résume les problèmes liés aux approches traditionnelles de l'histoire : la vue d'ensemble "de/depuis ... à/jusqu'à"; le récit linéaire; la perspective téléologique; etc. Ensuite, s'inspirant de Reinhard Kosselleck, elle suggère que les téléologies (comme celle de mettre fin à toutes les téléoglogies – la mort du cinéma) sont inévitables pour quiconque occupe la position d'un historien-situé-dans-le-temps. Elle s'interroge enfin sur la façon d'exposer les travaux de Baudry et de Foucault, et sur comment retracer les "aventures" du dispositif et de sa théorisation alors que la théorie du discours ayant souscrit à leurs projets critique toute "découverte" d'événements passés, puisqu'en définitive elle avance que nous en sommes toujours à constituer la technologie que nous découvrons alors même que nous croyons qu'elle nous constitue.

# The Inevitability of Teleology : From *le Dispositif* to Apparatus Theory to *Dispositifs* Plural

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I've deliberately put the paradigm I am going to attack in the title. Why? I want to be sure to warn the reader that while the title of this essay promises an overview it will in the end not deliver that "from…to" overview at all. Instead, it will ask "Why not?" The article will not trace technological developments and neither will it narrate the conceptual evolution of a theoretical approach, and although it will *ask* "why not" it will not offer an alternative approach to established historiographic methodology. Instead, it will ask about a set of problems that "go with the territory" of doing what we call "history". Some of my inspiration for skepticism about "history", the traditional discipline, comes from Philip Rosen's insight that the paradigm "old to new" is heir to the assumptions that inform the modern historiography that he so insightfully critiques (2001 : Ch. 8).[1] Additionally, I'm responding to Thomas Elsaesser's call for us to do "media archaeology" at this moment after the "historical turn" when we are called upon to account for the digital uptick. Further, my title is taken from Elsaesser's reference to "teleological inevitability" as one of the tendencies to read past events from the standpoint of their apparent convergence in the present (2004 : 105).[2]

But an overview, as we know, is not in and of itself a teleology, because for one thing it might be posed, open-endedly, as a question. However, we could say that an overview is highly susceptible to teleological thought if the "to" becomes an end point, and this would be because a teleology, following from Aristotle, means taking the end into account as the purpose of a phenomenon, a purpose requisite to a full understanding of it.[3] Here let us note, however, the distinction between a position that a complete explanation depends on the end or purpose and a position that an outcome is always determined by that which preceded it, as in

the reason so often given for studying past events : past events explain present ones. The problem that teleological tendencies represent for us is as they might read an entire historical phenomenon as the revelation of a pattern, evident, after all, by the end. Thus teleological thinking can be "it had to have happened that way" thinking, or, as Anthony Appiah puts it, a teleological argument is an "argument from design" (2003 : 323). Nevertheless, such arguments can be difficult to resist. For who is not impressed by studies of technological devices made in retrospect to appear to anticipate what became cinema? So my potentially teleological subtitle "From *le dispositif* to Apparatus Theory to *dispositifs* Plural" tempts us with its promise of mastery and continuity. It encourages us to think in a way that we cannot exactly help but think in spite of our best critical intentions. And what is it that we all do but that we can't help doing? Well, we pose questions like "What is Left of Apparatus Theory in the Age of Multiple Screens and Exhibition Platforms?", the title of the panel at the IMPACT conference on which these ideas were first shared as a paper. What else do we do? We posit change over time as though *le dispositif* and the apparatus theory that developed from it "came and went", or "had been" and might no longer be what they once were; we pose questions to the tune of "that was then, this is now". To even ask "What is left?" is of course to suggest that apparatus theory, in receding or metamorphosing or disappearing *was* something that it no longer *is* nor can be again. Why? For one thing, because everything has "ended up" here so now we may finally know "what it is". Although we have critiqued linearity, causality, and "grand narratives", in addition to teleologies, some notion of events in succession marching forward toward an outcome at which point all will become clear may be still playing, may, for that matter, always be playing in our heads, even as we refuse to listen to the tune. Or, this is to say how much of academic discourse, even that which deals with philosophical issues, may be suffused with "that was then, this is now" and "where we end up" thinking. The central point of this paper is that despite our best intentions it is *not only* technological apparatuses or devices but apparatus theory itself that may get configured as "from...to", although the reliance on "this to that and therefore what it is" thought is perhaps not as pronounced as in the histories of the kind that characterized the first half of the cinema century, those of Bardèche and Brasillach, Sadoul, Ramsaye, and Jacobs, all indebted to what Elsaesser criticizes as "from...to" approaches (2004 : 93).

As a field, of course, we have been critiquing the chronological "from...to" sweep and the companion notion of "firsts" since the post-structuralist 1970s.[4] And here I would site Jean-Louis Comolli in his "Technology and Ideology" articles in *Cahiers du Cinéma* where he wondered if there could be *a* cinema "birth" when there were so many "births", one "birth" for each new apparatus. Of the proliferation of origins, he says : "plural and fragmented... the birth of the cinema emerges

from all its 'Histories': scattered and sporadic, beginning anew with each new 'apparatus'…". (226-227). We know that the search for "origins" is an impossible undertaking and perhaps should be seen as somewhat ridiculous now that we have accumulated so many cinema "births", and especially when these "births" are pushed further back even before the zoetrope or further forward to the iPad in an attempt to "grandfather" cinema "in" as progenitor of the newest and latest apparatuses, in this case, digital cinema as well as our digital devices, which is "where we end up". And, as we know, if we invest in the chronology of "births" there will also be "deaths", which leads inevitably to the potential teleology of all teleologies, the so-called "death of cinema".[5] Within these parameters we watch with keen interest Francesco Casetti's argument that cinema has been "relocated" onto the iPhone based on his idea that viewing moving images on this device remains a "filmic experience" (2012 : 29). If viewing moving images on iPhones, even in miniaturized form, is still "filmic", cinema would *not* be "dead". Right? Or, as John Belton tells us in his recent *Film History* special issue on "Digital Cinema", contributors propose a number of ways in which the digital can be located earlier in experimental film work and 35mm film does not disappear completely but is held over into the digital present (2012 : 131). These are only a few examples of strategic attempts to "head off" the apparently inevitable. The apparatus in question, the one we have called "cinema", would not be a casualty of "birth to death" thinking if film scholars can find ways of reconceptualizing technological change, ways that stave off the final pronouncement of "death" by getting ahead of it. Right? But to what extent can we intervene? In this regard, which comes first, the technological phenomenon or our historical placement and theorization of it? Where do we as scholars position ourselves in historical time when we attempt to stake our theoretical claim to name that phenomenon? Even when we get there early we may think that we are too late. Recall that when Thomas Elsaesser urged the field to think about "digital cinema" in 1998 he asked if the concept was not a "contradiction in terms", and so it seemed then, unaccustomed as we were to the term (1998). More recently, Elsaesser has become more insistent, asking if "digital cinema" is not an "oxymoron", and even more of one than we might think, which perhaps he wants to stress before we grow completely accustomed to the term and stop thinking of it as at all strange.[6] So as media scholars did we begin to think about the term "digital cinema" after Elsaesser called our attention to it or did we wait for it to become naturalized – wait, that is, for the film industry to develop its own technological products, to phase in and phase out, to combine technologies or to abandon them, or to fool us into thinking it hadn't done anything at all since what we were getting was still cinema. Think of the technology review that recently urged consumers to try to use a new computer tablet to "create your own personal Cineplex". Can we ever get ahead of the industry's own configuration of its technological innovations? Or is that the wrong

question? Rick Altman thinks not, because a new technological phenomenon is always subject to push and pull from multiple user groups and no easy "crisis resolution" procedure is ever available (2004 : 21 - 22).

So it does no good to ask who really decides when it *is* finally "what it is", and further, because if we want to be really anti-teleological, we would argue that it is, to reverse post-structuralism's tense, *already* becoming something else. What, then, is a stronger position to take when we reconsider the configuration of past events and object to the historian's smooth overview? Think of how in the "from…to" formulation "birth" and concomitant "growth" are trajectorized, then consider how, as a consequence, they become institutionalized as paradigms. We know these "from…to"s by heart : from silent to sound, from black and white to color, from the rectangle to the wide screen, and now, perhaps, the most apparent of "teleological inevitabilities", from absorption to immersion and from film to digital. Elsaesser points out the most glaring flaw in "from…to" histories (2004 : 93). That flaw? It is not only the factual inaccuracy, but it is the great leap over all of the "start-up" apparatuses that failed and never flew. Once we have established "from silent to sound", we cannot then accommodate the earliest sound successes which would reverse "silent to sound" or expand the paradigm to "sound to silent to sound".[7] But a reversal in order is exactly what Allison McMahan proposes when she reminds us that the *Dickson Experimental Sound Film* was a successful synchronization in 1894 or 1895 and that the Gaumont Chronophone phonoscènes directed by Alice Guy Blaché were publically exhibited beginning in 1901. In addition, there were other synchronized sound systems like the American Synchronophone and Cameraphone, the British Cinematophone and Animatophone and the German Biophon and Seeberophon, to name only a few (2004 : 33-34).[8]

I would go further, however, because in my straw man paradigm, "From *le dispositif* to Apparatus Theory to *dispositifs* Plural" we are mixing technologies or devices with philosophical concepts, all the better to call attention to the exquisite ambiguity of *dispositif* and its translation into the English term "apparatus" which at first appears to favor the mechanical device aspect of the concept over the "tendency" or "disposition" meaning. Yet even if Jean-Louis Baudry himself wants to make a distinction between *l'appareil de base*, the *basic cinematographic apparatus*, and *le dispositif*, the apparatus, the theoretical projection that includes the subject, the remarkable ambiguity of the term "apparatus" has prevailed *despite the distinction*, and every use of the term now becomes theoretically suggestive.[9] So it would seem that this account encourages a hypothetical case to be made that there was a move "from" *le dispositif* "to" apparatus theory, perhaps encouraged by the translation from French to English.

Thus of course, as I began by arguing, it is not only mechanical apparatuses but an evolution of apparatus theory itself that gets configured

as "from…to", as in the aforementioned panel title, "What's Left of Apparatus Theory in the Age of Multiple Screens and Exhibition Platforms?", where this wording references *both* meanings of the word "apparatus". Let us see then what productivity and what trouble we encounter if we attempt an overview of what came to be called in English "apparatus theory", beginning with Baudry's 1975 theorization as *le dispositif*, and almost simultaneously Foucault's usage, whether in 1976 or 1977.[10] Recall, for instance, that Althusser's 1969 "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" essay was retrospectively mixed in to shore up the notion of the ideological function of the apparatus, and then, and then and then and then, until today. But wait a minute. Haven't we leaped over something here? What about the disillusionment with "apparatus theory"? As Jim Lastra looks back, summarizing a moment : "Apparatus theory's implicit claim that there is an identifiable and stable technology producing uniform representational and ideological effect independent of and transcending any specific representational act now seems, I hope, somewhat reductive" (2000 : 136). This pretty much writes off apparatus theory, doesn't it? If Lastra is indeed articulating a consensus, something had to happen next in the disciplinary field or in the technological realm for "apparatus theory" to make a theoretical comeback – if that is what is happening today.

Today would then be the moment in which we might come to think *dispositif* as the plural *dispositifs*, if in fact that is what we decide to do. And in this we could follow Frank Kessler's argument that the various shapes that the screening situation has taken over the cinema century point to different *dispositifs*, among which is the "cinema of attractions" with its historically specific mode of address and spectator positioning in contrast with the later *dispositif* of classical narrative cinema (2006 : 61). Taking this further, conceptualizing historical shifts and matching them with machines and processes, Giovanna Fossati in her discussion of "film as dispositif" fuses the theoretical and mechanical parts in the term "subject-making technologies" (2009 : 127). Suddenly, at the other end of the telescope, we arrive today at *dispositifs* plural, certainly confirmed by Nanna Verhoeff's positing of "screen dispositifs", the French term re-inflected and combined with an English word, now a theoretical construct with the capacity to address both screen spatial specificity and historical specificity (2012 : 18-19).[11]

Increasingly, we may draw together as a field to argue that while we once said viewers were positioned as gendered subjects by large screen theatrical projected film experiences, today they are positioned differently. And notice just how quickly common sense wisdom inserts itself even into academic discourse which may now also have latched onto an idea of the distracted or attention deficient device user. Recently, at least one scholar has argued that new devices position users as emotionally deficient, and perhaps this is that academic version of the common sense notion of the distracted user. We have become "one with

our devices", says psychoanalyst Sherry Turkle in her best-selling *Alone Together* which suggests that we have transferred our affective relations since, as she says, we are expecting from our technologies what we once got from each other (2011 : 167). There we have it again. We have moved "from" emotional connection "to" disconnection from each other via our devices, plural, an observation that further invites us to reconfigure former technologies in such a way that they foretell how we got here.

But don't forget that we are mixing philosophical concepts with technologies here (as both the term *dispositif* and its translation as "apparatus" encourages), and "screen *dispositifs*", the linguistic hybrid, would appear to confirm this if there was ever a question. Even if we insist that what we are also doing is as much intellectual history as technological history, traditional history's "where we end up" thinking and another of its enabling formations "influence on", inevitably assert themselves.[12] How can "ended up there" approaches hope to elucidate ideas and concepts, that is, elucidate thought itself, especially when thought is perhaps even more temporally promiscuous than machine technologies? For instance, how does a "from...to" paradigm accommodate the relation between Foucault and Baudry when we note how closely the historical introduction of apparatus theory corresponds with the moment at which Foucault began to use the term *apparatus* [*dispositif*], a shift which appeared to some as though he had abandoned the earlier "discursive formations" and the *épistémè* from *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Noticing this, interviewer Alain Grosrichard, interrogating Foucault about the shift from talking about the *épistémè* to speaking of "apparatuses" asks if these new concepts are meant to replace the others and as a consequence should all of his works now be read differently. Foucault replies to the interviewer's worry that their questioning might, in their terms, be at "cross purposes" with his new direction : "But bear in mind that it may be just as well if they're at cross purposes : that would show that my own undertaking is at cross purposes" (1980 : 196).[13] So much for "development", or "maturation", or the "evolution of thought", and here recall Foucault's insistence that an "archaeological description" was really "an abandonment of the history of ideas, a systematic rejection of its postulates and procedures" in favor of another kind of historical practice (1972 : 138).

Another kind of historical practice? My contention is that a kind of historical practice, a Foucauldian history-as-critique if you will, is also a critique of traditional approaches to "doing history". Here, then, the trouble with "from...to" paradigms is that they can reinforce one of the most stubborn features of traditional historiography – the feature in which the chronologically earliest comes to be privileged as the ultimate source of knowledge, and further, what we should think of as strange but don't, past events are thought to be the key to knowledge in and about present events. Historical knowing as chronology and event time-lines can even be culturally preferred or trusted over philosophical knowing,

of course. And what is the rationale we offer for going to the incredible trouble of conducting historical research? In this respect, Keith Jenkins, perhaps the most irreverent of the new philosophers of history, quotes Sande Cohen who holds that the justification for the study of the past as a way of helping us to understand the present, is of all of the reasons that might be put forth, the "hollowest" (2003 : 17).

Here, then, may be the blatant admission, the evidence of the ideological function of a "this, then this, and finally that" orientation which underwrites progress narratives in their lock-step march from past to present. It was Louis Althusser, source of the influential idea from 1969 that the apparatuses within which the cinema apparatus functions are ideological, who railed against the ideological work that this so-called linearity was able to do.[14] As he saw it, linearity delivered every event in the present as the inevitable consequence of that which went before, and would, in effect, be "explained" by the past. In addition to the old causal chain, we have events-as-tapeworm, or, as Althusser called it, the "ideological continuum of a linear time that need only be punctuated and divided" (2011 : 167).[15] And what other way is there? Thinking back to the moment of highest Althuserrian influence in the field, one recalls that the possibility of alternative modes of organizing that research was not a high priority, perhaps because the skeptical anti-historicism of *Screen* encouraged a complete circumvention of the dilemma.[16] Nevertheless it is not as though anti-historicism exactly prohibited the questioning of historical methods and perhaps it even prefaced some alternative attempts in the field to reconfigure accounts of technological objects innovated in the historical past. Because scholars, even as they took up the new research challenges of the "historical turn", did, on occasion, question the methods that "went with the territory".

In the context of an article that wonders how to "theorize cinema history", Rick Altman rethinks the criticism of André Bazin's notoriously "additive" understanding of cinema history in which each new technological "realism" succeeded another (1984 : 116). Altman then speculates, "What would a non-additive approach to technology look like? How might we write history, all the while respecting the notion that not even the apparatus is itself independent of history"? (117). By the end of the article, however, after having gently criticized Jean-Louis Comolli for inadvertently falling into the very trap of linearity that he criticized Bazin for advancing, Altman stops to reflect.[17] He admits something that should excuse Comolli for his lapse when he himself concedes that, as he says, "The straight-line model assumed throughout this paper is of course used here only for the sake of presentational convenience". We are all implicated here because all apt to fall back, from time to time, on the chronological and continual. Then Altman lightens up the occasion, offering a pragmatic satire : "There is no single straight line from the Ark of the Covenant passing through Assisi, *Quattrocentro* perspective painting, Renaissance and neoclassical theater, photography, cinema,

and TV" (124). But what there is instead is more difficult. Why? Because "what there is" will not be *what there is*, but will be another metaphor, ideally more multi-faceted and flexible. And in 1984, Altman, countering the straight-line model argues that "there is a complex web of constantly changing relationships among representational technologies" (*Ibid.*). An effort to accommodate this "complex web" becomes in his later work on sound technology the "multiple-leger" approach in contrast to the traditional "single-leger" grasp of events in which the invention, the law, or the contract signed, for example, are evaluated for their contributions to an eventuality – the final "what is it" of the technology in question (2004 : 22). Impressed as I am with such conceptual innovation in the interests of resisting traditional disciplinary moves, to look for alternatives is not finally my interest here.

Let me defer for a moment to a naysayer. German theorist of history Reinhart Koselleck once asserted that for the historian, teleological thinking was unavoidable. "Our discipline works under a tacit presupposition of *teleology*" he thinks (2002 : 10). Thus it would seem from Koselleck that we protest in vain the dread narrative teleology in which every event flows into an inevitable outcome, one that in the end reveals its design. His example is the most reactionary of Third Reich histories that took as its premise that it would demonstrate that "everything had to happen the way it did..." (11). This is tantamount to saying something like "History will demonstrate that things are the way they are because of the way that they are". But what are we up against? Following Koselleck, why the discipline of history is inevitably teleological may be quite beyond our control. And why else but because teleological proposals are a manifestation of the position-in-time of the historian? Koselleck goes on, "If every historian remains rooted in his situation, he will be able to only make observations framed by his perspective". No, he says, it is not the "*final causality*" on which we rely to rig historical narratives that is the problem. Rather, it is in "naively accepting" that causality, or, as we might better put it, passively agreeing with the only too obvious. This is because, Koselleck continues, it is always an option to find as many conceivable causes as one wants to find for any event in the historical past (11). To put it another way, to look for other causes and configurations is to resist the obvious and apparently inevitable. But why again does the historian inherit an assumption of teleology? Well, thinks Kosselleck, we might as well admit that any and every history is *ex post facto* (12), that is, it is always *after the fact* and, I would add, at a *retrospective advantage*.

Now that I've gotten that in, I want to back up a bit. Because I have always wanted to know why this field took the "historical turn", especially after having subscribed, as we once did so religiously, to the British journal *Screen*'s post-structuralist anti-historicism.[18] Here is the problem : the lesson of the apparatus that "positions" is also the lesson of the discourse-practice that produces its very own objects and

subjects, as in early Foucault where discourses as "practices" are said to "systematically form the objects of which they speak" (1972 : 49). What if we were also to hear in this 1970s conceptualization of the subject-making power of the apparatus something of Martin Heidegger's even earlier notion of the German word *Vorstellung*, translated in English as *representation*, a concept in which the object is "said to produce the subject" rather than the usual "other way around", as Fredric Jameson reminds us? And here Jameson traces the subject in film theory to Heidegger's model in which "the construction of the object of representation as perceptible formally opens a place from which that perception is supposed to take place : it is this structural or formal place, and not any kind of substance or essence, which is the subject" (2002 : 47 - 48).[19] As early as Heidegger's *Nietzsche*, Jameson says, we have a subject structured in place by the representational object.[20] Here, our own hypothetical "from...to" discourse produces events in the historical past by configuring them in particular ways. In the sleight of hand in which discourse produces its object, "said to become" becomes "it became". We thus put the habits of discourse theory in the position to turn that theory against the very histories of discourse theory themselves as well as the histories of the devices we conceptualize as apparatuses. But not so fast, some will say. Don't historical objects (machines) and the events of invention that brought them into being pre-exist in "the past?" Well, do they or don't they?

Let's say that they don't. What, then would be the point of conducting empirical research into past events if we are at all in doubt about the autonomy of those events, about their insured independence from the discourses that reference them? Well, we may be both *not in doubt*, believing that events are autonomous and *in doubt* because we are aware of how our narratives have brought key intellectual events into existence. Then again, we might vacillate. We might *not* want to argue that the discourse about apparatus theory produced the event in which Jean-Louis Baudry wrote an essay in the French journal *Communications* in 1975 titled "*Le dispositif : approches métapsychologiques de l'impression de réalité* ", (translated into English by Jean Andrews and Bertrand August as "The Apparatus : Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in Cinema", published in *Camera Obscura* in 1976). We might want to say that the essay was written independent of our later critical constitution of it as conceptually important. Then again, following Hayden White and others, we still might insist on asking what is the writing of the essay as a past event outside of our narrative of its writing?

In conclusion let me suggest that conceptual frameworks as well as technologies are ever available and can always try for a comeback. The reverse lesson of apparatus theory out of discourse theory would then be this : It is not that "the apparatus" constitutes us but that we, as we speak and write today, try to conceptually constitute what it was, which is also to say *what it is*. Or, following Bazin, who at the same time

that he portrayed cinema as the inevitable heir of 19th century imitative realism ended his linear overview in reverse with the nonsensical but provocative declaration that "Cinema has yet to be invented!" (2009 : 17).

## Notes

1. See also Gaines (2013) where I ask why we took the "historical turn", and (2014) where I question the assumptions behind Eisenstein's uncompleted historical overview.
2. See Elsaesser (2004 : 104) where he proposes what he calls an "archaeological 'turn'" to, as he says, "describe the emergence and development of cinema", an archaeology aligned in this article with the New Film History and taking its inspiration from Michel Foucault's (2010) notion of genealogy which, it is well known, rejects the conservative meaning of the term (92). Later in the 2004 article Elsaesser defines media archaeology as "the name for the placeless place and the timeless time the film historian needs to occupy when trying to articulate, rather than merely accommodate" (112). More recently, Ernst (2013 : 55) reminds us that taking Foucault's "archaeology of knowledge" literally has led to a "fatal misunderstanding" of the notion, especially as it has been taken up as media archaeology.
3. In a nutshell, the problem of teleology is there in the Greek derivation, *telos*, purpose or end and *logos* or reason.
4. Today, as André Gaudreault says, we are "post-Comolli", that is, after Jean-Louis Comolli's 1971 six-part *Cahiers du Cinéma* article critical of the first generation of traditional film historians (2011 : 12).
5. Cherchi Usai in *The Death of Cinema*, says of how he arrived at the title that cinema's "death" was a concept "we had been hearing of for a long time but dreaded to mention" (2001 : 2).
6. Elsaesser (2013 : 32) further explains the larger strategy behind his insistence on the "oxymoronic" status of "digital cinema", which he wants to oppose instead of analog and digital, all the better to call attention to their different logics and also to argue, as a way of resisting the "telos" of convergence theory, that "cinema" and the "digital", relative to other devices and technologies, are not easy candidates for "convergence" (34).
7. Chion (1999 : 7) articulates what has become a truism when he says that 1927 indicates the year in which "the entire previous cinema was retrospectively declared silent" as it never was before.
8. Gaudreault (2011) makes a related objection in his critique of the uses of "pre-cinema" as well as "early cinema", the later as the anticipation of the cinema it would become. But especially egregious he thinks are the uses of "precinema" to study optical toys, the magic lantern, and other devices as perhaps having "foretold" cinema. He asks "Isn't this another flagrant and extreme example of cutting history up after the fact in a way that does not respect the integrity of the object under study?" This is to tie oneself to a "teleological approach" he expects (33).
9. Baudry (1976 : 127) in a footnote, makes the distinction to which we attempt to adhere : "In a general way, we distinguish the *basic cinematographic apparatus* [*l'appareil de base*], which concerns the ensemble of the equipment and operations necessary to the production of a film and its projection, from the apparatus [*le dispositif*] discussed in this article, which solely concerns projection and which includes the subject to whom the projection is addressed. Thus the *basic cinematographic apparatus* involves the film stock, the camera, developing, montage considered in its technical aspects, etc., as well as the apparatus

[*dispositif*] of projection".

10. Kessler (2007) is right that *Histoire de la sexualité* includes a chapter titled "*Le dispositif de sexualité* ", but this is translated in the English edition as "The Deployment of Sexuality", which may be why scholars reading English have looked to Foucault's elaboration of what he means by the term *apparatus* (*dispositif*) in the 1977 interview with the editors of the journal *Ornicar?* (1980 : 195-98).

11. Verhoeff (18-19) also notes the success of *dispositif*, the concept, which, as she says, "filled a void but is at risk of becoming void itself by the wear and tear of over-use".

12. Although Foucault (1972 : 21) critiques the notion of "influence", which he says "provides a support – of too magical a kind to be very amenable to analysis..." The methodology of "influence" has not encountered much sustained resistance in the intervening decades.

13. See Foucault (1980 : 196) in "The Confession of the Flesh", a conversation with Alain Grosrichard, *et. al.*, in answer to Grosrichard's question.

14. Althusser (2011 : 167) says that "there is nothing in true history which allows it to be read in the ideological continuum of a linear time that need only be punctuated and divided..." Note : Although the 2011 reprinting of this essay, "The Errors of Classical Economics : Outline of a Concept of Historical Time", is credited to both Balibar and Althusser, editors Balibar and Rajchman maintain that it should be credited to Althusser as are all of the essays in Part II. "The Object of *Capital* is in the English Verso edition".

15. Note that Comolli, in his 1971 "Technique and Ideology" essay uses a long quote from Althusser in which this phrase occurs. (See Comolli 1990 : 247).

16. See Nowell-Smith's *Screen* editorial that announces in an issue featuring the Edinburgh "History/Production/Memory" event, the year before the Brighton Conference : "Paradoxically (at first sight) this revival of interest in history coincides with a crisis of confidence in the term history itself, a crisis which threatens to invest not just simple historicist notions of the past as cause of the present but the validity of historical inquiry as such" (1977 : 5).

17. For one, Altman thinks Comolli's reliance on the idea from Marcelin Pleynet that cinema "inherits" Renaissance perspective reveals that Comolli sees cinema history as "a straight-line affair" (1984 : 116). (See Pleynet & Thibaudeau 1970 : 159).

18. See on this Rosen (2001 : 11) who refers to Colin MacCabe's 1976 article in which he critiques empiricism in reference to André Bazin. Later, Kuhn and Stacey (1998 : 2) reviewing the years of *Screen*, refer to "anti-historicism"; but see Dosse (1997b : 427-434) who reminds us that anti-historicism is as much the legacy of structuralism and recalls Jacques Lacan's rejection of history as "this thing that I detest for the best reasons" (430).

19. Although note that his example of film theory is Comolli's "Technique and Ideology : Camera, Perspective, and Depth of Field" from 1971 where the term "apparatus" (226-227), before Baudry's elaboration, is closer to the mechanical device.

20. See Dosse (1997a : 376- 378) on the French denial of how much they were influenced by Heidegger.

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## Abstract

The article asks how problems of historical method are implied in the question "What Is Left of Apparatus Theory […] ?", the topic of the round table for which this paper was first delivered at the IMPACT conference. It goes on to recap the problems with traditional historical approaches : the "from…to" overview, the linear narrative, and the teleological expectation, to name a few. Then, it suggests, following Reinhard Koselleck, that teleologies (like the teleology to end all teleologies – the death of cinema) are unavoidable if one is functioning as a historian-positioned-in-time. Finally, it asks how we are to lay out Baudry and Foucault and trace the "adventures" of the apparatus and apparatus theory when the discourse theory that underwrote their projects critiques the project of "discovering" past events since in the end we are constituting the technology we discover, the same technology that we have said constitutes us.

## Résumé

L'auteure, ayant participé à une table ronde intitulée "Que reste-t-il de la théorie du dispositif?", lors du colloque Impact, s'interroge sur les problèmes historiographiques que soulève cette question. Elle y résume les problèmes liés aux approches traditionnelles de l'histoire : la vue d'ensemble "de/depuis ... à/jusqu'à"; le récit linéaire; la perspective téléologique; etc. Ensuite, s'inspirant de Reinhard Kosselleck, elle suggère que les téléologies (comme celle de mettre fin à toutes les téléoglogies – la mort du cinéma) sont inévitables pour quiconque occupe la position d'un historien-situé-dans-le-temps. Elle s'interroge enfin sur la façon d'exposer les travaux de Baudry et de Foucault, et sur comment retracer les "aventures" du dispositif et de sa théorisation alors que la théorie du discours ayant souscrit à leurs projets critique toute "découverte" d'événements passés, puisqu'en définitive elle avance que nous en sommes toujours à constituer la technologie que nous découvrons alors même que nous croyons qu'elle nous constitue.

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