

GILLES DELEUZE

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IMAGE AND TEXT



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Chapter 7

Mad Love

Nadine Boljkovac

[T]he nature of emotion as pure element . . . in fact precedes all representation, itself generating new ideas. It does not have, strictly speaking, an object, but merely an essence that spreads itself over various objects, animals, plants and the whole of nature.

Gilles Deleuze, Bergsonism (1991), p. 110

From its foreboding first strains¹ and the black and white still image of a deserted airport pier, *La Jetée's* cumulative audiovisual-tactile image, a *free indirect discourse and vision* (cf. Deleuze, 1989, ch. 7), overwhelms both screen and viewer as it evokes an experience akin to its music – that which is ever-new and of ‘great variety, . . . unexpected progressions, and expressive of every motion, and accent; almost savage in strength and spirit at times, but more often melancholy’.² Perhaps the most renowned and arguably most beautiful of Chris Marker’s several films and multimedia works, *La Jetée* (1962) derives its multi-sensory passionate force from its aura or *essence*, a particular *thisness* or sensual singularity that ‘pierces’ and wounds a body. As its contemplation of experience in an often intolerable world profoundly calls upon the senses, this short film imagines an emancipatory freedom or potential beyond our bodies’ corporeal, fragile human suffering through the most productive and creative means possible. Via a vibrating screen that expresses itself synaesthetically through its details, traces and *essence* that are not bound to characters or subjectivities but affect and are affected by other bodies in this Spinozian sense, *La Jetée* newly discovers sensations of happiness, peace and sadness, intangibles at once so elusive and yet tactile.

If 'feeling is that which is in continual exchange' as Deleuze contends, feelings in fact 'become characters' and music, as he similarly notes, 'becomes specially important' (1989, pp. 124–5). As do my considerations of Alain Resnais's cinema elsewhere (Boljkovac, 2009), the following study probes the notion of autonomous emotion and feeling as divorced from fixed subjective positions in Marker's cinema in relation to Deleuze's concepts of independent *affect*, by way of Spinoza, and *desire*. Affect in this sense suggests that which is always in continual exchange as an active or reactive force, as Deleuze and Nietzsche claim, with corporeal-incorporeal effects; *desire* then is an experimental, affirmative incessant process or force of affects that creates assemblages and empowers bodies by productive connections. Desire, in this sense Deleuze insists uniquely apart from Kant and in ways through Nietzsche and Spinoza but also Bataille, Marx, Freud and Lacan, is not a nostalgic or romantic longing but a process that continuously forms, deforms and reforms (cf. Holland, 2005, p. 61). With respect to a cinema and most especially a film as moving and seemingly melancholic as *La Jetée*, this essay seeks to discern how the film ventures beyond fixations of tragedy and loss. Detailed discussions of the film's sequences will consider affect and sensation vis-à-vis the production of multi-dimensional experiences that speak to the potential of cinema and its embodiment of time and movement through its dance of sensory images, signs and encounters. In other words, this study ruminates upon the film's poignant whispers, its music, voices, noises, lights and shadows and their relations of speed and slowness, or *durée*, that not only comprise music and the living cinematic medium but also the human bodies they indelibly affect.

Deleuze's filmic analyses, it may be noted, face accusations of a partiality towards a canonical hierarchy of modernist 'art-house' cinema. Yet this seeming preference principally reflects Deleuze's fascination with the capacities of certain films to directly present not merely the flow of nonlocalized movement but also time itself through time-images or signs that liberate a human body from its self-imposed limits as it begins to perceive its world and self differently through select cinematic

experiences. Interestingly however, despite evident admiration for the works of Marker's collaborators and friends, notably Resnais, Deleuze's writings do not acknowledge Marker's cinema although Marker's films, particularly *La Jetée*, remarkably exemplify Deleuze and Guattari's considerations, as does Marker's persona itself. Self-effacing, moreover, always self-redefining, becoming-other or 'deterritorializing', the persona that is 'Chris Marker, the artist' is itself perhaps most synonymous with this beautiful short film. Inasmuch as Marker playfully recreates his persona through various assumed names and puns, in its musings upon memories and ordinary moments, *La Jetée* presents an equally myriad assemblage of things, a hundred tiny details, as Deleuze and Guattari might suggest, which collectively and impersonally affect a body, be it, as Dorothea Olkowski observes, 'chemical, biological, social, or political' (1994, p. 120). The beautiful, Melissa McMahon writes, 'obliges us to think (its singularity poses a *problem*), without there being any concept for thought to settle on' (2002, p. 7). As it attempts to trace what is beautiful and intangible, what is not again a 'what' but rather *this*, a *thisness*, sign or 'trigger', as Steven Shaviro proposes (2002, p. 12), or *haecceity* as Deleuze and Guattari contend, Marker's cinema obsesses over lists of 'things that quicken the heart', as his *Sans Soleil* explains.³

This essential 'criterion', as *Sans Soleil's* disembodied voice terms it, marks Marker's entire practice as one of futurity fully immersed within a creative past and memory. The beautiful, singular, fragile, affective and forever haunting populate Marker's oeuvre with details, faces and places, worlds of detail or the 'infinitesimal' which constitute, as explain Deleuze and Guattari, 'an entire realm of subrepresentative matter' (1987, pp. 218–19). Upon scrutiny, these faces and places can dissolve; to reiterate Deleuze and Guattari's description, 'they are haecceities in the sense that they consist entirely of particles, capacities to affect and be affected' (1987, p. 261); the ever transient quality of which comprises a pure, incommunicable, aconceptual affect that may, by its 'event' in piercing and moving the soul, evoke Barthes' concept of *punctum*. Foreign and yet familiar, obscure though simple, ephemeral albeit acute, Marker's

cinema repeats itself ever newly through explorations that often assume for their points of interpenetrating directions indeterminate meanings of peace, happiness, dreams and memory. Perhaps in contrast to Resnais's cinema that also confronts the shocking horrors and traumas of twentieth- and twenty-first century experience, Marker's films more fully interrogate the simple beauty of a present moment always already past and yet to come, and its lingering sensations of loss where peace, sensitivity and feeling, freed as these sensations may be from unified subjects, are to be found in an affective process that endlessly passes through and reconfigures the bodies of the films and those they encounter. This process of creation that speaks not only to what a body is but also to what it can *do*, to paraphrase Deleuze and Guattari via Spinoza (1987, p. 257), inspires the following exploration of *La Jetée*'s affective beauty, an *essence* that inevitably evades this account of its incommunicable singularity.

The directors of the experiment tighten their control. They send him back. Time rolls back again. The moment happens once more; this time she is near him. He says something. She doesn't mind, she answers. They have no memories, no plans. Time builds itself painlessly around them. As landmarks they have the very taste of this moment they live . . . and the scribbling on the walls. (*La Jetée*)

The '*punctum*', Barthes writes, 'is a kind of subtle *beyond* – as if the image launched desire beyond what it permits us to see . . . toward the absolute excellence of a being, body and soul together' (1981, p. 59). An experience of *punctum*, a nonsignifying intensive charge that takes us beyond ourselves, may well be contemplated in relation to that *thisness* Deleuze and Guattari discern as *affect* that viscerally shocks a body, a body that may be defined as any whole aggregate of relational parts and speeds that affect and are affected by both internal and external actions–reactions or encounters with other bodies. All that remains beyond transcendent truths and illusions are 'bodies', Deleuze writes, 'which are forces, nothing but forces' (1989, p. 139). To assess the means and

effects of a violent singular beauty and love as released through Marker's film the 'relation between one force and others' must be considered, 'the shock of forces, in the image or of the images between themselves', as Deleuze explains (1989, p. 139). To conceive of an image or body without form, an assemblage of heterogeneous parts without binding organization, a *body without organs* as Deleuze and Guattari propose through Artaud, is to dismantle the notion of a hierarchized organism, traditional psychoanalysis and its theory of subjectification and the dominance of linguistic signs through which language and meaning are most often structured. Although a body can never entirely free itself in that its becoming exists within the regime it endeavours to crack, inherent to a body's dynamism and movement is nevertheless a risk of madness through the incorporeal wounding and very real scarring of a corporeal body. Of such madness *La Jetée's* voice speaks:

Nothing tells memories from ordinary moments. Only afterwards do they claim remembrance on account of their scars. That face, which was to be a unique image of peacetime to carry with him through the whole wartime, he often wondered if he had ever seen it or if he had dreamed a lovely moment to catch-up with the crazy moment that came next. . . . Only later did he realise that he had seen a man die.

Upon these words the screen darkens to a blackness pierced only by a subtle subterranean reverberation over which the droning voice continues: 'And soon afterwards Paris was blown up.' The irrationality and sheer madness of Paris's destruction resounds through the sensory image as its emerging light reveals a startling sight of an uninhabitable new Paris beset by radioactivity. The visual image track, momentarily layered with the cavernous tones, fully materializes with light and a choral reprisal whose majestic a cappella refrain augments the disconcerting tone of the entire stratigraphic image. Black and white still images of an unrecognizable Paris dissolve into one another; their merging superimposed skies of deadly, deathly dust and clouds extend the limits of the screen. This ominous image

surge that profoundly infringes upon the senses drives thought beyond dualisms of authenticity and representation as it infuses the screen with an emotive immediacy. A suppliant cry, the flow of ruins and requiem persists at a steady yet pausing pace as the visual images linger briefly while the elegy soars and the camera ascends along the remains of the Arc de Triomphe. Such sublime effect embodies Deleuze's apt description

It is a matter of giving 'emotional fullness' or 'passion' back to the intellectual process. . . . 'intellectual cinema' has as correlate 'sensory thought' or 'emotional intelligence', and is worthless without it. . . . we go from a thinking of the whole which is presupposed and obscure to the agitated, mixed-up images which express it . . . the drunkenness, the pathos which bathes them. (1989, p. 159)

As the film's camera ventures beneath ground along the galleries of the Palais de Chaillot, tremors that echo through the sinister soundtrack and visibly trembling shots give way to nearly imperceptible whispers, their sharp enunciation of frenzied German made more pronounced by the quickening rhythm of cuts between images.

[*whispers*. Then:] The prisoners were submitted to some experiments of great concern apparently to those who conducted them. The outcome was disappointment for some, death for others and for others madness.

Through the experimenters' frantic whispers, a score of plaintive strings and a series of shadows that reveal mere skeletal silhouettes in a prophetic unmasking of faces, identity and personalization, the agitation of the audio-visual-tactile image, as actualized through such virtual intensifications of sight, sound and bodily sensation, escalates only to fade and accede to a moment's silence. An affective anxiety continues to pervade the image; its ghostly ethereality emanates alongside the man's bodily fear and these incorporeal and corporeal forces, at once unearthly, indistinct and visceral, jointly engulf the image in

an '[i]nternal monologue' that, as Deleuze infers, 'goes beyond dream, which is much too individual, and constitutes the segments or links of a truly collective thought' (1989, p. 159). Which is to say, analogous to Deleuze and Guattari's project as Daniel Smith well defines it, *La Jetée* is also an 'analysis of delirium, . . . the delirium that lies at the heart of the self (schizophrenia) [which] is one and the same thing as the delirium that exists at the heart of our society' (2007, p. 75). This is a Paris in decay and decomposed, an urban embodiment of a self's unravelling and confrontation with mortality whose immanent survival indeed lies only through time and madness.

If the human race survives, future men will . . . look back on our enlightened epoch as a veritable age of Darkness. . . . They will see that what we call 'schizophrenia' was one of the forms in which . . . the light began to break through the cracks in our all-too-closed minds.⁴

The 'price to be paid, in cinema as elsewhere' Deleuze suggests, is 'always a confrontation with madness' (1989, p. 201). The inanity of the man's outer world, a ravaged Paris, finds its counterpart in the recesses of the underground galleries from wherein the man, held captive by the experimenters but moreover by the restraints of fixed identity, self and ego, seeks flight through the haunting memory of a woman's face. The man yet fails to perceive that a 'line of flight' or new becoming lies through an endlessly double process, coincidence or *between* of two terms or forces, beauty and fear, for instance, hope and despair, life through death, 'a process that produces the one within the other and couples the machines together' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p. 2),⁵ an encounter, becoming or 'nuptials' that fractures the limits of a well-defined 'self' and identity as it invents, zigzags, 'passes or happens *between* two' (Deleuze and Parnet, 1977, pp. 6–7). Deleuze explains

an encounter is perhaps the same thing as a becoming, or nuptials. It is from the depth of this solitude that you can make any encounter whatsoever. You encounter people (and

sometimes without knowing them or ever having seen them) but also movements, ideas, events, entities. (Deleuze and Parnet, 1977, p. 6)

If existence is an endlessly connective synthesis of ‘machines’, and each thing itself a machine connected to the flows of another body or machine as Deleuze and Guattari propose, life might be viewed as a moving assemblage of bodies and machines propelled though desire, a *desiring-machine* that ‘causes the current to flow, . . . flows in turn, and breaks the flows’ (1983, p. 5). Only through self-experimentation and the making of his body as one without organs, a decoded, dynamic body that would extend the limits of his perception and mortality, can the man in *La Jetée* discover a freedom that would challenge the illusions of chronological time and a stable self.⁶ In this sense madness is not a psychological disorder but a disordering of political and historical consequence and revolutionary potential (cf. Holland, 1999, p. x), a breakthrough rather than breakdown,⁷ a decoding and destroying of repressive codes and beliefs that constitute a self and society and that delimit the flows of life’s movement.⁸

From amongst the prisoners the man is selected and as he awaits his fate at the hands of the experimenters, his audible heartbeats punctuate the image.

He was frightened. He had heard about the Head Experimenter. He was prepared to face the Mad Scientist, a Dr Frankenstein. Instead, he met a reasonable man who told him in a relaxed way that the human race was doomed. Space was off-limits. The only link with survival passed through Time.

This line between madness and reason is as illusory, *La Jetée* suggests, as the notion of truth through representation, a repressive construction that fragments life’s dynamism and contingency. ‘There are mad faces’, Deleuze and Guattari write, ‘that do not conform to what one assumes madness should be’ (1987, p. 177). When sensory experience and creative possibilities are diminished through immutable morals, codes and theories of madness, truth and subjectivity, the profound connections and

sensations between all things cannot be sensed. Definitions of the real and perceptible constrict life and movement and yet, if thought might perceive that that which takes place ‘takes place in one world’, or ‘univocally’ as Deleuze stresses, the seemingly separate worlds of reality and representation would coalesce (1989, p. 130). The cinematic image would not seem to exist distinctly from ‘real life’ and a ‘body’ might be recognized in a manner Henri Bergson describes, as another expression of existence’s one substance or ‘immanence’, as an ‘aggregate of the material world, an image which acts like other images, receiving and giving back movement’ (1991, p. 19). To glean this revolutionary concept of life is to perceive that all memories, imaginings, perceptions and fictions are as ‘real’ as the Histories, Truths and Universals society holds dear. The degrees to which ‘we’ are affected and affect ever newly comprise the very real sensations and intensities of life, each moment of a synthesized past-present-future forever open to a future freed from any totality of ego-centric time.

As it assesses these affective, asubjective, impersonal forces, sensations and ‘machines’ that constitute our bodies and give rise to intensely intimate, touching encounters, *La Jetée* plummets beneath ground to plumb an obscure underworld of such coexistent temporalities, unidentifiable processes and endless imperceptible momentary events that underlie the world of entrenched thought and reason. The film performs, that is, a geological quest to discern the indiscernible, the material remnants and minutiae of quotidian life, as it sifts through debris and layers of subterranean strata. Deleuze and Guattari might define such an experiential, sensory exploration of certain *thisnesses* and forces as anti-historical.

Nietzsche opposes history not to the eternal but to the sub-historical or superhistorical: the Untimely, which is another name for haecceity, becoming, the innocence of becoming (in other words, forgetting as opposed to memory, geography as opposed to history . . .). . . . Creations are like mutant abstract lines that have detached themselves from the task of representing a world, precisely because they assemble a new

type of reality that history can only recontain or relocate in punctual systems. (1987, p. 296)

In pursuit of the ephemeral and ever-new, *La Jetée* explores the power then of a 'pure ontological' memory whose creative force emerges from stratigraphic planes of such 'subhistorical' layers of past in the face of which conventional time and faces and bodies themselves lose organization and resist the 'reterritorializing' of social production and overcoding. In a world where all known truths have vanished, the man locates in this madness a truer truth that eluded simple expression in the world he knew. He confronts not his own personal memory but this vaster world-memory, an architecture of memory (Deleuze, 1989, p. 117), through a tactile sensuality, *beauty, thisness or haecceity* emanating from his encounters with a foreign world and otherness of self, life and language, a becoming that surfaces most intensely through a face. This woman's face, a corporeal landscape and intensive surface evocative of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of faciality and the layers that engender a face, is itself a politics that breaks through and dismantles the 'black hole' of subjectivity, human consciousness and memory, reason and language (1987, pp. 186–9). There is risk, of course, in becoming trapped in an alluring idealization of a face without seeing through to the traits, zones, becomings and details of its composition. 'A language', write Deleuze and Guattari, 'is always embedded in the faces that announce its statements' (1987, p. 179); how tempting it is, that is, 'to latch . . . onto a *face*' and be guided by the seduction of aesthetic interpretation and its qualifications of beauty and authenticity (1987, p. 187). How can we then see beyond a face, can the man gaze past such a 'unique image of peacetime' and loveliness to look 'no longer . . . at or into the eyes but . . . swim through them' as Deleuze and Guattari urge? (1987, p. 187). Inasmuch as *La Jetée* asks how we might think beyond psychological definition and aesthetic idealization to exceed ourselves through strange encounters of love, faces and bodies, the very means of this questioning via the film's release of certain singularities from their formal properties into a pure realm of affect demand that the film itself be seen as a living

form, body or aggregate of singularities and affects that might generate empowering joy or disempowering sadness, a true cinema of ethics and ethics of cinema.

In the underworld he first assumes to be overrun by madness, the man's captors shield his face with a mask, an act that manifests the process of the man's becoming towards 'asignifying, asubjective, and faceless' sensory experience when faces become nothing but haecceities (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 187), 'set[s] of nonsubjectified affects' (1987, p. 262), series of movements, speeds and slownesses, images and interactions. Even a mask, Deleuze and Guattari write, can become '*the face itself*', an '*inhumanity of the face*', once more a politics whose unravelling entails a definite risk of madness (1987: 181, emphasis mine). What then is love's relation to such madness? 'Schizophrenia is like love', Deleuze and Guattari claim, both flows a productive and reproductive desiring-machine (1983, p. 5). Indeed, love too seems an affective decoding, a series of flows coupled by desire that, by their associations and conjunctions, enhance certain bodies whose encounters multiply their own bodies yet not through, as Deleuze explains (Deleuze and Parnet, 1977, p. 18), union or juxtaposition but the surfacing and proliferation of *thisnesses* that pass *between* two, 'that something [that] happens between them' (1977, p. 15). 'If you cannot grasp the small trace of madness in someone, you cannot be their friend', Deleuze maintains. 'But if you grasp that small point of insanity . . ., that point of madness is the very source of their charm.'⁹ Can it be *this* that moves the soul and extends the crack between the self and its beyond, incorporeal life and corporeal death, or immanent dying and personal death, bringing us nearer the potential to fully, selflessly embrace the singular, beautiful and different while not compromising mortal life, language and survival?

There are ways, Deleuze suggests, 'in which the association of the two [faces of personal and impersonal death] may be brought about', among these madness, suicide, drugs or alcohol (1990, p. 156). Although art is not, Deleuze and Guattari admit, 'an end in itself', the cinema, as an art of automatic movement unlike other arts, does possess the potential to expose this

cracking of experience via its images of time dechronologized and 'out of joint' (1987, p. 187). These direct time-images reveal becoming itself, the past and future on either sides of the crack, as they expose coalescing lines of the personal and impersonal. Yet to break through walls of a face, identity and unified organization is to confront the limits of 'what a body can do' as it crosses through its-self towards a singular beyond. The violence is undeniably real as its incorporeal virtuality becomes actualized in a corporeal body. By its evocation of a love that is 'itself inseparable from an experience of mortality' (Fynsk, 1991, p. xv), *La Jetée* enacts this risk of a becoming-imperceptible through an impersonal yet most personal death as it negotiates these faces of death and time: that of the 'most fully present' with respect to which the future and past are determined and, on the other hand, a contracted present of the 'mobile instant' (Deleuze, 1990, p. 151), simultaneously always past-future. Such shatters existence ever preoccupied with mortal death as it 'calls the subject out and beyond itself' (Fynsk, 1991, p. xv; see also Houle and Steenhuisen, 2006, p. 22).

There is, Deleuze explains, a dualism that 'corresponds to the two aspects of the time-image: a cinema of the body, which puts all the weight of the past into the body, all the tiredness of the world and modern neurosis; but also a cinema of the brain, which reveals the creativity of the world, its colours aroused by a new space-time, its powers multiplied' (1989, p. 205). There is, in other words, potential for a 'line of flight' or new becoming via the cinema whose time-images might reveal the double process or encountering of both the despair and exhaustion of a past and the hope of a present 'with all its future potentialities, . . . the two making up one and the same world, ours, its hopes and its despair' (1989, p. 205). If what is important is 'no longer the association of images . . . but the interstice between two images', once more it may be said that this coincidence or *between* of two terms or forces, hope and despair, speaks to the potential of life through death, an impersonal immanent death through a becoming-imperceptible or other, a folding and taking into the self of every element of nature (1989, p. 200). Ian Buchanan asks how an externalization 'of

an impulse which, when released in the world, takes on an exuberant life and existence of its own', can be 'conceived as an inward fold, when surely that must imply internalization?' (2000, p. 52). This folding, this coupling process of producing one within another in fact, as Buchanan clarifies, is both an externalization of a self's becoming-other beyond it-self, and an internalization of the subject as the self is enfolded into a larger fold. Through a truer death than the one the self internalizes and personalizes, a body might find freedom through a depersonalized death, which necessitates, as Buchanan further states, 'a disavowal of an individual past (one's memories) in favour of a common future' and a 'coming to terms with a common past so as to have an individual (but not personal) future, one's own death' (Buchanan, 2000, p. 137). If we might become 'worthy of what happens to us', as Deleuze urges, 'and thus to will and release the event, to become the offspring of one's own events', we might indeed perceive that one's personal death is at once a rebirth (1990, pp. 149–50). This is the point, writes Deleuze, at which not only 'I disappear outside of myself' but also 'the moment when death loses itself in itself, and . . . [in] the figure which the most singular life takes on in order to substitute itself for me' (1990, p. 153).

*An encounter is perhaps the same as a becoming, or nuptials.*¹⁰

Launched once more into the middle of a brightly coloured, sensual and tactile 'dateless world which first stuns him by its splendour', the man finds that face, that 'loved or dreamed-of' landscape whose beauty overwhelms and affronts him and between the two, this man and this woman, a love arises more true than the self he was (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, pp. 172–3). This is where madness also resides, in the smallest of connections and details, between things. In relation to the two processes or aspects of the crack that divide a self, Deleuze considers the notion of a human couple. 'Here is a man and a woman', he writes, 'and why couples, if not because it is already a question of movement, and of a process defined on the basis of the dyad?' (1990, p. 154). With poignancy and a tactile ethereality,

the film reveals the otherworldly love of lovers whose interactions, forever without memories and plans, enact the process of a self's encounter with its limits. 'A truly perfect relationship', Deleuze and Guattari propose through D. H. Lawrence, 'is one in which each party leaves great tracts unknown in the other party' (1987, p. 189). And the images flow now as if in a dream. The man in fact no longer knows 'whether he is driven, whether he has made it up, or whether he is only dreaming'. Cinema 'spreads', Deleuze suggests, 'an "experimental night" or a white space over us; it works with "dancing seeds" and a "luminous dust"; it affects the visible with a fundamental disturbance, and the world with a suspension, which contradicts all natural perception' (1989, p. 201).

Suspended in this 'limbo', in between past-present-future time and forever affected by 'the memory of a twice-lived fragment of time', lost and yet free and driven by a love for a woman that takes him beyond himself as their love manifests a 'process of *their passing into each other*' (Massumi, 2002, p. xviii), the man rushes inevitably towards a death. Yet, by such a death the man enacts a substitution of his self for a liberation of the singularities that affect the collective dimensions and multiplicities of his body and we, the film's viewers, are potentially also moved (Deleuze, 1995, pp. 6–7). For at the heart of this lovely film, from between its mesmerizing, lyrical images and most affective sequences, a beauty arises and strikes us by its flowing series of emotively evocative moments, each 'unexpected flash', as Barthes might suggest, another *punctum* (1981, pp. 94–6). And so, through confrontation with the body of this film 'I' feel my own body moved; 'something inside me' is touched by my relationship with this intensive screen of affects comprised of 'liberated singularities, . . . things, animals, [and] little events' (Deleuze, 1995, pp. 7). In reference to the gap between content and expression, Brian Massumi writes of 'the immanence of their mutual "deterritorialization"' and through the smallest of details, *La Jetée* embodies as much by way of two lovers whose process of passing into each other through the unravelling of a self reveals a potential opening to new experience and perception via such a startling singular love (Massumi, 2002, p. xviii).

The encounters between the man and woman, the man and his self, myself and the film itself enact a ‘depersonalization through love’ through the lovers and the ways they ‘understand and complement, depersonalize and singularize – in short, love – one another’ (Deleuze, 1995, p. 7).

he wanted to be returned to the world of his childhood, and to this woman who was perhaps waiting for him. . . . he thought in a confused way that the child he had been was due to be there too, watching the planes. (*La Jetée*)

As it liberally etches time’s past-future fissure within itself, that ‘silent trace of the incorporeal crack’, *La Jetée* deepens this scarring within the body of the man. Through a production of an affirmative *desire*, the ‘fugitive beings’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 271) and bodies of *La Jetée* preclude distinct definition, understanding or categorization. Inasmuch as the lovers resist such definitive description and analysis, his ‘memory’ then is more accurately an assemblage of singular sensations, bodily encounters of connections, actions and reactions. He is a prisoner within an unimaginable, unrecognizable world of crumbled ruins that once were known as Paris, his virtual images seeming remnants of this past existence. Yet, as Deleuze and Guattari write, ‘[b]ecoming is an *antimemory*’, and through his process of depersonalization, the man discovers a contemporaneousness of his adult and child as he becomes *a* body, a multiplicity, a man becoming-woman, -other, imperceptible (1987, p. 294).¹¹ The child whose story the film tells is *a* child, ‘“a” molecular child’, whose assemblage or block of singular sensations and perceptions are not of the man’s childhood but of a new world becoming, a new memory-world formed by the lovers’ encounter whose virtual images permeate a vast virtual and impersonal world-memory and past (1987, p. 294). ‘Is it possible to maintain the inherence of the incorporeal crack while taking care not to bring it into existence, and not to incarnate it in the depth of the body?’ Deleuze demands (1990, p. 157). Perhaps *La Jetée*’s beauty is the potential it extends to its viewer to ‘extend the crack’ a little further, ‘not enough to deepen it

irremediably' within ourselves, but to at least 'go farther than we would have believed possible' towards new life through a haunting love (Deleuze, 1990, pp. 157–8, 161).

La Jetée's heartbeat, its tracing of love, indeed evinces Bergson's classification of an 'image' as that which exists 'halfway between the "thing" and the "representation"', once more a *thisness* (1991, p. 9). The film's experiment, the perception of a self within time by a self deepens the crack within the 'thickness' of the film, the man's 'noisy body' and my own (cf. Deleuze, 1990, pp. 156–7). I am deeply moved by this film whose love and tender vulnerability touches me by its sensual 'telling of memories from ordinary moments', its most sensitively embodied movements across personal–impersonal lines and its tenuous balance along the crack's edge between two deaths that calls me from myself. The film maps a love through death, and we are called to consider such experience anew. The man's quest, and that of the film, may seem to be a tracing of a deeply wounding scar and yet the film's joyful revelation of a love encounter exceeds personal space-time dimensions, discounting any melancholy affect. Our 'capacity to be affected' is diminished, Deleuze explains through Spinoza, if '*our power of action is reduced to attaching itself to . . . traces*' (Deleuze, 1992, p. 246); such is a 'diminution of the power of acting . . . called *sadness*' (Deleuze, 1988, p. 40). The film does not then recover, re-present or redeem a memory, truth or authenticity but reverberates effortlessly via its flowing *punctum*, its series of images that request a death of ourselves, and via its vulnerability and fragility 'we' are infected by its mad love.

Notes

- ¹ The film's credits identify the 'Russian Liturgy of the Good Saturday'.
- ² N. Lindsay Norden writes that '[t]hose who have heard [the Russian Liturgy] never forget it, so forceful and so wonderful is the impression it creates'. She quotes another who states that the music 'contains melodies of great variety, full of unexpected progressions, and expressive of every motion, and accent; almost savage in strength and spirit at times, but more often melancholy in character. The Russian people have not found their existence an altogether happy one'. Indeed, as

- Norden claims, '[t]he imagination and emotion of the Russian people have found their freest expression in music' (1919, p. 426).
- ³ '[B]y learning to draw a sort of melancholy comfort from the contemplation of the tiniest things, this small group of idlers left a mark on Japanese sensibility much deeper than the mediocre thundering of the politicians. Shonagon had a passion for lists: the list of "elegant things", "distressing things" or even of "things not worth doing". One day she got the idea of drawing up a list of "things that quicken the heart". Not a bad criterion I realize when I'm filming; I bow to the economic miracle, but what I want to show you are the neighbourhood celebrations'. [*Sans Soleil*, dir. Chris Marker, Argos Films, 1982.]
- ⁴ Deleuze and Guattari quote R. D. Laing (1967, pp. 154–5) in *Anti-Oedipus* (1983, p. 131).
- ⁵ Here in *Anti-Oedipus* Deleuze and Guattari also explain: 'Everything is a machine. Celestial machines, the stars or rainbows in the sky, alpine machines – all of them connected to those of his body. The continual whirr of machines' (1983, p. 2).
- ⁶ See *Dialogues II*: 'experimentation on oneself, is our only identity, our single chance for all the combinations which inhabit us' (Deleuze and Parnet, 1977, p. 11).
- ⁷ See *Anti-Oedipus* for a passage in which Deleuze and Guattari acknowledge Foucault and quote R. D. Laing: 'Madness need not be all breakdown. It may also be breakthrough' (1983, p. 131).
- ⁸ See Deleuze, 'Cours Vincennes: the nature of flows – 14/12/1971', lecture, *Les Cours de Gilles Deleuze*, 14 December 1971, 19 June 2007 <<http://www.webdeleuze.com/php/texte.php?cle=119&groupe=Anti%20Oedipe%20et%20Mille%20Plateaux&langue=2>> (accessed 5 Jan 2009). 'At this stage, psychoanalysis proves less and less capable of understanding madness, for the madman is really the being of decoded flows.'
- ⁹ See Charles J. Stivale's extremely useful Deleuze site for a summary of the Deleuze and Parnet filmed interviews, dir., Pierre-André Boutang, *L'Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze, avec Claire Parnet (Gilles Deleuze's ABC Primer, with Claire Parnet)*, 1996, Charles J. Stivale, Web Resources, Wayne State University, 1/11/2005 <<http://www.langlab.wayne.edu/CStivale/D-G/ABC1.html>> (accessed 5 Jan 2009).
- ¹⁰ Gilles Deleuze, 'Letter to a Harsh Critic' (1995, p. 6).
- ¹¹ Elsewhere Deleuze and Guattari write: 'The BwO [body without organs] is a childhood block, a becoming, the opposite of a childhood memory. It is not the child "before" the adult . . . : it is the strict contemporaneousness of the adult, of the adult and the child, their map of comparative densities and intensities, and all of the variations on that map' (1987, p. 164).

Filmography

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Sans Soleil. Conception and Editing, Chris Marker. Argos Films, 1982.

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