Darwin, Marker, Deleuze: The *Expression of the Emotions* and the Filmic Unconscious

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Abstract

My article traces a speculative history of the unconscious in a tradition of films and theories of cinema that engage with the face as a simulacrum of the psyche. Taking Gilles Deleuze's discussion of the close-up in *Cinema 1* as my starting point, I tease out the historical, conceptual and figural continuities between Charles Darwin's work on the role of habit in emotional expression, Henri Bergson's writing on perception and memory, and Deleuze's own reflections on affectivity in film. I then turn to the films and essays of Chris Marker to suggest that within this cinematic model of the psyche, the unconscious corresponds to an irreducible passivity that conditions habit and perception and determines the expressivity of the face.

Keywords: *face, close-up,* La Jetée*, movement-image, passive synthesis, habit and memory, Bergson, cinema, Deleuze, Darwin, Chris Marker*

In his first volume on cinema, Gilles Deleuze observes that the birth and development of the seventh art coincided historically with a crisis in psychology, an epochal moment at which it became necessary to rethink the coordination of image and movement. Whereas received philosophical grammars tended to associate images with the inner workings of consciousness and movement with the existence of bodies in space, the end of the nineteenth century, and the decades that followed, found this dichotomy to be increasingly untenable. Deleuze notes: 'There were social and scientific factors which placed more and more movement into conscious life, and more and more images into the material world.'[1]

  This statement sets up the historical and philosophical coordinates for the entire two-volume project; but more than that, it tells us that Deleuze's understanding of cinema, his detailed taxonomy of cinematic signs and his analysis of formal operations specific to the art of film, is also, in fact, a model of subjectivity – one that can be precisely historicised. It describes, in short, a particular moment in the history of consciousness. (But is consciousness the right word?)

  We might unpack the passage a little more patiently. Deleuze starts by taking 'the historical crisis of psychology' as a given, and goes on to identify two paradigmatic philosophical responses:

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[1] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 56. Hereafter *MI* with page references in the text.

> What appeared finally to be a dead end was the confrontation of materialism and idealism, the one wishing to reconstitute the order of consciousness with pure material movements, the other the order of the universe with pure images in consciousness. It was necessary, at any cost, to overcome this duality of image and movement, of consciousness and thing. Two very different authors were to undertake this task at about the same time: Bergson and Husserl. (*MI*, 56)

The sketch appears to resolve itself into a debate between two rival interpretations of consciousness, but the binary setup is deceptive. The choice between Edmund Husserl and Henri Bergson does not in fact yield the operative conceptual framework of the *Cinema* books. Rather, Deleuze takes up Bergson's position exclusively. Husserl is merely the signpost of a road not taken. Then again, by starting his history of film at this philosophical crossroads, Deleuze implicitly co-opts the tradition of modern phenomenology for Bergsonism. The entire genealogy of ideas leading from Kant to Husserl is reframed as a topic in the 'historical crisis of psychology' (*MI*, 56), a philosophical stalemate that finds in Bergson and in film its most promising solution.

Two inferences can be drawn from this premise. First, that a late development in modern theories of consciousness forms the philosophical foundation of the *Cinema* books; and second, that the history can be accurately traced in the years between Kant and Bergson, and is in fact, best conceived as a Bergsonian rerouting of Kant's transcendental idealism. My aim in this article is to speculate on a concept of the unconscious emerging from that history. I will begin by teasing out the conceptual and figural continuities between Deleuze's semiotics of film and the strange combination of Kantian psychology and Bergsonism informing the Cinema project. I will then consider the ramifications for the project of a biological turn in nineteenth-century psychology, linking Deleuze's observations on affectivity in film with the treatment of the face in Darwin's work on emotions. Finally, I will look at two or three films that bear out or complicate Deleuze's understanding of cinema, focusing in particular on the works of Chris Marker.

But first things first, it is necessary to fill out the broader contours of the phenomenological tradition alluded to above. Deleuze himself invites us to look back to Kant in the Preface to the English edition of *Cinema 2*. Throughout his career, Kant is invoked as the proper name of a Copernican turn in philosophy, the moment at which 'the subordination of time to movement was reversed.'[2] Cinema, Deleuze argues, was to reproduce that same trajectory in its own history. The idea returns at a key juncture in the volume: the discussion of the crystal-image. The concept marks not only cinema's entry into modernity, but also the historical fulfilment of its most radical semiotic potential. The crystal stands for an image of time as a whole, time understood as the contemporaneity of the past and the present. The theory paraphrases Bergson – it is presented, precisely, as a Bergsonian repurposing of a Kantian insight.

> Bergson's major theses on time are as follows: the past coexists with the present that it has been; the past is preserved in itself, as past in general (non-chronological); at each moment time splits itself into present and past, present that passes and past which is preserved. […] Time is not the interior in us, but just the opposite, the interiority in which we are, in which we move, live and change. Bergson is much closer to Kant than he himself thinks: Kant

defined time as the form of interiority, in the sense that we are internal to time (but Bergson conceives this form quite differently from Kant).[3]

To claim, with Kant, that time is the form of interiority, is not to say that we all experience time subjectively. Rather, it is to understand time as a distention of the subject. Time is the interiority that hollows us out. Similarly, to identify duration with consciousness is not to imply that time receives its unity from some operation of the mind (synthesis, *Erinnerung*, or mourning, as the case may be). It is to found that unity on the coincidence of the past and the present. Time, in this setup, is the form of the subject's self-relation, the irreducible difference of the self from itself.

These distinctions give us the template for a theory of the unconscious that by-passes Freud. In the introduction to *Matter and Memory* Bergson famously defines matter as 'an aggregate of "images".'[4] An image, he explains, is 'a certain existence which is more than that which the idealist calls a representation, but less than that which the realist calls a thing – an existence placed half-way between the 'thing' and the "representation"' (*MM*, xi-xii). The effect of this statement is immediately to short-circuit the subject-object duality that has long plagued both idealism and empiricism. The image does not originate in the subject. It is not the product of a mind's perceptive and imaginative faculties. It is the in-between of the subject's sensibility and the object's visibility, but an in-between that is in actuality *all* there is.

The idea has two corollaries: it liberates consciousness from the charge of having to mediate reality; and it lays the groundwork for a far-reaching reconfiguration of the role of memory in sentient life. Bergson distinguishes at first between two kinds of memory: habitual and recollective. The differences between the two are intuitive, even obvious. The former, 'fixed in the organism, is nothing else but the complete set of intelligently constructed mechanisms which ensure the appropriate reply to the various possible demands' (*MM*, 195), while the latter is in a sense 'the true memory. Co-extensive with consciousness, it retains and ranges alongside of each other all our states in the order in which they occur, leaving to each fact its place and consequently marking its date, truly moving in the past and not, like the first, in an ever renewed present' (*MM*, 195).

In the first instance, memory is instinctive, physiological, and entirely subordinated to the uses and the economy of the sensory-motor mechanism. In the second, it is contemplative, even leisurely. Bergson's purpose in considering them side by side is primarily to account for the relation between memory and the body, where memory is broadly understood as the survival of the past in the present, and the body as the locus of action and perception, the nexus of all sensory-motor mechanisms.

> Our perceptions are undoubtedly interlaced with memories, and inversely, a memory, as we shall show later, only becomes actual by borrowing the body of some perception into which it slips. These two acts, perception and recollection, always interpenetrate each other, are always exchanging something of their substance as by a process of endosmosis. The proper office of psychologists would be to dissociate them, to give back to each its natural purity. (*MM*, 72)

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[3] Deleuze, *Time-Image*, 82.
[4] Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1911), xi. Hereafter *MM* with page references in the text.

The point, here, is that recollection, no less than habit, is inseparable from sensory-motor processes. To speak of the survival of the past in the present is to recognise that memories too are *acts*, that they are in some sense continuous with the order of perception. Bergson has no issue with this notion except where it leads philosophy astray by promoting the idea that memory is *founded* on the present. If that were true, it would follow that memory-images are second-order realities, mere copies of living perceptions. For Bergson, this is a conclusion that must be avoided at all costs. The past emphatically is not a faded duplicate of reality in the present. Our experience of it is inextricably bound up with the present, to be sure; but the past insists independently, it *is* in and of itself. As with the percept, which must not be dismissed as a mere representation of an object, or a mental projection of the real world, so a memory must not be mistaken for an impoverished image. It is to obviate this error that Bergson's discussion of memory as a representation of the past soon gives way to a third concept, that of 'pure memory' (*MM*, 170-6).

We are able, in sum, to distil three senses of memory operating in *Matter and Memory*: a survival of the past that is fully contracted into the present, and that insists *unconsciously, neurophysiologically*, in habit; a survival of the past in representations that lend temporal texture to actions and images; and finally, a pure memory, corresponding to the self-preservation of the past in the past, not the temporal thickness of a memory-image, but its grounding in the past itself.

Though in actuality recollective memory (memory$_2$) is always interlaced with perception, in its pure state it has no obvious neurophysiological expression, no immediate application in the world and, ostensibly, no utility to the living organism. Bergson goes so far as to compare this memory to a dream state, noting that 'he who lives in the past for the mere pleasure of living there, and in whom recollections emerge into the light of consciousness without any advantage for the present situation, is hardly better fitted for action: here we have no man of impulse, but a dreamer' (*MM*, 198). The metaphor is a curious rhetorical choice for a condition that is said to be '[c]o-extensive with consciousness' itself (*MM*, 195). But it is apposite in so far as it serves to establish the ontological independence of pure memory from sensory-motor activity (i.e., from the present).

Memory, then, both complements perception and is ontologically distinct from it. It faces two directions at once: on one side, it is continuous with the activities of the body, and on the other it is the in-itself of the past. What would the unconscious correspond to within this theoretical model?

Bergson himself uses the word to refer to those dimensions of memory that remain passive, 'ineffective' (*MM*, 182), or generally untranslatable to the requirements of sensory-motor activity. He further compares the unconscious to an environment that extends beyond our vision, into rooms adjacent to our own, and further still, into the town beyond them – all existing independently of perception, yet somehow inextricably connected to the immediate space of which we are aware. Deleuze warns us not to misconstrue this idea as a mere description of what lies outside our psychological horizon. Bergson, he clarifies, 'does not use the word "unconscious" to denote a psychological reality outside consciousness*, but to denote a nonpsychological reality –* being as it is in itself'.[5] The unconscious, in short, is the reality of a past that exists for

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[5] Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 56, my emphasis.

nobody. Or, put another way, it is the part of the memory-image that is incommensurate with what the image represents.

This concept of memory gives the *Cinema* books their most important ontological coordinate. But there are two additional aspects of Deleuze's project still to consider. In attempting to graft the model of subjectivity coded in the books onto a speculative history of the unconscious, we must determine how the Bergsonian unconscious is brought into the orbit of Kant – how it is made transcendental. We must also account for the role of habit in that model, and more generally, for the vestiges of an evolutionary turn in nineteenth-century psychology.

A Darwinian Precedent

An important but unacknowledged source for both Bergson and Deleuze is Charles Darwin's 1872 treatise *On the Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*.[6] This is the fork in the road that launches our allohistory. The central premise of the book, the third and least-known of Darwin's major studies in evolutionary theory, is that emotions are a product of the same biological reality that humans share with other animals. Not only are they determined by environmental and physiological conditions, their expressions are physiologically motivated. From violent trembling through sudden loss of colour to the bristling of the hairs on the neck, fear reads as one and the same phenomenon across species.

Paul Ekman has commented on the sheer originality of the work, calling it 'the first pioneering study of emotion'[7] and 'the book that initiated the scientific study of human behaviour – the first book in psychology.'[8] For the purpose of this essay I will focus on two of its many innovative features. The first of these is Darwin's use of photography both as a way to gather and sample evidence and as a way to illustrate his observations. The text of *Expression* includes numerous sketches, woodcuts and stills of human faces, some captured in a candid pose and some shown in a laboratory setting, subjected to experiments and made to respond to different stimuli.

Darwin draws on the work of a number of contemporary photographers and neurologists, most notably Duchenne de Boulogne, to demonstrate the universal recognisability of certain expressions even when detached from the immediate context in which they occur. Boulogne's experiments had shown that emotional expressions can be accurately reproduced through galvanic stimulation of the muscles of the face; and conversely, that certain facial contortions, even when artificially induced by means of electric probes, are widely legible as emotional expressions.

> It fortunately occurred to me to show several of the best plates, without a word of explanation, to above twenty educated persons of various ages and both sexes, asking them, in each case, by what emotion or feeling the old man was supposed to be agitated; and I recorded their answers in the words which they used. Several of the expressions were instantly recognised by almost everyone… (*EEMA*, 21)

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[6] Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, Anniversary Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Hereafter *EEMA* with page references in the text.
[7] Paul Ekman, 'Darwin's Contributions to Our Understanding of Emotional Expressions', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London. Series B* 364.1535 (2009), 3449.
[8] Paul Ekman, 'Preface to the 200th Anniversary Edition', in *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, xiii.

The implications for Darwin's project, and more generally for a discourse on scientific method, are far-reaching. As Ekman explains, one of the hallmarks of the work's originality is its peculiar treatment of the face. Before Darwin, reading a face was largely a function of understanding character: 'the face was of interest primarily to those who claimed they could read personality or intelligence from the facial features.'[9] Darwin's approach differs from that of the physiognomists in that, while he treats the face as a legible text, his focus is on involuntary reflexes – on expression as the product of a neurophysiological mechanism. Here psychology is reframed as a science of surface effects: Darwin imagines the study of emotions as a sign system – an instinctive and universal language – codified from spontaneous movement.

The second salient aspect of the work I wish to single out relates to this last point. In the first chapter of *Expressions* Darwin identifies three general principles that govern the production of facial expressions as universal signifiers. These are:

1.) '*The principle of serviceable associated habits*' (*EEMA*, 34): Darwin traces the evolution of certain expressions in the repetition of gestures that would have once been useful to the animal: gestures like the baring of teeth to ward off a perceived threat or the raising of eyebrows to adjust one's focus are fixed, through habit and association, into signifiers of anger or surprise. In the same vein, the combined action of turning up one's nose and snorting to fend off an offensive odour communicates disgust and is eventually repurposed as a sign of scorn or contempt.

2.) '*The principle of antithesis*' (*EEMA*, 34): Darwin's second principle suggests that certain expressions are formed by a reversal of muscle movements already associated with a contrasting emotion. For instance, where a smile habitually communicates happiness, the drooping of the lips, or the curling of the corners of the mouth into a frown might be instinctively used to convey sorrow. Darwin's favourite example is drawn characteristically from his observation of animal behaviour: accustomed to express aggression and hostility by tensing its body, a pet dog will greet its master by emphatically relaxing its posture. 'Instead of walking upright, the body sinks downwards or even crouches, and is thrown into flexuous movements; his tail, instead of being held stiff and upright, is lowered and wagged from side to side; his hair instantly becomes smooth; his ears are depressed and drawn backwards, but not closely to the head; and his lips hang loosely.' (*EEMA*, 56) These movements have no practical, adaptive or evolutionary use other than to convey a state of affairs that is antithetical to one already expressed through previously codified gestures; and

3.) '*The principle of actions due to the constitution of the nervous system*' (*EEMA*, 34): finally, certain expressions are the result of a violent or excessive excitation of the nervous system; they manifest as uncontrollable physiological processes such as trembling, excessive sweating or sudden pallor. Darwin clarifies that all emotions have a physiological basis; yet this third category is distinct from the first two in that the link between sensory-motor activity and emotional expression is direct, and entirely removed from any evolutionary or adaptive significance. 'Trembling is of no service' and is in fact 'often of much disservice.' (*EEMA*, 70) Here the nature of expression as physical symptom is made apparent.

Of particular relevance to our history is the importance assigned to habit in Darwin's setup. Bergson and Deleuze both adopt Darwin's insight that emotions are rooted in sensory-motor functions and that habit is the primary force responsible for

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[9] Ekman, 'Darwin's Contributions to Our Understanding of Emotional Expressions', 3449.

translating neurophysiological activity into legible expressions. Deleuze further buys into the notion that the face is the privileged surface on which this translation may be seen to take place. Yet his treatment of the face differs from Darwin's in at least one important aspect. For Deleuze, the expressivity of the face in cinema does not merely register, and make legible, the movements codified by habit. Rather, it suspends the simple efficiency of the sensory-motor schema, opening it up to a more complex temporal order. In Deleuze's psychology sensory-motor operations are still recognised as the condition of all conscious and unconscious syntheses; but the schema is always in danger of breaking down – always set up to fail.

Cinema and the Syntheses of the Unconscious

Deleuze's pairing of Bergsonism and transcendental psychology rests on three chain linked moves. First, he addresses Bergson's suspicions of cinema as a mechanical art, a technology that gives only a false impression of movement, ultimately reducing duration to a series of stills. Deleuze argues that in fact Bergson failed to recognise the full potential of cinema to create new types of movement and new forms of the image. This potential is explicitly identified with the medium's harnessing of the technique of montage which radically changes the nature of the shot. With montage, the shot ceases to be 'a spatial category' (*MI*, 3), and cinema is able to disarticulate the gaze from the subject, or rather, to unmoor the percept from the subject/object duality that governed traditional psychology at the time of its historical impasse.

Secondly, he identifies and contrasts two regimes of the cinematic image. The first type models its representations of time on an organic understanding of movement while the second, premised on a failure of the sensory-motor mechanism, is dedicated to the invention of new unities, new articulations of the connection between a segment of time and the Whole in which it partakes. This division both is and is not historical. On the one hand, it corresponds to two major historical phases within the history of cinema reconstructed in the books. One phase does not render the previous one obsolete; it merely marks the moment in which a form that had previously been expressed only as a grammatical transgression finally comes into its own.[10] But the distinction also reveals a split within the operations of the shot itself. It is this ambivalence of the shot within the complex theoretical setup of the *Cinema* books that interests us above all else.

Finally, after countering Bergson's objection that cinema entails a reduction of movement into still images, Deleuze goes on to discuss the foundational elements of cinematic composition – the frame, the shot and montage – as syntheses of time. The importance of this move within the architecture of the *Cinema* books cannot be overstated. More than any other facet of Deleuze's argument, it is the transformation of the shot from a spatial form into a temporal one that determines the character of the Cinema project as a modern psychological theory pitched between Kant and Bergson.

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[10] Scholars disagree on the virtues of reading the books as a history of film. Here I wish to single out D.N. Rodowick's compelling argument that 'the movement-image and the time-image are not historical concepts and that it is misleading to conceive of the latter as following the former along a chronological time line. The two concepts do suggest, however, divergent philosophies of history, owing to their different relationships to the Whole and to their immanent logics of image and sign' ['Introduction: What Does Time Express?', in *Afterimages of Gilles Deleuze's Film Philosophy*, ed. D.N. Rodowick (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), xvii]. According to Rodowick, the movement-image reflects a Hegelian notion of history whereas the time-image is modelled after Nietzsche's 'eternal return'.

Joe Hughes and Ian Buchanan have offered two distinct but complementary accounts of how Deleuze's taxonomy of cinematic images aligns with Kant's transcendental psychology. Buchanan notes that the 'tripartite conceptual schema of body without organs, abstract machine, and assemblage informs the basic matrix of Deleuze's account of the cinematic image.'[11] He develops this claim by tracing 'functional equivalences' across Deleuze's body work, examining concepts that 'perform essentially the same function from one book to the next.'[12] Hughes, for his part, tracks the emergence of the subject of the *Cinema* books out of a material field into 'three distinct moments of a sensory-motor schema: perception, affection and action.'[13] The full trajectory, from pure materiality to subjectivation, is articulated over five stages, each corresponding to a stage in the formal structure of the transcendental unconscious described in *The Logic of Sense* and *Anti-Oedipus*.[14] If, as both critics maintain, the three Kantian syntheses of the apperception correspond to the three varieties of the movement-image, if, in other words, the threefold schema of <apprehension; reproduction; recognition> is fulfilled, in filmic terms, by the triad <perception-image; affection-image; action-image>, what are we to make of the function of frame, shot and montage in Deleuze's film theory? And what of Bergson's concept of a pure memory – a memory that exists for no one?

The two questions, of course, resolve into one. Not only does the grammar of frame, shot and montage regulate the production of perception-, affection- and action-images, it also invokes, schematically, the passive syntheses of time described in chapter 2 of *Difference and Repetition*. Those syntheses correspond to the figures of Habit and Memory, and to a third underdetermined agency which reveals itself eventually as the pure form of Time, or the vertigo of the Eternal Return.[15]

The setup also informs the overall structure of the Cinema project (its division into two parts), and illuminates a peculiar aspect of Deleuze's formalism, namely his understanding of how multiplicities are constituted and organised categorially as open wholes or closed sets. For example, we might say of time that it is determined by the syntheses of the present, the past and the future (or by the passive syntheses of habit, memory and the eternal return), and that this threefold distribution recurs in several equivalent forms across Deleuze's body of work. But time for Deleuze also divides in two: the whole of time is split between the present that passes and the past that is. Here the relation between the present and the past repeats the ontological distinction between the actual and the virtual in *Matter and Memory*. Then again, there is *another* sense in which time does not divide at all; it is always virtually whole and is coextensive with the in-itself of the past (Bergson's pure memory). Finally, once we shift from an

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[11] Ian Buchanan, 'Is a Schizoanalysis of Cinema Possible?', in *Afterimages of Gilles Deleuze's Film Philosophy*, ed. D.N. Rodowick (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 136.

[12] Buchanan, 136.

[13] Joe Hughes, 'Schizoanalysis and the Phenomenology of Cinema', in *Deleuze and the Schizoanalysis of Cinema*, ed. Ian Buchanan and Patricia MacCormack (London: Continuum, 2008), 15.

[14] Hughes's article does not address the discussion of passive synthesis presented in chapter 2 of *Difference and Repetition*. However, I refer the reader to Hughes's own *Deleuze and the Genesis of Representation* (London: Continuum, 2008) for an excellent commentary on the chapter in question. On the connection between *Difference and Repetition* and Deleuze's cinema project see D.N. Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997) and Richard Rushton, 'Passions and Actions', *Deleuze and Guattari Studies* 2.2 (2008): 121-39.

[15] For a discussion of the allegorical and dramatic rendering of the three syntheses in *Difference and Repetition*, see Ruben Borg, 'Past, Passivity, Passion: Deleuze's Allegorical Drama', *CounterText* 5.1 (2019): 70-88.

abstract and static understanding of the whole to a dynamic one, time appears to split again: only now the operative division is not between the present that passes and the past that is, but between the unity of the past and present on the one hand (the whole) and the form of the eternal return (the ungrounding of the whole) on the other.

All these determinations find a corresponding value in Deleuze's semiotics of film. As mentioned already, the fundamental agencies of the cine-camera are those of the frame, the shot and montage (framing, cutting and editing). But while the functions of the frame are distinct from those of the shot, empirically the two operations are inseparable (as habit is inseparable from memory, and perception from affection). Deleuze defines framing as '*the determination of a closed system*' (*Movement-Image*, 12), that is to say, as the act of gathering and enclosing multiple elements into a field. The image, at this level, is merely a set of parts and relations between parts. The shot, by contrast, is

> *the determination of the movement which is established in the closed system*, between elements or parts of the set. But […] that movement also concerns a whole which is qualitatively different from the set. The whole is that which changes – it is the open or duration. (*MI*, 18)

The shot, then, faces two directions at once. It brings movement into the frame – determines the relative movement of parts in a set. But it also expresses an absolute change, an intensive movement that affects the whole. We may recognise in this duality the theme of the first volume, its single most important preoccupation. Deleuze himself makes the point quite candidly: the shot, he writes, 'acts like a consciousness' (*MI*, 20). And again, a few pages down: 'The shot is the movement-image' (*MI*, 22).

To say of the shot that it acts like a consciousness is not to grant it a human-like agency or intelligence. But it *is* to afford the perception of the camera a higher degree of complexity than the mere capturing of movement and light. That complexity consists of decomposing and recomposing relations between objects in a closed set, establishing changes in perspective, and expressing the virtual intensity – that is to say, the properly temporal quality – of the percept. In its most basic form, sentient life for Bergson is just this: a constant translation, at the neurophysiological level, between perception and action. Consciousness is what complicates the simple, neuro-mechanical directness of the sensory-motor schema. It introduces an interval in the sensory-motor mechanism, a delay or a hesitation in the passage between the two poles. Bergson speaks, to this effect, of a 'zone of indetermination' (*MM*, 23), a phrase that triggers different resonances across multiple fields. In political discourse, it suggests a measure of freedom in living beings. In psychology, it amounts to the potential of a living body to be more than just a conduit of stimuli and actions – an ability to be affected, and in being affected, to lend thickness and texture to percepts. In an ontological context, it is coterminous with the reality of time itself, captured in the unity of the actual and the virtual.

And what about aesthetics?

As James Chandler explains, within the syntax of the movement-image this indeterminacy materialises variously at the level of the shot, of the affection-image, and,

in particular, at the level of the close-up (i.e., the shot of the face).[16] The close-up is a paradigmatic instance of the affection-image because it showcases the ability of the shot to render movement for itself, to disarticulate movement from action. The effect, Deleuze clarifies, is not simply to enlarge or dramatically foreground an object. It is to suspend action, to trade in an organ of movement for one of expression. Up close, every object becomes a face. Thus, if the shot 'implies a change of dimension, this is an absolute change: a mutation of movement which ceases to be translation in order to become expression' (*MI*, 95-6). It is vital not to think of the face, in this context, as a signifier of identity, or a marker of individuality. In the close-up, the face is made impersonal. It is not a matter of recognising someone. Rather, the close-up draws out the faciality of the image, its impassiveness, its power to express movement as an intensity.

We are used to conceiving of the unconscious as a supplement of conscious processes. We are accustomed to thinking of it as a submerged part of the psyche – at any rate, as a matter of depth. I doubt that these coordinates can ever be jettisoned fully. But in the identification of the shot with the movement-image, and the consequent understanding of the close-up as the paradigmatic shot, Deleuze strains both the logic of supplementarity and the metaphorics of depth. Now we must look to the intensities coded on the surface, to the filmic apprehension of the face.

Marker's Faces

In an essay on Carl Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, published in 1952, Chris Marker comments on the extraordinary use of close-up in the film and elaborates on the significance of the technique in the language of cinema. Famously, all of the drama of Dreyer's masterpiece is played out in shot after stark shot of the human face set against a flattened background. One of the most interesting critical challenges posed by *Jeanne d'Arc*, Marker writes, is to learn to read Dreyer's close-ups as a cinematic articulation of time and space. For the filmmaker, the choice between different types of shot is comparable to the use of grammatical tenses in narrative, with the wide-shot corresponding to the past tense and the close-up to the present.[17] The style of *Jeanne d'Arc*, as Marker interprets it, is a radical experiment in narrative time where 'close-ups, absence of make-up, neutral sets and costumes all combine towards a single goal: to write a film, dare I say, in the present of eternity.'[18]

There is much that is surprising about this judgement not least the cultural connotations that attach to the idea of eternity as an affectless time and to the sense of an eternal present as a form of plenitude, the very opposite of a *passion*. Plainly, these are not temporal coordinates that apply to Dreyer's film. Nevertheless, it is possible to comprehend Marker's statement by reading it against a contextual claim from the same

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[16] See James Chandler, 'The Affection-Image and the Movement-Image', in *Afterimages of Gilles Deleuze's Film Philosophy*, ed. D.N. Rodowick (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 235-57.

[17] 'Au cinéma, on peut dire que le rapprochement ou l'éloignement du spectateur par rapport au personnage ou à l'action […] entraînent une approche ou un recul visuels qui s'apparentent aux temps grammaticaux. Plan général égal passé, gros plan égal présent.' [Chris Marker, 'La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc', *Esprit* 20.5 (May 1952), 841.] All translations from this article are mine.

[18] 'Usage de gros plan, absence de maquillage, décors et costumes neutres concourent au même but, qui est d'écrire un film, si j'ose dire, au présent de l'éternité.' [Marker, 'La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc', 842.]

essay. Quoting Jules Lagneau, Marker observes that in cinema 'space is the measure of our power', and time 'the measure of our powerlessness'.[19] The word 'measure' notwithstanding, the idea resonates powerfully with Deleuze's anatomy of the movement-image. If perception is always oriented towards useful action, as nineteenth-century psychology maintains, then time is precisely the dimension of the percept that cannot be converted to sensory-motor economies. I read Marker's statement on the use of close-up in *Jeanne d'Arc* as an elaboration on this principle. Far from implying some kind of timeless plenitude, Dreyer's experiment dilates the present and saturates it with affect.

  Written a full decade before the making of *La Jetée*, and some thirty years before *Sans Soleil* (1982), the essay offers an ideal entry point into Marker's body of work and explains a fascination with the face that was to characterise his career as a whole.[20] Close-ups on the face are a salient feature of the theme and the style of *La Jetée* (1962), *Le Mystère Koumiko* (1965) and, most notably, *Level Five* (1997). Each of these films invites us to dwell on the intensity of an expression, but also on those uncanny moments at which the human face, sometimes bizarrely cropped, or dramatically blown up, sometimes digitally altered or criss-crossed with beams of light, sometimes confronted with the reciprocal gaze of an animal or an inanimate object, tips over into nonhumanity (figures 1-6). Marker himself elaborates on this recurrent motif in his notes to *Crush Art*, a photographic exhibition consisting of a series of sixteen portraits from magazines, crumpled and then re-scanned to produce a modified image: 'I began to crumble pages in magazines, then scan the result and meet a series of ghosts.'[21] There is no question here of interpreting the close-up as a simple, affectless plenitude; for Marker the human face is always haunted, and the object of cinema is to reveal its ghostly temporalities.

Figure 1. The haunting of the face in *La Jetée* (1962)

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[19] 'L'espace est la mesure de notre puissance, le temps le mesure de notre impuissance.' [Marker, 'La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc', 841.]

[20] *Staring Back*, a collection of photographic portraits and close-up shots taken between 1952 and 2006 and culled from several of his projects, shows Marker's enduring interest in this theme. [Chris Marker, *Staring Back* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007).]

[21] Chris Marker, 'Notes to *Crush Art*, 2003-2008', *Chris Marker: 100*, Peter Blum Gallery; available at https://www.peterblumgallery.com/viewing-room/chris-marker [accessed 30 October 2023].

Figure 2. The haunting of the face in *Le Mystère Koumiko* (1965)

Figure 3. Framing in *Le Mystère Koumiko* (1965)

Figure 4. A face reflecting city lights in *Level Five* (1997)

Figure 5. Visions of cyberspace in *Level Five* (1997)

Figure 6. The undoing of the face in *Level Five* (1997)

Deleuze too, like Marker, reads *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* as the quintessential example of the use of close-up in cinema. Dreyer's technique, he explains, is to isolate the face in order to abstract it – to distil a pure affect from the dramatic situations which give the expression meaning and context. The film 'avoids the shot-reverse shot [*champ-contrechamp*] procedure which would maintain a real relation between each face and the other, and would still be part of an action-image' (*MI*, 107). Unusual framing, unnatural angles, abrupt cuts, and a systematic flattening of perspective combine to create a sense of false movement and vitiated continuity. Even so, Deleuze insists that the purpose of the close-up is neither to misshape the face nor to turn it into a partial object.

Why this clarification?

At stake, above all, is a rejection of traditional psychoanalytic grammars. Deleuze is keen to distinguish the passive syntheses associated with the agencies of the camera (framing, cutting and editing) from the operations of the Freudian unconscious – specifically, those set in motion in the psychoanalytic treatment of partial objects. Psychoanalysis recognises the primary role of the sensory-motor schema (most notably

the relation of hand and eye) in synthesising self and world out of early (partial) perceptions and impressions. But it subordinates those perceptions, and the immanent relations they set up, to a model of subject-formation based in lack and substitution.

> When critics accept the idea of the partial object, they see in the close-up the mark of a fragmentation or a cut, some saying that it has to be reconciled with the continuity of the film, others that it shows, on the contrary, an essential filmic discontinuity. But in fact, the close-up, the close-up of the face, has nothing to do with a partial object […] the close-up does *not* tear away its object from a set of which it would form part, of which it would be a part, but on the contrary *it abstracts it from all spatio-temporal co-ordinates*. (*MI*, 95-6)

This is not to say, however, that the object in close-up is indifferent to the passing of time. For Deleuze, the close-up always expresses a whole, a movement that changes without dividing. It *is* temporal – only we must conceive of time, in this context, not as the measure of movement, or as the medium of action, but precisely, as 'the measure of our powerlessness', to recycle Lagneau's phrase. Or better still, as the form of our passivity. To read the face as a partial object is already to disregard the purely affective dimension of an expression; it is from the first to recuperate the affect to the ends of action and individuation.

On this point, the correspondences between Marker's art and Deleuze's theory are numerous, and striking, but perhaps less instructive than the subtle differences. We have seen, for instance, that Marker deliberately and repeatedly distorts the face using photographic effects to misshape it and carve it up. Coded in these images is a peculiar coordination of past and present; the face becomes a figure for the grounding of habit and perception in an eccentric operation of memory. Close-ups may correspond to the use of the present tense in Marker's film language, but the shot always bears traces of an original passivity that simultaneously determines the present and undoes it.

The idea informs the narrative conceit of *La Jetée*. Set in a post-apocalyptic present, the film tropes on the theme of an impossible, posthumous memory. What passes for the main character's agency corresponds to a forced act of remembering. Memory, in this case, is a form of suffering, of torture, at best a compulsion.

> This man was selected from among a thousand for his obsession with an image from the past. Nothing else, at first, put stripping out the present, and its racks.
> They begin again. The man doesn't die, nor does he go mad. He suffers.
> They continue.
> On the tenth day, images begin to ooze, like confessions.[22]

Marker expands on this theme in *Sans Soleil*, in the section devoted to Hitchcock's *Vertigo*.

> He wrote me that only one film had been capable of portraying impossible memory – insane memory: Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo*. In the spiral of the titles he saw time covering a field ever wider as it moved away, a cyclone whose present moment contains motionless the eye.[23]

The lines are spoken over a still shot from the title sequence of Hitchcock's film, an image of a woman's eye overwritten with animated spirals. In the original sequence the

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[22] *La Jetée*, dir. Chris Marker (Paris: Argos Films, 1963).
[23] *Sans Soleil*, dir. Chris Marker (Paris: Argos Films, 1982).

camera segments the face as it pans from one detail to another before pushing in on the iris. Marker transforms that image into an allegory. The eye is identified with the contracted point of the present, but, abstracted from its original context, the image is in fact a false memory, a misquotation.

A recurring figure across Marker's filmography is the association of memory-images with ruins or discarded objects. In *La Jetée* this connection is signalled through a series of establishing shots of a bombed-out Parisian landscape, and then reinforced in a montage of broken statues and posed human bodies, most notably a slow dissolve from a close-up on a dilapidated stone sculpture to the suffering face of the time-traveller (figure 7). The motif is also highlighted in the voice-over script.

> Sometimes he recaptures a day of happiness, though different.
> A face of happiness, though different.
> Ruins.
> A girl who could be the one he seeks. He passes her on the jetty. She smiles at him from an automobile. Other images appear, merge, in that museum, which is perhaps that of his memory.[24]

In *Junkopia* Marker turns his gaze to another post-apocalyptic landscape, a series of abandoned driftwood constructions, human and animal figures, that once haunted the Emeryville mudflats. Much lighter in tone than *La Jetée* this later film displays Marker's signature fascination with faces and ruins. Dwelling on the expressivity (sometimes comical, sometimes kitsch) of each ramshackle sculpture, the film invites us to look for a face in every object, to discover an affect in every bit of tattered debris. Once again, Marker succeeds in drawing out the element of sheer passivity coded in every close-up, but the more striking effect of his compositions is to invest each object with a simultaneously human and nonhuman expression, to make visible in a single shot the human-and-nonhuman facets of the face (figure 8).

Figure 7. A face emerging from ruins in *La Jetée* (1962)

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[24] *La Jetée.*

Figure 8. The animality of the human face in *Junkopia* (1981)

We recognise in this allegory a return to the topics that defined nineteenth-century psychology: a desire to bring transcendental argument to evolutionary thought and physiological aesthetics; a genealogy of the unconscious that runs from Darwin's study of involuntary expression, governed by force of habit and the structure of the nervous system, through Bergson's theory of the image and his original account of the relation between memory, perception and action, to Deleuze's exploration of the passive syntheses of time. If for Bergson consciousness is a complication of the sensory-motor schema, a delay in the neurophysiological relay linking perception and action, for Deleuze and Marker the unconscious corresponds to a pure past that conditions habit and memory; not a past represented in the image but a passivity that takes hold of it.

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Darwin, Marker, Deleuze. *Exprimarea emoțiilor* și inconștientul filmic

Articolul meu creionează o istorie speculativă a inconștientului într-o tradiție a filmelor și teoriei cinematografice care transformă imaginea chipului într-un simulacru al psihicului. Pornind de la discuția lui Gilles Deleuze despre noțiunea de „close-up" din *Cinema 1*, refac continuitățile istorice, conceptuale și figurale dintre opera lui Charles Darwin despre rolul comportamentului în exprimarea emoției, scrierile lui Henri Bergson despre percepție și memorie și propriile reflecții ale lui Deleuze despre afectivitate în film. În plus, mă îndrept către filmele și eseurile lui Chris Marker pentru a sugera că în acest model cinematic al psihicului, inconștientul corespunde unei pasivități ireductibile care condiționează comportamentul și percepția și determină expresivitatea chipului.